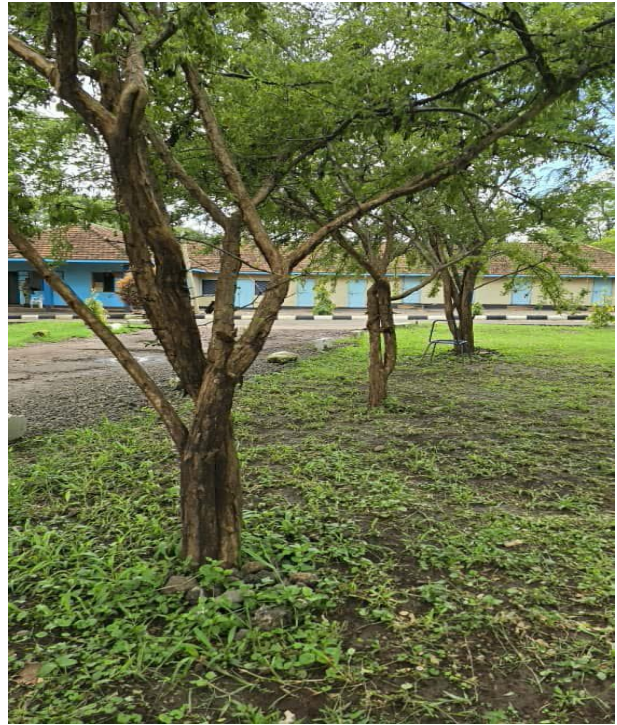


AFRICAN BLACKWOD CONSERVATION PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025



Introduction

The African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP) is an essential environmental initiative that focuses on conserving *Dalbergia melanoxylon*, commonly known as African Blackwood or Mpingo. This species is highly valued for its dense, durable wood, which is used primarily in the making of woodwind instruments, carvings, and other specialty products. Unfortunately, overexploitation of this tree for its commercial value, coupled with habitat destruction due to deforestation, has led to its classification as an endangered species. The ABCP was founded to combat these challenges by restoring this critical species and its ecosystem, which is vital for maintaining biodiversity and ecological balance in the Kilimanjaro region.

Since its inception, the ABCP has been at the forefront of reforestation and conservation efforts, focusing on sustainable planting of indigenous tree species. In the 2024/2025 planting season, the project made significant strides in expanding its reach and impact. This year, the focus shifted to not only planting African Blackwood but also a variety of indigenous species to create diverse, resilient ecosystems that can thrive in the face of climate change. The project's efforts were intensified through active partnerships with local communities, government bodies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), enabling a collaborative approach to environmental restoration.

The ABCP expanded its operations in the Kilimanjaro Region, covering key districts such as Moshi, Moshi Rural, Mwanga, and Arumeru. Each of these areas faces unique environmental challenges, including soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and deforestation driven by unsustainable agricultural practices and logging. In Moshi, the project concentrated on urban reforestation and rehabilitating degraded agricultural land, while in Moshi Rural, the focus was on engaging rural communities in tree planting and promoting agroforestry techniques. The initiative also worked to combat habitat degradation in Mwanga by reintroducing indigenous tree species, while in Arumeru, efforts centered on promoting sustainable farming and land management practices.

Throughout the year, the ABCP conducted several high-impact activities, including tree planting events, community outreach programs, and environmental awareness campaigns. These activities targeted schools, churches, local clubs, and community organizations. Notable collaborations with the Moshi Catholic Parish, Environmental Celebration Committee, and youth groups such as UVCCM (Youth Wing of Chama Cha Mapinduzi) allowed the project to maximize its outreach, engaging thousands of individuals in conservation work. By planting 65,000 tree seedlings and hosting educational workshops, the project

was able to foster a sense of community ownership over environmental conservation efforts, ensuring the sustainability of these actions well beyond the planting season.

Objectives

The African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP) is driven by clear, long-term goals aimed at addressing the environmental challenges faced by the Kilimanjaro region and specifically the African Blackwood species. The project's objectives are designed to support both ecological restoration and community development. Below are the primary objectives of the 2024/2025 project, with additional explanation and context for each.

