Project Update: January 2024

Background
Rising global demand for rosewood has led to a significant increase in the exploitation of African rosewood. The African rosewood (*Pterocarpus erinaceous*) 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 producers 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	Activity completed
Objective 2: Assess distribution of African rosewood and tree species diversity in Akwete community forest in Benue State		
Activities	**Outputs**	**Forthcoming activities planned**

Establish plot for vegetation inventory	A total of 4 Plots were established in different randomly in the forest landscape.	Activity completed
Conduct vegetation inventory in the plots established	Vegetation inventory was carried out in the plots established	Activity completed

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 clubs were established in two schools.	Activity completed
Facilitate club activities in the school	Conservation ambassadors formed Awareness raising souvenirs include books, pencil, eraser, and sharpener.	Activity completed
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 for question-and-answer section.	Activity completed

Objective 4: Facilitate community approach to the restoration of Akwete community forest

Activities	Outputs	Forthcoming activities planned
Plant African rosewood and o t h e r tree species in degraded forest areas	600 tree species planted in the month of June	Activity completed
Beating up of tree species planted	Tree care and we are replanting of dead or weak seedlings planted with healthy ones.	Continues monitoring and tree care provided for planted seedlings
Train community guards on sustainable forest management practices and care for the trees planted	Community guards were trained in forest management practices and tree care	Activity completed
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

Vegetation inventory
An assessment of the current status of vegetation in Akwete community forest was carried out to collect information of the tree species and shrubs in the landscape. Four plots were randomly established in the different sections of the forest landscape to draw inference on the entire forest population. While the majority of tree species in some sections were Terminalia spp., species such as *Pterocarpus erinaceous, Parkia biglobosa, Vittelaria paradoxa, Prosopis Africana, Daniella olivera* identified in the landscape. Tree identification was done with the support of a botanist from the J. S Tarka University Benue state Nigeria, and unidentified species were collected by plant press and taken to the University Herbarium for identification.

Problems encountered in this phase
The Akwete community had a new school established where a good number of our environmental ambassadors transferred to the new school. To mitigate this challenge, we had to establish a new club to continue facilitation with the ambassadors in both schools.

Left: Patience Adaje taking Diameter at Breast height measurement. **Right:** Patience Adaje with a Botanist during vegetation inventory.

Left: Patience Adaje taking a tree height measurement. **Right:** A cross section of Akwete community forest.

Left: A cross section of environmental ambassadors during club facilitation. **Right:** Trained community forest guards in Akwete community forest.