Project Update: May 2011

Buffer zone agroforestry is one of the strategies being promoted because it can provide alternative sources of forest products commonly harvested from protected forests. For this strategy to succeed, tree species selection for buffer zone agroforestry must be carefully handled, so as to respond to felt needs of local people. This requires their participation in the species selection process. The grant was awarded to carry out a survey on the trees preferred by buffer zones for agro-forestry in Yankari Game Reserve and raise seedlings of desired plants for transplanting. Activities carried out are outlined below.

Acquiring of land

The field work started in February by visiting the chiefs of the 10 communities targeted for the programme and a piece of land was acquired for the nursery programme. This was a welcomed idea by all the communities. My team and I were warmly welcomed in all the communities and they vowed to give us their support in this project.

Participatory rural appraisal

After acquisition of the lands, we went on to distribute questionnaires to the community members in order to know the commonly used trees by members of each community. All the questionnaires were collected and analysed. The following tree species were the ten commonly used by all the communities: *Sclerocarya birrea, Afzelia africana, Stereospermun* spp., *Malaysia tonningii, Leuceama leucocuphala, Gliricidia sepium, Butryspemum paradoxum, Anogeissus leocarpus, Terminalia microcarpum* and *Lannea acida*.

Sclerocarya birrea, Butryspermum paradoxum, Anogeissus leocarpus, terminalia microcarpum, Lannea acida and Afzelia africana are all local trees indigenous to savannas in Nigeria and are eaten by man and animals. Stryspermun spp. are a local timber plant, while Malaysia toningii, Leuceamia leucocuphala and Gliricidia sepium are naturalised exotic plants which have multipurpose use such as nitrogen fixation and soil improvement. They also grow long into the dry season thereby remaining green almost all year round.

We also discovered that without the inclusion of fruiting trees such as mango, orange, banana etc., the community members will not be so interested in taking care of the nurseries. So we included them as part of the plants we are going to raise in the nursery.

Training of participants

We had earlier planned to train all the participants for the workshop together but due the distance between the different communities and the Yankari Game Reserve we decided to train each community separately and it was very successful. It gave us more time to concentrate on two members of each community.

Seed collections and procurement

Seeds of commonly used plants were collected in the reserve and some from the A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute seed bank. Seeds of fruiting trees were purchased from the State Agricultural Development Programme.

Preparation of polypots

During training of each community, polypots were prepared in order to train the community members. It became a routine duty for them to prepare polypots as it will make the planting of seed easier for them.