

Project Update: November 2018

This is a summarised report of activities conducted in September and October 2018.

Activities

(i) Monthly community outreach

Two community outreach sessions have been conducted for Gangu BMU and Seje safe water self-help group, both located in Gangu, with the aim of empowering the locals with skills on sustainable forest conservation, products and ecosystem values and viable alternative livelihood earning initiatives in the Akara hills forest. We also tackled green energy alternatives (solar lamps, energy saving cook stoves) and market linkages for the locals with service providers e.g. where to get seeds, pesticides and market for seedlings. 64 people have directly been reached out in the two groups.

(ii) Community mapping and tree planting sensitisation forum

This exercise started in August 2018, spearhead by the local village heads across the Akara hills, with the main purpose of identifying or mapping out individuals whose farms extend into the hills. This was to aid in equipping the farm owners with seedlings to plant in their farms in the forest, and especially to ensure that the seedlings were not neglected to wither off. As we were concluding the exercise, 35 locals were identified from four villages directly lying in the Akara Hills, Kubar A, Kubar B, Ohaya and Kadhayi.

Before the seedlings were given out to the locals, a 1-day sensitisation forum was conducted for the 35 individuals on why conservation of Akara Hills, roles and responsibilities of locals in its protection and conservation, why use the seedlings types promoted, spacing for the seedlings types and routine management of trees/seedlings. After this, the seedlings were given out.

(iii) Tree seedlings distribution and planting on the Akara Hills

The project has reached a milestone - the Kenya Forest Service joined the project team in getting the seedlings from the tree nursery areas and transporting them to the distribution area next to the forest, at Kubar Primary School.

From the three groups that raise the seedlings, we managed to get 2,460 seedlings given out to the identified farmers who were trained and whose farms extends into the hill. Below is the distribution list for the seedlings:

Village Name/Institution	Seedlings donated	No of people
Kubar A	672	14
Kubar B	396	9
Ohaya	250	5
Kadhayi	300	6
Kenya Forest Service (Bondo zone)	200	1
Chief's office (for planting within the chief's office compound and sharing with village elders)	200	8
Kubar Primary School	132	1
Kubar Primary school teachers	32	8
Spoilt/destroyed seedlings	198	
TOTAL	2,460	

This was followed by an extensive follow up to ensure that the seedlings are all planted in the required forest areas.

(iv) Environmental clubs monitoring

This was conducted for the three pilot schools for indigenous tree nurseries (Nyalula, Hawinga and Ndayi primary schools) to check on the performances of the tree nurseries. It was observed that due to the school closure period in August through early September 2018, the nurseries were not well attended to due to the fact that the pupils were not in session, leading to some seedlings drying off especially at Hawinga and Ndayi. Nyalula Environmental club however, tried to tend to their nursery and now have 251 seedlings which will be planted in their school compound once they are ready.

(v) Conclusion and way forward

New seeds are going to be sown to help raise more seedlings that will be planted during the March long rains; this will also be towards the end of the planned project period. Coupled with overwhelming demand for seedlings by many locals living around and within the Akara hills, more seedlings must be raised.

From our monitoring exercises, we observed that schools are best to work with while in session since the club members only attend to their school assignments while in session. The tree planting was highly welcome by the locals hence a great sign for successful reforestation of the Akara Hills, which is one of the greatest project goals.



Community members living and farming at the foot hills of Akara Hills being sensitised before tree planting at Kubar Primary School



Seedling distribution to selected individuals living at the foothills of Akara Hills for planting under the supervision of Aaron Okoth (Project member)



Collection of seedlings ready for distribution for tree planting by community groups living at the at the foothills of Akara Hills