

Mulanje Landscape Restoration Project

2024 PROJECT REPORT



Greenpop

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through our Forests for Life programme, we form long-term partnerships with small-scale, local organisations and provide support to plant trees, restore forest and woodland habitats, manage critical catchment areas, and improve the lives of communities that rely on forest resources in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Since 2011, Greenpop has implemented forest and landscape restoration projects across **four countries**, with **230,299 trees** planted across **147 hectares**. Over this period we have collaborated with **15 implementation partners** in Sub-Saharan Africa and are currently actively implementing **four projects**. This annual project report focuses on one of those four projects: the **Mulanje Landscape Restoration Project**.

In collaboration with Mulanje Mission Hospital, Greenpop has been implementing the Mulanje Landscape Restoration Project since 2019. This project involves stakeholder engagement, assisted natural regeneration, enrichment tree planting and community engagement in order to improve land management and restore indigenous forests in Mulanje District, Malawi.

In 2024, the project focused on strengthening relationships with existing village partners through natural regeneration management, non-monetary incentives, and, where necessary, the active planting of 4,500 tree seedlings, 1,000 bamboo plants, and 6 tonnes of vetiver grass (*Chrysopogon zizanioides*) for riverbank stabilisation in target catchment areas. The project also promoted sustainable forest management through the maintenance of community nurseries established during previous project activities, as well as community training on community-based natural resource management, improved cookstove technology, and forest beekeeping.

Additionally, crop diversification was encouraged through the non-monetary incentives programme by providing various cash crop seeds (bird's eye chillies, sesame, soybean, and various vegetable seeds) and natural fertiliser starter kits, enabling communities to produce more organic fertiliser to improve soil health.

All of the above interventions contribute to addressing key drivers of forest loss in Malawi, driven by over harvesting of forest resources for fuel wood for cooking and heating, while contributing to building social, ecological and economic resilience of those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.



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INTRODUCING THE MULANJE LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROJECT

Many of the world's ecosystems, those in Malawi included, have undergone significant degradation resulting in negative impacts on both biological diversity and the livelihoods of communities dependent on natural resources. High population growth, 3,2% in Malawi, coupled with illiteracy rates higher than 50% and poverty levels reaching 60%, has led to an increase in unsustainable resource utilisation throughout much of the country. Poor agricultural practices, overutilization of natural forests and charcoal production have continued to increase the vulnerability of the natural environment and the ecosystem goods and services it provides.

Multiple barriers exist preventing effective solutions from being implemented, including: i) a lack of adequate scientific data and information on natural systems in Malawi; ii) a lack of knowledge of the importance of protecting the natural environment; iii) poverty; and iv) insufficient funding of conservation activities. Land degradation, as one of the major contributors to climate change, and climate change as a critical driver of biodiversity loss, act in a compounding and interconnected manner that is expected to lead to a reduction in crop yields of 10% globally and up to 50% on the African continent if left to proceed unchecked. It is thus critical to address these barriers to sustainable development and to reduce/prevent the large-scale impacts that these drivers of change will have on the local communities, their livelihoods and the natural environment on which they depend.



The Mulanje Landscape Restoration Project contributes to both climate change mitigation and adaptation through the active planting of a range of tree species, encouragement of natural regeneration, and restoration of soil and by implementing relevant soil restoration and water conservation activities. Community members are trained in novel, sustainable income-generating activities which will provide more sustainable sources of income, food, and wood, help communities regenerate forests naturally, and increase soil fertility and crop yield for small-scale farmers by reducing soil erosion. The project aims to increase the economic benefits received by more than 1,000 households within the villages surrounding the project area through training and capacity building, active forest restoration, environmental education, and the improvement and protection of the surrounding natural environment.

