Project Update: September 2016

This was the third major activity of this project and the aim, running from June to September 2016, was to develop nurseries and plant fruit and non-fruit trees. The expected outcome was to lay the framework for an agroforestry system that will restore lost food chains for bats and orchestrate a process to regrow destroyed habitat.

Methodology

1. With help from two experts from the Ekona based National Institute of Agronomic Research, we selected and bought 100,000 seeds of fast-growing trees whose fruits and shades will provide direct food and roosting opportunities for bats as well as attract insects eaten by bats. Buying this number of seeds was part of our risk management strategy to ensure that the inevitable loss of seedlings to natural and human causes in the nursery wouldn't affect our target of planting 70,400 trees. At the end of the process, we had 71,438 plants in hand. In keeping to our model of operating at low cost and minimal logistics, we were successful in making farmers develop their nurseries in close proximity to planting sites while the project team also developed its own nurseries to facilitate demonstration purposes. For most farmers, this was the opportunity for them to develop nurseries for cocoa plants to expand their plantations or replace aging plants.

Project volunteers display selected seeds for nursery development

2. With the incentive/opportunity to develop nursery for new cocoa plants, all 352 farmers took part in nursery development, each farmer receiving 270 different seeds that were grown in well-constructed shades designed by the project team to avoid intense sunshine and heavy rainfall. Despite the efforts of the project team to ensure a high seed survival rate, farmers faced challenges in the form of insects destroying the young plants. This was put under control with natural insecticides developed from garlic, pepper, onion and soap, with farmers ending up with an average of 210 trees to be planted. This was facilitated by 25 farmer supervisors and 75 volunteers. Farmers were organised and managed in groups of 13, with each group's activity overseen by one farmer supervisor and three volunteers.

Nursery point under construction

A farmer supervisor undertakes monitoring of nursery development with a farmer.

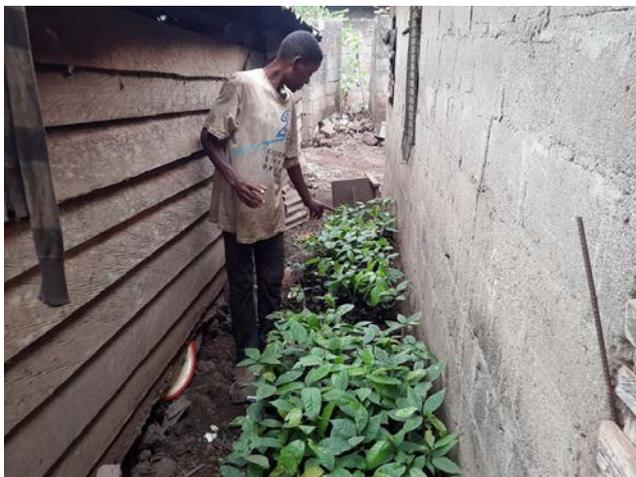*A group of farmers develop their nursery close to the Koke River*

A boy and a girl inspect the growth of plants in their father's nursery.

A farmer develops his nursery close to his farm shed in Ekona.

A farmer inspects his nursery developed besides his kitchen for close monitoring.

Farmers and volunteers listen to project team to get information on best practices for planting of trees.

A farmer, farmer supervisor and volunteer check a nursery to confirm its readiness for planting.

3. When nurseries were fully developed, farmers received training on best practices for planting of trees as seen above. This was to ensure the trees are planted with higher chances of survival. When nurseries were fully developed, farmers received training on best practices for planting of trees as seen above. This was to ensure the trees are planted with higher chances of survival.

Farmers and some youth volunteers get instructions and demonstration on best practices for tree planting.

Farmers and volunteers load tree seedlings in wheelbarrow, ready for transportation to planting site.

Farmers arrive planting site and get ready for the day's work.

Farmer, Peter Njoke, digs a hole to start planting his trees.

The first of 200 trees is planted by Peter Njoke, with support from a volunteer and supervisor.