

Mulanje, Malawi

Restoring forest to protect
water and biodiversity



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Mid-year update 2024

Mulanje, Malawi



Project status

Over 1700 hectares under restoration

More than 1.9 million trees protected & growing



Mount Mulanje is known for its dramatic landscapes and rugged terrain, its massive granite peaks rising abruptly from the surrounding plains. The lower slopes are covered in dense forests, home to a variety of flora and fauna.

Although officially protected since 1927, the Mount Mulanje Biosphere Reserve is under severe pressure due to high poverty, population growth and increasing demands for land and energy resources. We are engaging communities to reverse the degradation of this native miombo through community-based forest management.

The expanded team in Malawi is doing great work, with some big achievements already this year. The project area increased to include two new forest co-management blocks on the lower slopes of the mountain: Bwanaisa and Nyambalo in Phalombe district.



Meet Mathews Tsirizeni, WeForest's Malawi's new Country Director. He brings 20 years' experience in climate change, environment and natural resources management, Remote Sensing, and monitoring and evaluation to WeForest. His previous positions include managing a US\$75M USAID Resilient Food Security programme for Malawi, and Regional Monitoring, Research and Evaluation Manager for WaterAid in Southern Africa.



Covering 1890 ha, these new areas – together with the existing ones, Kazembe and Tchete – will bring us to more than a third of the way towards our goal of 9000 ha of miombo under co-management by 2030.

23 permanent monitoring plots were set up in the older co-management blocks, and 18 in the new ones. The communities assisted in identifying tree species and installing beacons in the corners. These 10m x 40m plots are carefully selected to be representative samples, allowing us to track forest health, biodiversity and ecosystem function over time.

Agroforestry is reducing pressure on forest resources here by creating new sustainable sources of fuelwood through pruning. The team's assessment of the agroforestry seedlings planted in January showed fantastic short-term survival rates of 75% to 85%!

July and August mark the peak of the forest fire season, with most set by charcoal producers and illegal loggers. The dry vegetation acts as a tinderbox. To combat this threat, WeForest Malawi trained 225 community members in forest fire management, all of whom live in the co-management blocks, Kazembe, Tchete, Nyambalo and Bwanaisa.

The training was hands-on, using practical skills to suppress fires using beaters, hoes, slashers, and water carriers. Armed with their new knowledge, the communities then took proactive steps, constructing 49 km of firebreaks in Mulanje district and 38 km in Phalombe. These vital barriers will shield their forests from the devastating impact of wildfires.



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You'll receive an annual update in March. Meanwhile, stay up-to-date with our interactive [Mulanje map](#), and check out the photos on [Flickr](#).

You can find an overview of all communications assets and guidance on how to communicate about your partnership with WeForest [here](#).



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