

Project Update: August 2023

Background

Rising global demand for rosewood has led to a significant increase in the exploitation of African rosewood. The African rosewood (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*) has been subjected to extensive illicit and unsustainable extraction because of the high demand for its timber for the manufacture of high-end furniture. In 2014, Nigeria was the top supplier of rosewood logs in Africa and among the top three in the world while in 2016, West Africa was the largest producer of rosewood logs by volume to China. According to IUCN, it is listed as endangered with a decreasing population trend, and currently the world's most traded tropical hardwood, including other species of rosewood. Akwete community forest is a typical Guinea savanna forest, the community members depend on the forest landscape for their livelihood, tree species such as African rosewood is commonly used for traditional medicine and fodder for animals. Yet the forest landscape is fast depleting through logging, farming activities, and fire. If allowed to continue, natural regeneration of species will not support the rate of harvest, which may lead to the local extinction of the species in Akwete community forest. The project aims to protect this valuable resource and other natural resources in the forest, through conservation education, restoration, and document a comprehensive inventory of plants species in the forest for conservation.

Summary of Objectives, Activities and Outputs

Objective 1: Assess the threats, perception to African rosewood in Akwete Community Forest in Benue State		
Activities	Outputs	Forthcoming activities planned
Community entry and meeting to introduce the project and seek approval from community leaders	Two meeting held to gain approval	Activity completed
Select two community nearest to the Akwete community forest (one control and one for intervention)	Akwete and Igbiji communities selected	Activity completed
Select two schools in each community selected – Akwete (community of intervention), Igbiji (Control community)	Approval gotten from school authority and two schools selected	Activity completed
Conducted pre-intervention surveys with 100 participants in 2 communities and 60 students in two schools.	Pre-intervention data collected through ODK	Conduct a Post intervention surveys at the end of the project.
Objective 2: Assess distribution of African rosewood and tree species diversity in Akwete community forest in Benue State		
Activities	Outputs	Forthcoming activities planned
Establish inventory plot for vegetation	Plot will be established in September	To be carried out in September

Conduct vegetation inventory in the plots established	Vegetation inventory will be carried out in September	To be carried out in September
Objective 3: Create awareness of the status and conservation of African rosewood in Akwete community in Benue State		
Activities	Outputs	Forthcoming activities planned
Establish conservation club in Government Primary School, Akwete	Conservation club established	
Facilitate club activities in the school	Conservation ambassadors formed awareness raising souvenirs include books, pencil, eraser, and sharpener.	
Awareness raising in community through talks, townhall meetings and movie screening	Two movie screening held in the Akwete community Awareness raising souvenirs include T-shirts.	Awareness raising will continue in school after the holiday in schools and community for 2 months
Objective 4: Facilitate community approach to the restoration of Akwete community forest		
Activities	Outputs	Forthcoming activities planned
Plant African rosewood and other tree species in degraded forest areas	500 tree species planted in the month of June	600 tree species will be planted in August
Beating up of tree species planted	After one week of planting, we replaced dead or weak seedlings planted with healthy ones	This will also be done in the next batch of trees that will be planted in August
Train community guards on sustainable forest management practices and care for the trees planted	Community guards will be trained	This will be carried out in the month of September, and care for planted seedling up to December 2023
Conducted post-intervention survey in 2 communities and 2 schools.	Post-intervention data will be collected through ODK	This will be carried out in January to February 2024
Write manuscript for publication	Produce manuscript for publication	This will be carried out from February to April 2024

Equipment and other communication materials

We purchased a camera for taking pictures, projector and speaker used during movie screening in community, tablets to collect data during survey. We bought some rain boots and a raincoat to be used because of the rain during field activities. We also produced some branded notebooks, t-shirts, and writing materials for the conservation ambassadors. Notebooks and branded t-shirts were used as gift items to those who answered questions during community talks and movie screenings in community.

Information, Education and Communication Materials



Problems encountered to date

In the project area, we are in the rainy season, we could not hold the movie screening in an open space and had to use the community town hall for the movie screening in order to overcome the issue. We also have to shift a 1-day activity to the next day because the Chief of Igbiji community died, Igbiji community is our control community and the chief who died was the oldest in that region.



Interview during social survey. © Research Assistant.



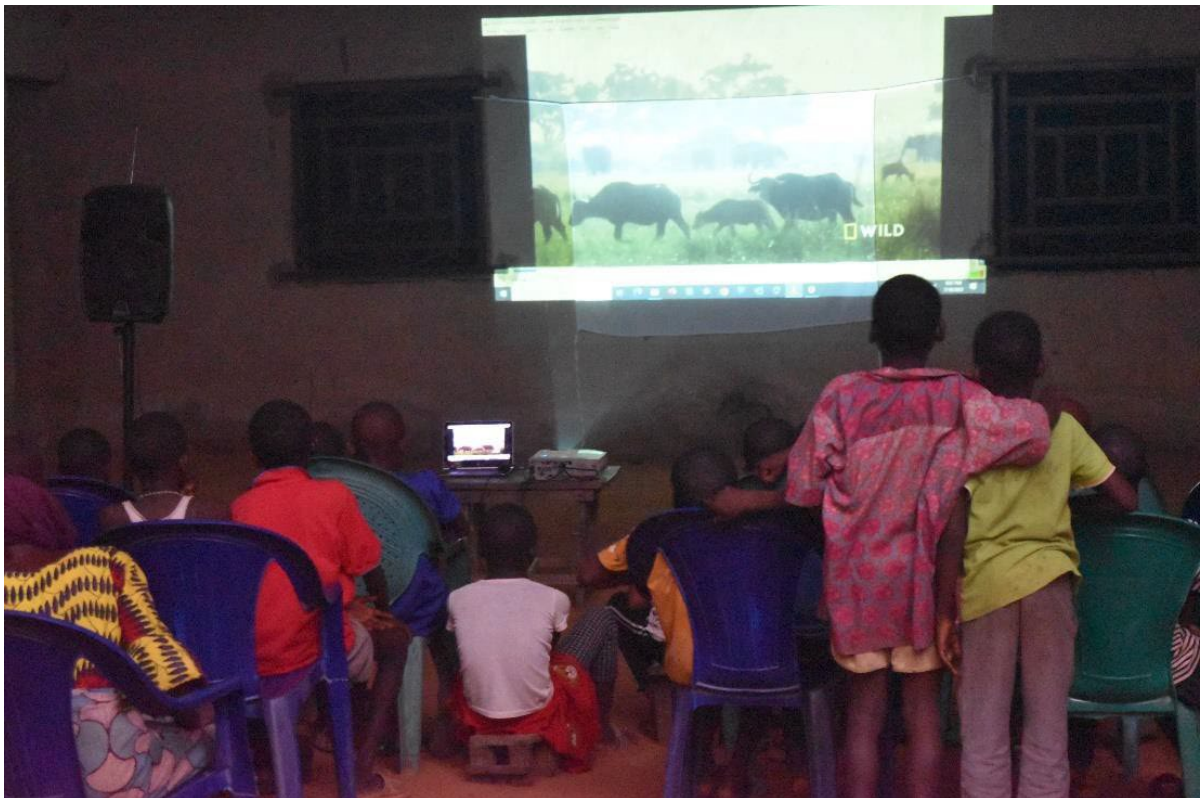
Facilitation during club activities. © Research Assistant.



Conservation club members. © Research Assistant.



Conservation ambassador with African rosewood seedling for planting.



Movie screening in Akwete community. © Patience Adaje.



Question and answer section during movie screening.