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT PARTNERS

THE GREENPOP FOUNDATION

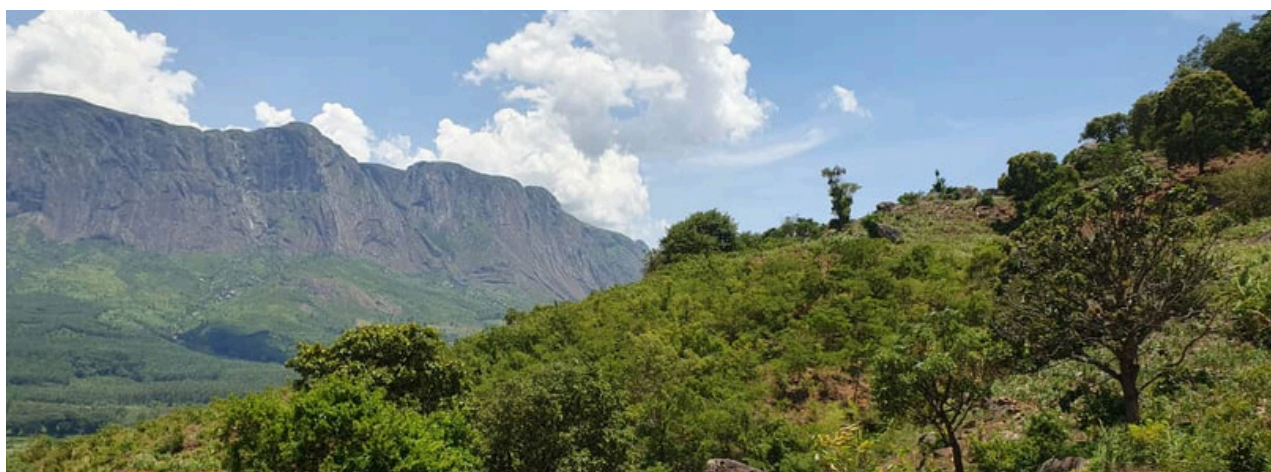
Greenpop is an award-winning registered non-profit organisation based in Cape Town, South Africa. We are dedicated to restoring ecosystems and empowering environmental stewards through forest restoration, urban greening, food gardening, and environmental awareness projects across Sub-Saharan Africa. Since our founding in 2010, we have planted over 200,000 trees and inspired more than 356,000 active citizens across South Africa, Zambia, Malawi, and Tanzania.

As a UN Decade Restoration Supporting Partner, Greenpop is recognised as a leader in practical ecosystem restoration with considerable impact in terms of hectares restored and people engaged.

Greenpop is also a 1% for the Planet Environmental Partner, which shows that we are a vetted environmental organisations working toward a wide array of solutions, from climate justice and urban infrastructure to gender equality; conservation policy to environmental education, and beyond.

MULANJE MISSION HOSPITAL (MMH)

Mulanje Mission Hospital runs several social development programmes in the Mulanje District. Under their Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, the hospital works to uplift the general living conditions in the catchment area. Using the Model Village Approach, rural communities are engaged in conservation agriculture and empowered to develop sustainable sources of income. Activities include agroforestry, beekeeping and honey production, solar fruit drying, soil and water conservation, riverbank protection, and the development of small-scale irrigation schemes. These schemes are used to produce cash crops such as vegetables and chilli peppers, leading to increased incomes in the area. Eight Model Villages have been targeted so far, and reforestation is undertaken in various areas.



MULANJE LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROJECT: THEORY OF CHANGE

WITHIN OUR MULANJE LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROJECT, WE...



PROVIDE FUNDING TO MULANJE MISSION HOSPITAL (MMH)



COLLABORATE WITH MMH TO CONDUCT TRANSPARENT AND EFFECTIVE MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING



SUPPORT MMH IN FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION BEST PRACTICE

SO MULANJE MISSION HOSPITAL CAN...

MAINTAIN COMMUNITY TREE NURSARIES

PLANT TREES (ACTIVE RESTORATION)

PLANT BAMBOO & VETIVER GRASS (ACTIVE RESTORATION)

TRAIN COMMUNITIES ON NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

PROVIDE TRAINING IN SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS



GROW TREES

IN DEGRADED FORESTS, AGRICULTURAL LAND, AND VILLAGES



PROTECT FORESTS & RIVERS

FROM UNSUSTAINABLE HARVESTING AND EROSION

INCREASE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND INCOME



EMPOWER PEOPLE

TO STEWARD THEIR ENVIRONMENT & SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES

IN ORDER TO...

