



PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT

Period of report: MARCH - JUNE 2024

Project: Forest Restoration in West Bugwe Central Forest Reserve

Service Provider: Uganda Timber Growers Association (UTGA)

Partner: Grow For It (GFI)



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1.0 Introduction

This report provides progress on the ongoing forest restoration project in West Bugwe Central Forest Reserve (CFR) implemented through the collaboration between Uganda Timber Growers Association (UTGA) and Grow for It (GFI). Oversight and technical advice are provided by Silva Causa.

The project involves restoration planting and maintenance using indigenous tree species. UTGA through its collaboration with the National Forestry Authority (NFA) holds exclusive rights to manage 1,000 hectares for restoration in the West Bugwe CFR.



The UTGA and GFI collaboration has been ongoing since 2022 and through it, 95.77 hectares of degraded forest have so far been restored.

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2.0 2024 Activities

2.1 Planning and monitoring

The UTGA team comprising the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Program Officer (PO) and two local support staff, conducted three planning and monitoring visits to the project area.

These were conducted mainly to;

- a) Carry out FSC internal audits in preparation for the Reassessment Audit (RA).
- b) Plan the tree planting activities and engage with local contractors, staff and the community on proper implementation of the field activities and to plan for community tree planting.
- c) Monitor the project activities on compliance with certification requirements and to ensure that all activities met the requirements of the FSC standard.
- d) Deliver seedlings and oversee the preparation and management of the holding nursery.
- e) Check on the progress of the tree planting activities
- f) Provide technical backstopping for successful tree planting.
- g) Stakeholder engagements especially with local community leaders and the NFA leadership.

2.2 Tree planting and species selection

The restoration followed natural forest restoration guidelines for Uganda, standards stipulated in the NFA forest restoration guidelines 2020 and the new forest management plan.

The restoration planting involved a combination of row and spot plantings together with liberation where the forest cover constituted of bushes of invasives and a few shrubs. Where strip planting was done, one-meter-wide planting rows were created from the forest boundary inwards. The planting rows were created four meters apart and the trees planted at a four-meter spacing along the rows to achieve an average spacing of 4meters by x 4meters implying **625 seedlings** planted per hectare. In some areas, spot planting was done following the same formula. Spots that were 4 meters apart were cleared and after pitting, planting was done. The removal of invasives like *Lantana camara* is a method of restoration and was done. Preparations for planting included, opening one meter planting rows, spot clearing, pitting, seedling transportation followed by the actual planting. Spot plantings and liberation were done in places with relatively higher concentrations of indigenous shrubs and low intensity of invasives.

The restoration plantings were done during the months of April and May. All the **36 hectares** were restored with a total of **22,500 seedlings**. This implies that **59,857 seedlings** have so far been planted.

The planting was done using an assortment of good quality indigenous tree seedlings that had been maintained in the local holding nursery and some obtained from NFA and UTGA nurseries.

As part of preparations, UTGA raised a greater number of seedlings over a period of five months before delivering them to the temporary holding nursery at the forest reserve. However, in order to have a good species mix, some seedlings were procured from the NFA nurseries among others. The dominant species included; *Khaya anthotheca*, *Makhamia Lutea*, *Albizia Species*, *Maesopsis eminii*, *Antiaris toxicaria* and *Prunus africana*.

