PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

FORESTRY AND LAND RESTORATION ACTION FOR KENYA'S NDC (FLaRAK)

NETFUND
Leading the way to a greener future

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Forest and Land Restoration Actions for Kenya's NDC (FLaRAK) was a project executed by the UNDP Kenya and implemented by different partners in Kenya including the National Environment Trust Fund (NETFUND), with financial support from the government of Japan under Climate Promise. This was a one-year project commenced in April 2022 to March 2023 and was aimed at catalysing the implementation of Kenya's NDC whilst building a climate resilience. The project's objective was to resolve systemic barriers that continue to hinder sustainable tree growing and ecosystem and land degradation.

In the partnership with the UNDP Kenya, NETFUND was responsible for delivering three key outputs under the projects namely:

- Output 2.4 Build capacity of women, youth, and Persons Living with Disabilities in the production of quality seedlings as well as tree planting and growing activities.
- Output 2.6: Providing for the active involvement of vulnerable and marginalised groups in the society in the re-afforestation and conservation efforts to be implemented
- Output 3.1: Protection, rehabilitation, and restoration of public forests and degraded landscapes

NETFUND successfully implemented the activities under these outputs to realize significant achievements relating to climate change actions. This Project Completion Report (PCR) therefore presents key project achievements, key challenges faced and lessons learnt during the implementation period.

Firstly, the project provided green job opportunities through nature-based solutions such as tree seedlings production, beekeeping as well as sale of medicinal forest processed products thereby significantly improving livelihoods of the adjacent forest communities within the targeted ecosystems. The involvement of the local communities with emphasis on women, youth and people with disability led to creation of 477 green jobs directly impacting over 12,000 direct beneficiaries as well as 51,000 indirect beneficiaries.

Similarly, the project also contributed to increased awareness on environmental conservation within the targeted ecosystems. The project in its awareness efforts through strategies such as public community meetings, project launch, community sensitization forums and media features, contributed to awareness on the need for environmental conservation particularly forest conservation and tree growing. This led to drawing attention of key stakeholders on conservation of degraded ecosystems including attracting the private sector and other partners in the conservation efforts. In Kaptagat Ecosystem, the project attracted financial and in-kind support from 51 private sector players towards conservation and rehabilitation of the ecosystem. In Kakamega on the other hand, M-PESA foundation committed to support the forest fencing activities.

Lastly, in pursuit of sustainability, the project established partnerships with various stakeholders including local communities, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and private entities. Notably, NETFUND signed a partnership agreement with County Governments of Kakamega and Vihiga, Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Forest Service, Kenya Forestry Research Institute and The Rhino Ark Charitable Trust to enhance management, conservation and protection of Kakamega Forest.

The implementation process for the FLaRAK project highlighted key critical success factors for conservation and climate change projects, including the value of partnerships, multi stakeholder approach, community engagement and participation, and the role of nature-based enterprises in conservation and resilience building.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CFA	Community Forest Association
CORE	Community Roads Empowerment
ENSDA	Ewaso Nyiro South Development Authority
FLaRAK	Forestry and Land Restoration Action for Kenya's NDC
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
KEFRI	Kenya Forest Research Institute
KFS	Kenya Forest Service
KIBT	Kenya Institute of Business Training
KWS	Kenya Wildlife Service
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NETFUND	National Environment Trust Fund
PCR	Project Completion Report
PWDs	People with Disabilities
ToTs	Trainers of Trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States Dollar

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The National Environment Trust Fund (NETFUND) has been a partner with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Kenya in sustainable environmental management and ecosystems conservation efforts under Kenya's National Tree Growing Programme. It is in light of this partnership that in 2022, UNDP Kenya selected NETFUND as one of the implementing partners for the Forest and Land Restoration Action for Kenya's NDC (FLaRAK) project under the Climate Promise.

The Climate Promise is UNDP's commitment to ensure that any country wishing to increase the ambition of their national climate pledge to the Paris Agreement receives the required support. The FLaRAK project was therefore, one of the initiatives intended to deliver catalytic interventions that implement Kenya's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), contributing to climate change mitigation and building climate resilience. The project's objective was to resolve systemic barriers that continue to hinder sustainable tree growing and unmitigated ecosystem and land degradation. To deliver the project objective, a four-prong strategy was adopted:

> Strengthening forest governance

> Enhancing production capacity and accessibility of certified and quality seedlings

>Piloting and scaling up appropriate technologies for tree growing

>Sensitising and mobilising the public to participate in tree growing activities

The project was funded by the Government of Japan at the tune of USD 2,680,898 under the execution of UNDP Kenya and targeted strategic ecosystems of Kenya; Kaptagat Forest, Kakamega Forest and the Suswa-Magadi Ecosystem. These ecosystems were identified as pilot sites where robust forest and land restoration and protection activities were implemented.

