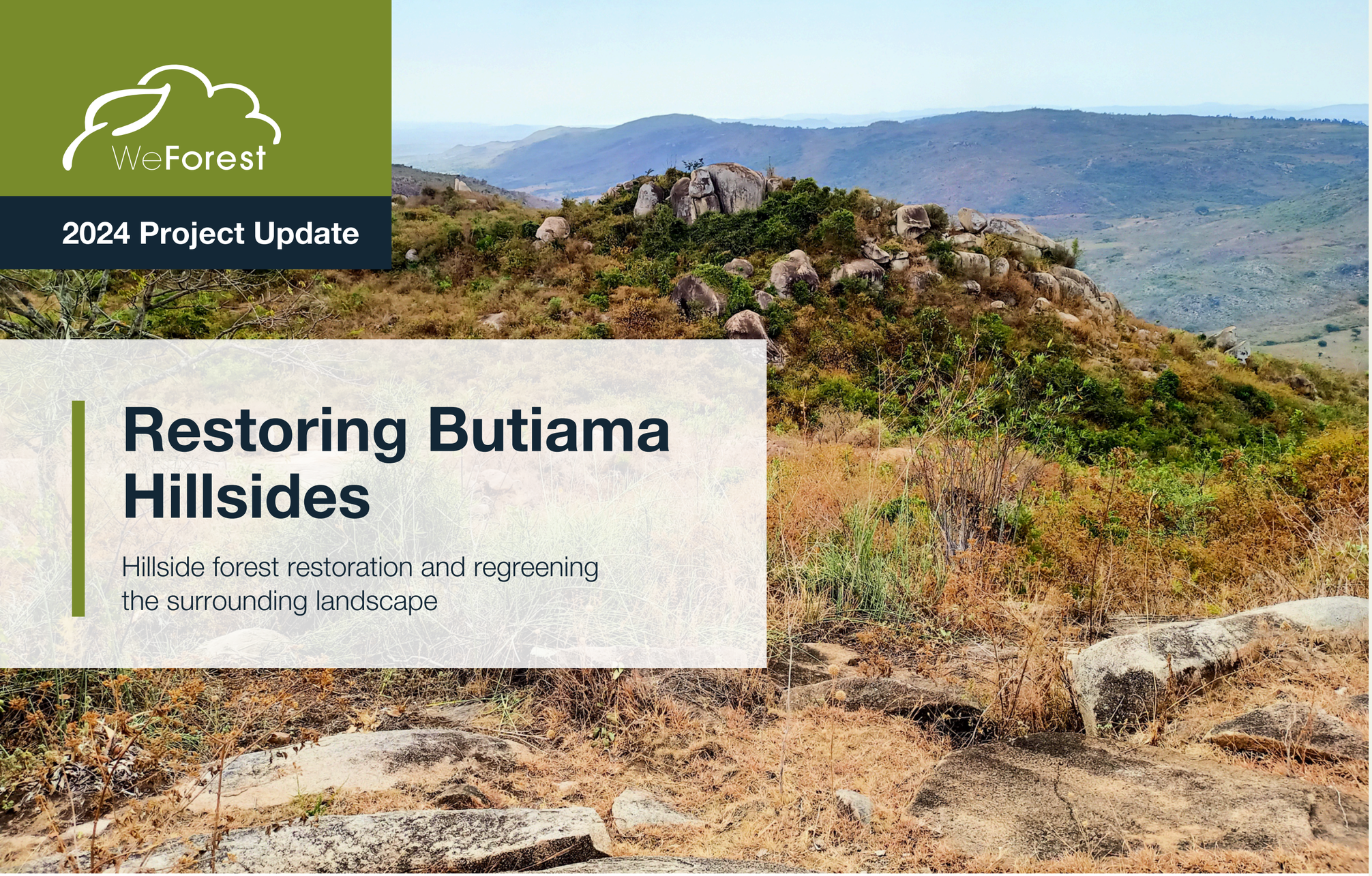
WeForest

2024 Project Update



Restoring Butiama Hillsides

Hillside forest restoration and regreening the surrounding landscape

Butiama, Tanzania
Special Projects

Timeline:
2023 - 2026

Targeted ecosystem:
Acacia woodland

Project management and M&E team

Main implementing partner:
Global Resource Alliance Tanzania (GRA-TZ)

