WeForest

2024 Project Update

Copperbelt Forest Landscape Restoration Project

Forest on Farms and Community Forest Restoration

Mpongwe, Luanshya, and Ndola Districts, Copperbelt Province, Zambia
Miombo Belt

Timeline:
2015 - 2030

Targeted ecosystem:
Miombo woodlands

KBA KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS
Imanda #7190

Project management and M&E team

Main implementing partner:
WeForest Zambia

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Country Director, Zambia

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MEL Manager

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Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

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Agroforestry Specialist

See the full team at:
www.weforest.org/about-us/#our-team

Project story

The Copperbelt Forest Landscape Restoration Project (COPP) is implemented in Mpongwe, Luanshya, and Ndola Districts of Zambia's Copperbelt Province. The project addresses the degradation of forests on farms and community lands, with a focus on reversing deforestation and enhancing ecological integrity. Between 2000 and 2021, the Copperbelt Province lost 372,000 hectares of tree cover, an 18% reduction that contributed to 170 million metric tons of CO_2e emissions.

The project works closely with Forest and Farm Community-Based Organisations (FFCOs), local authorities, and traditional leadership to restore degraded areas through sustainable forest management, strengthen local forest governance systems, and develop alternative forest-friendly livelihoods that reduce pressure on natural resources.

The project is anchored in a participatory governance model involving key local institutions, including Forest and Farm Community-Based Organisations (FFCOs), the Forestry Department, Bee Mentors and Honorary Forestry Officers (HFOs). This multi-stakeholder arrangement ensures inclusive decision-making and accountability in the stewardship of forest resources.

From 2015 to 2020, the project operated solely in Luanshya district as the Luanshya Project, becoming the Copperbelt Forest Landscape Restoration Project in 2021, with an expansion to include Mpongwe and Ndola districts.

Key challenges in the landscape

Illegal and unsustainable **charcoal** production

Expansion of **agricultural** land and land use change

In-migration and population growth leading to forest conversion

Weak **enforcement** of forest laws and governance structures

Limited **incentives** for forest conservation among farmers

Perception of forests on farms as **idle land** suitable for clearing

Our integrated approach

Improve forest governance and stewardship through:

- Strengthening FFCOs and Community Forest Management Groups (CFMGs) in governance, leadership, and law enforcement.
- Establishing and enforcing community rules of engagement and by-laws.
- Operationalizing grievance redress, compliance systems, and forest law enforcement.

Conserve and restore the forest through:

- Establishing of Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) plots and miombo conservation areas.
- Ensuring sustainable management of wet evergreen swamp forest in Imanda Community Forest.
- Land-use planning and beekeeping forest plot mapping.
- Integration of climate-smart agriculture and agroforestry.

Strengthen forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors through:

- Implementation of beekeeping and diversification into other viable green enterprises.
- Seed funding schemes to foster ownership and reinvestment.
- Behavior-centred design campaigns to drive social change.
- Radio programs, community storytelling, and peer-led outreach to reinforce new norms.

A long-term vision

Climate

The restoration of the project area will contribute to both climate mitigation and adaptation: increasing tree cover to sequester carbon while improving water retention and soil stability to help communities adapt to droughts and erratic weather.

Nature

Restoring the project area will protect biodiversity and secure critical ecosystem services like water and soil health. Improved land management will enhance habitat resilience, ensuring the forest continues to sustain both people and wildlife

People

Strengthened governance and forest-friendly livelihoods will ensure communities see the forest as an asset: one that provides resources while being sustainably managed. By integrating agroforestry and other sustainable livelihoods, the project reduces deforestation-driven income reliance while securing long-term economic stability.

Outcomes

By integrating these interventions, the project will:

- **Strengthen governance** and community ownership of forests and biodiversity.
- **Increase forest cove**r and restore ecosystem functions in targeted areas.
- **Improve household incomes** through forest-based enterprises and climate-smart agriculture.
- **Foster behavioural shifts** toward sustainable forest and land management.
- **The long-term impact** of our work will benefit people, nature and climate.

