

Project Update: March 2021

This stage of project implementation was to create awareness amongst the wider Mwache community of the importance of restoration/ conservation of Mwache Mangrove forest. Initially this was to be achieved through visits to learning institutions (i.e. primary and secondary schools in Mwache community) but their closure due to the coronavirus pandemic made us to change tactic. We therefore resorted to form a small motivated musical team made up of local communities. This musical team with help of a song composer composed two songs in Swahili, the first to enlighten the community on importance of mangroves forest restoration, and the second to motivate the community on why they should conserve / restore Mwache Mangroves. Then each Friday of the week from December 2020 to February 2021 the team assembled at designated places to sing the songs to the general community/ public (Figure 1). This awareness creation tactic was very effective with both the younger and older generation.



Mwache local community members singing conservation songs to create awareness. © Gilbert Atuga.

Subsequently, there was need to expand the conservation area in order to reverse the loss of momentum on conservation initiatives during the coronavirus pandemic, hence keep the conservation fire burning. A designated new area was therefore identified; the idea was to involve the general community. The first phase of site preparation was excavation by the local community in order to remove accumulated sediment which acted as a stressor to normal tidal sea water flow to and from mangroves (from fieldwork observations) (Figure 2). Mangrove seedlings were planted under close monitoring to observe how the seedlings fared (Figure 3). The impact of this activity was to make the local community realise that uncontrollable cutting of mangroves trees for their daily use is easier, but the restoration process is a painstaking affair. This may act as an incentive for behaviour change away from Mwache mangrove degradation and hence protect the remaining mangrove cover while forging ahead with restoration efforts.



Mwache local community members participating in ground preparation for expansion of mangroves planting. © Gilbert Atuga.



A section of progress on planted mangroves seedlings from excavated area with community participation after four months. © Gilbert Atuga.