



2024 Project Update

Mount Mulanje Restoration Project

Project management and M&E team



Main implementing partner:
**WeForest Malawi
and MMCT**



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Mount Mulanje, Malawi
Miombo Belt



Timeline:
2019 - 2030



Targeted ecosystem: **Miombo woodlands**
Biodiversity Hotspot: **Eastern Afromontane**



**Mount Mulanje FR
#6680**

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

Project story

WeForest Malawi’s flagship initiative is centered on the Mount Mulanje Biosphere Reserve, a unique area home to endemic and endangered species such as Mulanje Cedar tree and Mt Mulanje chameleon (*Nadzikambia mlanjensis*). This area - despite its UNESCO recognition in 2000, protected status since 1927, and years of intervention by conservation NGOs - is grappling with significant challenges.

The main mission in Mount Mulanje is to conserve existing woodlands, restore areas of miombo woodlands lost to rapid deforestation, and secure these gains through sustainable models of economic development.

In 2021, the Mount Mulanje Restoration Project adapted its focus from cedar and pine plantations towards miombo woodland co-management.



Key challenges in the landscape

Deforestation

One fifth of the forest has been lost since 2000.

Economic hardship

65% of people living around Mount Mulanje live below the international poverty line.

Unsustainable forest extraction

Wood for fuel,charcoal and timber continues to be unlawfully extracted from the forest.



Our integrated approach

Improve forest governance and stewardship through:

- Working with the landowner, the Department of Forestry; and local Forest Block Committees and Village Natural Resources Management Committees, which include local communities, stakeholders, traditional leadership, state department representatives to foster community-based forest management and law enforcement to prevent illegal activities in the forest reserve.

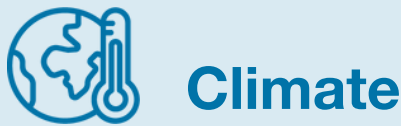
Conserve and restore the forest through:

- Carrying out Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) through fire management activities e.g. fire break construction, prescribed burning and silvicultural activities restoring 9,000 hectares

Strengthen forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors through:

- Reducing the pressure on the forest from fuelwood extraction and enriching crop production with small-holder farmers by growing 2,700,000 agroforestry trees and ensuring their ongoing care and reinforcing value chain of non timber forest products such as honey.

A long-term vision



Climate

The restoration of Mount Mulanje 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 Mount Mulanje 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, beekeeping, the project reduces deforestation-driven income reliance while securing long-term economic stability.



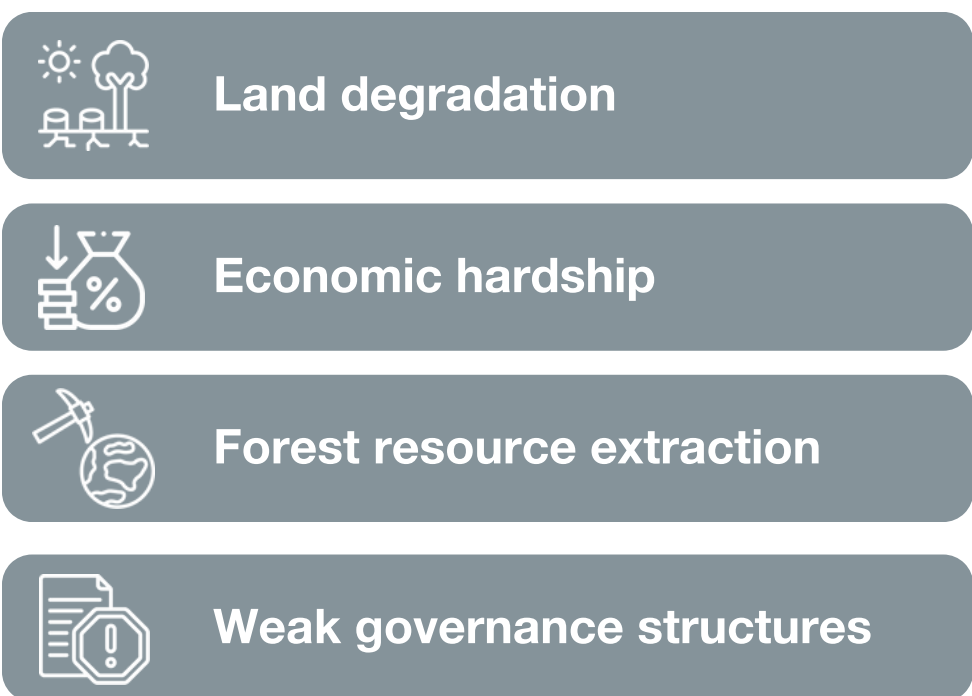
Outcomes

By integrating these interventions, the project will:

