

Project Update: August 2023

Project activities conducted during the reporting period.

1.0 Public awareness and conservation education

Public awareness and conservation education are vital components of any successful conservation efforts. They serve as the cornerstone for fostering a deep-rooted commitment to preserve our planet's natural resources and biodiversity. These initiatives play a crucial role in enlightening individuals and communities about the value of our environment, the imminent threats it faces, and the actions they can take to mitigate these threats. By raising awareness, we empower people to make informed decisions in their daily lives, such as sustainable use of natural resources from the forest including firewood, timber, poles, etc.

Conservation education goes a step further by equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to actively participate in conservation efforts, whether it's protecting local ecosystems, advocating for policies, or engaging in sustainable practices. Ultimately, public awareness and conservation education not only shape environmentally responsible citizens but also build a collective sense of responsibility to safeguard our planet for future generations.

After the establishment and launching of the project we conducted a survey to identify some degraded areas that could be vital for the restoration activities of the project as well as to the conservation authorities of Uluguru Mountains. Afterwards, the project team-initiated activities for sensitising and raising conservation awareness to local communities around the Uluguru mountains. These activities included.

1.1 Education and conservation education to local village officials

The project team conducted conservation education programme to the local communities in Bigwa Kisiwani and Ualimu villages. During the opening of the training, the team leader welcomed participants and briefly reminded them on the aim and goals of the project as well as activities and topics to be discussed during the conservation education session.



Pictures 1 and 2: Village leaders and members of the environmental committee during the conservation education session

The session was interactive, and participants were free to air out their views regarding the conservation of the Uluguru mountains. The project team also assessed the

knowledge and awareness of the participants as far as the natural resource conservation is concerned. The knowledge gaps identified, and challenges brought forward by the participants were then addressed by the project team.

1.2 Education and conservation education to primary school students

Similarly, the project team was able to conduct conservation education session to the primary school students in Bigwa Kisiwani and Ualimu villages, which are among the villages surrounding the Uluguru mountains forest reserves. The school administration was contacted prior the visit and informed on the aims and the objectives of the project and benefits that the school, village and the forest reserve in general will get from engaging students in the conservation activities from this early stage of their educational journey. We started by giving brief introduction of the project then engage students in question-and-answer session. We asked them about the environment, forest, mountains, plants and animals as well as conservation in general. Students were able to answer correctly most of the questions we asked indicating their good understanding on the environmental issues. Later on, the project team and school administration planned to establish school environmental clubs that will promote conservation in schools and engage students in restoration activities of the Uluguru mountains.



Pictures 3 to 6: Conservation education sessions during school visits

2.0 Preliminary findings

The project field activities have uncovered the trend in both the use of natural resources from the forest and the understanding of environmental conservation among the local communities and the forest reserve management, both

acknowledging the significance of preserving and sustainable use of the forest resources for the long-term survival of the endemic flora and fauna in the Uluguru mountains. The project team also identified some challenges including lack of clear and effective communication channels between the forest reserve and the local communities around, insufficient funds to cover for transport, incentives for the patrol team and other costs for patrolling the forest reserve in Uluguru mountains.

On the other hand, the project's effort in raising public awareness and providing conservation education to the communities around the Uluguru mountains including primary school students was a success with promising results. The feedback from the discussions and the questions posed to the participants revealed their acceptance and willingness to conserve the Uluguru mountains. Moreover, the primary school students were very knowledgeable on the environmental conservation particularly the forests in the Uluguru mountains. Their active participation and eagerness to learn could be a good indication of their potential to serve as conservation ambassadors within their community.

3.0 Next move

The project team is preparing for upcoming restoration activities particularly the tree planting. This activity will be conducted in identified areas that were degraded as well as in the village lands. The restoration activities will engage stakeholders such as village environmental committees, students and forest officers from TFS.