

Project Update: December 2007

(A) Accomplished activities

1. Assessment of early growth performance

Most of the seedlings which were transplanted didn't survive. The most probable reason is the need for more formal knowledge on how to raise indigenous tree seedlings by farmers. Many farmers are used to handle exotic tree seedlings which their nursery and silvicultural techniques are known by farmers through extension services.

Most of the indigenous trees establish themselves through natural regeneration. Their survival on farms therefore is subject to farmers' selection preferences. Through this Rufford funded project, awareness about *Prunus africana*, and actually on environmental conservation in the study area has grown drastically. Therefore although nursery seedlings did not survive significantly, the current survey observed a considerable amount of retained and managed natural regenerants of *P. africana*. To see that farmers have a serious involvement in utilizing traditional tree management skills to ensure *P. africana* increase in number in their farms is a good indicator of this Rufford project success. Even the older trees are now well taken care of; the tree was among the most human misused and badly managed species in homegardens through unnecessary damage to the bark debranching and topping.

2. Enhancing wider coverage of farmers to domesticate *P. africana*

Three more village communities have been linked with this project. Awareness seminars, farmer visits and field observations have been done. In all villages the project was accepted and farmers are eager to be involved for the following reasons; which were put forward by themselves: (i) they have understood the concern that *Prunus* is a valuable species but it is disappearing due to mismanagement and therefore calling for urgent conservation interventions (ii) the fact that *Prunus* is a potential alternative cash crop/tree which can contribute to their household income basket and (iii) they have witnessed a decline in environmental health in their villages and therefore fully accepting and ready to be involved in environmental rehabilitation/conservation initiative.

(B) Remaining activities

Vegetative propagation to produce rooted cuttings for planting by farmers is the main remaining activity. This activity will be done in a participatory approach so that farmers can practice the techniques involved. This will be done from December and planting in the farmers fields can start during the long rains in March