Project Updates, September 2017

In early 2014 when the project to establish the community agroforestry seed bank was initiated with funds provided by the Rufford First Grant, a socio-economic baseline survey was conducted among some randomly selected 86 small scale farmers in the various project communities.

The main goal of the baseline survey was to understand and document the prevailing conditions of the farmers and the environment in the pilot areas of the project at the beginning of the implementation of the project activities. Documentation of the baseline indicators will help to monitor and evaluate the project impact on farmer adoption of the agroforestry technology and the potential impact of the agroforestry technology on food security and the environment. The survey would also help identify the existing challenges faced in the adoption of the technology and how best the technology could be adapted to suit the prevailing socio-economic and environmental conditions as well as potentials for replication in the entire country at large.

The baseline survey was designed to capture key household-based variables on which the agroforestry technology is expected to make a considerable impact in the short and long run in terms of farmer's adoption of the technology, annual yields of main crops obtained per hectare, cost of production, level of livelihood improvement, as well as changes in water supply in the various communities resulting from the restoration of the water catchments.

Within this month of reporting, the project went back to the 86 farmers who were initially surveyed at the start of the initiative in order to start making a vivid assessments of the impacts of the project to the farmers and to the environment.

Results from our findings indicates that, slightly over 70 percent of the 86 farmers surveyed at the start of the project have fully adopted the agroforestry technology and this has significantly led to a gradual increased in yields of the three main staple crops produced in the project sites (maize, beans and solanum). Additionally, the quantity of chemical fertilizer which until the start of the project remained the major farm input has equally reduced as farmers are now using alternatives to boast crop production. A reduction in chemical fertilizer means a reduction in money spent for its acquisition and hence an increased in livelihood.

We also investigated 30 farmers who were not originally sampled during the survey at the start of the project but who were participating in the entire project activities. Slightly above 85 percent of these farmers have completely transformed their farm plots into agroforestry systems especially with the planting of soil enrichment tree species. Though at the short term, the technology is yet to fully satisfy the needs of the farmers in terms of yields, it is highly expected that in the long run, the expectations of the farmers shall be fully made especially as the adoption rate remains very encouraging in the entire community.

Furthermore, the bee farming component of the project is already creating positive impacts amongst the farmers and their families as they have continued to exploit market opportunities in and around the major towns for the sale of honey and by products. As the demand for honey and by-products keep rising on a daily bases,

farmers on their parts have equally embarked on the provision of additional bee hives with proceeds made from the sale of previous harvest. With the awareness that the honey is coming from the forest (the agroforestry seed bank and community water catchment areas), the needs for the protection and conservation of these sites is very primordial to the farmers. It is within this backdrop that during this reporting period, community leaders embarked on the introduction of bee loving tree species in the agroforestry seed bank by planting over 456 additional trees belonging to six different tree species. Seeds from these trees planted were donated to the management committee during their recent learning visit to the Mbiame community forest.

Left: Agroforestry demonstration maize farm. Right: Present state of the community agroforestry seed bank.

Left: Measuring yields of staple food to compare with those obtained before the project. Right: Project takes stock in yields of main crops.