



CULTIVATING TERRITORIAL, NARRATIVE, & DATA SOVEREIGNTY ACROSS THE CONGO BASIN

www.basandja.org

BASANDJA
COALITION OF
INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES &
LOCAL
COMMUNITIES

WHO WE ARE

Basandja Coalition is a growing alliance of Indigenous peoples, local communities, miners, youth, women leaders, and environmental defenders across the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Congo Basin.

"Basandja" is a Topoke word referring to traditional codes of conduct that maintain balance between human beings, the more-than-human world, and future generations.

Our communities have protected forests, rivers, peatlands, and biodiversity for generations. Long before the language of climate justice and the green transition entered global conversations, we were already practicing stewardship, collective care, and regenerative ways of living.

Today, we are organizing to defend our territories, strengthen our livelihoods, and ensure that the future of the Congo Basin is shaped by the people who call it home.



WHY BASANDJA?

The Democratic Republic of Congo sits at the center of two defining challenges of our century:

- The global climate crisis.
- The green energy transition.

The Congo produces more than **70%** of the world's cobalt and hosts one of the planet's most important tropical forests and peatlands. Yet the communities whose lands sustain the world continue to experience extreme poverty, violence, dispossession, and exclusion from decisions that affect their futures.

At the same time, a **"new"** form of extraction is emerging.

Not only are minerals and forests being pillaged—our knowledge and our data are also being extracted. Communities are increasingly mapped, surveyed, and studied without meaningful participation or consent. Information generated from our territories often shapes investments and policies while excluding our voices.

For Basandja, the struggle is therefore not only environmental. It is a struggle for sovereignty:

- Territorial
- Narrative
- Knowledge
- Data



OUR VISION

We envision a Congo Basin where Indigenous peoples and local communities exercise full sovereignty over their lands, waters, forests, minerals, knowledge, narratives, and data.

A future where ancestral ecological wisdom guides regenerative development and where communities are recognized not as beneficiaries, but as authors of the future.



THE BEE HIVES

At the center of Basandja's work is the Agroliberation decentralized network of community youth-led Bee Hives.

Each community Hive is both a physical and social infrastructure for self-determination and collective flourishing.

EVERY HIVE INCLUDES

Social Baraza Club

A daily gathering place for community meetings, intergenerational dialogue, conflict resolution, and collective decision-making.

Resource and Learning Center

A decentralized library and training space for leadership development, legal education, ancestral ecology, and digital literacy.

Community Living Data Keeping

A community-governed system for storing territorial information, community research, participatory maps, and environmental monitoring data.

Living Archive

A space where oral histories, songs and dances, ceremonies, ecological knowledge, films, and community memories are preserved and activated.

Computer and Media Center

A hub for community journalism, storytelling, digital mapping, podcasting, and communication across the Congo Basin

Together, the Bee Hives form a continental ecosystem of territorial intelligence rooted in ancestral ecology.

Every Hive is a house of memory, a school of the future, and a place where communities practice sovereignty.

“In the pursuit of sovereignty, thus far, Basandja has reached 10 percent of Congo’s 145 territories with 2 million inhabitants”

NORTH (Rainforest - Tshopo and Isangi)

The GOVA-Tshopo Hive works with dozens of villages deep in the rainforest of northeastern Congo. The Gova-Tshopo Hive connects these villages through a powerful community radio station (Radio Mabele) reaching hundreds of thousands of people. Its youth brigade of 2,000 forest defenders delivers vital humanitarian aid to villages throughout the forest. They build and refurbish bridges to link farms to local markets and facilitate the movement of goods and people in this challenging rural environment.

- 428 villages served
- Hundreds of thousands of inhabitants reached through Radio Mabele
- 2,000 Youth forest defenders who protect the forest, preserve local culture and knowledge, educate community about environmental protection, and assist with community security
- 2 main libraries and 17 affiliates community libraries built
- 20 bridges constructed and refurbished to connect isolated villages with local markets
- Several collectives of women farmers who produce food for subsistence consumption and sale in market from which profits are used to send students to school and university
- Operate a solidarity fund (rural credit union) since 2005 that pools funds that are used to address local emergencies



SOUTH MINING COMMUNITIES

(Grand Katanga - Kolwezi)



The Grand Katanga–Basandja Hive has a regional ecosystem that connects artisanal mining communities, women-led cooperatives, youth organizations, environmental defenders, researchers, and local institutions across the Grand Katanga region.

The Hive advances community-led mineral governance, labor dignity, environmental restoration, land tenure, community health, and territorial, ecological, and data sovereignty.

The Hive works alongside 32 artisanal mining cooperatives representing more than 20,000 members and frontline communities to build safer livelihoods, protect children and women, restore mining landscapes, and promote a just energy transition rooted in community leadership.

Through partnerships with academic institutions, civil society organizations, collectives of traditional leaders, and mining cooperatives, the Hive combines local knowledge with participatory research to ensure that minerals, data, and decisions about the future of mining serve the communities who have safeguarded these territories for generations.