As an implementing partner, NETFUND was tasked with delivering on three output areas namely:

Output 2.4 Build capacity of women, youth, and Persons Living with Disabilities in the production of quality seedlings as well as tree planting and growing activities.

Output 2.6: Providing for the active involvement of vulnerable and marginalised groups in the society in the re-afforestation and conservation efforts

Output 3.1: Protection, rehabilitation, and restoration of public forests and degraded landscapes

To deliver on the other components of the project, UNDP Kenya partnered with various organisations and agencies including: Kenya Forest Research Institute (KEFRI), Ewaso Nyiro South Development Authority (ENSDA), Community Roads Empowerment (CORE). Other partners who worked closely with the implementing partners included the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), the Rhino Ark, County governments of Kakamega, Vihiga, Narok, Kajiado and Elgeyo Marakwet.

This Project Completion Report (PCR) is a documentation of the achievements realised under NETFUND led components, the project successes, challenges, lessons learnt and recommendations for designing and delivering similar projects in future.

2.0 OVERALL PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT

The FLaRAK project has demonstrated the potential to deliver social, ecological and economic outcomes through conservation initiatives. Having successfully implemented the project components, NETFUND has noted remarkable achievements in restoration and community empowerment.

The project significantly contributed to improving livelihoods for communities in the target ecosystems. At its core, the project provided an array of green job opportunities through involvement in nature-based enterprises such as; beekeeping, seedlings production and domestication, processing and sale of products from medicinal plants. Additionally, local communities earned wages as they were involved in tree growing, fencing activities and fence maintenance. The earnings provided capital to the households to increase and diversify their income and improve livelihoods. This potentially reduces pressure on forest resources. Women, youth and PWDs found purpose in nurturing tree seedlings, involvement in agroforestry, re-afforestation and apiary establishment. In this context the project created 477 green jobs for vulnerable community members. In return, these green opportunities directly impacted over 12,000 beneficiaries and approximately 51,000 indirect beneficiaries.

The project also contributed to increased awareness on environment conservation in the target ecosystems. The project made deliberate efforts in undertaking comprehensive awareness/sensitization strategies in undertaking activities which included public barazas, public launch, community sensitization meetings and media outreach. About 5,000 community members were directly reached with various messages on conservation and restoration. These activities were geared towards impacting the community to adopt positive environmental practices particularly on forest and land restoration as well as community buy-in and support.

Additionally, through this awareness effort the project was able to draw attention of key stakeholders on conservation of key ecosystems. For example, in Kakamega forest, Kenya's First Lady adopted and committed to restore 200 Ha, while the Mpesa foundation also committed to support the second phase (34km) of the construction of the electric fence. In the Kaptagat ecosystem, the project attracted financial and in-kind support from 51 private sector players towards tree growing and conservation.

To support the implementation and enhance sustainability of the project, NETFUND established partnerships with various stakeholders including local communities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector entities. Notably, NETFUND signed a partnership agreement with County Governments of Kakamega and Vihiga, Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Forest Service, Kenya Forestry Research Institute and The Rhino Ark Charitable Trust to enhance management, conservation and protection of Kakamega Forest.

Overall, the FLaRAK project made significant strides in environmental conservation, job creation, and livelihood improvement. By addressing both ecological and social aspects, it has the potential to bring positive, lasting change to the community and the environment.

3.0 PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT AGAINST THE TARGETS

In implementation of the FLaRAK project, NETFUND was expected to deliver on three outputs with set targets. This section therefore presents the project achievement on the output areas as per the targets.

3.1 Output 2.4: Build capacity of women, youth, and Persons Living with Disabilities in the production of quality seedlings as well as tree planting and growing activities.

