



**CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM**  
PARTNERSHIP FUND



# **MISUKU HILLS IMPROVED LIVELIHOOD AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION PROJECT SUMMARY REPORT**

## **Project Back Ground Summary**

Implemented by Action for Environmental Sustainability (AFES) with support from CEPF, Misuku hills improved livelihood and biodiversity conservation project will run from July 2014 to Jun 2016.

The project aims to raise awareness of the value and importance of the area's biodiversity in the surrounding communities.

It focuses on building the capacities of rural impoverished communities to sustainably harvest and sell forest products from customary land and forest reserves; the incentives will also be promoted through community capacity building on Village Savings and loan (Village Banks) which use the methodology that does not provide financial support but rather offer training for group of members (that will be established in this project) interested in the creation and operation of savings and loan associations.

The purpose is to enable communities learn to save the little they have and be able to accumulate enough money for their needs including money for venturing into various micro enterprises purposefully emphasizing the development of alternatives to biological resource use that threatens the massif's biodiversity.

The project also aims to contribute and help to fast track the finalization of a management plan (and co management agreements) which is currently still under modification.

*The project is not a new model but rather its building on the successes and lessons learnt from work that has previously been implemented around the Mughese, wilindi and Matipa forestry reserves.*

## PROJECT COMPONENTS

1. Awareness creation on the need and importance of Natural resources management and biodiversity conservation of Wilindi, Matipa and mughesse forest reserves. *The awareness activities have been targeting 47 communities around the forest reserves.*
2. Promotion of Non forest based activities by introducing a Village savings and loans-VSL (Village Bank)-The introduction of the village savings and loan system intends to encourage non forest based economic activities and promote the conservation of Wilindi, Matipa and mughesse forest reserve.
3. Facilitate platforms to discuss with stakeholders (department of forest, local management board, Block committees, Natural resources management committees, Misuku bee keepers Association and others) to discuss debate and complete the forest management plan.
4. Capacity building on best agricultural practices with emphasis on conservation agriculture to increase food security and reduce encroachment in the forest reserves.

## **CURRENT ACHIEVEMENTS**

Since the project was implemented in July 2014, the following are some of achievements:

### **1. NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AWARENESS.**

36 days of awareness campaigns around the Wlindi-Matipa and Mughese forest reserves has been conducted and 47 villages educated in Natural resources management and biodiversity conservation.



*Local dances and songs used t promote the awareness © AfES*



*Project manager shakila Msusa addressing the community gathering in an awareness event © AfES*

## IMPACT COMMUNITIES FOR THE AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

47 communities of Traditional Authority Mwenemisusku in Misuku Hills which are close to Wilindi, Matipa and Mughese forest reserves and whose livelihood is very much dependent on the forest reserves covering around 522 hectares inside the forest reserve and 622 hectares of customary land outside the forest reserve were targeted in the awareness campaign.

The targeted communities include;

- i. Mwandisi 1,2&3
- ii. Mwangulukulu 1,2&3
- iii. Mwenitulo a & b
- iv. Mughona
- v. Mwakomo 1&2
- vi. Msango 1&2
- vii. Kaleghania
- viii. Mwamalange 1,2&3
- ix. Kaboneka 1,2&3
- x. Mwenechibula
- xi. Mwalupanga
- xii. Mwamwamunyira
- xiii. Kabilangwa
- xiv. Chilalika
- xv. Walasa
- xvi. Mwandima 1&2
- xvii. Yapoma 1&2
- xviii. Kabotola,
- xix. Mwakayera 1,2
- xx. Mponda 1,2
- xxi. Mwenechipwela,
- xxii. Sam Chipwela



*Pupils of itulo primary school participate in the awareness event with songs and dances© AfES*



*Members of village natural resources management committee at an awareness event © AfES*



*A side photo of Wilindi-Matipa forest reserve covered by the communities © AfES*



*Part of the customary land out-side the wilindi,matipa and mughesse forest reserve© AfES*

## 2. VILLAGE SAVING AND LOAN SYSTEM

Another major achievement the Improved livelihood and biodiversity conservation project is the Promotion of Non forest based Village savings and loans-VSL (Village Bank)- *which has eventually increase saving culture, provide an opportunity for business loans, entrepreneurship and has created jobs to more than 500 people where 60 percent are women.*

A village savings and loans feasibility study identified 41 communities who are close to Wilindi, Matipa and mughesse forest reverse and whose lives highly depend on the forest resources and the forest areas are at risk of high degradation.

The communities include;

- i. Mwenitulo a & b
- ii. Mughona
- iii. Mwakomo1&2
- iv. Msango 1&2
- v. Kaleghania
- vi. Mwamalange 1,2&3
- vii. Kaboneka 1,2&3
- viii. Mwenechibula
- ix. Mwalupanga
- x. Mwamwamunyira
- xi. Kabilangwa
- xii. Chilalika
- xiii. Walasa
- xiv. Mwandima 1&2
- xv. Yapoma 1&2
- xvi. Kabotola,
- xvii. Mwakayera 1,2
- xviii. Mponda 1,2

- xix. Mwenechipwela,
- xx. Sam Chipwela

These targeted communities' covers around 480 hectors of forest areas inside the reserve and 533 hectors of customary land outside the forest reserve.

20 groups of Village savings and loan system have been established with an average number of 25 memberships (subject to increase every month) which includes members of the Wilindi, matipa and mughese management board, members of the forest block committees, Village Natural Resources Management committees, Village headmen, Men and Women of Misuku Hills. Since the establishment of the Village savings and loan system in January 2015, each group has saved about MWK 110,000 equivalent to US\$ 250.