UPLIFT COMMUNITIES

MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE

REDUCE IMPACT OF NATURAL DISASTERS

AND RESTORE HEALTHY & SUSTAINABLE FOREST LANDSCAPES

ALIGNMENT WITH LOCAL & GLOBAL GOALS

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

Our work contributes to SDGs 13 (Climate Action) and 15 (Life on Land) through the restoration of forest ecosystems which are vital in combatting the impacts of climate change.



STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FORESTS (2017-2030)

Our work contributes to the Strategic Plan's Goal 1: Reverse forest cover loss & Goal 2: Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits by restoring forest ecosystems and working with local communities to identify economic opportunities related to forest restoration and conservation.



UN DECADE ON ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

Our work contributes to Goal A - The integrity of all ecosystems is enhanced, with an increase of at least 15 per cent in the area, connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems, supporting healthy and resilient populations of all species - of the UN Decade by strategically planting indigenous trees to restore connectivity to degraded forest ecosystems.



BONN CHALLENGE

Our work contributes to the Bonn Challenge's goal to bring 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes into restoration by 2030 by restoring degraded forest landscapes.



10 NYDF GOALS

Our work contributes to the global effort aimed at bringing 350 million hectares of land under restoration activities by 2030 #5 "Restore forests" by restoring degraded forest landscapes.



AFR100

Our work contributes to the AFR100 goal to bring 100 million hectares of land in Africa into restoration by 2030 by restoring degraded forest landscapes



DFFE 10 MILLION TREES PROGRAMME

Our work contributes to the DFFE initiative to plant 10,000,000 trees across South Africa to restore degraded forest ecosystems and landscapes.



KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Our work contributes to Goal A: Protect and Restore of the KMGBF by restoring degraded forest landscapes and educating local communities on the importance and benefits of protecting natural ecosystems.

