

Project Update: October 2018

Introduction

Ruvu-South Coastal Forest Reserve forms one of the most important coastal forests in the eastern African coastal belt. The reserve habitat is comprised of dry, scrub and riverine Zanzibar-inhambane forest mosaics. The reserve provides important habitat for most endemic and endangered fauna and flora species. This project activity was conducted with the aim of building capacity for Ruvu-Coastal Forest Reserve management on the ecology, threats and conservations of Sokoke pipit bird in the reserve. Community training was conducted in villages surrounding the reserve. Communities were trained on restoration of endangered Sokoke pipit bird habitat, biodiversity, gender-based conservation awareness and forest protection. These were done purposely with the aim of addressing activities that endanger the habitat of the Sokoke pipit bird and forest reserve as a whole. Conservation-based Women Economic Groups were organised to reduce dependence and exploitation pressure on the forest resources.

Forest Managers Capacity Building

Project team intended to conduct capacity building workshop to Ruvu forest managers and workers on the ecology, threats and conservations of Sokoke pipit bird in the reserve. However, due to insufficient resources, Tanzania Forest Services (TFS) agency has not been able to establish office and allocate permanent staff at the forest reserve. Project team hold a discussion meeting with the district management team and was informed that:

- Due to insufficient staff and financial constraint, the authority has not been able to establish office and allocate permanent at Ruvu coastal forest.
- The forest reserve is managed centrally from the district office through occasional patrols and visit
- District collaborates and depends on Village Natural Resources Committee from villages surrounding forest reserve in forest management, protection, patrols and laws enforcement.

Community Training

Team conducted successful conservation awareness training to 93 community members from six villages out of eight planned. The villages included Boko, Soga, Timiza, Kipakenge, Boma and Kipangeni. Due to difficulties in logistical arrangements and administrative protocols, we were unable to conduct training in two villages. Overall, pre-test conducted prior conservation awareness training indicated very low knowledge and understanding of conservation issues and endangered Sokoke pipit bird. Post-tests indicated moderate increase in knowledge and understanding amongst training participants. However, we were challenged by a broad gap that we realised it was existing between traditional ecological knowledge and contemporary conservation knowledge.



Project lead leading discussion during community training at Kipakenge

Conservation-based Economic Group

Project team was able to mobilise and organise five conservation based economic groups in each village. In July and August, 2018, groups were provided with basic entrepreneurial and project management skills and supported to enhance (for the villages with already established income generating small activity) and/initiate for the villages which had no income generating activities. Two villages Kipangeni and Kipangege were supported with beekeeping project, two other villages Boko and Soga were supported to establish small chicken project and one Isola village were supported to establish small tree nursery project for selling fruits, medicinal and fodder plants seedlings.



Left: Project lead mobilizing group at Baka village. Right: Nursery establishment at Kipangege village.



Left: Featured small project: Project lead during monitoring visit at Nyota Njema chick group, Soga village. Right: Beehives at Isola village.

Challenges and Recommendations

i. Empowerment of Village Natural Resources Committee (VNRC)

Project team noted that due to the problem of understaffing, Tanzania Forest Service Agency was unable to station staff and officers at Ruvu-South Forest Reserve. The forest reserve is managed by staff from district headquarters through occasional patrolling, visits and through engagement of the Village Natural Resources Committee from villages surrounding the forest reserve. While VNRC plays critical role in management and conservation of Ruvu south ecosystem, they do not have any on-work skills, knowledge and understanding of forest ecosystem conservation and sustainable utilisation of forest resources. The project suggest immediate support and on work training to these committee in order to ensure sustainable conservation, food and livelihood security of communities surrounding Ruvu south forest reserve.

ii. Climate Change Impacts on Livelihood and Food Security

While working with communities surrounding Ruvu-South Forest Reserve and conducting monitoring visits in October, 2018, the project team observed severe impact of climate change on agriculture, livelihood and food security. Communities are affected by prolonged period of dry seasons, soil erosion along agricultural fields, reduced yields and productivity. Water sources for domestic uses and small income generating projects are scarce and available with difficulties. After successful rising of 200 chickens from 60 supported in June 2018, a small project in Soga village are facing difficulty in securing water source for their livelihood and chicken project. They are currently using hand dug bored well which is not safe and unreliable to secure water. Communities showed no awareness on climate change impacts adaptation awareness and strategies. To ensure sustainability of the established projects and enhance conservation and livelihood security, the project team suggests immediate awareness creation and community empowerment.



Project lead (first left) observing Nyota Njema chicken keeping group member drawing water from unsafe bored well for 200 raised chickens and domestic uses at Soga village.