2.3 Forest protection

In a bid to improve protection of the planted trees from grazers and browsers,

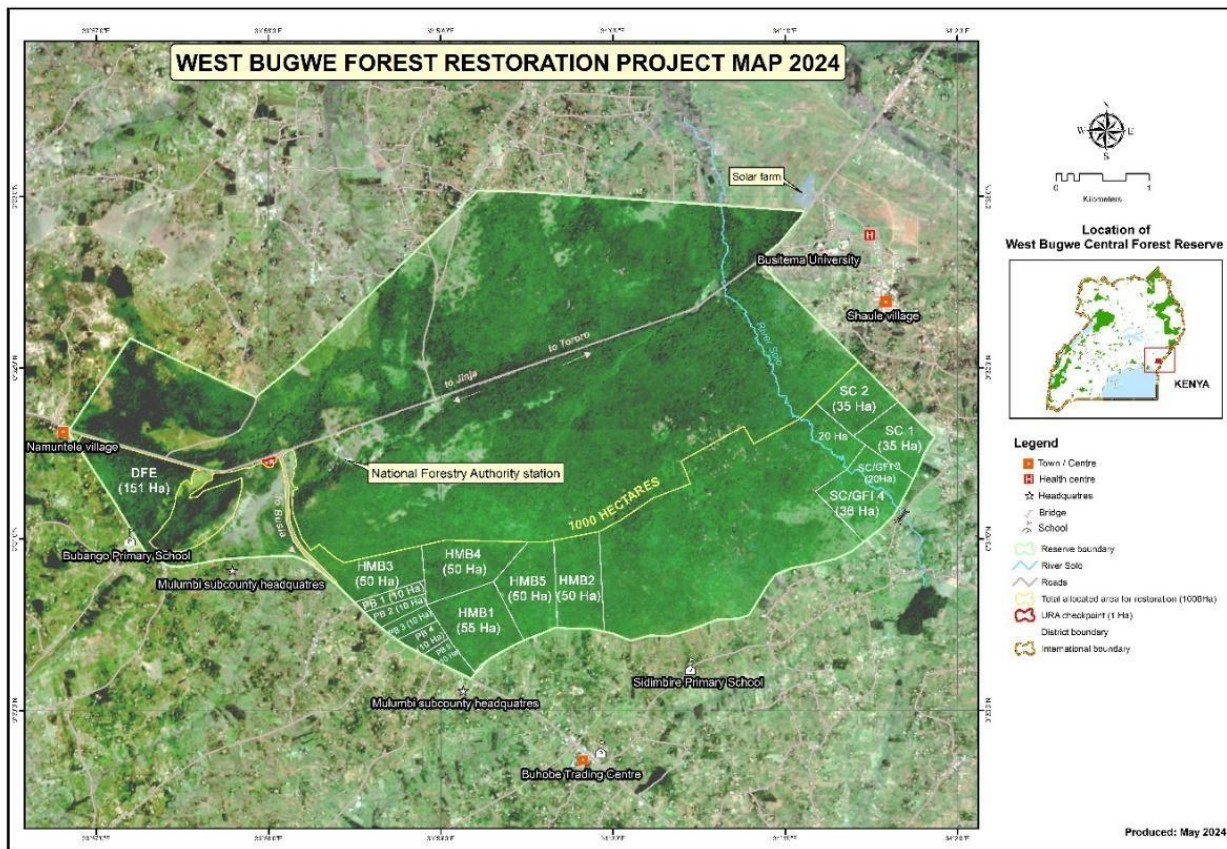


human damage and to improve forest monitoring, UTGA has put in place, a forest protection patrol team that works with NFA field staff and the community.

2.4 Mapping

Through collaboration with the NFA mapping team an update the forest map was done to show all the compartments restored. The compartment restored is SC/GFI 4 as shown in the map below.

An updated map of the West Bugwe Central Forest Reserve showing the compartments under restoration June 2024



For this project the planting plan is as follows;

| Compartment | Year of planting | Area Restored (Ha) | Status |
|--------------|------------------|--------------------|----------|
| SC1 | 2022 | 35.0 | Restored |
| SC2 | 2023 | 39.77 | Restored |
| SC/GFI3 | 2023 | 20.0 | Restored |
| SC/GFI4 | 2024 | 36.0 | Restored |
| TOTAL | | 130.77 | |

3.0 FSC certification

The UTGA group scheme had its Reassessment Audit (RA) in February this year and only two minor corrective action requests were raised. UTGA retained its certificate for the next five years.

Notably, UTGA is facing the challenge of unforecasted costs related to certification including the annual certification and audit fees. These have been escalated by the certifying body and are having a huge toll on UTGA's budget. We continue to work closely with FSC both locally and elsewhere for technical advice and other support. A copy of the new UTGA certificate (No. SA-FM/CoC-006962) is shown at the end of this document.



