

Project Update: April 2016

Introduction and Background

This is a follow up of my first report submitted late last year (2015). The main activities of the project include:

- a) Establishment of the botanical garden and nature trail.
- b) Surveying the biota of the land allocated for the botanical garden.
- c) Establishment of nature clubs in 10 selected primary schools.
- d) Establishment of a tree nursery in the Botanical Garden.

Progress made to date

a) Establishment of Botanical Garden and Nature Trail/ Tree nursery

The above objective is at advanced stage. The trees in the nursery are ready for planting but will wait until the onset of rains. This is critical because there must be adequate moisture in the soil before planting can be done to ensure high rate of survival. The work on the nature trail started early in mid- March 2016 and should be completed by end of April 2016. The process of establishing a tree nursery as was reported in the last report is also ongoing.

b) Surveying of the Biota of the land allocated for the Botanical Garden

This work has been ongoing since November 2015. There was a delay in the resumption of data collection after Christmas holiday, but the work is now progressing, and the study will be concluded end of June 2016.

c) Establishment of Environmental Clubs in 10 Primary Schools

This is one activity that has made very good progress. The selection of the schools was done in December 2015 and January 2016. Initially 10 schools were selected but the local leadership were so impressed with the initiative that they requested for increase in the number of schools to cover all the four sub-counties. Currently, the schools are distributed in the four sub-counties in Nyeri County as follows: Mathira=10, Othaya=four, Tetu=six and Kieni=five. This has led to additional 15 schools due to demand from the county leaders. The establishment of the clubs started in January 2016 and so far eight schools have active Environmental Clubs (Plates 1 and 2). This process is ongoing and should be completed by end of June 2016.



Plate 1: Gitunduti Primary School Environmental Club in Mathira being trained by Dr. Mugo Mware (squatting) on how to establish a tree nursery. Looking on is Prof. P. Aloo-Obudho



Plate 2: Muthangira Primary School Environmental Club in Kieni (During International Day of the Forest, 21st March 2016).

d) Partnerships established through the project

As mentioned in my first report, the Kenya Forest Services (KFS) had donated to us seedlings to use during rehabilitation of degraded land in Nyeri County. When I shared this with the Chief Executive Officer in charge of Environment in Nyeri County Government, he said the County Government would like to partner with us in the rehabilitation of degraded areas especially in Kieni Sub-County. On the 21st March 2016, Karatina University, the KFS and Nyeri County Government celebrated the International Day of the Forests at Gatwanyaga Primary School in Kieni Sub-County. During the event, I launched the establishment of environmental clubs in primary schools in Nyeri. This was witnessed by the Deputy Governor of the County, his senior officials and senior officers from KFS (Plate 3- Newspaper cutting). The Deputy Governor launched the rehabilitation of degraded areas through tree planting. We launched these as projects being championed by Karatina University Rufford project team (Plates 3 and 4).



Plate 3: Newspaper cutting on the celebration of the international day of the Forests



Plate 4: Prof. P. Aloo-Obudho explaining the purpose for establishment of the Environmental Clubs in Nyeri County during the International Day of the Forests and the launch of the clubs at Gatunyaga Primary School in Kieni, Nyeri County.

A follow up meeting is scheduled to take place soon to discuss how the three institutions will promote the project dubbed *Greening Nyeri County* through rehabilitation of degraded lands and establishment of environmental clubs in primary schools. Karatina University through the Rufford Project will continue with establishment of Environmental Clubs in primary schools.



Plate 5: Prof. P. Aloo-Obudho talking to environmental Club Members after the launch of the clubs

e) Conclusion

I am happy to report that this project is opening doors for partnerships and we wish we could roll it out to the other counties in Kenya. Karatina University is the first institution to launch the establishment of Environmental Clubs in Primary schools to sensitise young children on environmental conservation. We are now collaborating with KFS and Nyeri County Government because of the project. We look forward to bringing other partners to join us in conserving our environment.