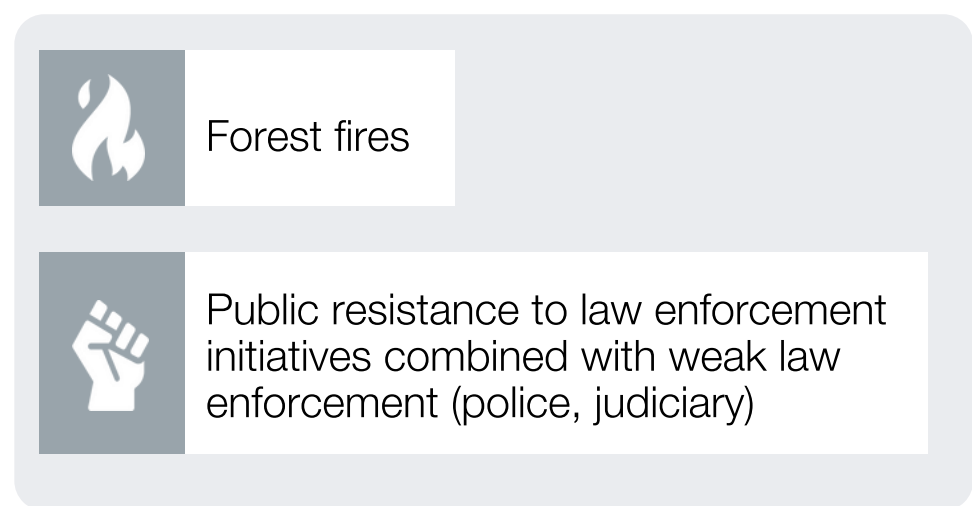
- **Restore and protect** the forest ecosystem.
- Optimise **agroforestry** through effective maintenance practices.
- Ensure **co-management** entities are financially supported through sustainable livelihood schemes.
- Develop **ongoing partnerships** in the landscape.
- Ensure that the **co-management blocks** around Mount Mulanje are well governed.
- The **long-term** impact of our work will benefit people, nature and climate.