The Hive has:

- Hosted training for hive members from around the Congo
- Facilitated the production of a series of films that document local conditions at the bottom of the AI, EV, Green Energy supply chain
- Presented the conditions of local miners through films and testimonials to government officials
- Organize village chiefs to secure their land from mining conglomerates
- Mapped and secured 8,707 acres of forest land



EAST KIVUS & IDJWI ISLANDS

*The Yolé–Basandja Hive is a regional ecosystem connecting **78** community organizations, **800** women-led cooperatives, and four Agroliberation Campuses across the Kivus and Idjwi Island.*



Four Agroliberation Campuses

- Community-governed data systems
- Indigenous seed keeping and healing plants
- Community food storage
- Libraries & learning spaces
- Shared Working spaces
- Digital literacy labs
- Solar & biogas energy systems
- Film production studio
- Sound recording studio
- Music production studio
- Eco-Cinema for education and dialogue
- Ritual and ceremonial spaces

Our Collective Action

- Food Sovereignty
- Regenerative Agriculture
- Women's Leadership
- Economic Justice
- Community Health
- Gender-Based Violence Prevention
- Climate Justice
- Environmental Stewardship
- Peacebuilding
- Human Rights
- Arts & Culture
- Narrative Sovereignty
- Knowledge & Data Sovereignty
- Youth Education & Leadership

Our Network

- 78 Allied Community Organizations
- 800 family Women-Led Cooperative
- Youth Movements
- Indigenous Peoples' Organizations
- Farmers' Associations
- Cultural Centers
- Community Media
- Traditional Healers
- Community Health Practitioners

Strategic Partnerships

Working alongside universities, cultural institutions, Tech, labs and international organizations, including:

- University of California, Irvine (UCI)
- Stanford University
- Emory University
- Alec Glasser Center for the Power of Music and Social Change
- Kakuma Sound
- SHOFCO (Shining Hope for Communities)

WEST MBANDAKA (Cuvette Centrale Peatlands)



The Mbandaka–Basandja Hive is a regional ecosystem connecting Indigenous peoples, peatland communities, women-led cooperatives, youth organizations, researchers, and local institutions across Équateur Province. The Hive advances community-led peatland conservation, water and river stewardship, ancestral ecological knowledge, and territorial, ecological, and data sovereignty.

The Hive currently supports 12 community peatland research sites across 14 villages, engaging 26 villages in community-based ecological monitoring, restoration, and governance. Working in partnership with the University of Kinshasa, the University of Mbandaka, the University of St Andrews, the Hive combines Indigenous knowledge with scientific collaboration to protect one of the world's largest tropical peatland ecosystems while ensuring research and data remain community governed.

Community-Led Peatland Stewardship

Reach

- 26 villages engaged
- 12 peatland research and monitoring sites
- 14 villages across the Mbandaka landscape actively participating in community-led peatland conservation

Key Focus

- Community ownership of peatland research, monitoring, and data governance
- Protection of biodiversity and Indigenous knowledge
- Community-based environmental monitoring and stewardship

Strategic Partnerships

- University of Kinshasa
- University of St Andrews (UK)
- GASHE (Groupe d'Action pour Sauver l'Homme et son Environnement), Mbandaka



Areas of Action

ORGANIZE AND STRENGTHEN GRASSROOTS NETWORKS

Building trusted relationships among communities and creating secure communication systems for solidarity and rapid response.



SUPPORT CONSERVATION AND LIVELIHOODS

Advancing Agroliberation, community health systems, food sovereignty, alternative economies, and the protection of environmental defenders.

ADVANCE DATA SOVEREIGNTY

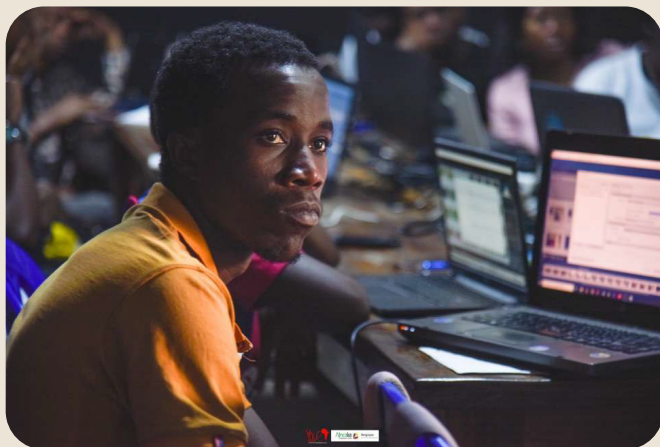
Developing community-owned data infrastructures and ethical protocols that ensure communities determine how information about their territories is gathered, used, and shared.



Areas of Action

PARTICIPATE IN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL DECISION-MAKING

Expanding the presence and influence of Indigenous and local communities in national and international spaces.



DISSEMINATE KNOWLEDGE AND STORIES LOCALLY

Strengthening community radio, filmmaking, journalism, and storytelling so communities become the authors of their own narratives.

BUILD GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Distributing Basandja's knowledge production through books, films, articles, lectures, tours, workshops while establishing mutually beneficial and respectful exchanges, relationships and collaborations with a wide range of individuals and institutions.





Why Partner with Basandja?

We believe the future of climate justice, biodiversity protection, and a just energy transition depends on communities having the power to govern their territories, tell their stories, and own and protect their knowledge.

Basandja is building the infrastructure necessary for that future:

- Community-rooted and youth-led.
- Grounded in ancestral ecological knowledge.
- Connecting forests, rivers, mining communities, and conflict-affected territories.
- Advancing territorial, narrative, and data sovereignty.

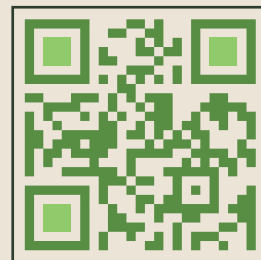
**Because before algorithms, there was the land.
And the land remembers.**

GET IN TOUCH !

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←
SCAN ME