

Project Update: December 2020

Background

Mount Loleza Forest Reserve (MLFR) is among the ecological potential areas in the southern highlands of Tanzania with diverse flora and fauna offering ecological and economic benefits to the local communities around. However, the conservation status of MLFR is deteriorating due to deforestation, agriculture, and encroachment. These activities have caused loss of plant species with medicinal values as well as habitat destruction for many birds and animal species including the blue swallow (*Hirundo atrocaerulea*) which is in the Vulnerable IUCN category. This project therefore aimed at educating the communities around the MLFR on the importance of conserving the forest reserve, providing training to village environmental committees, and supporting the environmentally friendly income generating activities started by the local communities with the goal of reducing pressure and over dependence of the forest products from the MLFR.



Picture: A view of Mt Loleza Forest Reserve

Project activities and key accomplishment

(i) Project inception and awareness raising

The project was introduced to all stakeholders including, among others, the project team, villages leaders, environmental committees from villages around the MLFR, Mbeya University of Science and Technology and Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology. The goal of this activity was to present the new project to stakeholders, to set and plan new goals and objectives as well as to discuss how these activities will be accomplished. The project was also introduced to villagers

through village assemblies and people were given opportunities to contribute on what should be done for the betterment of conserving the MLFR.



Pictures: Meetings with village leaders (left) and environmental committee (right)

(ii) Status of the income generating activities

During phase one (2019), the project supported the income generating activities (IGA) such as beekeeping and tree nurseries that were initiated by the local communities surrounding the MLFR. The status of most of IGA is good and some villages have started generating income by selling tree seedlings and honey. However, there are few villages where trees planted were destroyed/eaten by livestock. The village game scouts in these villages were encouraged to do regular patrols in the areas where trees are destroyed by livestock. Also, the environmental committees were encouraged to educate the communities on the values of these trees and penalise those who will be caught doing any activity that may harm the trees or the MLFR in general.



Pictures: Patrolling the MLFR to check the status of beehives and trees planted

(iii) Support from the project

The project continues to support the IGA by providing training to the village game scouts, village environmental committees, educating the communities on the benefits of conserving the MLFR, donating working gears (including GPS, camera, t-shirts and flashlights), beehives and other equipment. These IGA will help to reduce overdependence of forest products from the MLFR.



Pictures: Working equipment donated by the project to the village game scouts



Pictures: Beehives and tree seedlings donated by the project