Sefia Jetha
Partnership Manager and Technical Advisor Coordinator

Specioza Kifutu
Project Manager (GRA-TZ)

Leonard Lutalamila
MEL Officer (GRA-TZ)

See the full team at:
www.weforest.org/about-us/#our-team

Project story

The introduction of agroforestry systems in areas adjacent to the degraded Butiama hillsides will improve local livelihoods while reducing pressure on the remaining forests for fuelwood. At the same time, the project aims to facilitate the proper conversion and formal recognition of a community forest under an appropriate management plan. Together, these practices will help create favorable conditions for assisted natural regeneration (ANR) to support vegetation recovery, restore water catchment areas, and ultimately revive critical clean water springs.

Key challenges in the landscape

Unsustainable firewood harvesting, charcoal burning and grazing.

Lack of community ownership of the forests.

Decreasing sources of water.

Insufficient access to clean energy sources.

Low agricultural productivity.

Our integrated approach

Improve forest governance and stewardship through:

- Clarifying forest boundary locations, developing a forest management plan, and strengthening law enforcement.

Conserve and restore the forest through:

- Ecological restoration through Assisted Natural Regeneration) of 1,275 ha of hillside forest.

Strengthen forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors through:

- Improving incomes and resilience for 939 smallholder farming households in four villages through training and equipping farmers to convert to agroforestry systems.

A long-term vision

Climate

The restoration of the landscape will contribute to both climate mitigation and adaptation: increasing tree cover to sequester carbon while improving water retention and soil stability to help communities adapt to droughts and erratic weather.

Nature

Restoring the project area will protect biodiversity and secure critical ecosystem services like water and soil health. Improved land management will enhance habitat resilience, ensuring the forest continues to sustain both people and wildlife.

People

Strengthened governance and forest-friendly livelihoods will ensure communities see the forest as an asset: one that provides resources while being sustainably managed. By introducing agroforestry to the landscape, the project reduces deforestation-driven income reliance while securing long-term economic stability.

Outcomes

By integrating these interventions, the project will:

- **Restore a functional ecosystem** in the Butiama hillside landscape by reducing pressure on forest resources through a combination of Joint Forest Management implementation, promotion of forest-friendly and diversified economic pathways, and improved agricultural productivity via sustainable agroforestry systems in four villages surrounding the hills.

- The long-term impact of our work will benefit people, nature and climate.

Theory of Change

Existing problems in the forest and landscape

- Forest degradation
- Weak governance
- Yield reductions
- Unsustainable forest product extraction
- Cattle grazing
- Unsustainable farming systems

Risks

- Drought
- Decrease in soil fertility

WeForest Interventions

Improved forest governance and stewardship

- Develop Community Forest Reserve Plan
- Demarcation of reserve boundary
- Improve governance structures
- Development of a law enforcement plan
- Training forest guards

Restoring and conserving at-risk forests

- Assisted Natural Regeneration
- Nurseries

Introducing forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviours

- Agroforestry
- Community engagement
- Training programme

Project outcomes

- Enhanced stewardship and forest governance
- Increased tree cover on Butiama Hillsides
- Improved household income through forest-friendly livelihood schemes

Long term impact

Climate

Stored and sequested carbon

Nature

Thriving biodiversity and intact ecosystems

People

Sustainable and resilient communities

2024 Major Achievements

- 151 farmers (42 women) were successfully enrolled into agroforestry and 188,097 seedlings were distributed.
- A workshop was held to bring together various institutional stakeholders to discuss developed strategies for the conservation and regreening of the severely degraded Butiama Hillside. This initiative was part of a broader project to restore ecological balance, enhance biodiversity, and promote sustainable land management practices in the Butiama District.
- Robust M&E systems were developed, ensuring effective tracking and support for ongoing and future project activities

Case study

Farmers’ training session on Agroforestry foundations. This training took place for Cohort B at Kurusiru hamlet during which Mti ni hazina group members were theoretically and practically trained on the foundations of Agroforestry. The primary objective of the training was to enhance farmers' understanding of the Agroforestry system designed for the implementation of the Butiama Hillside project. 18 farmers attended this training, including 13 men and 5 women.

