

Press Release

Four African projects selected to advance community-led ecosystem restoration through nature-based carbon projects, covering over one million hectares of land

9AM, Nairobi, Kenya, 4 September 2025: The Carbon Accelerator Programme for the Environment (CAPE), an initiative to mobilise investment into projects across Africa which will cut carbon emissions and protect biodiversity while also benefitting local communities, today revealed its first cohort.

Selected from over 100 applicants across 28 African nations, the four early-stage projects from Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia, will now receive support to get from the development phase to investment ready. They are:

- **Gashaka Gumti Forest Carbon Project:** one of Nigeria's first nature-based carbon projects, facilitating the natural regeneration of forests in Gashaka Gumti National Park
- **Rubeho Mountains Carbon Project:** a community-based forest protection and restoration project in the Eastern Arc Mountains of Tanzania, a globally renowned biodiversity hotspot
- **Barotse Rangelands for Restoration:** a livestock enhancement and rangeland restoration project in Barotseland, Zambia
- **Papariko Mangroves:** a mangrove restoration project across three counties of southeastern Kenya

These four projects showcase the diverse scope of CAPE, and were chosen based on their level of development, potential impact including the delivery of tangible benefits to communities, alignment with carbon buyer and investor preferences and potential to replicate and scale.

CAPE was launched in November 2024 by **FSD Africa**, the UK-backed financial sector development agency, in partnership with the African Natural Capital Alliance (ANCA) and Finance Earth - a leading international environmental impact advisor and investor in nature, climate, and community projects - to address the lack of early-stage funding for nature-based carbon projects in Africa.

CAPE aims to fill that gap by providing recoverable grant funding and tailored transaction advisory support necessary to advance projects to investment-readiness. Its partners strongly believe that by leveraging Africa's nature as a powerful economic asset, there is a significant opportunity to advance local livelihoods, protect irreplaceable biodiversity and support climate resilience.

With 62% of Africa's GDP reliant on natural capital¹ and a global annual funding gap for biodiversity of between US\$598 billion and US\$824 billion², CAPE aims to build confidence in Africa's nature-based carbon markets and ultimately catalyse investment into Africa's natural capital by focusing on high-integrity projects which have strong links with their local communities, materialised through equitable governance structures, with strong biodiversity outcomes and backed by up-to-date rigorous carbon methodologies.

"CAPE shows that Africa's natural capital is not just a solution to the climate crisis, but a catalyst for tackling interconnected planetary challenges while unlocking fair and inclusive growth," said **Reshma Shah, the Carbon Markets Lead at FSD Africa**. "These projects go beyond generating carbon credits—they are blueprints for redefining how the world invests in and values nature."

"Unlike transactional carbon deals, CAPE's chosen projects will generate revenue, livelihoods, and ecological value," noted **Dorothy Maseke, Head of the ANCA Secretariat**. "We're showing how Africa can harness its natural wealth to tackle both global crises and local poverty – while attracting investment from across the world and within Africa itself."

"CAPE is empowering projects to unlock equitable financing and harness the true potential of carbon markets," said **James Mansfield, Managing Director and Co-Founder at Finance Earth**. "This isn't just about finance — it's about enabling transformative solutions that strengthen communities and restore their critical natural assets across the continent".

A brief overview of the selected four projects is below:

Gashaka Gumti Forest Carbon (Nigeria)

Gashaka Gumti is Nigeria's largest and most biodiverse national park covering approximately 600,000 hectares and containing one of West Africa's last intact montane rainforests. The project, led by Africa Nature Investors (ANI) Foundation and Africa Carbon Partners, uses Assisted Natural Regeneration to protect critical ecosystems and species like chimpanzees and pangolins. It targets 12 million tonnes of CO₂e emissions removals while delivering lasting community and biodiversity benefits, secured through a dedicated endowment fund. Working with local communities, the initiative is creating tangible community benefits including rehabilitation of schools, scholarships and micro-finance support for women-led Small and Medium Enterprises, at the same time as reducing pressures on the park.

CAPE selected Gashaka Gumti for its scalability and replicability to other national parks. As one of the first nature-based carbon projects in Nigeria, the team is setting the standard for best practice in the development of high-quality carbon initiatives.

¹ [WEF_New_Nature_Economy_Report_2020.pdf](#)

² Deutz, A., Heal, G. M., Niu, R., Swanson, E., Townshend, T., Zhu, L., Delmar, A., Meghji, A., Sethi, S. A., and Tobin de la Puente, J. 2020. Financing Nature: Closing the global biodiversity financing gap. The Paulson Institute, The Nature Conservancy, and the Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability. Link: [FINANCINGNATURE_FullReport_091520.pdf](#)

Rubeho Mountains (Tanzania)

Eden: People + Planet's Rubeho Mountains Carbon Project protects 260,900 hectares of Tanzania's Eastern Arc Mountains - a globally recognized biodiversity hotspot - while restoring 10,000 hectares of degraded afro-montane forest. This transformative 40-year initiative safeguards the headwaters of both the Wami and Great Ruaha Rivers - critical catchments that support downstream communities, drive national hydropower generation, and underpin food and water security for millions.