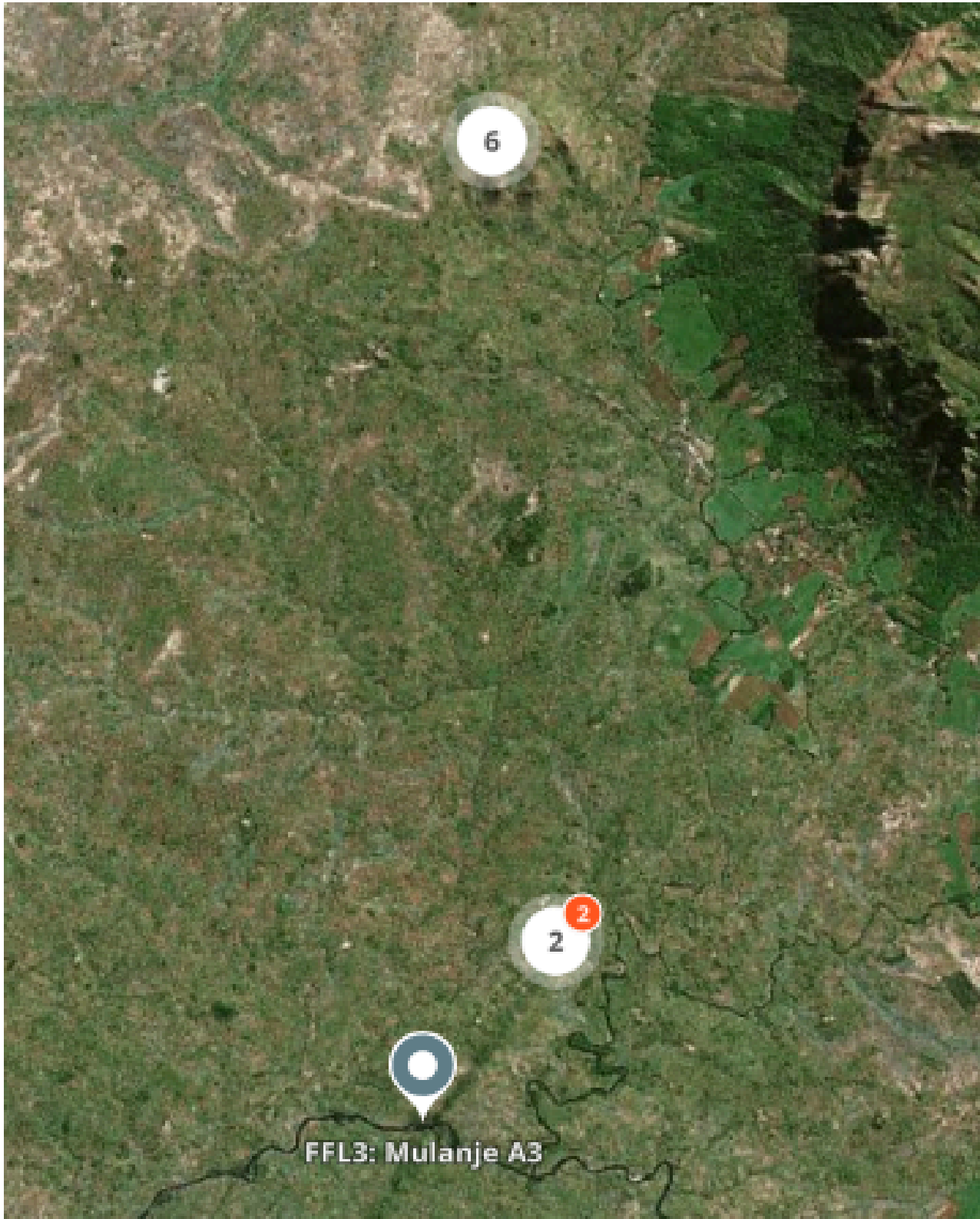


PROJECT LOCATION

The Mulanje Landscape Restoration Project is located near Mulanje District, Southern Region Malawi.

GPS: 15° 57' 32"S 35° 27' 42"E

View our interactive map on explorer.land.



OUR RESTORATION APPROACH

This project utilises the Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) approach, which is the ongoing process of regaining ecological functionality and enhancing human well-being across deforested or degraded forest landscapes. FLR goes beyond merely planting trees; it involves restoring an entire landscape to meet present and future needs, offering multiple benefits and land uses over time.

Greenpop's specific approach to FLR involves ensuring that all species selected for planting are indigenous and endemic to the ecosystem and are sourced locally. Where possible we work with nurseries run by local community members, who collect seed stock from the local forest ecosystems in which we are working. We plant our seedlings in dense clusters, often with taller nurse trees, so as to mimic natural conditions as much as possible and to facilitate natural regeneration. We also support our planting by conducting alien vegetation management to ensure that the indigenous species have the strongest chance of survival.

Funding and implementing actions to restore degraded areas will eventually lead to improved forest management and associated co-benefits, such as:

- Biodiversity conservation by increasing habitat availability for forest-dependent species
- Enhanced soil stability and health
- Improved water regulation
- Increased carbon sequestration
- Economic benefits derived from eco-tourism and sustained forest productivity

Restoring forests and forest landscapes is a vital step in regaining the health and functionality of these ecosystems.



COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Community members and relevant stakeholders will be engaged throughout the project, from problem identification to implementation and project monitoring. All participating villages have already undergone training and sensitisation meetings, and efforts will continue to develop the intervention activities established within these communities.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Project team, along with relevant government departments (Forestry and Agriculture), will actively participate in and lead the ongoing management and oversight of all project activities, particularly the training of community members and the monitoring and evaluation of project outcomes.

The relevant communities will be involved in decision-making from the onset of the project and will be the focus of training sessions, workshops, capacity building, and environmental education. As the primary beneficiaries of all project activities, the communities are the most valuable resource in ensuring project success. Decisions within most of the Mulanje communities are based on village representatives being integral to the process. These potential projects require buy-in from village leaders and general community members to be successful and impactful.