**Committee Leaders of a village saving loan club in Mwalupanga village© AfES**

The established village savings and loans clubs/groups were trained and provided with the manual guide (**see attachment 1. Village savings and loan training guide**) which is used to be referred to from time to time by the members.

Each Village savings and loan system has a constitution which clearly states that 10% of the interest that the group makes at the end date (when they sharing the money at the end of each year) will be devoted for environmental conservation of wilindi Matipa and Mughese forest reserve.

The rules and regulations for each of the Village saving and loans (VSL) group that has been introduced by this project require that individual group members should observe certain behaviors, group members are discouraged to get involved in activities that degrade the wilindi-matipa and mughese forestry reserve (eg. they promise not to degrade the forest, they promise to guard the forest, they promise to restore the forest).



*A training session of a new Village savings and loan club village© AfES*



*A village savings and loans (VSL) committee leaders in Villages of Mandima 1& 2© AfES*

The 500 plus people who are farmers around Wilindi, matipa and Mughese forest reserve and are members of the Village saving and loan system established by this project have been trained in tree nursery operation (**see Table 1 below**) which has so far realized approximately 50,000 new indigenous and exotic trees.

The trainings were administered in partnership with the Department of forestry (DoF) with the purpose of building capacity of the members of the Village savings and loans clubs which have been established by this project for future conservation actions. The trainings were also administered with the purpose of establishing a communal forest and individual household woodlots out-side the forest reserve on customary land.

A total area of 1144 hectares inside and out-side the forest reserve will be covered with the forest by the end of the rain season November to April 2015.



Tree nursery for the community of mandima I© AfES

**TABLE 1. TREE NUSERY OPERATION**

<b>TREE NURSERY OPERATION TOPICS COVERED</b>
1. Choice of the nursery site and factors to consider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Area required</li> <li>• Climate</li> <li>• Soil</li> <li>• Slope</li> <li>• Shelter</li> <li>• Proximity/access</li> </ul>
2. Preparation of nursery site
3. Anti erosion measures and types
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grass</li> <li>• Sepi-sepi</li> <li>• Bricks</li> </ul>
4. Construction and layout of the seed bed
5. Transplanting bed

6. Paths/fences and hedges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of fences</li> <li>• Termite control measures for nursery fences</li> </ul>
7. Seed sowing
8. Transplanting
9. Weeding
10. Root pruning
11. watering
12. Preparation of nursery site



*Tree nursery ready for planting in November 2015 © AfES*



*Sub-Traditional authority itulo and giving advise a group in his village after being trained© AfES*



*More tree nursery ready for planting© AfES*

## CURRENT AND ON GOING ACTIVITIES

The following activities and are being monitored on an ongoing basis and the staff from Action for Environmental Sustainability (AfES) are providing professional support where necessary in partnership with the department of forestry.

These activities includes;

- Monitoring of the performance of the village loans and savings clubs that they are able to manage the microfinance services and abided agreed conservation behaviors.
- Monitoring of the performance of the formation of a communal forest on customary land outside wilindi, matipa and mughesse forest reserve and formation of individual household woodlots in 41 communities.
- Completion of the forest management plan/co-management plan for Wilindi and Matipa forest reserve. It is anticipated that the management plan should be approved by December 2015, more follow up are being made.



More meeting sessions for the completion of forest management plan© AfES



*Meeting with the forest management committee leaders at local level to push finalization of the forest management plan © AfES*

## **LESSONS LEARNT**

Since implementation the project in Misuku, new lessons have been learnt as follows;

1. Wood fuel which is the only form of cooking fuel used in the project impact area is the one major factor that is increasingly contributing to deforestation of the forest reserves (Wilindi, matipa and mughesse).

About 90% of households in the impact area are using three stone open fire as a method for cooking which increases demand for wood fuel.

This situation much affecting women and girls lives who shoulders the burden of collecting firewood.

Also the three stone open fire cooking method pose a huge health risk to the families and a threat to the climate as the method produce a lot of smoke.

2. Besides the greater achievements that this project is achieving, there is still a huge need to promote afforestation and reforestation on customary land, there is a need for more tree seedlings and more capacity building of communities around the Wilindi, matipa and mughesse forest reserve to achieve much greater impact. Many village forest areas outside the forest reserve on customary land still remain unallocated and do not have management plans.

## **CHALLENGES AND HOW THEY WERE AND/OR ARE MANAGED**

A number of challenges have been encountered during the project operation which in one way or the other has affected some of the project targeted objectives as follow;

- Staff turnover at the Department of forestry: during the implementation there has been a vicious staff turnover at the district council which has also affected the Department of forestry (DoF) making the finalization of the forest management plan for Wilindi-matipa forest reserve almost impossible because of lack of proper hand over of the government office.
  - ✓ This challenge was managed by re-orienting the new staff at district council and the department of forestry on the project and involving them intensively so that they can easily catch up with the project.
- Difficulties to reach other communities due to very poor road networks and long distances between them (communities in misuku Hills are very scattered apart).
  - ✓ This challenge has been managed by having the project staff and partners from forest department to sleep over particular communities for the time that the activity is being implemented or monitored.

## EASTERN AFROMONTANE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION SITE VISIT SUMMARY



Albert Schenk visit our project office in Chitipa after 800 kilometers drive from another project in Lilongwe



After the office visit its time to visit the field unfortunately a radiator ricks and the journey is slowed



With hours of driving Albert finally arrives to be welcomed by very happy community members and dances which he could not hold up but to dance along.





**Albert moves forward to see some tree nurseries after a meeting with the community where he learnt more about the project from them.**



More tree nurseries



After spending the whole day in the field it's time to say goodbye