

Project Update: January 2009

The Project commenced in August 2008 following the award of the small grant by the Rufford Small Grants Foundation. An initial advance party of project team members consisting of the project coordinator and a rural sociologist went on a familiarization tour of the community and engaged in series of meetings and consultations with community heads, the Forest Custodians, local government officials and other partners to brief them of the project mission and goals. During this visit, the documentation of the history of the forest commenced which was completed on subsequent visits. The success of this initial meeting set the stage for the further activities lined up for the project including:

- Documentation of the history of the forest.
- Identification/taxonomy and mapping of the species within the forests.
- Gathering initial support for the fencing of the forest.
- Initial preparation for the community biodiversity training.

With the identification of the species in the forest, the next step was tagging identified trees with long-lasting plastic labels. Work has commenced on the inscription of biological and local names on the purchased of plastic labels. Some of the identified species are listed below:

Trees

- *Elaeis guinensis*
- Ape
- *Triplochyton scleroxylon* (Arere)
- *Azardiractha indica*
- *Delonix regia*
- *Morinda lucida* (Oruwo)
- *Nauclea diderichii*
- *Ceiba petandra* (Araba)
- *Milicia excelsa* (Iroko)
- *Ricinus communis*

Shrubs and Climbers

- *Boeharia diffusa* (Etipon Ola)
- *Ageratum conyzoides* (Inii esu)
- *Paquetina nigresnsis* (Ewe Ogbon)
- *Lecaniodiscus cupanioedes* (Aborere)
- *Spondia mombii* (Iyeye)
- *Jatropha curcas* (Lapalapa)
- *Thiveta*
- *Anconianas diffumis*
- Egun osunsun or Ounje Ajanaku
- *Awogba alleyxia*
- *Synderella nodiflora* (Ooyo ile)

An initial gathering of local knowledge on the economic importance of the identified species, particularly their medicinal and socio-cultural use in the village has commenced. This will give rise to a comprehensive academic paper and book on the usefulness of the species in the forest.

We are also receiving very positive signals on the community part to fence the forest as an effort on their part to conserve the forests. The current local government administration has proposed to undertake some work in this respect. The custodians have also made commitment to put in place temporary fencing using *Jatropha curcas* (Lapalapa) as an initial measure to mark-out the heritage sites.

In the next two months, the community biodiversity conservation training will commence for the community members and the local staff, to be followed by the training for students around the community and the organizing of a study visit to the forest.