A strong focus will be placed on engaging female community members in various aspects of the project. Women will be encouraged to participate in village committees (VNRMCs, Beekeeping Committee, and Efficient Cookstoves Committee) as they are most likely to be affected by the issues at hand within these communities. Therefore, it is critical that they are involved in the decision-making processes to ensure that the appropriate problems are addressed.



PROJECT STATUS

The primary focus of the Mulanje Landscape Restoration Project involves activities such as training community members in natural resource management and alternative livelihood opportunities, and the annual planting of up to 12,000 indigenous trees. MMH's Sustainable Livelihoods Project team, along with relevant government departments (Forestry and Agriculture), have actively participated in and led the ongoing management and oversight of all project activities, particularly the training of community members and the monitoring and evaluation of project outcomes.

Community members and relevant stakeholders have been engaged throughout the project, from problem identification to implementation and project monitoring. All participating villages have undergone training and sensitisation meetings, and have been continually engaged with to develop the intervention activities established within these communities.

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MONITORING & EVALUATION METHODOLOGY



Monitoring and Evaluation tools for the project include vegetation, soil, and water monitoring methodologies, satellite data, fixed-point photography, and records maintained by project managers (e.g., purchase and activity records). Vegetation monitoring was conducted by MMH staff using methodologies developed by Greenpop.

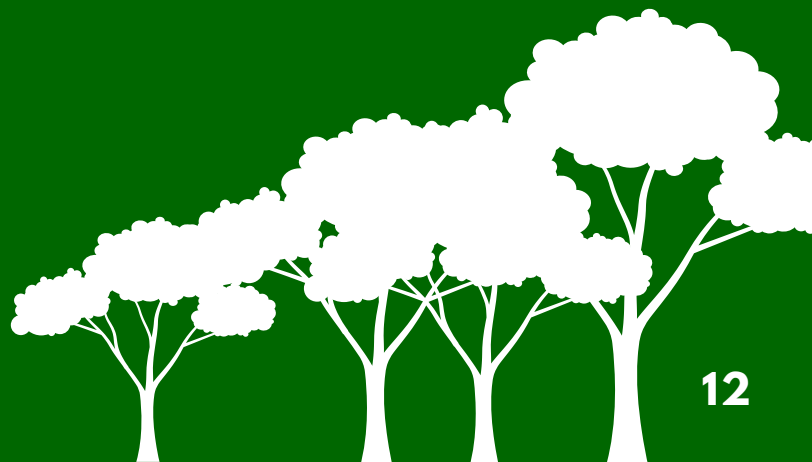
These methodologies assess vegetation cover and tree growth, including height, basal circumference, and canopy diameter, according to an established schedule. Additionally, fixed-point photographs are captured by MMH staff to visually document changes in the landscape over time. Out of the field, Greenpop is able to access satellite data to determine indicators such as the Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) for the site over time, through the Restor platform.





2019-2024 IN NUMBERS

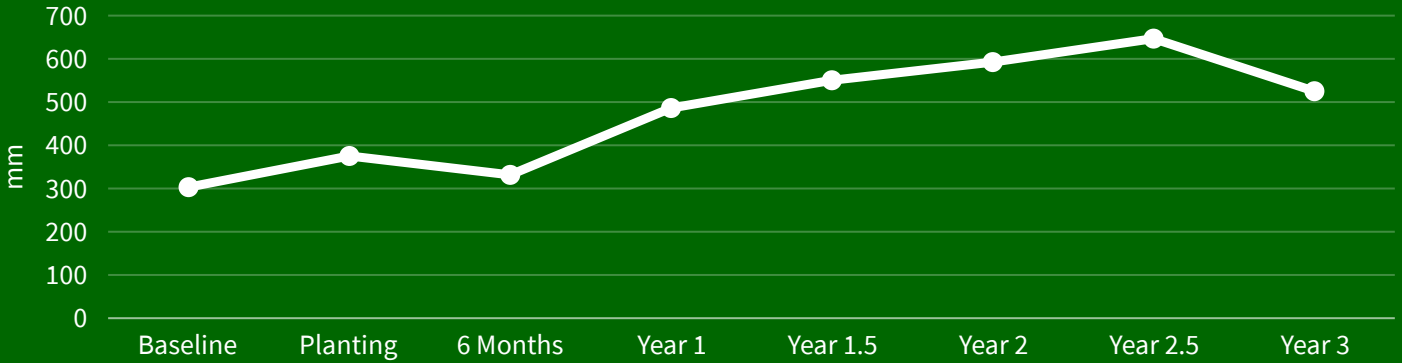
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
TREES PLANTED	2,500	3,500	4,000	12,000	4,500	4,500	31,000
HA UNDER RESTORATION	3.6	4	12	5	6	3.6	34.2
# OF SPECIES PLANTED	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
COMMUNITIES ENGAGED	7	8	10	13	13	13	13



