

Project Report

RESOURCE CENTRE FOR THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION AND TECHNICAL ADVICE IN TAITA HILLS TO LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS IN RESTORATION WORK.

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CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM
PARTNERSHIP FUND

Introduction

The Taita hills form part of the remnants of the eastern arc mountain forests that are globally renowned for their biodiversity richness. The forests remaining in fragments occur on the Dawida massif, Sagalla and Kasigau. Most of the fragments are found in the Dawida massif that is home to most of the endemic and unique flora and fauna. The fragments on Dawida massif have a potential for forest connectivity work. There are about 15 forest fragments surrounded by a community whose mainstay is subsistence agriculture. Around most of these fragments are groups involved in various environmental conservation activities in one way or another. However, these activities have suffered from little coordination and accessibility to technical advice/information.

Project Goal

The main goal of this project is to facilitate the accessibility of technical advice, and information regarding forest and biodiversity conservation in the Taita hills to the stakeholders.

Project Objectives

- To set up a resource centre in Wundanyi.
- To collect and collate information and research findings relevant to the Taita hills.
- To provide technical advice and information to the local stakeholders.
- To provide access to internet to the local stakeholders.

Expected Results

- A resource centre set up in Wundanyi at EAWLS office.
- Documents with information and research findings made available.
- Access to internet made available to the local stakeholders.
- Local stakeholders able to access technical advice and information easily.
- Database of stakeholders made available i.e. contacts and summary of their activities.

Achievements

The EAWLS office in Wundanyi also doubles up as the resource centre. The seating capacity was increased and two extra computers (a desktop and a laptop) were purchased. In addition, the local stakeholders were informed of its existence through various fora.

Documents with information relevant to biodiversity conservation within the Taita hills and the eastern arc mountains in general were obtained. Among them are scientific papers, reports of past research activities, guidebooks, simple pamphlets on certain topics such as butterfly rearing, and others were sourced. However, difficulties were encountered in obtaining some books and materials, because some were either out of print or the authors (especially some researchers) the addresses were no longer valid. However, some institutions proved very helpful by willingly providing copies (hard or soft copies), such as the University of Ghent and University of Helsinki, to which we are grateful.

Internet connection was obtained and now users can easily access information through this facility. However, the service has had some difficulties. This is because only the

dial-up connection is available in Wundanyi and the telephone charges are quite high in addition to the unreliability of the telephone service.

Since the establishment of the resource centre, it has served over 180 people – among them local community members, researchers, students, and government officers. It has also provided assistance to groups in information provision and in proposal writing. Currently, a number of groups involved in conservation work supported by CEPF are receiving technical, administrative and financial advice from the centre.

The centre is also the focal point for the promotion of various CEPF funded initiatives such as the community micro-grants for groups (managed by WWF) and the scholarships for local students in universities (managed by BLI). In the first round of the micro-grants, seven proposals were forwarded to WWF out of which three were approved for funding. The three groups are from Susu (for nursery activity), Shigharo (for bee-keeping activity), and Nyache (for bee-keeping activity). The centre has also provided assistance to researchers from various institutions. The assistance has varied from office space (including storage of specimens) to internet connection to linking the researchers to the local community.

Difficulties

The major difficulty encountered is the poor telephone service in Wundanyi. This has made the access to internet rather expensive and unreliable. This becomes more frustrating if one needs to download or upload rather large attachments.

There were requests for advice that needed a field visit before one could provide adequate or appropriate information. These were difficult to address due to the lack of a budget line for transport. This need had not been foreseen during proposal development.