

Project Update: January 2021

Preamble

We did submit a report for this project in early 2020. Some of the activities of the project had not been implemented for a variety of reasons – weather challenges and changes in composition of interviews for the film. Unfortunately, it has taken much longer to implement the remaining activities because of the outbreak of COVID. Within the first month of the emergence of COVID 19 in Kenya, the government implemented a raft of measure to safeguard the population. Among these were restrictions of movement between Counties and also a dusk to dawn curfew. This went on for several months, and basically it was impossible to proceed with project activities.

Outstanding activity 1: Planting of 5,000 trees on the western side of the Nyandarwa forest

We had managed to plant trees on the eastern side. Within a couple of months, the community members contacted me and informed that a lot of the trees that they had planted had been destroyed by landslides. There were heavy rains in the region. Instead of going to plant trees in the west, we agreed to replace and increase the number of trees on the eastern side. Following are some pictures of community members participating in this activity.



Image 1: Community member/an elder removed a plastic bag from a seedling before planting



Image 2: Community members planting trees on riparian land



Image 3: An elder demonstrates how to extract a seedling from a plastic bag



Image 4: Community members ferrying seedlings to planting sites



Image 5: Some of the group members at a swampy site



Image 6: Digging holes to plant trees at a swampy area



Image 7: Grant recipient (Kendi Borona) planting a tree

This activity was a great success, and it keeps community efforts in ecological restoration and landscape care. I thought that it was better to replace the trees that had been destroyed by landslides in order to keep the community engaged or to fight

discouragement. As Prof. Wangari Maathai used to say, *we have to keep at it until it becomes rooted.*

Outstanding activity 2: Developing a film

As explained in the last report, we agreed to change the scope of the film to showcase the work of youth whose environmental work is inspired and informed by the legacy of Wangari Maathai. I am happy to share the film with you. We have been working on this for a full year and trying to jump through the hoops posed by the presence of COVID 19 in our communities. The film showcases the work of four young Kenyans working in the environmental space but in diverse landscapes or approaches.

Film synopsis

This film documents the work of four African/Kenyan conservationists in diverse spaces: conservation photography, hiking, food and seed sovereignty and community-based conservation. The film showcases how their work interlinks with the ideas and philosophies of Prof. Wangari Maathai. They articulate their passion for conservation and their hopes and desires in contributing to conservation practices that are oriented to the needs and aspirations of African peoples. They are working to build what Prof. Wangari Maathai referred to as "A canopy of hope".

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gx0vhgBYo0I&t=2s>

Sincere thanks to The Rufford Foundation for supporting this work and for your patience in waiting for the final results for a long time.