MONITORING RESULTS ACROSS ALL SITES



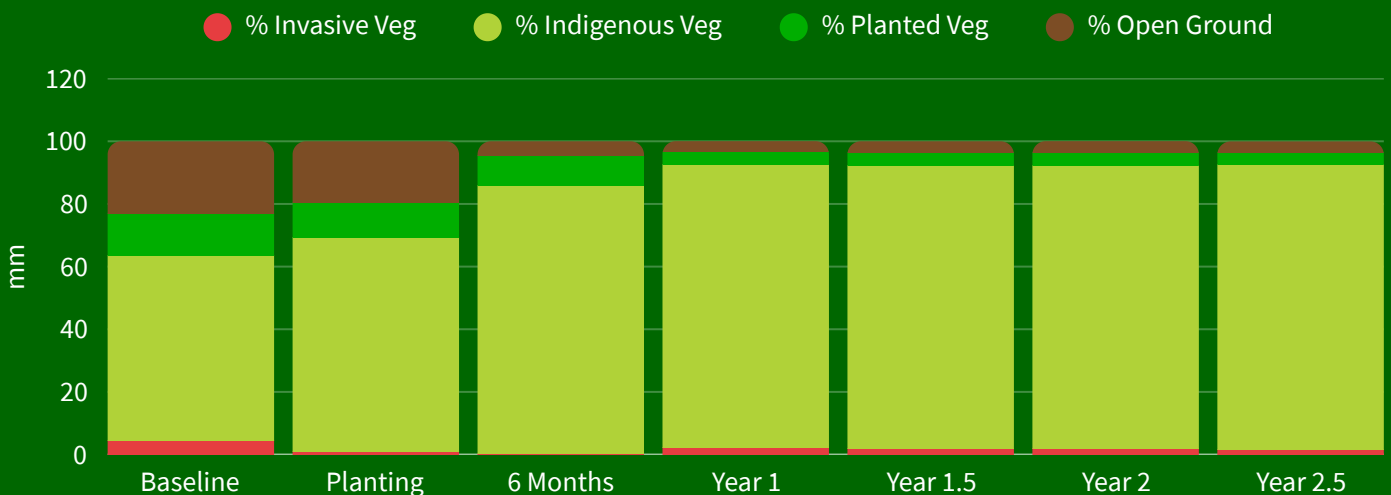
TREE HEIGHT



CANOPY DIAMETER



VEGETATION COVER



MULANJE LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROJECT STATUS

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The Mulanje Landscape Restoration Project has proven to be a great success among the target communities as it has imparted knowledge and practical experience to community members on how they can protect and restore their landscapes, while benefiting from it sustainably. It has also helped these communities to understand the impacts and effects climate change has on them thanks to the advocacy which forms a key component of MMH's project implementation.

Ecosystem restoration is progressing across the project sites, however it has suffered several setbacks recently, namely Cyclone Freddy and a subsequent dry spell which had a significant impact on the trees planted across project sites. The project has thankfully been able to mitigate the impact of these events through the community nurseries which were established under project activities and which have already begun producing thousands of seedlings annually.

The work of the project has also started to change attitudes within the local communities towards the environment, with communities undergoing natural resource management training and creating community based natural resource management committees, as the sense of project ownership as increased, to ensure that project interventions are properly managed.

