



Mount Kenya Reforestation

Mount Kenya glaciers and forests – the source of water for the whole country.

Summary

Kenya's forests are rapidly declining due to significant population growth and other land uses. The result of this is such that there is only 2% forest cover remaining. Experts warned us years ago: Global warming could cause a 25 % drop in surface water across Africa by the end of the century.¹ The Horn of Africa is currently suffering the biggest draught in 60 years. We must act now to alleviate local famine and prepare for the future by stopping the progression of the desert through the restoration of the forests on the slopes of Mount Kenya.

Why this project?

Today, Kenya's forest cover is less than 2% and Mount Kenya Forest constitutes some of the most significant reserves of the remaining forestland in the country. With a big part of the country being arid and semi-arid, this produces a lot of strain on the rest of the land – since the economy is natural-resource based.

The main issues in Kenya are:

- **Deforestation:** Mount Kenya has lost about 30% of its forest cover through various illegal activities such as timber harvesting, charcoal burning and poles collection. This is threatening wildlife living in the forest.
- **Decreases in water volume:** Mount Kenya forests act as water container to many rivers that have clearly seen decreases in water volume in the last years. This is leading to water conflicts amongst communities.
- **Poverty:** Most communities living in the area are poor due to unsustainable methods of farming which have caused massive soil erosion and infertility.
- **Food insecurity:** Most communities living in the area are suffering from diminishing food crop productivity due to lack of proper knowledge on how to farm sustainably.

How do we work?

The government of Kenya, through the forest department, has enacted and formed an organization called **Community Forest Association (CFA)** whereby the community is involved in running and managing the forest in partnership with the Government through tree planting activities.

The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, the second best time is now.
African Proverb.

Reforestation – At the Core of the Long Term Solution

New laws facilitate community involvement

¹ According to a March 2006 report from the University of Cape Town

The community takes care of the seedlings after the planting and reports on any illegal activities including firewood collection, charcoal burning, logging and illegal cultivation.

Additional to this, another law requires each individual owning land to plant 10% of his land with trees – this means anybody with ¼ of an acre of land should be planting in the range of 50 trees!

Our local partner “Save Mount Kenya Forest from Extinction Group”, a community-based organization located in the eastern slopes of Mount Kenya, has a capacity of 200.000 trees per annum and is dedicated to planting trees in the degraded forests, on farms, water lines and catchment areas, schools and public lands – thus promoting sustainable farming practices in order to reduce pressure on natural forests. 80% goes to the forest and water lines and 20% goes to the farms. Local people are being trained on new farming techniques such as agro forestry that reduces soil erosion, increases soil fertility and crop yields, and promotes food security and environmental restoration.



Tree Seedlings



Men carrying seedlings for transplanting into the forest



Seedlings – Credit LLB



Women planting – credit LLB



Women working in Nursery – credit LLB



Nursery work



Tree seedlings growing



Prunus Africana, fully grown in:20 years



Trees planted in 1984

Reforestation goes hand in hand with training

- **Educate and empower** communities on the environment and their rights, through seminars undertaken every two months.
- **Improve healthcare** using medicinal plants such as Neem and *Moringa oleifera*. *Moringa oleifera* is known as miracle tree which has very many uses ranging from boosting immune system of the body, curing many diseases as well as water purification.
The group is promoting growing *Moringa oleifera* among the communities and school children in the area.
- **Prevent deforestation** through community forest policing aimed at making sure that each and every person participates in tree planting activities and reports all illegal activities taking place.
- **Reforest and restore** important ecosystems providing habitat for endangered animals.
- **Raise the incomes** of local farmers through activities such as beekeeping, horticulture and other income generating activities.
- **Provide food and energy sources** by implementing agroforestry technologies (live fences, windbreaks, firebreaks, alley cropping, forest gardens and contours farming).
- **Improve access to clean water** by protecting water catchment areas and planting trees along riverbanks and water sources.
- **Growing trees:** Our local partner has one nursery and has partnered with over 20 smaller groups within the area who also have tree nurseries. Multi-purpose fast growing tree species are being grown and used for the reforestation of Mount Kenya and for planting on farms. All community members are being involved and each one is receiving 50 free seedlings to plant on their farms.
- **Agroforestry trainings:** The group is undertaking agroforestry technologies' trainings aimed at equipping the community with improved methods of farming that will restore the soil and lead to increases in food crop production and livestock keeping.
Two types of trainings are planned: on-farm and nursery establishment. Trainers are trained, and they in turn train farmers and community members. Institutions such as the **Ministry of Agriculture** and **Kenya's Agricultural Research Institute** are sources of knowledge and consultation.
- **Advanced trainings:** The community is trained on the importance of planting medicinal trees such as *Arbugia ugandensis*, *Prunus africana*, *Azadirachta indica* (Neem) and *Moringa oleifera*; and on how to use them to cure various diseases. This is leading to improved health care and income.
- **Biofuels:** Growing biofuel plants such as *Jatropha curcas*, castor seeds and *Croton megalocarpus* provide clean energy and alternatives to using wood, coal and fossil fuels.
Communities are being trained and given seeds for this purpose and are generating income through the sale of biofuels.

Forests sustain people when crops fail due to recurring droughts.

How does the local community benefit?

Tens of millions of rural households in the Horn of Africa rely heavily on forest products for subsistence and to supplement their cash income. Particularly the vulnerable households, often led by women and children, depend on tree resources during crises and when food is scarce.

² Source <http://www.afrikansarvi.fi/issue-1/15-issue1/artikkeli/40-the-importance-of-tree-resources-in-rural-livelihoods-in-the-horn-of-africa>

The households derive sustenance from forests mainly through harvesting and use of Non-Wood Forest Products, i.e. fruits, honey, bush meat, gums and resin, medicinal plants etc. This diversifies the economy and potentially minimizes the risks associated with the frequent crop and fodder failures due to recurring droughts.²

The forest land is owned by the government and the community members benefit through collecting fallen trees for firewood, leaves or grass for fodder, honey from beehives, nitrogen fixation in the soil for their crops, shade for food and cash crops. Planting 100.000 trees can create between 5-10 permanent jobs and between 100 -200 temporary jobs.

The species planted include :*Cordia africana, Albizzia gummifera, Prunes' africana, Vitex keniensis, Sysygium cordatum, Fagaropsis angolensis, Polyscias kikuyensis, Olea usambarensis, Senna siamea, Rauvolfia caffra, Sesbania sesban, Leucaena leucocephala, Calliandra calothyrsus, Warburgia ugandensis* and *Spathodea campanulata*. Our survival rate is around 85%.

How is the money used?

For every \$ donated for planting, we have the following breakdown:
25% will go to purchase of seeds and polythene bags
20% for the purchase of nurseries equipment, (some are one-off's)
25% for the nursery labor,
15% for management of the organization
15% for the transplanting of seedlings

150 km north of Nairobi

Where do we plant?

Our projects are located east of Mount Kenya national park, in the districts of Meru South and Embu. <http://bit.ly/bMfJie>

2 rainy seasons

When can we plant?

This area has 2 main planting seasons: the extended rains (mid March - June) and the short rains (October - December). During the extended rainy period, we are able to plant lots of seedlings.

Quotes

"Drought is a natural climatic phenomenon, but what has dramatically changed in recent decades is the ability of nature to supply essential services like water and moisture during hard times," said Klaus Toepfer, director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). "This is because so much of nature's water and rain-supplying services have been damaged, destroyed or cleared."



"Donations in December can already be planted in March"! says **Paulino Damiano**, manager of the project.



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