Theory of Change

Existing problems in the landscape

- Forest and land degradation
- Soil erosion
- Unsustainable resource extraction
- Weak governance structures
- Food insecurity

Risks

- Worsening economic pressure

WeForest Interventions

Improved forest governance and stewardship

- Improving local forest management structures and regulations
- Improving forest law enforcement and compliance

Restoring and conserving at-risk forests

- Conservation
- Assisted Natural Regeneration
- Tree planting

Introducing forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviours

- Beekeeping
- Agroforestry
- Farm irrigation
- Community awareness-raising and behavioural change activities

Project outcomes

- Improved community-led management of natural resources and forest governance
- Enhanced tree cover and biodiversity on farmlands and in the community forests
- Increased income and agricultural production, and enhanced social and behavioural change for sustainable forests and farms

Long term impact

Climate

Stored and sequested carbon

Nature

Thriving biodiversity and intact ecosystems

People

Sustainable and resilient communities

2024 Major Achievements

The Imanda Community Forest Management Group (ICFMG) was officially recognized and granted community forest user rights, empowering them to control access, use, and management of the Imanda Community Forest Area.

A new farm- and forest-based beekeeping enterprise model was developed through a community-led participatory process, replacing the previous handout-oriented model.

A three-year grant totaling £386,345 was secured from Jersey Overseas Aid through the Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society to upscale agroforestry interventions in the project .

Case study

A workshop was held to equip journalists to tell impactful stories of forest restoration, climate smart dairy production, agroforestry and green business.

The project aims to harness the power of the media to not only raise awareness but also to amplify the voices of Zambian rural farmers in decision making processes. In the insert is one of the journalists making a group presentation during the training.

2024 activity update

Improved forest governance and stewardship

- The ICFMG was **officially recognized** and granted community forest user rights.
- Mpongwe East District Farmer Association and ICFMG **remained functional**, with a majority of their elected office bearers actively engaged in daily operations.
- **Eight Honorary Forestry Officers** successfully trained in forest monitoring, law enforcement, and corruption management.

Restoring and conserving at-risk forests

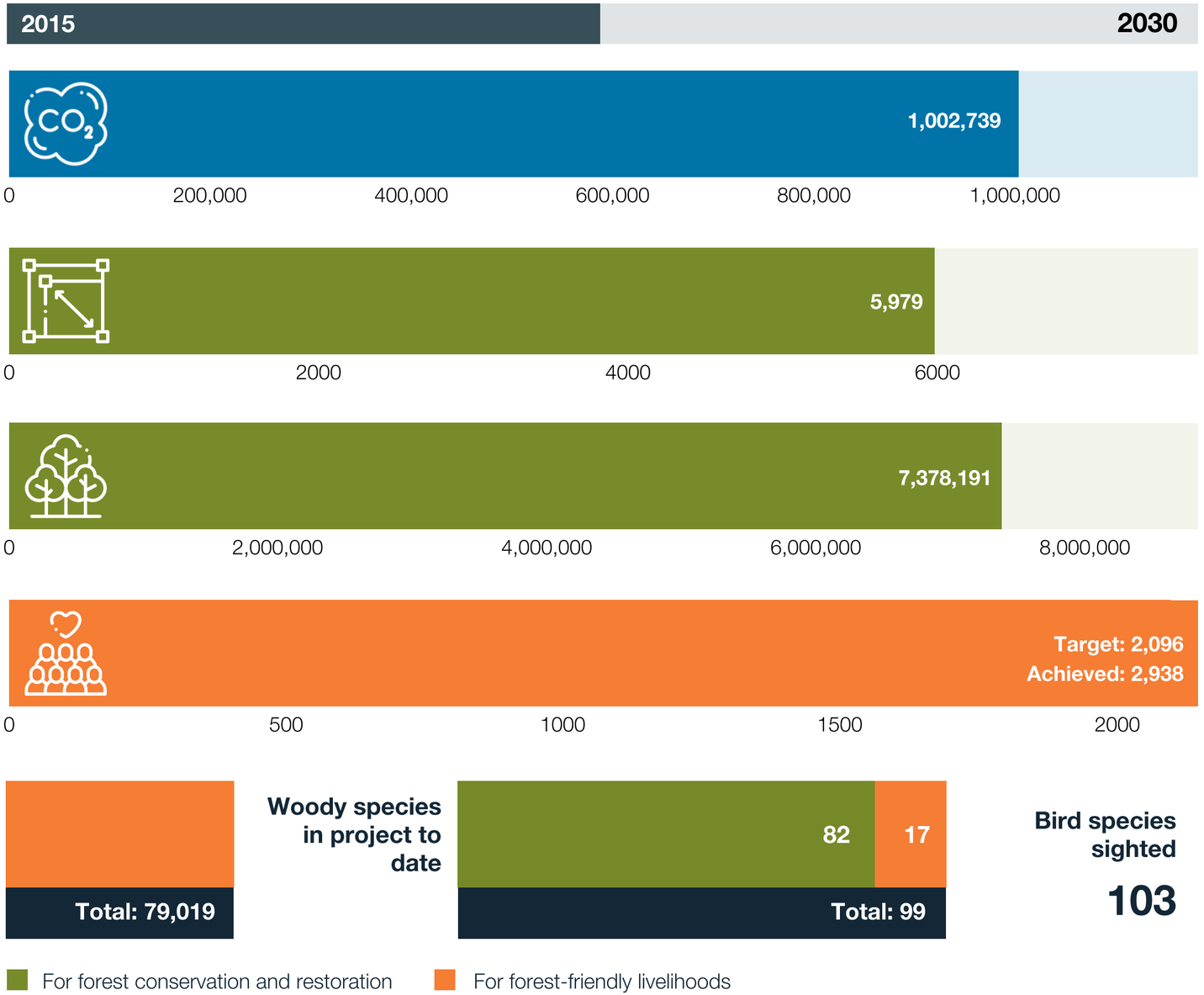
- **2238** hectares of land formally put under community forest management.
- **840** hectares of forest, representing **121** beekeeping plots, were put under conservation.
- A forest management plan for Imanda Community Forest Area was developed and approved by the Forestry Department.
- **125** farmers were trained in Assisted Natural Regeneration, farmland use planning, and agroforestry.