The recurrence of cyclones and dry spells in Malawi for the past four years, and the likelihood for these to increase in frequency and intensity, makes the project's work to teach and equip communities about climate change and how to adapt to it all the more vital.



CLOSING WORDS FROM MMH

PROJECT REFLECTIONS

Since 2019, the project has made significant strides, conserving over 30 hectares and planting more than 30,000 trees. The impact is clear across various sites.

At Mlatho Hills, riverbanks thrive with large trees and beehives, with communities continuing conservation efforts post-project. In Mwanamvula, a 5-kilometre riverbank stretch is protected, enhancing water quality. Matwika has seen wildlife return, and Sites E and F show promising growth. The project has reduced soil erosion and boosted agricultural yields. Beekeeping and tree nurseries have become valuable income sources, with some communities achieving self-sustainability and opening bank accounts linked to nursery profits.

Community-led monitoring has expanded site reach and sustainability. Despite challenges like political influence, bylaws developed with communities and the forestry department ensure effective resource management.

A mindset shift has occurred, with farmers recognising the long-term financial benefits of conservation over short-term gains from tree cutting.

PARTNERSHIP WITH GREENPOP

We greatly value our partnership with Greenpop. Without their funding, initiating many activities would be challenging. What makes this partnership unique is the exchange of technical expertise. For instance, while we previously planted trees, we struggled with monitoring. Greenpop introduced more effective monitoring techniques, which we now apply to all other tree planting initiatives in the area.

HOW THINGS WENT IN 2024

In 2024, the project expanded to include an additional site. With consistent and timely funding, all planned activities were executed smoothly. Although the execution faced no setbacks, communities encountered environmental challenges. The strong El Niño led to droughts and, in some cases, the drying up of rivers and boreholes. Consequently, some seedlings dried out, and the number of trees from the communities was lower than anticipated. Nevertheless, a total of 12,500 trees were planted in 2024.



CLOSING WORDS FROM MMH

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Our work is far from complete. While tree planting and conservation remain priorities, we aim to expand our focus to broader land restoration strategies to enhance soil health. Excessive runoff continues to degrade farmland, so we plan to invest in water harvesting technologies, such as dams and tanks, and implement soil and water conservation structures like terraces and gabion baskets. These efforts will align with the Malawian government's MWASIP programme to accelerate soil conservation.

The economic benefits from tree planting, including honey, beeswax, nurseries, and grafted fruit trees, have been successful. We aim to empower more communities to establish businesses and cooperatives, thereby improving livelihoods and promoting conservation.

THANKS TO DONORS

To the donors who have supported this project, the message is clear: your contributions are having a lasting impact. On a large scale, restoring degraded tropical forests is one of the most effective ways to mitigate climate change. Locally, these efforts are visibly transforming communities. In a country increasingly affected by cyclones and droughts, conservation initiatives like these are crucial for protecting current and future livelihoods. You are helping communities adapt and realise the benefits of conservation. Your support is making a significant difference in the lives of many.

Hastings Chitengu, SL Project Officer
Thomas Van Acker, M&E



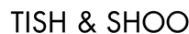
THANK YOU

PLEDGE PARTNERS

The Greenpop Foundation is proud to be partnered with the following donors who have all pledged to support our forest restoration work on a monthly/quarterly basis. The consistent and ongoing support from these companies allows us to plan our restoration impacts and financial budgets accurately each year. We couldn't do it all without these partners who have made a pledge towards a greener world.



Naked



THANK YOU



THANK YOU



NOTEWORTHY DONORS

In 2024, we give special thanks to a few of our notable Pledge Partners who have contributed significantly to our Forest Restoration work. Your support allows us to push the boundaries of impact in the work that we do.



INDIVIDUAL AND ONCE-OFF DONORS

And a HUGE thank you to the countless individuals and businesses who supported this programme through once-off donations, monthly donations, Tree Certificates, green gifting purchases, GivenGain campaigns and more in 2024.

Every single donation is seen and appreciated, and we are grateful for all of the trust and support that we receive from our TREEvolutionary community.

Together we have been able to make an incredible impact.