

Project Update: June 2009

Sampling Pollinators

Bee species were sampled in March 2009 to establish species present and abundance in the project area. Sites where tea or coffee alone dominated harboured only honey bees and in low numbers, whereas in the sites where both tea and coffee dominated we caught honey bees, carpenter bees and leaf cutter bees. In addition, this site had the highest number of bees counted. Identification of bee species caught is currently being done and this will be reported once the taxonomists are through with this task.

Weru Self-help Group Revived

March 2009 marked a milestone for this project since the defunct Weru Self-help Group, which was very active in the area in the early 1990s, was revived. This revival was seen as the best option as compared to forming a new outfit since the older generation that we held discussions with were comfortable associating themselves with the organizations it also meant that conservation matters would move faster now. This is the group which will take over this project and steer it to the next level. We have registered 117 members and put in place interim officers (Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer) pending elections slotted for July 2009.



Some of the Weru Self-help Group members during a consultative meeting in April 2009

Tree Planting

The rains came towards the end of March, and in April 2009 the soils were well soaked. We therefore mobilized members of Weru Self-help Group to plant trees along one of the main road reserves traversing the villages. We ensured that all trees planted were one foot and above, the rest of the trees were left in the nursery and will be planted in the coming wet season



Members selecting the right tree seedlings and transporting them to planting sites

Before planting, members were introduced to the procedure followed on how to plant trees, a topic which I personally delivered. I also demonstrated on how seedlings could be removed from potting bags for recycling in future.



Dr. Kirika demonstrating how best to go about planting trees



After the demonstration everybody else joined to plant the trees

During planting it was essential to water the young seedlings to ensure that all had a high chance of survival



Members fetching water and watering the young seedlings

A total of 3200 trees were planted on a 5km stretch of the road. Some of the main trees planted included *Markhamia lutea*, *Cordia africana*, *Harungana madagascarensis*, *Prunus africana*, *Croton macrostachyus*, *Milletia dura*, *Bridelia micrantha*, *Ehretia cymosa* and *Sapium ellipticum*. The above trees are extremely important since all are indigenous and the majority bear flowers pollinated by bees. In addition, their fruits are fed on by a diverse array of animals including birds and mammals. These trees also offer good firewood and timber. Members were later encouraged to each plant at least 10 trees in their private farms.