

AXIS as seen by President Sidi Ould Tah (2)

How the DRC became the first laboratory for the
AfDB's new doctrine



Long version

Introduction — The DRC, the first testing ground for the AfDB's new doctrine

The DRC at the heart of the Bank's African strategy — For several decades, the Democratic Republic of Congo has held a special place in the African Development Bank's interventions. Its size, natural resources, agricultural potential, and population size alone represent a significant portion of the continent's challenges and opportunities. In the context of the new doctrine championed by AfDB President Sidi Ould Tah, the DRC appears more than ever as a strategic territory where new approaches combining economic development, social inclusion, and the leveraging of national resources can be tested.

A long-standing partnership evolving — The relationship between the AfDB and the DRC is not limited to financing infrastructure or sectoral programs. Over the years, it has gradually evolved into a more ambitious partnership focused on the economic transformation of territories. Recent projects demonstrate a growing commitment to supporting not only reconstruction and resilience, but also mechanisms capable of sustainably generating local value. This evolution reflects a more integrated approach to development, based on community empowerment and the mobilization of national resources.

When natural resources meet development finance — For a long time, natural resources were considered a sector separate from development policies. A new logic now seems to be emerging. Forests, carbon, mineral resources, and community assets are now being considered as potential levers for financing and wealth creation. This evolution is bringing together two worlds that have long ignored each other: that of natural resources and that of development finance. It is precisely at the intersection of these two dynamics that certain innovative projects are now appearing, projects that are increasingly attracting the attention of the African Development Bank.

1. PRECAPE: much more than a resilience program

The program's ambitions

A structuring program for Eastern DRC — Approved by the Board of Directors of the African Development Bank in April 2026, the Crisis Response Project in Support of Affected Populations in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (PRECAPE) is among the most significant interventions recently undertaken in this region of the country. Targeting the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, the program aims to address the economic, social, and humanitarian consequences of the conflicts while laying the groundwork for the sustainable reconstruction of these fragile territories.

Reconstruction, inclusion, and local development — PRECAPE goes far beyond the traditional approach of emergency assistance. Its ambition is to restore the economic and social capacities of communities affected by the crises by combining infrastructure rehabilitation, support for productive activities, vocational training, and the inclusion of vulnerable populations. The approach is based on the idea that resilience is not built solely through humanitarian aid but also through the creation of economic opportunities capable of sustainably strengthening the livelihoods of local populations.

The AfDB as an architect of resilience — Through PRECAPE, the African Development Bank affirms a broader vision of its role in fragile contexts. The institution is no longer content with simply financing infrastructure or social programs. It seeks to build resilience ecosystems that bring together public services, communities, economic actors, and innovative financing mechanisms. This approach reflects an evolution in the Bank's doctrine: the stabilization of territories now depends as much on economic inclusion, employment, and the creation of local value as on physical reconstruction itself.

A community-based approach

Making territories the engines of development — One of PRECAPE's key characteristics lies in its territorial focus. Rather than applying a uniform approach to the entire country, the program starts from local realities and the specific needs of communities affected by crises. This approach is based on a simple conviction: sustainable reconstruction cannot be imposed from the top of the state or from international institutions. It must be driven by the territories themselves, their resources, their stakeholders, and their capacity to become the engines of their own development.

The importance of local development — The strategy promoted by the African Development Bank (AfDB) places local development at the heart of its role as a factor of stability and resilience. Improving access to education, healthcare, water, vocational training, and income-generating activities aims to directly strengthen the capacities of communities. This approach seeks to reduce the factors of vulnerability that fuel crises while creating the conditions for more inclusive growth. Local development is no longer considered a mere social component but a crucial lever for economic transformation.

The role of the FSRDC — In this framework, the Social Fund of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FSRDC) occupies a strategic position. Drawing on its experience in implementing community programs, it serves as a crucial link between national

institutions, financial partners, and beneficiary populations. Its role extends beyond the mere technical execution of projects. It participates in identifying local needs, mobilizing communities, and building mechanisms to ensure greater ownership of investments. This close connection to the regions also explains its involvement in exploring new approaches to leveraging community assets.

Beyond traditional financing

Why needs exceed traditional mechanisms — The scale of the challenges facing the eastern provinces of the DRC far exceeds the capacity of traditional development financing mechanisms. Infrastructure reconstruction, job creation, youth inclusion, climate resilience, and support for local economic activities: these priorities demand significant and sustainable resources. Even when international partners are mobilized, public and concessional financing is no longer sufficient to cover all the needs. This reality is gradually leading development institutions to seek new, complementary approaches.

The search for complementary resources — In the vision championed by the AfDB, development financing can no longer rely exclusively on public budgets, international aid, or debt. It is becoming necessary to identify new sources of value creation capable of supporting territories in the long term. This reflection leads to a greater focus on local resources, community assets, and mechanisms that can mobilize additional capital. The objective is not to replace existing instruments but to strengthen their impact by broadening the base of available resources.