2024 activity update

Improved forest governance and stewardship

- **130 hectares** of land was put under agroforestry.
- Outline of a Hillside vegetation assessment was established.

Restoring and conserving at-risk forests

- A Joint Forest Management Plan was outlined with a Joint Forest Management Committee.
- A proposal for Forest Management Regulations was drafted to be discussed with the villages and approved by the District Council.
- **4 Village Natural Resource Committees** have been reactivated (43 members with 44% women) and trained on ‘’natural resource management’’ and ‘’record keeping’’.

Introducing forest-friendly livelihoods

- **194 farmers** (43 women), actively participated in the project from the registration phase to group formation.
- **151 farmers** who have successfully been trained have received seedlings.
- **57%** average survival across all 2023 agroforestry systems (seedling mortality attributed to the challenging weather conditions experienced in 2023/2024, including extreme heat and heavy rains.)
- **80%** of the live seedlings distributed in 2023 were in good condition in their respective plots.

Progress tracker

See end of report for our progress tracking methodology

Case study

In 2024 the project nursery experienced waterlogging brought by too much rain. The effect was not only in the nursery but also within farmers farms, especially those who had opted for a vegetable agroforestry system. Vegetable farms are generally closer to water sources, on lower lands where waterlogging is more likely. Papaya and moringa were among the species affected.

2024 Challenges

Heavy rains followed by drought in early 2024 impacted the survival of seedlings distributed as some planted seedlings did not have the time to ‘settle’ before the drought. To overcome this challenge, the team will emphasize the need to water the seedlings if the rains are interrupted during distribution, and to put distribution on hold until the rains resume again.

The project faced HR challenges in finding and retaining a forester, which impacted the forestry activities. To strengthen the forestry component, a new position for a forest extentionist has been opened. This, combined with strong support from the Project Manager and M&E Officer, is expected to help recover from the delays and bring the forestry work back on track.

Looking ahead to 2025

The Butiama Hills project will continue into 2025, with priorities including:

- Introducing agroforestry to 250 hectares of land.
- Conducting a forest botanical inventory and installing new Permanent Sample Plots.
- Providing agroforestry training to 320 new farmers.
- Distributing 525,000 tree seedlings to 250 new farmers.
- Assessing the survival rate for seedlings planted in 2024 and filling the gaps left by the seedlings that perished.
- Participatively demarcating the Hillside boundary line with the community.
- Establishing a Joint Forest Management Committee that will work across the four villages surrounding the hillside.
- Participatively develop a law enforcement plan.

Case study

Existing Village Natural Resources Committee (VNRC) was reactivated in Busegwe. The trainer explained the roles and responsibilities of the VNRC in management of Natural Resources.

This activity fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility among committee members towards the resources they are tasked to protect.

Supporters & Partners

2024 project partners

Neema Nyerere (Mwitongo lodge) supported with land for nursery site.

Village Executive Officers from Kigori, Mwikoro, Busegwe and Nyanza engaged on local issues.

Village Natural Resource committees from Kigori, Mwikoro, Busegwe and Nyanza engaged on forest governance

Butiama District Council Land Use Department supported in the implementation of project activities.

Butiama District Council Forestry Department supported in the implementation of project activities.

Tanzania Forest Services - Butiama supported and actively engaged in the implementation of project activities.

National Commission for Land Use Planning supported and actively engaged in the implementation of project activities.

With thanks to our supporters in 2024, including:

DZMEDIA

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Contact us

Visti **www.weforest.org** or for more information or email: **contact@weforest.org**

How we measure and forecast our impact

Baseline

For the sake of simplicity, the progress bars in this report show a baseline of zero. This represents the concept that the area covered by WeForest forest and landscape restoration (FLR) activities was zero; thus the associated trees conserved and restored, carbon stored and households impacted through WeForest intervention was also zero.

In reality, when a WeForest project begins, our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning team undertakes a detailed survey on forest structure and regeneration through establishing Permanent Monitoring Plots, and conducts an extensive questionnaire on livelihoods, to establish meaningful baseline values. You can read more about our full MEL activities here.

