

## Project Update: November 2013

**Summary:** Very satisfactory progress was made with the Mount Moco reforestation project during the November 2013 field trip to Kanjonde. Thirty one new trees were planted onto the mountain in a new cleared area, bringing the total of planted trees to 139 and covering an area of about 3500 m<sup>2</sup>. Another area was also prepared for rehabilitation. All planted trees were measured and their health assessed; only one tree has died. Maintenance work was conducted on the nursery, which included moving all plants into their own bags. The nursery, divided into three sections, currently contains just over 400 saplings in their own bags, some of which should be ready for replanting in February 2014.



**Figure 1.** Three nursery guardians are joined by two additional assistants to plant 31 additional trees, clear new areas for rehabilitation, erect a cattle-exclusion fence and maintain planted areas and the nursery.

I spent three full days (6-8 November 2013) at Kanjonde, Mount Moco, together with Michael Rogerson of CGG. This was the first visit since May 2013.

The nursery was in good condition with 31 additional plants having reached a large enough size to replant. There was very little leaf curl or insect damage, although three plants showed some leaf burn. During our visit each sapling was moved to its own bag. At the end of the visit the nursery contained just over 400 saplings (in three sections). I hope another 20 plants will be ready for replanting during the next planned visit in February 2014.

The second activity during the visit was to continue to reforest the mountain. The area cleared in May 2013 for replanting was prepared and 31 saplings were planted, measured and labelled. This brings the total number of trees replanted to 139. This area was also fenced off to prevent cattle from entering the area and trampling the young saplings (see image below).



Replanting success was monitored by measuring maximum stem diameter, height, maximum canopy diameter and canopy diameter perpendicular to maximum canopy diameter of trees. Only one of the 139 trees has not survived. This tree died very quickly after replanting, probably from rapid exposure to sunlight.

The final activity conducted was to clear a new area for rehabilitation. Very rank herbaceous growth slows down tree growth and the heavy biomass of fine materials allows fire to burn through it and burn back trees. Based on the recommendations of Clewell & Aronson (2013. Ecological Restoration. Second edition) another approach to rehabilitation (i.e. not replanting) is being tested in which natural regeneration of trees is allowed to take place by clearing an area of fast-growing, fire-prone plants. This area will be cleared regularly of herbaceous growth and bracken in order to allow forest trees to naturally regenerate. We hope this method will allow us to rehabilitate larger areas.

The coming months are expected to be wet, making November an ideal time to plant trees. This period has the added advantage that the soil is moist and soft, making it easy to dig holes for planting. I hope to make annual visits in November and January/February as the

main planting season. Other field trips will concentrate on nursery maintenance and clearing areas for planting and in order to reduce fire risk.