The project aims to create sustainable livelihoods for over 90,000 community members across 40 villages, and aims to deliver 14 million tonnes of CO₂e combined emission reductions and removals. By addressing a 10-year deforestation rate of 6% - exceeding Tanzania's national average - the project seeks to demonstrate how community-centred conservation can protect ancient forests that shelter endemic species and sustain essential ecosystem services at landscape scale.

Barotse Rangelands (Zambia)

Through the Barotse Rangelands for Restoration Project, Pro Green Earth and the Barotse Royal Establishment (BRE) are partnering to improve grassland quality, productivity, and biodiversity through community-driven rangeland management and traditional cattle-based livelihoods in Western Province, Zambia. Partnering with traditional leadership and local institutions, Pro Green Earth is leveraging climate finance to generate locally-led economic growth, expand sustainable use of natural resources, enhance the Barotse floodplains' ability to provide ecosystem services, and support the Barotse people's ability to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The project aims to generate an estimated 5.5 million tonnes of CO₂e removals over its 40-year lifetime.

CAPE has selected the Barotse Rangelands project as it showcases how large-scale carbon projects can be developed jointly with community, governmental and private stakeholders to deliver long-term impact.

Papariko Mangroves (Kenya)

The project is Kenya's first registered blue carbon initiative on Verra's registry and the only mangrove restoration project worldwide to achieve certification under Verra's VCS, CCB, and SD ViSta standards. Operating in Kwale, Kilifi, and Tana River Counties, along the Kenyan coast, the project has to date restored more than 250 hectares of degraded mangroves while improving livelihoods for vulnerable coastal communities, and deliver an estimated 1 million tonnes of CO₂e removals. Co-designed and co-managed with local stakeholders, the project aims to strengthen resilience through new income opportunities such as agroforestry, beekeeping, and ecotourism, with over 70% of local staff being women. By combining indigenous knowledge with cutting-edge science, Papariko aims to safeguard biodiversity, enhance fisheries, and protect communities from extreme weather.

CAPE selected Papariko for its governance structure with deep community involvement, its demonstrated impact to date and its potential to provide a scalable and replicable model for blue carbon initiatives worldwide.

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About FSD Africa

FSD Africa is a specialist development agency funded through UK International Development operating in more than 30 countries working to help make finance work for Africa's future. Based in Nairobi, FSD Africa's team of financial sector experts work alongside governments, business leaders, regulators, and policymakers to achieve policy and regulatory reform, capacity strengthening, and improving financial infrastructure, to address systemic challenges in Africa's financial markets. Since 2017, the organisation's strategy has evolved to prioritise solutions to Africa's most critical challenges: economic, social, and environmental. The organisation has worked to promote investment into the continent's green economy, as well as its rates of financial inclusion and gender equality. FSD Africa – previously known as Financial Sector Deepening Africa – was founded in 2012 and is based in Nairobi, Kenya.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.fsdafrica.org>

About the African Natural Capital Alliance (ANCA)

ANCA is an African-led collaborative multi-stakeholder initiative, acting as the vehicle to drive coordinated advocacy and action across the continent. ANCA was established in 2022 by FSD Africa out of a need to ensure an African Voice on the global nature agenda. With growing global interest in nature, including in the development of nature-related risk frameworks and standards, there is an urgent need to ensure these emerging approaches can be applied to an African context. ANCA brings some of Africa's leading financial institutions including KCB, Access Bank, the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), Ecobank, Equity Bank, FirstRand, Investec, Sanlam, Standard Chartered and Zanaco together with governmental organisations, intergovernmental partners, and civil society representatives to ensure an African Voice on the global nature agenda and with the ultimate aim of catalysing nature-positive African economies.

For more information, please visit: <https://africannaturalcapitalalliance.com>

About Finance Earth

Finance Earth is a leading international environmental impact advisor and investor, headquartered in London, UK and operating in more than 40 countries around the world. A mission-driven social enterprise and B-Corp, Finance Earth works in partnership with world leading environmental organisations to protect and restore nature utilising market-based mechanisms, such as developing revenue streams for a variety of ecosystem services, and implementing bespoke financial tools, such as natural capital funds or environmental impact bonds. Finance Earth helps create innovative pilots, project pipelines, and the investment products to fund them, that balance positive outcomes for nature, climate and communities,



with the financial returns needed to attract investors. Finance Earth provides regulated financial advisory and investment management services focused on scaling high-integrity, high impact conservation investment to close the global biodiversity and nature funding gap.

For more information, please visit: <https://finance.earth/>