This project sought to enhance the capacity of ten (10) community organisations with women, youth, and Persons Living with Disabilities within the target ecosystems to promote their participation in production of quality seedlings for restoration activities. NETFUND collaborated with KFS (Kenya Forest Service) and KEFRI (Kenya Forestry Research Institute) and trained 35 Trainers (ToTs) on nursery establishment, management and commercialization of tree seedlings in Kakamega and Kaptagat. Out of the ToTs trained, 43% were women, 71% were youths and 6% PWD. The ToTs in turn trained 7,740 group members out of which 67% were women, youths and PWDs in Kakamega and Kaptagat ecosystems. As part of capacity building, the groups in Kakamega ecosystem were also provided with inputs including water tanks, potting tubes, assorted seeds, nursery tools & equipment, and grants to facilitate seedlings production. At the project's conclusion the groups had successfully raised 472,000 assorted indigenous tree seedlings.

A training session on nursery establishment, management and commercialization of tree seedlings for beneficiaries of the FLaRAK Project.

The table below presents breakdown of seedlings raised:

Name of supported Group	County	Sub location	Raised Seed-lings
Green Villages International	Kakamega	Shitochi	140,000
Chambili Youth Empowerment	Vihiga	Solongo	80,000
Muileshi CFA	Kakamega	Virhembe	92,000
Ebusiekwe CFA	Vihiga	Ebusiekwe	76,000
Kakamega Environmental and Beautification CFA	Kakamega	Solongo	84,000
Totals			472,000

Another notable achievement was the uptake of 372,000 seedlings by NETFUND from local communities across the various ecosystems. This accomplishment was instrumental in motivating the establishment and adoption of tree nurseries as an alternative nature-based livelihood option and contribution to restoration efforts.

3.2 Output 2.6: Providing for the active involvement of vulnerable and marginalised groups in the society in the re-afforestation and conservation efforts to be implemented

Vulnerable and marginalised groups including women, youth and PWDs, are often excluded from conservation efforts. The project intended to create opportunities for the active participation of vulnerable groups in conservation activities including tree growing, agroforestry, nature-based solutions and sustainable land management. These initiatives were jointly identified by the community through various engagement forums and stakeholder meetings.

In Kakamega Forest ecosystem, the project sought to engage vulnerable and marginalised persons in conservation efforts by domesticating medicinal plants to reduce poaching of plants and ensuring conservation of such forest resources. The project supported Muliru Farmers' Conservation Group, a community group consisting of 300 farmers, to upscale on-farm cultivation, processing, and sale of indigenous medicinal plants. First, 192 members of the group were trained on ex-situ conservation and commercial cultivation of indigenous medicinal plants. Secondly,31 farmers were trained and certified on business management by Kenya Institute of Business Training (KIBT). The Group was also provided with processing machinery, and a financial grant for electricity connection, all geared towards upscaling of their cottage industry. With the upscaling, the Group will increase production of essential oil from 1,500 Liters to 4,500 litres per production cycle and thereby lead to increased income for the group.

The project also engaged over 500 community members in various tree growing activities including land preparation, tree planting and maintenance. Over 400 local community members in Kaptagat were engaged in tree growing activities. Likewise, in the Kakamega and Enoosupukia forests, the project engaged 107 and 60 community members respectively in fencing and tree growing activities.

In addition, the project promoted adoption of high value trees as part of farmland forestry by providing 40,000 high value fruit tree seedlings, including avocados, to 1,348 vulnerable farmers. The average survival rate for the high value seedlings stands at 97%, indicating a potential of vulnerable farmers increasing their income and subsequently reducing dependence on forest and forest products.

In Suswa-Magadi and Kaptagat, the project prioritized beekeeping as a nature-based enterprise that promote biodiversity regeneration and reduce pressures on ecosystem resources. The project supported seven (7) women and youth conservation groups to establish apiaries by providing 400 beehives as well as honey harvesting tools and equipment. The support also included training of 24 ToTs on apiary establishment and management, hygienic honey harvesting, bee products value addition, and marketing. In turn, the ToTs trained 4,134 members of the groups. This initiative is expected to provide each group with an annual income of Kes. 500,000 based on the harvest and sale of 1,000Kg of honey annually. This intervention targets to directly benefit 4,134 beneficiaries mainly youth, women and PWDs.

