

Project Update: February 2008

On November 21st 2007, I surveyed the last three farms on the eastern slopes of South Nguru Mountains, making the total plots surveyed 143, just seven less plots than I had hoped and planned for. It had been raining continuously for five days and after four months of arduous labour, the four-person team's spirit was waning. It was still an eight-hour walk to my base camp in Kichangani Village where soil samples had to be dried, packed and transported to the Agricultural University of Sokoine for bulk density measurement. Another batch of soils (~120 kg) had to be transported to Dar es Salaam where they are still awaiting shipment to California for carbon and nitrogen analyses.

I am now back in Davis, California, entering data and mounting 160 tree cores for dendrochronological analysis, which will enable me to establish growth rates for some of the more common species in the three forest types. I will use some of those cores to determine wood densities of the same trees.

Having enough plots to capture the environmental variability of the landscape was the priority in the last four months of the 2007 fieldwork. Consequently, there was insufficient time to conduct a survey of farmers in the area. Their insights and dynamics are crucial to understanding how carbon offset projects could work in the Eastern Arc Mountains, but for the moment, understanding what happens on the farms they leave to regenerate is the first step.

For each plot, we took 25 samples for determining bulk density and 5 samples for determining carbon and nitrogen content. Between coring and soil sampling, it was necessary to hire another team member. This is Manyama in Mbogo Village, sampling for soil.