4.0 Community engagements

All the labour used was sourced from surrounding forest communities. Some of the light work like tree planting, spot weeding was spared for women. The project created over 70 community member jobs, majorly youth and women. The community tree planting program was initiated through the local leaders from the two sub counties surrounding the forest including Busitema and Bulumbi. They mobilized the local community to find some land for establishment of woodlots or boundary planting on their farmlands. Sensitization meetings and site visits will resume in August to support them on tree planting preparations and tree management.

UTGA has prepared over **20,000** high quality *Eucalyptus grandis* seedlings to be used for community tree planting in West Bugwe during the next rainy season (September to December).

Engagements with NFA regarding reviving a roadside market at the Busitema T-junction are in their final stages.

UTGA is supporting the community leaders in preparing the requirements that include, a



designated management committee, a management/business plan. The market is expected to be handed over by December 2024. The market will provide space to local community members to sell their farm produce to improve household incomes and reduce pressure on the forest.

5.0 Maintenance activities

For the new plantings maintenance activities including survival assessments, blanking, spot weeding, liberation and opening more planting spots will be carried out during the second rainy season (September - December) this year.

6.0 Planned activities

| Activity | Timelines |
|--|-----------------|
| Maintenance activities including survival assessments, spot weeding, blanking, liberation. | Sept – Nov 2024 |
| Boundary marking of compartments (with paint) | Aug - Sept 2024 |
| Completion of verification of carbon ES | December 2024 |
| Implement community tree planting initiatives | Sept – Nov 2024 |
| Additional restoration plantings | 2025-2026 |

7.0: Challenges

The major challenge was with the intermittent rains at the beginning of the planting season which delayed the planting. However, the planting was completed in May. Animal damage from browsers for some of the palatable species. A team of forest patrol men was instituted to support the protection of the newly planted trees.

FSC certification/auditing fees were increased yet unanticipated when budgeting, however UTGA is striving to cope. It's expected that as the certificate grows it will become cheaper as more members contribute.

UTGA conveys deep appreciation to GFI and Silva Causa team for your commitment and support to our mission. Your contribution strengthens our ability to continue and further develop the actual programs through which we manifest our convictions particularly for sustainable forest management and restoration of forest cover and related ecosystems. We have become experts in forest restoration and you have provided the opportunity for us to become what we are now. We thank you.

Below is the newly acquired certificate.



Certificate of Registration

This is to certify that
Forests in the Uganda Timber Growers Association Group Scheme

has been certified in accordance with the requirements of the Forest Stewardship Council® A.C. Using the The FSC National Forest Stewardship Standard of the Republic of Uganda (FSC-STD-UGA-01-2017, March 2018) and that Uganda Timber Growers Association of

PLOT 116 BUKOTO STREET, Kampala, +256, UGANDA

is the Group Manager for this Group Certificate and is hereby licensed to describe the management of the certified forest area as 'FSC® Certified' and is hereby licensed to use the FSC Logo on and sell as FSC certified all products which are listed on the attached product schedule which were sourced from the certified forest area.

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Certificate Registration Code: | SA-FM/COC-006962 |
| Licence Code: | FSC-C148799 |
| Issued By: | Soil Association Certification Limited Spear House, 51 Victoria Street, Bristol, BS1 6AD United Kingdom |
| Issue Date: | 05 June 2024 |

Valid until the Renewal Date: **04 June 2029**

Subject to successful annual surveillance

Signed on behalf of Soil Association Certification *Meriel Robson*

Meriel Robson, Director of Forestry

SA-FSC-020-02 June 2022 © Prepared by Soil Association Certification Ltd
This certificate is only valid for sale of FSC products when accompanied by a correct product schedule. Validity of this certificate shall also be verified by checking the FSC database info.fsc.org or by contacting Soil Association Certification, forest@soilassociation.org
This Certificate is the property of Soil Association Certification Ltd and all copies or reproductions of the certificate shall be destroyed or returned to Soil Association Certification Ltd immediately on request.
A description of the products, when or wherever they are included in the scope of the certificate may be obtained from Soil Association Certification on request.
This certificate itself does not constitute evidence that a particular product supplied by the certificate holder is FSC certified (or FSC Controlled Wood). Products offered, shipped or sold by the certificate holder can only be considered covered by the scope of this certificate when the required FSC chain of custody record is in place and shipping documents.