Furthermore, the project promoted local community participation in sustainable land management in the Suswa-Magadi ecosystem by supporting adoption of pasture growing and storage. The project supported 10 lead-farmers across the ecosystem to establish 2 Ha pasture demo farms each. These farmers received technical training on pasture planting, harvesting, and storage as well as inputs including pasture seeds and fertilizers. In addition, the project established a 5-acre demonstration site and a fodder bank at Naragie Enkare to showcase pasture production and storage. These demo sites were established to promote learning and the adoption of on-farm pasture growing as a soil conservation measure. A total of four hundred (400) community members were facilitated to visit the demo sites and were sensitized on sustainable land use practices and soil conservation. Furthermore, 10 ToTs from the community were trained on pasture growing and storage at the Narok Pastoral Institute to continue providing training services to the community. It is anticipated that this will increase adoption of pasture growing and storage hence provide coping strategy to the local community in the face of climate change, and reduce land degradation as a result of overgrazing.

3.3 Output 3.1: Protection, rehabilitation, and restoration of public forests and degraded landscapes

Project partners plant a ceremonial tree during the launch of the FLaRAK project.

Forests play a pivotal role in maintaining ecosystems, regulating climate patterns, and providing essential resources to local communities and beyond. However, constant degradation of the forests, characterized by deforestation and habitat destruction have led to severe environmental repercussions in Kenya. In its updated NDC, Kenya committed to increase her tree cover as a contribution towards reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 32% by 2030. As part of this commitment, the country is targeting to achieve 30% tree cover by 2032. This project therefore sought to catalyze efforts towards protection and rehabilitation of degraded public forests as a measure to increase national tree cover, through fencing and reforestation within the three ecosystems.

The project cumulatively rehabilitated 387Ha of degraded public forests; 352 Ha in Kaptagat, 20Ha in Kakamega and 1 Ha in Enoosupukia forests. This involved growing of 408,500 assorted indigenous tree seedlings which were sourced from local communities and CFAs within the respective ecosystems. For the tree growing activities, KFS provided technical backstopping and surveillance which ensured optimal seedlings survival rates of 80% in the three ecosystems.

As part of protection of public forests, the project supported establishment of a 15.4 Km solar-powered electric fence in Kakamega forest. This was a contribution towards fencing of 217 Kilometres around the forest to ensure controlled access, sustainable management, and promote natural regeneration. The fence construction initiative adopted a participatory approach where local communities were engaged in the fence construction activities. In Kaptagat and Enoosupukia forests, 352Ha and 17Ha of degraded areas respectively were fenced using local materials, specifically logs and barbed wire. Over the long term, protection of the three ecosystems will immensely contribute towards maintaining ecological, social, and economic value of the forests.

Above: Hon. Soipan Tuya, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry during the launch of the Fencing of Kakamega Forest under the FLaRAK project. Below: Project-donated motorbikes for forest surveillance.

SOCIAL AND GENDER CONSIDERATION

Inclusion of women and other marginalised community groups in forest conservation has been a key focus of the project

The implementation of the FLaRAK project was deliberate on social and gender considerations and inclusion particularly for the local communities, the vulnerable and marginalised groups in the project target areas.

Central to this project was community participation and involvement in decision making processes across the three ecosystems. There was active involvement of local communities through the Community Forest Associations (CFAs) and community groups in restoration of the Kaptagat, Kakamega and Enoosupukia forests. The community organisations, working closely with Kenya Forest Service identified the degraded sites and were engaged directly in tree planting activities. The groups were also the sole suppliers of tree seedlings planted in the ecosystems. In the fencing of Kakamega forest, an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment was undertaken and an Environment and Social Safeguard Plan developed to address and manage all the identified issues. The process included detailed community consultations during which the community supported the fencing project. Additionally, the project-maintained community consultation throughout the project cycle through community barazas and continuously addressed emerging community concerns. For instance, during the start of fence construction and during the construction, five community meetings that directly reached over 1,000 community members were held to facilitate community inputs and participation in decision making. The meetings encouraged attendance and participation of women, youth and PWDs. The meetings were intended to address community concerns and raise awareness on the fence including on concerns such as forest access points and the risk of electrocutions. The community

members were also given an opportunity to make decisions on the locations of the gates/ access points based on their access needs. Additionally, instead of tendering the fencing work to contractors, the community was given an opportunity to participate in the fence construction under the guidance of KWS fence technicians and experts. This enabled the community to appreciate and support the fencing of Kakamega forest. In the Suswa-Magadi ecosystem, the community members were facilitated to explore and identify areas that required interventions and to select preferred land restoration activities which included pasture growing demonstration farms and alternative livelihood activities such as beekeeping. The community members were also allowed to select the location of the model farm for pasture growing demo farm as well as for the lead farmers.