Hectares planted, conserved and restored

Progress up to 2024

Verifiable cumulative total since the project began of all mapped intervention sites, also known as polygons, of:

1) Conservation forest areas, such as forest reserves

2) Restoration forest areas, such as Assisted Natural Regeneration and planting areas

3) Agroforestry areas on community/farm land

End of Project Target

Target number based on the potential area of land able to be conserved, restored and planted in the project area under the known and expected conditions at project start. However, it is subject to change based on unforeseen opportunities or challenges that may arise.

Anticipated tons of CO2 to be sequestered through project activities

Progress up to 2024

Extrapolated tons of CO2 calculated from the measured areas of different types of land use (for example forest or agroforestry) under “Hectares of forest planted, conserved and restored” to date, and the average amount of projected long-term CO2 per hectare provided from literature review for each land use type in their locations. Although totalled, please note the methodology for calculating these CO2 projections are specific to land-use type, and span a period corresponding to the expected time taken for the trees to reach maturity, which varies between locations.

End of Project Target

As above, but using the target (and not current) number of hectares planted, restored and conserved and their respective area totals as a parameter for calculations. As this parameter is subject to change, the associated CO2 target may also change over time.

Number of trees conserved and restored*

Progress up to 2024
Extrapolated number of trees calculated from the measured areas of different land use types (for example conservation areas, restoration areas or agroforestry) under “Hectares planted, conserved and restored” to date, and the average tree densities observed for each land-use type when mature, known through our MEL activities or scientific literature.

End of Project Target
As above, but using the target (and not current) number of “Hectares of forest planted, restored and conserved” and their respective area totals as a parameter for calculations. As this parameter is subject to change, the associated trees conserved and restored target may also change over time.

*Estimations based on average numbers per hectare

Trees planted to date (2024)

Total
Actual counted number of planted seedlings and saplings of woody (tree and shrub) species in the project to date.

Trees planted for forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors
Only woody species directly planted for livelihood improvement. This also includes woody fruit, fodder & timber trees, and woody cash crops, exclusively planted on community or farm land.

Trees planted for forest conservation and restoration
Only woody species that were directly planted for ecological reasons, aiding restoration of the natural forest ecosystem.

Woody species in project to date (2024)

Total
Actual observed number of woody (tree and shrub) species:

- Regenerating in the conservation/restoration zones (i.e. in the Permanent Monitoring Plots) and
- Planted, either for restoration or livelihood improvement
- Growing as mature trees in the conservation/restoration zones (i.e. in the permanent monitoring plots).
- Please note, these numbers are not exhaustive and the true species richness is likely to be higher.

Tree species for forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors
Only woody species directly planted for livelihood improvement. This also includes woody fruit, fodder and timber trees, and woody cash crops, exclusively planted on community or farm land.

Tree species for forest conservation and restoration
The woody species observed in the project area that are not used for livelihood improvement purposes. Where species are used for both livelihood improvement and restoration (which is sometimes the case, as we use native species as much as possible), they have been counted under ‘forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors’.

Mammal and bird species sighted to date

Numbers are included where we have a good level of biological monitoring, for example using camera traps or audio devices - please note that numbers are unlikely to capture the full species richness of the project area and that the absence of reporting does not imply the absence of species.

Other notes

WeForest works in close cooperation with local partner organisations, institutions, community-based organizations and local people. Therefore, our impact can never be fully separated from the work of our partners. WeForest acknowledges that the presented impact numbers cannot be solely attributed to our work, but is also supported through the hard work contributed by all our local partners.

Terminology

Conservation
Where native forest canopy cover is still intact, we focus on protecting the forest from any threats and disturbances, such as overgrazing, unsustainable wood extraction and fire.

Restoration
Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR): Where there is reduced forest cover but high potential for natural regeneration, we aim to accelerate natural recovery, typically through preventing soil degradation, reducing competition with weeds, and protecting young trees.

Tree planting
Where there is reduced forest cover and little regeneration potential, we actively plant native trees at a density that corresponds with the regeneration potential.

Agroforestry and tree crops
Where agricultural landscapes exist, WeForest promotes the planting of trees for livelihood improvement. These trees can be used either for direct consumption or sale (fruits, timber, fuelwood) or to support other crops or livestock (agroforestry). Native tree species are prioritized but, where necessary, non-native species may be used.