

Project Update: June 2018

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Gombe Group of Environmental Clubs

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, especially the Northern region, land degradation in form of desertification, has become the greatest environmental challenge. The land has become adversely eroded, nutrient deficient, with loss of vegetation structure, heavy flooding and sand storms gradually becoming a yearly norm in the environment. In the north-eastern region, it has been estimated that about 350,000 m² of land mass is being lost at an alarming rate of 0.6 km a year. This is majorly due to rapid increase in human population, incessant anthropogenic activities such as logging and intensive agriculture, converting woodlands and forests into land for agriculture, road construction, residential areas to mention a few.

Gombe State is a home to various biodiversity including threatened trees and migrant birds. Presently, this state is considered an ecologically endangered state and has already lost 65% of its forest to incessant tree felling (Magem, 2017). This poses a threat to various biodiversity and life forms.

The major aim of this project is to plant trees thereby beginning the process of restoring the ecosystem and to educate the public especially teenagers and youths on the

importance of trees and the dangers of their absence in an ecosystem. These two tools – tree planting and education, are what we consider as the major weapon against desertification in the region.

MEETING WITH STAKHOLDERS

We visited local chiefs from each of the three local government areas we selected in the state. This was to seek for consent from them, also, to ensure that the communities are fully committed to the course of the project. We explained the aims of the project to each of them, because of the evident rapid desertification in the state, they had no difficulty understanding the concept of the project and they gave us full consent to carry out all our activities freely. Other chiefs under their leaderships, local vigilante and armed forces were also adequately informed about our activities to ensure smooth progression of the project.



From right- Fatima Ramzy, Emir of Dukku Alh. Hurana Abdulrashid II, Dr Babale of Gombe State University and Jerry Denis representing Waldi Gurumse (photo credit: Elisha Barde Emmanuel)

TREE CENSUS

Tree census was carried out for 3 weeks at the three different local government areas. However, the extent of desertification can not be determined accurately without historical data. We are presently working with the federal center for remote sensing to use NDVI samples to compare historical data with the data collected by us. And results will be sent in the next report.



Elisha Barde Emmanuel and our field guide Mallam Hassan during tree census in Gombe local Government area (photo credit: Fatima Ramzy)

ENVIRONMENTAL CLUBS

Environmental clubs have been setup in the three local government areas of the state. To date, we have had three monthly meetings with the clubs, and we will want to applaud the commitment of each member of the clubs. They have shown great interest and commitment in the project and have participated fully in all activities carried out.

The population of most club meetings have exceeded the number stipulated in the proposal as all who hear about the project develop great interest. However, we have a list and record of all club members registered with us as stated in the proposal.



Left: Gombe local government Environmental club during a meeting. ©Elisha Barde.
Right: Akko local government Environmental Club during a meeting. ©Waldi Gurumse.



Left: Akko local government environmental club. ©Waldi Gurumse. Right: Some members of the Dukku local government environmental club.

TREE PLANTING CAMPAIGN

The first tree planting campaign was carried out in May 2018 in Dukku local government area, Gombe state. Three hundred and forty seedlings were planted in that region, with the help of the environmental club. The species of plant ranged from African mahogany *Khaya senegalensis*, black currant *Syzygium guinensis* and bush mango *irvingia gabonensis*. We also provided local baskets which will provide protection against livestock and wind. The Emir of Dukku also identified a guide for the project and who is currently taking care of the plants while we constantly check in to ensure their survival. Pamphlets with information on trees and conservation were also distributed to members of the public during the campaign.



Left: Environmental club members planting seedlings. Right: Environmental club members planting seedlings.

AFFILIATIONS

Apart from our affiliation with A.P. Levntis Ornithological Research Institute and Gombe State University, we have contacted the Mahadi Foundation, Jewel environmental initiative, federal center for remote sensing and the American Corner.