The project also focused on poverty reduction, employment creation and livelihood opportunities for vulnerable community members within the target ecosystems. Deliberate efforts were made to ensure that women, youth and PLWDs are involved in livelihood activities. For instance, only women, youths and PLWDs groups were targeted for support in the establishment of apiaries and tree nurseries. The selection criteria for the group strongly weighted the membership and participation of vulnerable groups particularly women, youth and PWDs and ensured that only groups with these categories of people in large numbers benefit from the support provided by the project.

In the areas targeted by the project, and generally in Kenya, gender disparities are still prominent with women being disadvantaged in terms of participation in decision making processes, climate change vulnerabilities, incomes and poverty. The FLaRAK Project therefore took into consideration these inequalities and efforts were made to support women more deliberately and ensure they benefited from the project. In the seedlings off-take plan in the Kaptagat ecosystem for example, women conservation groups were targeted for training on entrepreneurship and purchase of tree seedlings thereby earning the women income. Women were also given opportunities for temporary jobs created during project implementation such as tree planting and forest fencing activities in all the three ecosystems. Women were also encouraged to attend and participate in the community consultative forums regarding fencing of Kakamega forest which informed the location of various gates to enable women access resources such as water, herbs and firewood from fallen trees and branches in the forest.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Public awareness is critical for enhancing community participation in conservation and protection of forests, and inspires the local community to take meaningful action for a sustainable future. NETFUND adopted various strategies to enhance publicity of the project and its partners to stakeholders. These strategies included:

Media engagements

NETFUND engaged mainstream and social media outlets to convey messages about the project and the importance of conserving and protecting the targeted Ecosystems. The project activities were featured in major national dailies, and leading radio and TV stations during news bulletins and classifieds. A total of 31 mentions in radio, TV and newspapers. NETFUND social media pages (Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) were also used to disseminate messages about the project where 15,000 people were reached on Facebook and 30,000 reached on Twitter. Some of the project activities covered included Launch of Kakamega forest Fencing, Kakamega local leaders' engagement forum, Launch of Kaptagat tree growing (6th Edition of Kaptagat Restoration Programme) and South-South Global Exchange Learning visit to Suswa-Magadi Ecosystem.

Community Engagement Forums

NETFUND organized for community engagement forums where the public including opinion leaders were sensitized on the various aspects of the project and its significance. Such forums included leaders conference and Chiefs Baraza.

Branding of project sites

All the project sites and events were branded to enhance visibility and awareness. This included use of signages, stickers, banners, and plaques with logos of project partners. The site branded by project were apiaries, rehabilitated forest sites, community groups' tree nurseries, pasture demo farms and Kakamega fence. Branded events included Launch of Kakamega forest Fencing, Kakamega local leaders' engagement forum, community meetings, Launch of Kaptagat tree growing (6th Edition of Kaptagat Restoration Programme) and South-South Global Exchange Learning visit to Suswa-Magadi Ecosystem.

Branded project sites. Such Brandings were used to enhance donor visisbility as well as public awareness of the project.

CHALLENGES, MITIGATION MEASURE AND RECOMMENDATION

Some challenges experienced during the implementation of FLaRAK project, mitigation measures undertaken and recommendation are presented in the table below:

Challenge	Mitigation Measures Taken	Recommendations for future interventions
Poor viability of procured assorted seeds for tree nursery establishment	Promotion of wildings collection for tree nurseries.	Collection of wildings by the community groups for the nurseries.
Minor fence vandalism at the initial stage of fence construction	Regular joint patrols by KWS and KFS rangers were initiated to enhance security along the fence line.	Targeted community meetings and barazas to sensitize the community on the fence's purpose, means of accessing forest resources and identification of access points to avoid conflicts were conducted.
Prolonged drought that affected pasture demo farm and survival of seedlings.	Regular joint patrols by KWS and KFS rangers were initiated to enhance security along the fence line.	The demo farm was replanted during the rainy season