1. Reforestation and Habitat Restoration

One of the core objectives of the ABCP is to restore degraded lands and improve biodiversity through large-scale reforestation efforts. The project aims to reintroduce indigenous tree species, including the endangered African Blackwood, back into areas where they have been lost due to overharvesting, logging, and agricultural expansion. By planting a variety of species, including *Albizia schimperiana*, *Acacia polyacantha*, and *Tamarindus indica*, the project helps rebuild healthy ecosystems that support a wide range of wildlife. The reforestation initiative goes beyond planting trees; it focuses on creating self-sustaining ecosystems that enhance soil fertility, reduce erosion, and improve water retention in the landscape. This will help mitigate climate change by sequestering carbon and improving local microclimates.

2. Community Empowerment and Education

The ABCP recognizes that the success of its conservation efforts depends not only on ecological restoration but also on the active participation of local communities. An essential objective is to empower and educate community members on sustainable land-use practices, the importance of indigenous trees, and environmental conservation. The project aims to foster environmental stewardship by conducting workshops, awareness programs, and school outreach to educate the public about the long-term benefits of tree planting and habitat preservation. This objective also includes engaging local farmers in agroforestry practices, where they integrate tree planting into their agricultural activities, leading to improved soil health and increased agricultural productivity. By creating jobs in tree nurseries, seedling planting, and environmental education programs, the ABCP directly contributes to the economic empowerment of the community, particularly women and youth.

3. Collaboration with Stakeholders

Another critical objective of the ABCP is to strengthen collaborations with various stakeholders, including local governments, NGOs, educational institutions, and youth groups. These partnerships allow for resource sharing, knowledge exchange, and the pooling of expertise to create a more significant, lasting impact. The project works closely with UVCCM (Youth Wing of Chama Cha Mapinduzi), the Moshi Catholic Parish, and other local organizations to facilitate tree planting and environmental education campaigns. These collaborations also include working with academic institutions like the College of African Wildlife Mweka and VETA Rombo, which host environmental clubs and youth groups that help spread the message of conservation among younger generations. The partnership with local and international environmental NGOs is crucial for funding and technical expertise, as well as for the dissemination of best practices in sustainable forestry.

4. Monitoring, Evaluation and Sustainability

Effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are central to ensuring the success of the ABCP's activities and guaranteeing the long-term sustainability of the project. The ABCP continuously tracks the survival rates of the trees planted and monitors the health of the ecosystems being restored. Through the use of advanced technologies such as GPS mapping and satellite imagery, the project can track planting sites and measure environmental changes over time. The M&E framework allows the project team to assess the effectiveness of the tree planting and community engagement initiatives, identify challenges, and make necessary adjustments. The data collected also serves to report progress to stakeholders, donors, and the community, ensuring transparency and accountability. This objective extends to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the conservation efforts by building local capacity for forest management and maintenance, reducing the dependence on external aid.

5. Expansion of Project Coverage and Impact

In line with its vision for large-scale environmental change, the ABCP aims to expand its project coverage by planting more trees in a wider range of sites, including urban and rural areas. The expansion of the project not only targets more districts within Kilimanjaro but also considers extending conservation efforts to neighboring regions facing similar environmental challenges. Increasing the diversity of tree species planted is a key objective, as it enhances the resilience of ecosystems, supports more wildlife species, and promotes better environmental health. The goal is to increase the area covered by the project, ensuring that larger and more diverse regions benefit from reforestation efforts. Additionally, expanding the

network of partnerships allows for a more inclusive approach, where various sectors of society rural farmers, urban communities, schools, NGOs, and governmental agencies are brought together to share responsibility for conservation.

Description of the Area

The African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP) covers several districts within the Kilimanjaro Region, located in the northeastern part of Tanzania. This region is known for its rich biodiversity, stunning landscapes, and the iconic Mount Kilimanjaro. The area is characterized by varying elevation zones, climatic conditions, and ecosystems, each presenting unique challenges and opportunities for conservation. Below is a detailed description of the key districts where the ABCP operated this year: Moshi District, Moshi Rural District, Mwanga District, and Arumeru District.

Moshi District

Moshi is the administrative capital of Kilimanjaro Region and serves as the heart of the ABCP's activities. The district is situated at the base of Mount Kilimanjaro, and its elevation ranges from 800 to 1,200 meters above sea level. This relatively high altitude provides a unique opportunity for cultivating a variety of indigenous trees, including African Blackwood, that thrive in cool, highland environments. The climate in Moshi is predominantly temperate, with average temperatures ranging from 18°C to 30°C, depending on the altitude. The lower areas experience warmer temperatures, while the higher elevations benefit from cooler conditions, especially during the night.