Introducing forest-friendly livelihoods

- **A farm-and forest-based enterprise** beekeeping model was developed, requiring co-ownership of beehives by farmers and a Community-based organization, with recoveries from the scheme serving as a revolving fund for beekeeping and other forest-friendly livelihoods.
- **125** farmers were trained in beekeeping and basic business management.
- **1168** beehives were distributed, benefitting 118 farmers.
- A partnership was formalized with **Radio Mpongwe** to run the ‘Nature Solutions Community Radio Programme’.
- **16** community radio journalists from local radio stations were trained in environmental reporting.
- **40** community radio programmes were produced and broadcast on Radio Mpongwe.

Progress tracker

See end of report for our progress tracking methodology



Case study

Establishment of Permanent Monitoring Plots in Mpongwe, with Community Facilitators who received training in data collection. The Forest Extension Officer (FEO) verifies the diameter at breast height (DBH).

Case study

Group photo featuring the District Forestry Officer (DFO), Imanda CFMG Chair, COP Project Manager, WFZ Country Director, Provincial Forestry Officer (PFO), Chief Ndubeni, and the eight HFOs after the handover ceremony of the Community Forest Agreement to Imanda CFMG - a key milestone in securing forest user rights within the designated Imanda Community Forest area.

2024 Challenges

In 2024, farmers earned an average net income of USD 37.3, a decline compared to the previous year's figure of USD 46. This reduction is partly due to the prolonged dry spell during the 2023-2024 rainy season, which significantly reduced water and forage availability, which are critical for honey production. To address this climate-induced decline in production and earnings, the project scaled up technical support and training in climate-smart agriculture and agroforestry to help farmers diversify and stabilize household incomes. These interventions were reinforced through a newly secured grant from Jersey Overseas Aid, aimed at building long-term resilience to climate shocks by promoting sustainable farming practices and alternative livelihood options beyond honey production.

Looking ahead to 2025

Our primary focus for 2025 is to:

- Conserve 625 hectares of land, provide training on sustainable forest management and incentives land preservation by distributing 1,300 beehives.
- Promote Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) by focusing on agroforestry farming systems and establishing satellite tree nurseries through Community Based Organisations.
- Enhance social and behavioral change in forest management and agricultural practices.

Supporters & Partners

2024 project partners

Forestry Department supported and actively engaged in the implementation of project activities.

Mpongwe District Council engaged on local issues with five traditional leaders.

Department of Cooperatives and Entrepreneurship engaged with the project's capacity development programme.

Future Search led the CBO capacity development programme.

Department of Agriculture engaged in the Bokashi Research Project and support of project objectives.

Copperbelt University supported empirical studies.

Department of Community Development (CD) engaged in gender awareness raising activities.

BirdWatch Zambia (BWZ) collaborated on the implementation of bird surveys.

Mpongwe Community Radio collaborated on the Nature Solutions Radio Programme.

Wildhive & Co renewed their honeycomb offtake agreement with CBO.

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) supported law enforcement training.

With thanks to our supporters in 2024, including:

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ILLUSTRATION ANIMATION

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How we measure and forecast our impact

Baseline

For the sake of simplicity, the progress bars in this report show a baseline of zero. This represents the concept that the area covered by WeForest forest and landscape restoration (FLR) activities was zero; thus the associated trees conserved and restored, carbon stored and households impacted through WeForest intervention was also zero.