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN AND RECOMMENDATION

Project sustainability generally refers to the ability of a project to continue generating economic, social and environmental benefits for an extended period of time and to a larger number of beneficiaries. The central idea of the FLaRAK project was to accelerate the realization of targets under Kenya's NDC particularly in the forestry sector as well as land restoration interventions. The outcomes of the project therefore cannot only be measured in terms of immediate results of the project but also how these results can be sustained and upscaled to achieve greater impacts. During and at the end of the implementation of the FLaRAK, project sustainability was a key consideration for all the output and activity areas as follows:

Fencing of Kakamega Forest: To complete the fencing of 117Kms and maintenance of Kakamega forest fence, a partnership agreement was signed by KFS, KWS, NETFUND, Kakamega and Vihiga County Government, KEFRI, Nyayo Tea Zones Development Corporation and the Rhino Ark Trust, all who agreed to play various roles during and beyond the project as summarized in the table below:

PARTNER	CONTRIBUTION/ ROLE
Kenya Forest Service	Provision of in-kind support estimated at 20 million Kenya Shillings including a lorry, supervision of the fence construction work and overall fence maintenance
Kenya Wildlife Service	To provide technical expertise for the fence construction
	To contribute up to 22.5 million Kenya shillings to support fence activities
National Environment Trust Fund	To provide both in-kind support in mobilization of additional resources and coordination of fence construction at an estimated amount of 10 million Kenya shillings
County Government of Kakamega	To contribute up to 25 million shillings per year for four years across the four phases of fence construction
	To employ fence attendants to maintain the fence
County Government of Vihiga	To contribute up to 30 million shillings in four years across the four phases of fence construction
Rhino Ark Trust	Provide vehicle to support the fence construction project to completion

Signing of partnership agreement between NETFUND, KFS, KWS, Kakamega and Vihiga County Government, KEFRI, Nyayo Tea Zones Development Corporation and the Rhino Ark Trust. Partnerships enhances sustainability of the project interventions.

The project has also provided key assets that will be required in the continuation of the fencing work and fence maintenance including tools, equipment and un-huts to host workers during future construction and maintenance activities.

Finally, the project also supported the development of a resource mobilization strategy for the fencing of Kakamega forest. This strategy will guide and accelerate resource mobilization and completion of the fencing work in Kakamega forest. The resource mobilization efforts have already resulted in additional investment of 60 million Kenya shillings from M-PESA foundation towards the second phase of fencing.

Reforestation of degraded public forests: All the rehabilitated sites were fenced using local materials to protect the planted seedlings from destruction by animals. Community Forest Association members were also engaged to provide maintenance support to ensure optimal survival rate. The KFS is also generally in charge of management of public forests and therefore will continue to provide maintenance and monitoring on all the inhabited sites in public forest. Continuous production of seedlings by community groups and forest associations will also ensure seedlings are available for reforestation activities in the target areas.

Production of tree seedlings: community groups and community forest associations were provided with tools and equipment to support continuous seedlings production. The groups were provided with both nursery establishment and entrepreneurial skills. There are ToTs who were trained and will continue to train new members and other community members in general. It is also, expected that the groups will earn income through sale of the seedlings and reinvest in the tree nurseries to ensure continuous production of seedlings. KFS and NETFUND will support the groups through market linkages and tree seedlings off-take programmes towards rehabilitation of nearby public forests during tree growing activities as well protecting the planted trees from illegal logging.

Nature based enterprises: The youth and women groups involved in beekeeping were trained on honey harvesting, value addition and marketing and will therefore be able to run the apiaries as business ventures where they can reinvest and upscale production. There are also ToTs who were trained and will continue to train new members and other community members in general. The groups have also been linked to market opportunities through Bee-farmers hub, a company that buys and aggregates honey from bee farmers. Muliro Farmer's group members have already domesticated medicinal plants. The group has also been provided with required machinery and equipment to process medicinal products for commercial purposes. The members were also trained on entrepreneurship hence will run an income generating venture to sustain their operations while also earning the members livelihoods.

NETFUND CEO, with beneficiaries from local communities. Local buy- in and participation is critical to the sustainability of the project intreventions.

LESSONS LEARNED

The success of the NETFUND Components under the FLaRAK Project stems from several key factors. Key among them is the project's deliberate efforts to encourage a high level of participation, ownership, and support from the local communities and relevant stakeholders in the three ecosystems. Project activities were implemented in a participatory manner in a bid to ensure that the local communities understood the resulting benefits. In addition, the project also identified, analyzed and addressed challenges experienced during implementation of the project. For example, the strategy that was utilized in addressing the vandalism of the erected electric fence in Kakamega was responsive to the needs of the community.

