



treesisters
women seeding change



Cameroon: trees, water, soil and endangered wildlife

Mount Bamboutos is part of the 'Western Cameroon Highlands' volcanic line. It is just north of the Equator at the border region between Nigeria and Cameroon. It is an area of global biodiversity importance that includes the endangered Cross River gorilla. Though today, a highly productive landscape for its people (with the use of external nutrients through fertilizers and even the use of pesticides), what will Mount Bamboutos be like in 10 or 20 years' time under the current trend of increasing population, farming and forest loss?

The "Mount Bamboutos Initiative" (MBI), a project of International Tree Foundation (ITF) with Environment and Rural Development Foundation (ERuDeF), aims to support a more sustainable path in Mount Bamboutos over the next 15 years through reforestation. It will connect altogether community forests, riparian forests, sacred forests, protected areas, and agroforestry systems. The area holds the possibility to plant 3 million trees across 150km.



Why are we planting there?

Treesisters has been partnering with ITF on MBI since April 1st, 2018 in the southwest portion of Mount Bamboutos. The partnership aims to plant 600,000 trees over three years and 3,000 hectares (equivalent to 4,000 soccer fields). The project will involve and benefit 1,000 households drawn from 3 villages.

What are the expected socio-economic outcomes?

Reforestation directly employs locals. They are also encouraged to generate their own sources of income through training on the cultivation and processing of fruit and other non-timber forest/tree products. Moreover, regreening farms with trees will help liberate farmers from dependency on, and cost of chemicals.

The project supports the communities involved to relate differently with trees and forests. They are called to work together to restore the ecosystem that gives them life. It empowers them to participate in forest management and conservation. They learn that it is possible to earn a living from growing and planting trees, and not only from cultivation and the extraction of timber and non timber from the forest. More sustainable land use activities and land cover may arise. For example, personal and commercial use of timber and non-timber products from the remaining tracts of forest may be replaced by sustainable avocado food and commercial production (not in place of forest) and cottage industries.

What are the goals?

This project has several goals:

1. The protection and conservation of water catchments. The trees will help attract rain, retain water in the soil and recharge groundwater tables. The trees will keep nutrient pollution from agricultural sources out of the water by recycling excess nitrogen and reducing soil erosion.
2. The increase in biodiversity, habitat and corridors. By establishing a connective network of forests, with high diversity of trees and indigenous tree species, many mammals, birds, insects, reptiles, and other micro animals and bacteria are expected to pop out across the landscape.
3. Increased tree cover within agricultural areas, which will contribute to (1.) and (2.). On farms, the presence of a variety of trees increases the presence of pollinators and other beneficial fauna and flora to the cultivated crops.
4. The project will also help farmers reduce their reliance on external inputs. The trees that will be planted within farming systems will help minimise nutrient losses and maximise internal cycling of nutrients.





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People

Regreening farms with trees will help liberate farmers from dependency on, and cost of chemicals.

The initiative puts local people at the center of the project. They are the most suitable people to take care of Mount Bamboutos' trees and forests. Personal ownership is necessary for the project's success.

Over 10 exclusively native species of trees will be planted for reforestation, in the "to-be-created" biodiversity reserve and sacred forests, community forests and along streams.

The project is planting 60% of trees for reforestation purposes. The other 40% are agroforestry trees planted on farms. The project will artificially plant tree seedlings, grafted trees, and wildlings, etc. of a wide spectrum of species adapted up to 1,900m elevation.



Trees

Some of them are only found in the Cameroon Highlands ecoregion while some of them have a wider distribution and are present all over Africa.

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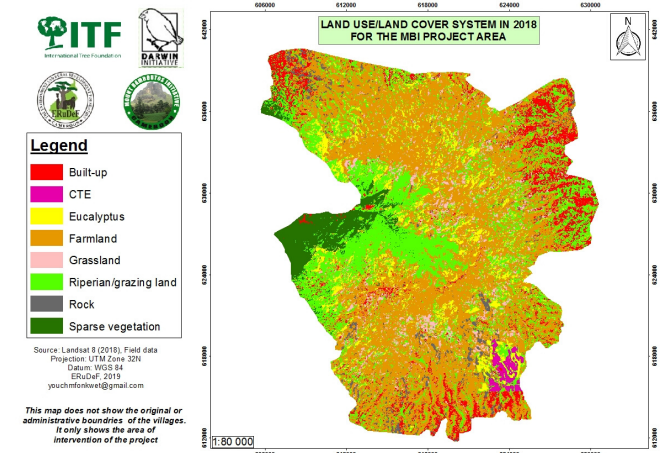
Mount Bamboutos still harbours today birds that are endemic to Cameroon such as the Bannerman's Turaco which is critically endangered, the endangered Banded Wattle-eye or Bamenda Pririt which is only known in Mount Bamboutos and nowhere else on Earth.

Animals



Only 300 individuals of Cross River Gorillas remain in the wild. They are labeled as critically endangered. Three protected areas were created in the past 10 years for the conservation of Cross River Gorilla, within which one sits in our project area.

Place



Location: southwest portion of Mount Bamboutos, Cameroon

Land size: 3,000 hectares (equivalent to 4,000 soccer fields).

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Expected Outcomes

The project will connect altogether community forests, riparian forests, sacred forests, protected areas, and agroforestry systems. The area holds the possibility to plant 3 million trees across 150km.

Women are primarily encouraged to take steps towards increased income through agroforestry and non-timber forest products. The goal is to have 70% of the households having female entrepreneurs or workers - as part of women-led associations



Regional insecurity has resulted in some delays to project implementation: the planting could not happen in the first year. However, many villagers remain on their farms to protect them and to continue farming to feed their families. ERuDeF and ITF believe it is feasible to catch up with the target of planted trees this coming planting season.

Women

Women and men gain equal knowledge and skills on nursery establishment and tree planting, for the restoration of Mount Bamboutos' degraded ecosystem.

Project Approach



While remaining forests will be set aside for conservation, new ones will be planted along streams and around springs, on degraded farms, in sacred forests and in existing or future community forests. The project also aims to regreen farmlands with 'agroforestry trees'. Reforestation will take place as the result of a participatory land use planning process which is likely to control the expansion of horticulture activity on the top of the mountain range, and especially near the streams and springs. Some of the farmers will move away from monoculture crop farming and animal husbandry to switch to tree-based farming and other activities, and possibly other more sustainable farming practices.

For more details about this project and others please go to www.treesisters.org
Most photos courtesy of ERuDeF; Cross River Gorilla photo unknown