Financial innovation as a lever for resilience — This evolution paves the way for a new generation of tools combining digital technologies, resource governance, and development finance. For the AfDB, financial innovation is not an end in itself. It must enable the creation of more effective resource mobilization mechanisms, strengthen the economic resilience of communities, and improve the capacity of territories to finance their own development. From this perspective, certain emerging experiments appear as potential complements to traditional approaches to reconstruction and local development.

When PRECAPE becomes an innovation lab

Innovation discreetly integrated into the program — At first glance, PRECAPE appears to be a classic resilience program designed to address the consequences of the crises affecting eastern DRC. However, a closer look at its structure reveals a more innovative dimension. Beyond infrastructure, training, and community support, the program also incorporates the experimentation of new resource mobilization mechanisms. This approach reflects the AfDB's desire to explore solutions capable of complementing traditional development financing instruments.

The choice to support the deployment of AXIS — Among the most innovative components of PRECAPE is the explicit support for the deployment of the AXIS program. The Bank's press release specifies that the project will facilitate the implementation of this initiative, which aims to enhance community assets and mobilize new resources to serve the local economy. AXIS is therefore not a parallel initiative to PRECAPE: its deployment is one of the mechanisms supported within the framework of the program financed by the African Development Bank. This integration marks a significant step in the evolution of local resource-based development finance approaches.

Gold, carbon, and community assets as new levers — The pilot phase supported by PRECAPE focuses primarily on two asset categories: artisanal gold and carbon from community forest resources. The objective is to explore how these resources can contribute to local development finance when properly identified, tracked, and valued. This approach introduces a significant shift in development finance: natural resources are no longer viewed solely as raw materials, but as assets capable of generating new economic flows that directly benefit the communities that conserve or produce them.

2. AXIS: an answer to a Congolese paradox

Rich country, poor communities

Why wealth doesn't always translate into development — The Democratic Republic of Congo possesses some of the most important natural resources on the planet. Strategic minerals, rainforests, water resources, biodiversity, and agricultural land constitute an exceptional heritage. Yet, this wealth has not always produced the expected effects on the living conditions of the population. A large part of the value created is often captured outside the territories where the resources are produced. This gap between abundant resources and weak local development constitutes one of the country's major economic paradoxes.

Valuing community assets — Faced with this reality, a new approach involves focusing on assets owned or managed by the communities themselves. Forest resources, carbon storage capacity, artisanal mining activities, and other local resources represent forms of wealth often overlooked in traditional financing mechanisms. The aim is to make these assets more visible, better documented, and more easily valued so that they can contribute directly to the development of the territories where they are located.

Creating new sources of local financing — The goal is not simply to better utilize existing resources, but to create new financing mechanisms that benefit communities. In this approach, the value generated by certain natural or economic assets can be transformed into resources to support local investment, infrastructure, employment, or basic services. This approach seeks to complement traditional public funding by enabling local areas to mobilize a larger share of the wealth they generate themselves.

AXIS as a governance infrastructure

Much more than a technological project — AXIS is sometimes presented through its digital tools, traceability mechanisms, or tokenization systems. But reducing the program to its technological dimension would be to miss its true meaning. AXIS primarily seeks to build a governance infrastructure capable of connecting natural resources, public institutions, local communities, investors, and financing mechanisms. Technology is not an end in itself, but a means to make resources more visible, more verifiable, and better governed.

Mapping resources — The first step in such an architecture is to gain a better understanding of available resources. In many regions, natural, mineral, forestry, and community assets remain insufficiently documented, which limits their economic value. Mapping makes it possible to identify these resources, assess their potential, and integrate them into a more transparent management framework. For AXIS, this knowledge is a prerequisite for any credible financial mobilization: sustainable development is only possible if we know how to locate, measure, and qualify them.

Organizing traceability and transparency — Once resources are identified, the challenge becomes monitoring them over time. Traceability makes it possible to document the origin of assets, their evolution, their transformation, and the economic flows they generate. This transparency is essential to reassure investors, strengthen the trust of public institutions, and ensure a better redistribution of value to communities. From this perspective, AXIS does not simply create financial instruments: it seeks to

establish governance rules that make natural resources more transparent, more controllable, and more useful for local development.

Initial use cases

WinstantGold, the first pilot project of the AXIS national program — To concretely demonstrate the principles of the AXIS national program, the project promoters chose to begin with an operational experiment: WinstantGold. Sponsored by President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi as part of the "Solution Country" strategy, this first pilot project aims to test the governance, traceability, and resource valuation mechanisms that could then be deployed on a larger scale. WinstantGold thus constitutes the initial laboratory through which AXIS gradually moves from concept to implementation.