Generally, the main lessons learned during the implementation of this project are as follows:

- Building and sustaining strong partnerships with key stakeholders is crucial for the success of a project. This is because of the complex nature of ecosystem restoration with economic, ecological, and social variables which necessitate a holistic approach. Given this scale and complexity therefore, cooperation among different stakeholders is critical. NETFUND built and maintained partnerships with relevant national government agencies, the local County Governments, non-governmental organizations and local communities through their leadership and conservation groups during project implementation. NETFUND appreciated the specific roles played by these partners owing to their mandates and missions.
- Tree nursery establishment and management initiatives are good sources of green and sustainable employment to many youths and women especially in rural areas. In addition, these initiatives could be replicated in other areas in efforts to increase forest cover and improve livelihoods.
- It is relatively cheaper and more sustainable to partner with community conservation groups to raise required seedlings for restoration activities than it is to purchase the seedlings. This is because through the adopted model by NETFUND, the local community conservation groups contributed to the raising of seedlings through provision of land, labour and maintenance, while NETFUND provided the equipment, material and resources required to establish tree nurseries. In addition, working with the local community groups also increases their level of buy-in for the project which in effect leads to local ownership and maintenance. Lastly, having the nurseries championed by the community provides a learning opportunity for the rest of the community whilst ensuring that seedlings required by the community for restoration work are not only accessible but also affordable.
- Prioritising promotion and adoption of high value trees is a good strategy to rehabilitate degraded lands and increase tree cover. Through the project, NETFUND has observed that the high value seedlings distributed to farmers have a higher survival rate at approximately 97% in comparison to the indigenous tree seedlings, which had a survival rate of 87% on average. This might be attributed to direct benefits attached to fruit trees.
- Diversified awareness raising and dissemination approaches designed for various target groups are necessary for improving the general interest in and concern of the local community in the project.
- Provision of technical and knowledge support from relevant entities enhances the success of the project. Maximized use of synergies between project activities and local projects and integration of human resources of different parties active in the same field has maximized the benefits and impacts of the project.
- Infrastructure projects, in this case fencing, require considerable investment in design and community buy-in processes before construction can commence.
- Landowners' buy-in, understanding of the issues and their goodwill is integral to the success of any efforts in land restoration activities and are receptive to respectful, collaborative approaches from the government/partners.
- Strong commitment of different stakeholders and especially the local community is essential to the sustainability of the project and its initiatives. It is important to secure commitment of the local community and especially the selected community conservation groups through financial and in-kind contribution.

1. Building and sustaining strong partnerships with key stakeholders is crucial
2. High value seedlings offer a better chance for survival rate
3. Tree nursery establishment and management initiatives are good sources of green and sustainable employment
4. It is relatively cheaper and more sustainable to partner with community conservation groups to raise required seedlings
5. Diversified awareness creation strategies are necessary
6. Provision of technical and knowldge support enhances success.
7. Provision of technical and knowldge support enhances success
8. Collaborative and respectful approaches to land restoration activities
9. Strong commitments from local community for project sustinability

Cabinet Secertary, Hon. Sopian Tuya Flags off Motorbikes donated by the project for forest surveillance.

Cabinet Secertary, Hon. Sopian Tuya during the launch of the Kakamega Fencing under the project.

Rehabilitation of a degraded section in kakamega Forest.

Beneficiaries tend a nursery established under the project.

Start point of the 15 km electric fence in kakamega forest.

Fenced section of kaptagat forest for rehabilitation

High quality tree nursery established under the FLaRAK Project

An avacado tree nursery established by project beneficiaries.

An apiary center set up by the project in Suswa-Magadi Ecosystem

An apiary center set up by the project in Kaptagat Ecosystem

A memeber of Engiriata Women Group in Suswa-Magadi tend a beehive supported under the project

NETFUND CEO issues a beneficiary with avocado seedlings. This intervention creates alternative sources of livelihood for beneficiary households

Potting for seedling production under the project created temporary employments for beneficiary communities

Muliru Conservation group in Kakamega supported with equipment to extrace medicine from herbs.

A section of fodder production demonstration farm for pastoralist communities in Suswa-Magadi ecosystem.

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