

## **Final Project Report**

**Restoration of Sagalla forest for the conservation of the critically endangered caecilian.**

**John Mlamba**

**12<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

## Introduction

The project activities were initiated in February 2009. The project aims at contributing towards the conservation of the critically endangered Sagalla Caecilian *Boulengerula niedeni* that is endemic to Sagalla. This is through the creation of awareness of the organism and the need to conserve it, rehabilitation of the indigenous forest through raising and planting of indigenous tree species and later the removal of the exotic tree species especially eucalyptus and the introduction of fish farming as an alternative livelihood that would contribute towards the restoration of the wet areas.

## Activity Implementation

A number of activities have been initiated as detailed below;

- Awareness creation

A total of twelve public meetings have been held in the area i.e. a 3 public meetings in each of the four sub-locations covering the area, basically covering every village. These were organised through the Provincial Administration officials i.e. the Chief of Sagalla location and his four assistant chiefs in charge of each of the sub-locations. The message passed across included the existence of the critically endangered Sagalla caecilian, the need to conserve it, the threats to its survival and the intervention measures. Also the link between its survival and that of the residents was highlighted laying emphasis on water availability and the health of the catchment forests and its relation to farm productivity and food security. The public meetings were also an opportunity where community members generally had a review of how activities were progressing and an opportunity to compare notes, thus inculcating greater community interest and commitment.



Fig 1. A public meeting and a tree planting day.

- Tree Seedlings raising and Planting

Three group nurseries were engaged to raise indigenous tree seedlings and upto the last rainy season (March-May) a total of 12,000 tree seedlings had been planted. Among the species planted were *Millettia oblata* (an endemic tree species to Taita) and *Prunus africana*. Both of these tree species are extinct in the area and this is an effort of reintroduction. The tree seedlings are being monitored for survival.



Fig. 2. Tree planting.



Fig 3. Community members collecting tree seedlings for planting in Sagalla.



Fig. 4. Tree seedlings in the nursery.

○ Training in fish pond construction and fish farming

The training of farmers in fishpond construction started in earnest and 30 farmers have been trained. Four fishponds have been built and harvesting has started. The following photograph shows some of the fish harvested in one of the fishponds recently. The harvest was about 68kg whose market value is equivalent to USD 174. It is anticipated that the fishponds will be able to yield upto 100kg every two months thus realising an income of USD 125 per month which is a great boost to the household income.



Fig 5. Part of the fish harvested from a fishpond.

**Challenges**

There have been challenges. The major challenge is encountering rather porous soils thus making some of the fishponds constructed not work very well. This calls for the purchase of damsheets to enable them hold water. An attempt has been made to acquire damsheets from projects working in the area. A link was established with APHIA II programme funded by USAID whose aim is to assist HIV/AIDS infected and affected people. The programme promised to assist in purchasing damsheets since fish farming goes to assist with provision of better nutrition – a key aspect in HIV/AIDS management. Also the project approached the Arid Lands Resource Management Project II funded by the World Bank and Government of Kenya and response is being awaited.

The interest of the community in fish farming is very high while the resources available currently are very limited. The potential to have a positive impact on water resource management is high with the high interest shown by the community which would go along way in reducing destruction of wetlands for vegetable production as more farmers are trained and construct fishponds.