

Project Update: March 2019

Detailed bird and grassland survey was conducted between November and December 2018. During the survey, six local youths were involved as a way of training them basic survey techniques. A total of 40 farms were visited across South and Kinangop. The preliminary results of the survey indicated that pressure on the remaining grasslands is still very high. The quality and extent of the grass cover and the availability of suitable habitat structure – tussocks mixed with short grass is diminishing rapidly. About 400 individuals were counted during the survey. Other notable grassland species recorded were the Jackson's widowbird and long-tailed widowbird.

The survey has helped us to identify 20 farmers who will be issued with high-quality breeding rams. However, due to the continued dry spell in Kenya which has greatly affected Kinangop grasslands and the livestock, we have planned to buy and distribute the rams once the rains start hopefully in April 2019.

In October 2018, we visited six previous farmers to access the status of their grasslands as well as the sheep and get feedback from them. Overall, the farmers have improved on their sheep management practices with most of their flocks in good status. However, we also noticed that there is still a combination of mixed sheep breeds among them. In our discussion with them, we emphasized on the need to maintain pure breeds especially Corriedale due to its value for wool.

The first farmers' training workshop was held in February 2019 with the aim of bringing together initial farmers engaged in the previous projects as well as the new identified farmers. A livestock management expert, a local veterinary officer and county government officials from the ministry of agriculture, livestock and fisheries were invited to educate the farmers on sheep management. The importance of sheep management and its relation towards contribution of conservation of Sharpe's longclaw and the grassland was emphasised. In addition to this, the new project was officially introduced. Mr. Mbatia, one of the farmers who spoke on behalf of the farmers and greatly acknowledged the support they receive from Friends of Kinangop and Njabini Wool Crafters and requested the local government to extend their support to them mostly on sheep farming to maximise their income. The second farmers' training is planned towards the end of the project.

20 sheep farmers to be involved in the 1-year deworming programme were identified and with the support from a local veterinary the programme is in progress. Out of the 20 farmers, 10 farmers are used as a control to have a comparison between scheduled and traditional system. A detailed report on this programme will be produced at the end of the project.

In February 2019, 15 local youths (six men and nine women) were trained on wool spinning and weaving at the Njabini Wool Crafters Society. As a result of the training, two of the new trainees have been absorbed by Njabini Wool Crafters to contribute towards the production of quality wool products by using the wool received from local farmers.

Environmental education programme has been planned to take place between May to August 2019. The programme will take place in four identified local secondary and primary school with a target audience of at least 300 students. However, in the recent

past we had very nice media (print, electronic and social) coverage both in local language and in English. The links are: <https://bit.ly/2XeI46U> and <https://bit.ly/2GnYsfN>. The two features were very helpful in highlighting our work.

Our relationship and collaboration with the county government is getting stronger where we regularly get considered to participate in relevant county government exhibitions or workshops/training.

Samuel Bakari and John Gitogo attended the Rufford Small Grants Conference in Nairobi which was held in December 2018. The conference was very helpful and was used as for further networking as well as learning new skills of fundraising and project management