In reality, when a WeForest project begins, our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning team undertakes a detailed survey on forest structure and regeneration through establishing Permanent Monitoring Plots, and conducts an extensive questionnaire on livelihoods, to establish meaningful baseline values. You can read more about our full MEL activities here.

Hectares planted, conserved and restored

Progress up to 2024

Verifiable cumulative total since the project began of all mapped intervention sites, also known as polygons, of:

1) Conservation forest areas, such as forest reserves

2) Restoration forest areas, such as Assisted Natural Regeneration and planting areas

3) Agroforestry areas on community/farm land

End of Project Target

Target number based on the potential area of land able to be conserved, restored and planted in the project area under the known and expected conditions at project start. However, it is subject to change based on unforeseen opportunities or challenges that may arise.

Anticipated tons of CO2 to be sequestered through project activities

Progress up to 2024

Extrapolated tons of CO2 calculated from the measured areas of different types of land use (for example forest or agroforestry) under “Hectares of forest planted, conserved and restored” to date, and the average amount of projected long-term CO2 per hectare provided from literature review for each land use type in their locations. Although totalled, please note the methodology for calculating these CO2 projections are specific to land-use type, and span a period corresponding to the expected time taken for the trees to reach maturity, which varies between locations.

End of Project Target

As above, but using the target (and not current) number of hectares planted, restored and conserved and their respective area totals as a parameter for calculations. As this parameter is subject to change, the associated CO2 target may also change over time.

Number of trees conserved and restored*

Progress up to 2024
Extrapolated number of trees calculated from the measured areas of different land use types (for example conservation areas, restoration areas or agroforestry) under “Hectares planted, conserved and restored” to date, and the average tree densities observed for each land-use type when mature, known through our MEL activities or scientific literature.

End of Project Target
As above, but using the target (and not current) number of “Hectares of forest planted, restored and conserved” and their respective area totals as a parameter for calculations. As this parameter is subject to change, the associated trees conserved and restored target may also change over time.

*Estimations based on average numbers per hectare

Trees planted to date (2024)

Total
Actual counted number of planted seedlings and saplings of woody (tree and shrub) species in the project to date.

Trees planted for forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors
Only woody species directly planted for livelihood improvement. This also includes woody fruit, fodder & timber trees, and woody cash crops, exclusively planted on community or farm land.

Trees planted for forest conservation and restoration
Only woody species that were directly planted for ecological reasons, aiding restoration of the natural forest ecosystem.

Woody species in project to date (2024)

Total
Actual observed number of woody (tree and shrub) species:

- Regenerating in the conservation/restoration zones (i.e. in the Permanent Monitoring Plots) and
- Planted, either for restoration or livelihood improvement
- Growing as mature trees in the conservation/restoration zones (i.e. in the permanent monitoring plots).
- Please note, these numbers are not exhaustive and the true species richness is likely to be higher.

Tree species for forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors
Only woody species directly planted for livelihood improvement. This also includes woody fruit, fodder and timber trees, and woody cash crops, exclusively planted on community or farm land.

Tree species for forest conservation and restoration
The woody species observed in the project area that are not used for livelihood improvement purposes. Where species are used for both livelihood improvement and restoration (which is sometimes the case, as we use native species as much as possible), they have been counted under ‘forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors’.

Mammal and bird species sighted to date

Numbers are included where we have a good level of biological monitoring, for example using camera traps or audio devices - please note that numbers are unlikely to capture the full species richness of the project area and that the absence of reporting does not imply the absence of species.

Other notes

WeForest works in close cooperation with local partner organisations, institutions, community-based organizations and local people. Therefore, our impact can never be fully separated from the work of our partners. WeForest acknowledges that the presented impact numbers cannot be solely attributed to our work, but is also supported through the hard work contributed by all our local partners.

Terminology

Conservation
Where native forest canopy cover is still intact, we focus on protecting the forest from any threats and disturbances, such as overgrazing, unsustainable wood extraction and fire.

Restoration
Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR): Where there is reduced forest cover but high potential for natural regeneration, we aim to accelerate natural recovery, typically through preventing soil degradation, reducing competition with weeds, and protecting young trees.

Tree planting
Where there is reduced forest cover and little regeneration potential, we actively plant native trees at a density that corresponds with the regeneration potential.

Agroforestry and tree crops
Where agricultural landscapes exist, WeForest promotes the planting of trees for livelihood improvement. These trees can be used either for direct consumption or sale (fruits, timber, fuelwood) or to support other crops or livestock (agroforestry). Native tree species are prioritized but, where necessary, non-native species may be used.