MACC and community carbon — Within WinstantGold, the MACC (Community Carbon Market) initiative is dedicated to valuing carbon from community forest resources. Its objective is to enable communities to better document, measure, and certify the environmental services provided by their ecosystems. By creating the conditions for greater economic recognition of these assets, MACC seeks to transform the preservation of natural resources into a potential source of income and financing for the territories concerned.

GoldConnect and artisanal gold — The second initiative led by WinstantGold is GoldConnect, dedicated to structuring the artisanal gold sector. The project aims to improve gold traceability, strengthen the transparency of supply chains, and better integrate producers into formal economic circuits. With GoldConnect, the ambition is not only to secure transactions but also to enable mining communities to capture a larger share of the value generated by their activities. Together, MACC and GoldConnect represent the first two use cases through which AXIS is experimenting with new forms of natural resource valorization for local development.

3. The turning point of December 19, 2025

A discreet but strategic meeting

The participants — On December 19, 2025, a working meeting brought together several officials from the African Development Bank, representatives of the Social Fund of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the teams involved in developing the AXIS program. The discussion included specialists in development finance, governance, innovation, and natural resources. At this stage, the focus was not on financial negotiations but rather on listening and assessment, aimed at understanding the rationale, objectives, and mechanisms proposed by the program.

The presentation's objectives — For the AXIS promoters, the challenge was to present a new vision for leveraging community resources. The meeting aimed to explain how assets such as artisanal gold, forest carbon, and other local resources could be better documented, tracked, and integrated into development finance mechanisms. The objective is not simply to present technological tools, but to demonstrate the existence of an architecture capable of linking governance, local development, economic inclusion, and the mobilization of new resources.

Program expectations — Program leaders primarily hope to generate interest from the Bank in an approach that is still relatively unexplored within traditional development mechanisms. They seek to demonstrate that natural resources can become levers for financing that directly benefit communities when combined with rigorous governance and traceability systems. More broadly, the meeting aims to assess the extent to which this vision aligns with the new strategic directions emerging at the African Development Bank.

What captured the AfDB's attention

The valorization of natural resources — Among the elements that generated the most interest within the Bank was AXIS's approach to the issue of natural resources. The discussions revealed a particular focus on the possibility of better identifying, mapping, tracking, and valuing assets that are often underutilized within traditional development mechanisms. This approach resonates directly with the AfDB's emerging thinking on the need to further transform Africa's natural resources into drivers of value creation and development financing.

Job creation mechanisms — Bank officials are also interested in the program's capacity to generate concrete economic activity. Beyond technological or financial innovations, discussions focus on the expected impacts on employment, vocational training, and the development of new skills. For the AfDB, job creation remains a key indicator of the success of a development strategy. The interest in AXIS stems from its ambition to connect natural resources, productive activities, and economic opportunities for the benefit of local populations.

Community integration in value creation — Another particularly noteworthy aspect concerns the role given to communities in the program's architecture. Unlike many extractive models where value is primarily captured outside the territories, AXIS proposes to place communities at the heart of the economic process. The resources they protect, exploit, or manage are gradually becoming assets that can contribute to their own development. This logic of economic inclusion directly aligns with the

AfDB's priorities regarding local development, territorial resilience, and reducing inequalities.

From presentation to integration into PRECAPE

Mapping, tracking, valuing — One of the most striking aspects of the discussions on December 19, 2025, lies in the coherence of the approach proposed by AXIS. The program is not limited to identifying resources; it seeks to build a complete value creation chain. Mapping assets, ensuring their traceability, strengthening their governance, and then enabling their economic valuation constitute the different stages of a single process. This systemic approach addresses several challenges that development institutions face when seeking to sustainably finance territories.

Why AXIS resonated with the AfDB's new priorities — As the African Development Bank undertakes an in-depth review of African resource mobilization and the valuation of the continent's natural assets, AXIS appears as a particularly relevant experiment. The program combines local development, financial innovation, resource governance, job creation, and community involvement within a single framework. Several themes highlighted during the presentation directly align with the increasingly important directions of the Bank's new leadership's vision.

When an innovation becomes a development tool — A few months after this meeting, the support provided for the deployment of AXIS within the PRECAPE framework marked a significant milestone in the program's evolution. The interest expressed during the technical discussions has now translated into operational integration within an AfDB-financed project. This development illustrates how an innovation initially presented as an experiment can gradually find its place within development policies. AXIS is no longer simply seen as an emerging concept; it is becoming a tool used to support economic resilience and the development of local communities.

4. AXIS in the AfDB's new African strategy

From project submitted to funded project

What the integration of AXIS into PRECAPE reveals — The integration of AXIS into PRECAPE is an important signal of the African Development Bank's evolving approaches. Beyond supporting a specific program, this decision demonstrates the institution's growing interest in mechanisms that can complement traditional development tools. By combining local resource valuation, community inclusion, and financial innovation, AXIS is now part of an intervention officially supported by the Bank, marking a significant step in its maturation process.

