

Progress Update: December 2023

Project activities conducted from September to December 2023

(i) Training and tree planting in schools and on degraded land

Tree planting is among the most crucial initiatives central to enhancing the integrity of the Uluguru Mountain ecosystem. The endeavour of tree planting in the Uluguru Mountains, coupled with the training of young generations and environmental committees in sustainable practices, plays a pivotal role in fostering environmental stewardship. Following the educational sessions on conservation and the significance of preserving the vital Uluguru Mountain ecosystems, the project transitioned to actively involve young participants and environmental committees in tree planting activities, both around schools and in degraded lands.

A collaboration with the Tanzania Forest Service Agency (TFS) facilitated the procurement of 3500 trees for four villages (850 trees in each village), encompassing various species such as fruit trees, shade trees for schools, and native trees essential for ecological restoration and reforestation (Pictures 1-6). The planting process was meticulously executed, emphasising key procedures to ensure optimal survival rates. This included the careful selection of healthy seedlings, proper handling during transportation, precise hole digging, and accurate seedling planting techniques. The comprehensive instruction and demonstration on these effective procedures were paramount to guaranteeing the success of the tree planting initiative, contributing significantly to the sustainable rejuvenation of the Uluguru Mountain environment.





Pictures (1-6): Tree planting activities with local communities and students within project area

(ii) Trainings and technical support on building improved cooking stoves

Similarly, the project provided technical support on locally improved cooking stoves within the Uluguru Mountains Forest Reserves. Participants from four villages, Kisosa, Bigwa kisiwani, Ruvuma and Ualimu, representing various community groups of different age and gender, were reached through training and demonstration sessions (Pictures 7-10). Notably, the inclusive approach ensured the involvement of the young generation, who, despite being on holiday leave, actively participated, facilitating potential knowledge transfer within their peer groups.

The training and demonstration sessions commenced with a comprehensive overview of the project objectives, with a specific focus on the demonstration of improved cooking stoves. Subsequently, there was an extensive discussion addressing the cost-effective availability of necessary materials and the participants' understanding of the importance of adopting these stoves for the Uluguru community's benefit and individual health.



Pictures (7-10): Preparation and demonstration for building local improved stoves in project area.

The project also provided raw materials and other essential items for constructing improved cooking stoves for 40 households (10 from each village). The stoves are highly efficient and use less firewood thus promoting environmental sustainability. The training sessions not only equipped the participants with practical skills but also served as a platform for valuable discussions on the environmental and health benefits of adopting improved cooking stoves in the villages surrounding the forest reserve. The accompanying pictures below offer a summarised visual representation of the training.





Pictures (11-16): Some of the local improved cooking stoves built in the homestead of villagers.

Preliminary findings

The project has received positive reception from local communities in activities that aimed to enhance their capacity for protecting the mountain ecosystems. The active participation of these communities in tree planting activities demonstrate their commitment to both personal benefits and biodiversity conservation in the forest reserve. Our project places a strong emphasis on involving local communities in conservation activities, recognising the importance of their engagement in adopting new technologies and sharing indigenous knowledge.

The enthusiasm of students exceeded the project's scope, with many expressing keen interest in monitoring trees at their homesteads. While budget constraints prevented immediate inclusion of this request, we proposed it as a future activity to further engage and empower the students. Notably, the introduction of improved cooking stoves was very appreciated by the communities particularly the training and provision of building materials supported by The Rufford Foundation. The discussions among participants highlighted the potential of these stoves on significantly reducing deforestation by reducing the use of forest products such as charcoal and firewood. During the training sessions, the project team emphasised the use of maize cobs as an alternative to charcoal. For stoves that still required firewood, we encouraged the utilisation of tree branches pruned from the farms. However, community members raised existing challenges, including lack of reliable seedlings for planting in farmlands and home, and need for technical support and logistical arrangements including

transport. These findings underscore the need for addressing these challenges and providing technical support to enhance the sustainability of conservation efforts established by this project.



Pictures (17-18): Improved cooking stoves that uses maize cobs and fewer firewood.

Next move

The project team is gearing up for upcoming activity centered around forest protection and firefighting. Given the rapidly growing population in the villages around the Mt Uluguru Forest Reserve and the escalating pressure on the forest, bushfires have become inevitable. Consequently, it is imperative to educate and bolster the community's ability and skills in firefighting, making them reliable assets in this crucial aspect. By enhancing the local communities' skills and techniques in firefighting, we not only broaden their knowledge in conservation education but also boost their confidence in effectively preventing and combating bushfires.