Theory of Change

Existing problems in the landscape



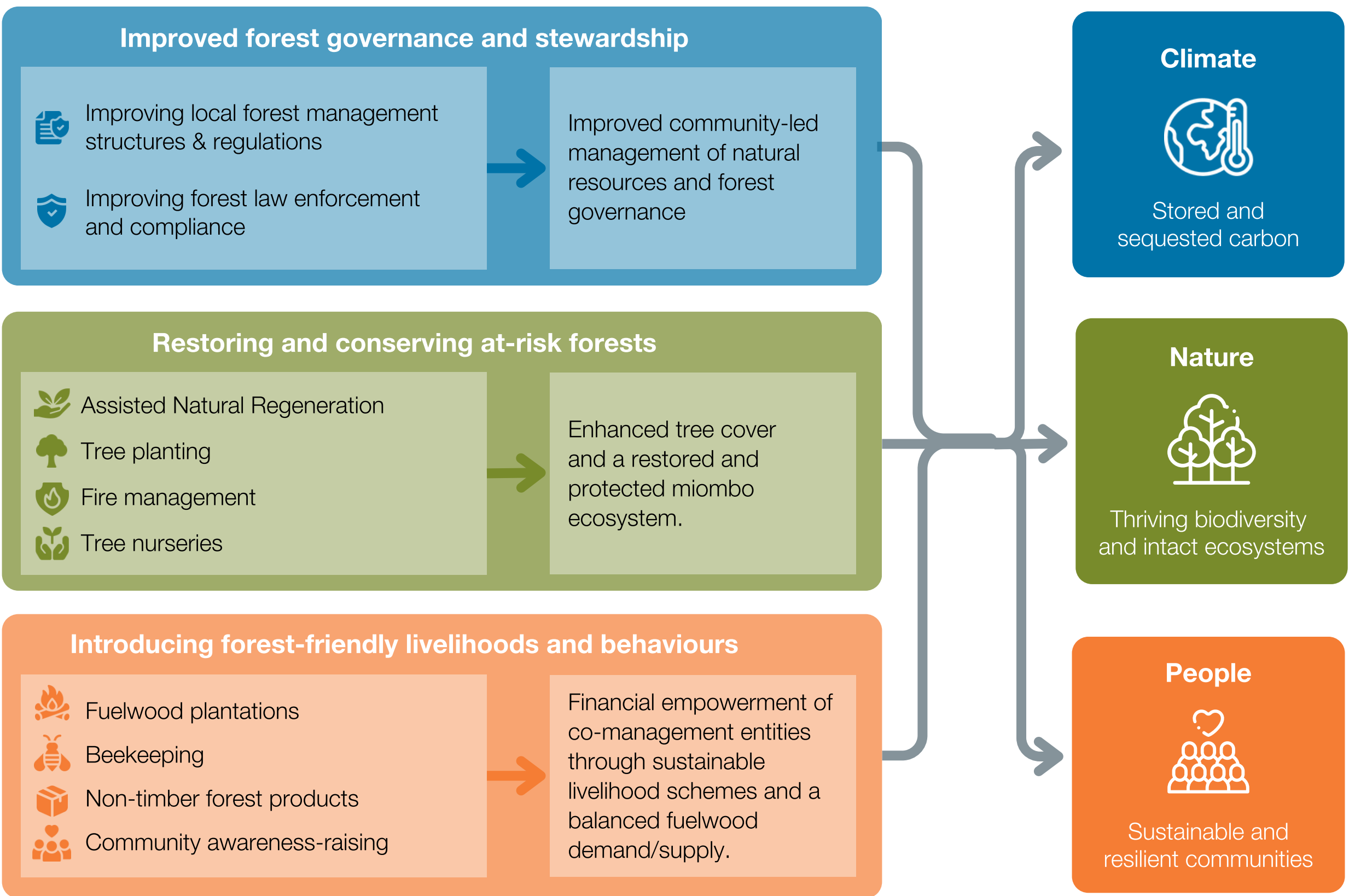
Risks



WeForest Interventions

Project outcomes

Long term impact





2024 Major Achievements

Forest Management Plans were signed for the co-management blocks in Kazembe and Tchete, laying out the strategy for sustainable forest practices until 2029.

Director of Forestry
Titus Zulu signing
the Forest
Management Plans
of Kazembe and
Tchete Forest
Blocks in Mulanje
District



Centre for Ecological Research team in collaboration with Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST), WeForest, MMCT, FRIM, MoM and community representatives expressing joy after establishing 2 PMPs in Mphaya sub block

2024 activity update



Improved forest governance and stewardship

- **Co-management agreement signed** in 2 forest blocks in Mulanje district
- **66 community scouts** were trained by the Malawi College of Forestry and Wildlife.
- **231 patrols** were carried out in two forest blocks in both Mulanje and Phalombe, led by the communities along with the forestry department
- **20 annual Forest Action Plans** developed in 20 villages in charge of the four forest blocks.
- **Nine Village Natural Resources Committees** and two Forest Block Committees were established in Phalombe district
- **Participatory Forest Resource Assessment** was undertaken in the two forest blocks in Phalombe district.



Restoring and conserving at-risk forests

- **41 Permanent Monitoring Plots** were established to monitor changes in tree growth and diversity in the forest.
- A fire management procedure was developed and **225 people** were trained in fire management practices.
- **184 kms of firebreaks** were constructed in the project area.