Why the Bank is interested — The AfDB's interest in AXIS stems from the convergence between the program's objectives and several strategic priorities of the institution. Job creation, local development, mobilization of new resources, asset governance, and community resilience are among the central themes of the new development doctrine. AXIS is unique in that it links these different dimensions within a single framework. This ability to combine several development objectives within a coherent framework helps explain the growing attention the Bank is paying to it.

Natural resources as a lever for development — One of the key innovations introduced by AXIS lies in its approach to natural resources. These are no longer considered solely as raw materials for exploitation or export, but as assets that can support the financing of local development. Artisanal gold, forest carbon, and other community resources thus become potential instruments for creating value for local communities. This approach aligns with the broader reflections undertaken by the AfDB on the need to better transform African wealth into economic opportunities for the continent's people.

From the DRC to a continental vision

Lessons learned from the model — The experience in the Democratic Republic of Congo offers several lessons that extend far beyond the national context. It demonstrates that it is possible to combine natural resource governance, community development, digital innovation, and development financing within a single framework. Moreover, it illustrates how assets often poorly integrated into traditional financial mechanisms can become levers for local value creation. This approach addresses several challenges faced by many African countries with significant natural resources that are still seeking to better transform them into development opportunities.

Conditions for replicability — However, the dissemination of such a model requires several prerequisites. The first concerns the quality of governance and the capacity to identify, document, and secure the assets in question. The second lies in the existence of institutions capable of ensuring transparency, traceability, and investor confidence. Finally, success largely depends on the involvement of local communities, which must remain at the heart of the mechanisms for creating and sharing value. Without these elements, the development of natural resources risks replicating the limitations of traditional extractive models.

Countries likely to draw inspiration from this model — Beyond the DRC, many African countries possess comparable assets that could benefit from similar approaches. States possessing significant forest resources, artisanal mining sectors,

carbon-related assets, or strategic agricultural resources could be affected. The growing interest of development institutions in mechanisms for valuing natural resources is thus opening up new perspectives at the continental level. In this context, the Congolese experience could be seen as one of the first examples of a broader transformation of African development financing models.

Towards a new generation of financing

Financing communities — One of the most significant developments in emerging approaches to development is bringing financial mechanisms closer to the communities themselves. For a long time, financing was primarily channeled through states, major infrastructure projects, or economic operators. The new mechanisms being explored today, on the contrary, seek to better recognize the contribution of local populations to the preservation, management, and valuation of resources. This approach paves the way for mechanisms in which communities become not only beneficiaries but also active participants in value creation.

Financing territories — The new doctrine gradually emerging within the AfDB places increasing importance on the territorial level. Territories are no longer considered merely as areas for public policy intervention, but as economic ecosystems capable of generating their own development dynamics. From this perspective, the mobilization of local resources, the development of natural assets, and the strengthening of institutional capacities become complementary levers. The objective is to enable territories to have greater resources to finance their economic and social priorities.

Financing economic transformation — Beyond the projects themselves, the central challenge remains the economic transformation of the continent. For the African Development Bank, the mobilization of new resources is only meaningful if it contributes to creating more jobs, developing local value chains, strengthening productive capacities, and sustainably improving the living conditions of populations. The mechanisms being tested today around natural resources, traceability, and community assets are part of this broader ambition: to make African wealth a direct driver of development, investment, and shared prosperity.

Conclusion — Towards a new African model for development financing

Why PRECAPE marks an important milestone — PRECAPE appears today to be much more than a response program to the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. By combining reconstruction, economic inclusion, local development and financial innovation, it illustrates the evolution of the African Development Bank's approaches in fragile contexts. The integration of a component dedicated to the development of community assets shows that the Bank is no longer only seeking to finance immediate needs, but also to build the foundations of sustainable economic resilience based on the resources of the territories themselves.

How AXIS fits into the Sidi Ould Tah doctrine — The emergence of AXIS is part of a broader movement that is currently affecting the ADB under the presidency of Sidi Ould Tah. The development of natural resources, the mobilization of African wealth, the development of communities and the creation of new financing mechanisms now constitute central areas of reflection. Through its integration into PRECAPE, AXIS appears to be one of the first concrete translations of this vision. The program illustrates how local resources can gradually become levers for financing development rather than simple operating assets.

The rise of a new African model for the development of natural resources — Beyond the Congolese case, the developments observed around PRECAPE and AXIS perhaps demonstrate the emergence of a new African development model. This no longer relies solely on external aid, debt or the traditional exploitation of raw materials. It seeks to transform natural resources, environmental assets and community wealth into instruments of value creation, investment and local prosperity. If this dynamic is confirmed, it could open a new stage in the way Africa finances its own economic transformation.