

Project Update: August 2013

1.0 Introduction

The project focus was on training households how to set-up tree nurseries using locally available resources. The project steering team began by visiting the Uganda National Tree Seed Centre in Namanve to acquire hands-on knowledge about tree seed propagation and nursery bed management. We also visited the Faculty of Agriculture at Uganda Martyrs University for more grounding in nursery bed establishment using local materials. The Faculty Field Officer, Mr. Kalanzi accepted to train the project beneficiaries so as to equip them with the required skills needed to set-up and manage community tree nurseries. Thereafter, we mobilised the beneficiaries to meet for a practical session in nursery bed set up, management and maintenance.



Left: Leonard at the National Tree Seed Centre in Namanve. Right: Leonard at the National Tree Seed Centre learns how to prepare Musizi seeds for propagation.

2.0 Practical training in nursery bed set-up and management

As highlighted in the previous reports, each of the five communities identified two nursery bed managers (a youth and an elderly member). Therefore, 10 individuals together with the village local council leaders were invited for a practical session at Mandwa estate where one of the nursery beds was to be located. Mr. Kalanzi demonstrated the process of preparing the nursery bed soil, constructing the nursery bed, required methods of planting tree seeds (i.e. how to position the particular seeds in the soil) and procedures involved in nursery bed maintenance. Below are some of the pictures taken during the practical session.



Left: Mr. Kalanzi (front-left) briefing participants before proceeding for the practical session. Right: Members preparing a nursery bed as children observe.



Left: Preparing the nursery bed soil. Organic manure, loam soil and a little sand are mixed and put through a sieve to make the soil suitable for seed germination. Right: Mr. Kalanzi demonstrating how to plant (and to pot) avocado tree seeds.



Left: Participants set-up a nursery bed using local materials. Right: Young Daniel participates in nursery bed set-up by gathering thatches for roofing the community nursery bed structure.

3.0 Collection/ gathering of propagation materials

Once the community had learnt to set up nursery beds, we continued collecting seeds of various tree species. Some of the species collected included fruit seeds (Jack fruit, Avocado, custard apple (*Ebitafeeri*) and non fruit tree seeds (Musizi, Muvule, Musaali, Omuyiky, Podo and Musambya). Tree cuttings for propagation included Mutuba and Mukokoowe.



Left: Musaali and Kitafeeri seeds. Right: Muvule pods.



Left: Musambya seeds. Right: Musizi seeds.

4.0 Provision of farm implements

The selected village team leaders (nursery bed care takers) of the five villages were given farm implements and materials to assist them to set up and to manage their respective nursery beds on behalf of the community project beneficiaries. Nails were given to the team leaders to be used in setting up the nursery beds. Each nursery bed care taker was given a soil filtering net, a watering can, a spade, and a hoe, seed/seedling potting bags, a jerry can and a trowel.



Potting bags can be re-used or recycled

5.0 Setting up of Community tree nursery beds

Having learnt how to set up and manage tree nurseries, each community embarked on setting up a community nursery bed. Accordingly, five nursery beds have been set up Wambale, Gombe, Mbugu, Ttikalu and Najeza villages. The respective project beneficiaries in each village participated in propagating the various seeds supplied to them.



Left: Potted Musizi seeds. Right: Potted avocado seeds.



One of the Community nurseries at Mbugu village

6.0 Challenges

- We had hoped that the country's tree seed centre would provide free seeds for propagation but this was not the case. Seed prices are set according to the value of the trees. We felt that if government is to promote environmental stewardship (deliberate tree planting) then individuals passionate about tree planting should be given free seeds or seeds sold at a very affordable fee. Therefore given these circumstances, the project steering team set out to other districts to collect seeds of tree species that had become critically endangered within the Gombe Sub County, namely: Musaali, Muvule and Kitafeeri.
- The challenge of water scarcity is common in Gombe. Community members have to travel long distances to collect water for home use, part of which has to be diverted to watering the tree nurseries.

7.0 Achievements

- Five tree nursery beds have been set up in five villages. Members acquired the skill of preparing and setting up a nursery bed using locally available resources. These skills can also be used in preparing vegetable nursery beds.
- The project beneficiaries have been able to appreciate the importance of tree planting at household level.
- The project beneficiaries now know the medicinal and nutritional value of the various tree species planted.
- On the whole, about 12,000 tree seeds have been planted (and some potted) in the five community nursery beds. Also, about 400 cuttings of Mutuba and Mukokoowe have been propagated. Majority take 1 to 2 months to germinate. If we can have at least 80% germination rate, the exercise will be a success.