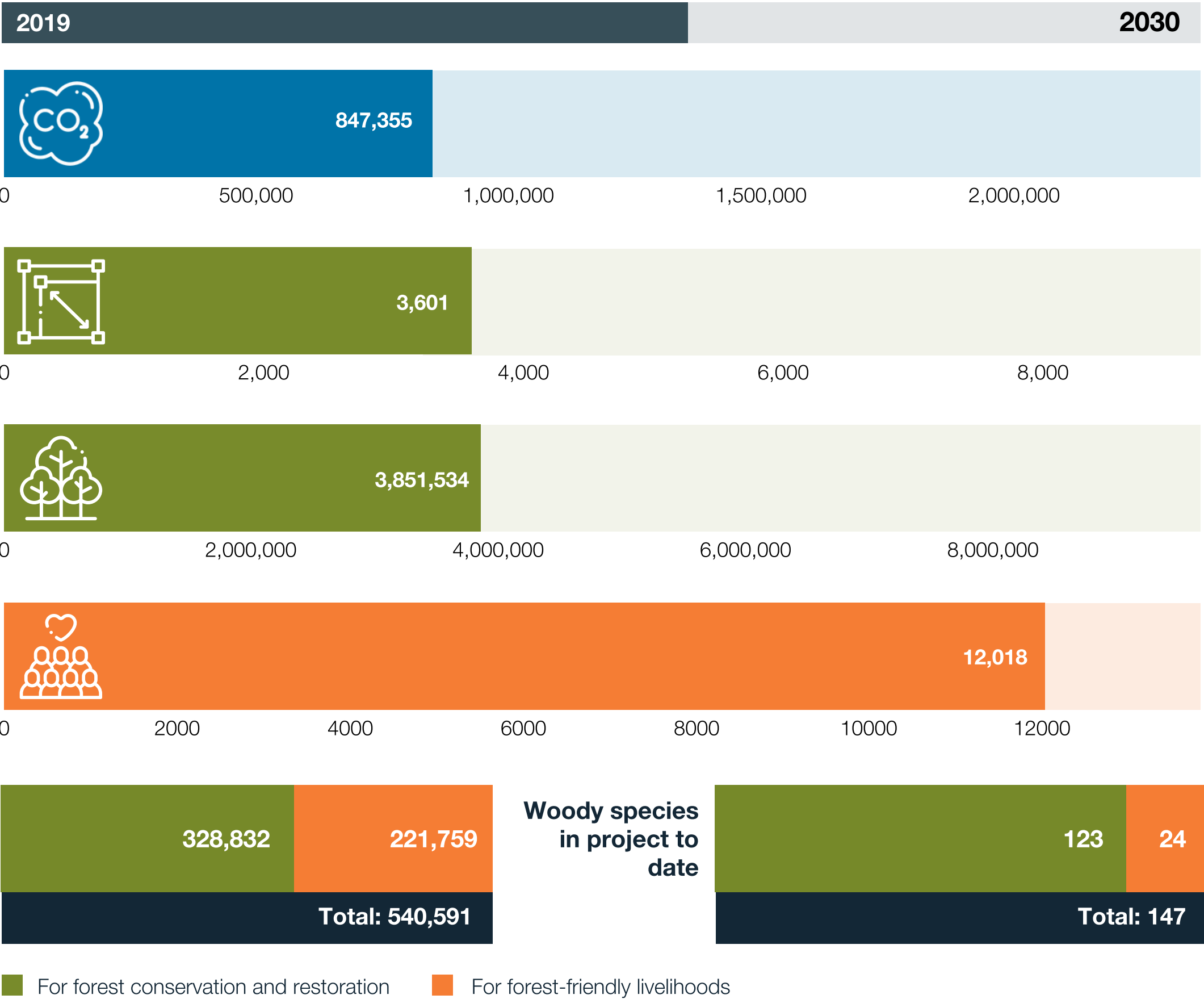
Introducing forest-friendly livelihoods

- **75,000 agroforestry seedlings were** planted during planting season December 2023 - March 2024.
- **340,000 agroforestry seedlings** were grown for planting season between December 2024 and March 2025.
- **70 nurseries** were established across Mulanje and Phalombe.
- **60 new lead farmers** were identified, joining the 50 existing lead farmers.



Progress tracker

See end of report for our progress tracking methodology





! 2024 Challenges

The prolonged dry conditions experienced across Malawi, particularly in the southern region, have significantly impacted the out-planting activities planned for 2024. The lack of rainfall, attributed to the El Niño phenomenon, has resulted in unfavourable planting conditions and the mortality of some seedlings especially pigeon pea seedlings which were planted with the first rains. To address this, adjusting planting schedules to align with favourable weather patterns, and enhancing soil moisture retention through mulching and conservation techniques were recommended to the farmers.

Persistent fires have continued to hinder forest regeneration and growth on Mount Mulanje, largely attributed to encroachers leaving fires unattended, poaching activities, and other factors. In response, fire management plans and training programs have been implemented, and firefighting equipment has been distributed to Village Natural Resources Management Committees (VNRMCs) to enhance their capacity to combat these fires. Looking ahead, a fire monitoring tool has been developed and will be integrated with Kobo and GPS devices to facilitate effective mapping and enable thorough follow-ups.

>> Looking ahead to 2025

- Operationalization of benefit sharing mechanism for Kazembe and Tchete co-management blocks (including ticketing system)
- Cedar trees survival counting and enforcement of fire management controls
- Linking beekeepers to functioning cooperatives
- Establish functional Village Forest Areas
- Expansion of co-management to GVH Khamula (the third forest block in Phalombe district)
- Assessment of 2020 PMPs in Kazembe and Tchete co-management blocks
- Distribution of 682 beehives to beekeepers in both Phalombe (Likulezi & Chiphalombe co-management blocks) and Mulanje (Tchete)

Supporters & Partners

2024 project partners

Inter-Aide conducted a learning exchange visit on agroforestry and collaborated on the preparation for expansion in Phalombe.

MMCT collaboration and cross learning on co-management, law enforcement and fire management. Cedar management support. WeForest has an MoU with MMCT, therefore, for some activities we share resources when implementing similar activities within the landscape of Tchete and Kazembe co-management blocks as well as cedar sites at the plateau.

Katope Cooperative, Linyangwa Cultural Heritage and Conservation Club (KAWWICODDA) facilitated exchange visit and identified potential partners for future expansion.

With thanks to our supporters in 2024, including:



Contact us

Visti www.weforest.org or for more information or email: contact@weforest.org

Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM) collaboration on environmental education and public awareness.

Development for Alternative Initiative established Forest Law Enforcement Coordinating Team & supported mobile courts.

BGCI Project (Darwin Initiative) supported restoration activities in Mulanje and Miombo non-timber forest product value chain development.

Malawi College of Forestry and Wildlife collaborated on law enforcement training.

Malawi University of Science and Technology conducted research on selling miombo wood in local markets.



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’.

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.

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.