

Project Update: August 2018

Since October 2017, three field trips have been made to Mount Moco, in October 2017, January 2018 and May 2018. During these visits, highly significant progress has been made with project targets, with some targets already surpassed. Instead of hiring 12 assistants during field visits, up to 60 local assistants have been hired to advance the project more quickly than expected. More villagers are interested in working with the project, which means that the project has become a major temporary employer of villagers. We have also started to employ women in our work, and were pleasantly surprised to discover that men in the village were not opposed to this.

According to specific project activities:

1. *Establish firebreaks around two areas totalling 15 hectares.* We have already established firebreaks around two forest patches totalling 22.3 ha of habitat. These were reinforced in May 2018 before the first fires of the 2018 dry season.
2. *Expand the nursery to hold 800 plants.* The nursery has been massively expanded and currently holds >1300 plants.
3. *Increase planting rates to >400 plants per season.* During the 2017-8 wet season only 230 plants were replanted. This is largely due to the late arrival of rains: conditions were not right for planting during the October 2017 field trip (in October 2016 conditions for planting were very good), so all planting was done during a single visit in January 2018. However, the total will be increased for the 2018-9 season.
4. *Investigate fuel efficient stove use.* In October 2017 we visited c. 20 households to investigate usage of fuel efficient stoves, and discussed their use during a general village meeting. In most cases people still owned the stoves, which were functional, but were not using them. About five households used the stoves on a regular basis (>50% of days). A few households had not taken care of the stoves, which were broken. We held a village-led demonstration of the stoves, and encouraged those who use the stoves regularly to assist fellow villagers in the proper use of the stoves. Social inertia was identified as a major contributing factor for not using the stoves, so we are considering different incentives to encourage use.
5. *Continue community education.* During village meetings held during the October 2017 and January 2018 field trips, open discussions have been held regarding the contributions that forest make to villagers wellbeing, especially related to water quality and supply and preventing soil erosion.

To support the project into the future we have submitted a first round proposal for Darwin Initiative Funding, working with local and international partners.