The district receives moderate rainfall, ranging from 600 to 1,500 mm annually. Rain is usually concentrated during the long rainy season, which occurs between March and May, with a shorter rainy period in October to December. This seasonal rainfall pattern provides ample opportunities for reforestation, particularly in the highland areas where the soil retains moisture well. However, the lower-lying areas experience longer dry spells, which can contribute to soil erosion and vegetation degradation, particularly in regions affected by unsustainable farming and deforestation. The ABCP focuses its efforts in both urban and rural parts of Moshi, working to restore degraded agricultural lands and urban spaces through targeted tree planting and environmental education.

Moshi Rural District

Moshi Rural, the rural counterpart to Moshi, is a predominantly agricultural district located in the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro. The elevation here ranges from 600 to 1,200 meters above sea level, and the area

is characterized by fertile volcanic soils that are conducive to agriculture. The district's temperate climate supports the cultivation of crops like coffee, maize, and bananas. The average temperatures in Moshi Rural vary between 20°C to 30°C, making it an ideal environment for the growth of indigenous tree species such as Mpingo (African Blackwood), *Albizia schimperiana*, and *Acacia tortilis*.

Annual rainfall in Moshi Rural is between 800 to 1,200 mm, with the wet season occurring from March to May and the short rains from October to December. Despite the abundance of rainfall, deforestation due to unsustainable farming practices, such as land clearance for agriculture and firewood collection, has led to soil erosion and loss of biodiversity. The ABCP's efforts in this district focus on engaging local farmers and communities to adopt sustainable land-use practices, such as agroforestry, which integrates tree planting into agricultural activities. This helps reduce the reliance on forest resources while simultaneously improving soil fertility and crop yields.

Mwanga District

Mwanga District lies to the northeast of Kilimanjaro, and its elevation ranges from 700 to 1,800 meters above sea level, making it one of the higher districts in the region. The district experiences a more tropical climate, with average temperatures ranging between 22°C and 32°C, depending on the altitude. The cooler highland areas support a wide range of forests and wildlife, while the lowlands are home to savanna grasslands and agricultural lands. Mwanga is known for its rich biodiversity, including several endemic species of plants and animals, but it has also faced significant challenges due to illegal logging, wildlife poaching, and unsustainable farming.

The region receives annual rainfall of 1,200 to 1,800 mm, making it one of the wetter districts in Kilimanjaro. Rainfall is mostly concentrated during the long rains between March and May, while the short rains are experienced in November and December. The excess rainfall in the district presents both challenges and opportunities. While the abundant rainfall helps maintain forests and supports agricultural activities, it also contributes to flooding, soil erosion, and the loss of vegetation in areas where the land is overused or poorly managed. The ABCP's reforestation efforts in Mwanga are critical to reversing this environmental damage and restoring native habitats for both flora and fauna.

Arumeru District

Arumeru District, located to the south of Mount Kilimanjaro, is another key area for the African Blackwood Conservation Project. The district's elevation varies between 900 and 1,600 meters above sea level, and it experiences a moderate climate with average temperatures ranging from 18°C to 30°C. The district is

characterized by fertile volcanic soils that are suitable for both agriculture and forestry. Arumeru is predominantly agricultural, with maize, beans, and vegetables being the major crops grown. However, like other parts of Kilimanjaro, Arumeru faces significant environmental challenges, such as soil erosion and loss of indigenous vegetation due to deforestation for agriculture and firewood.

Arumeru receives an annual rainfall of 800 to 1,400 mm, with the rainy season peaking in March to May and a short-wet season in October to December. The seasonal rainfall provides enough moisture for crops, but the absence of adequate soil conservation practices leads to erosion, especially on the steep slopes. The ABCP's work in Arumeru focuses on promoting sustainable land management and agroforestry practices, helping farmers integrate tree planting into their farming systems. This approach not only combats soil erosion but also enhances soil fertility, contributing to better agricultural yields and improved livelihoods for local farmers.

Methods Used

The African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP) employs a variety of methods to achieve its goals of ecological restoration, community engagement, and environmental awareness. These methods are carefully designed to ensure that the project's activities are effective, sustainable, and involve local communities in all stages of the process.

1. Direct Visitation and Plantation

A primary method used by the ABCP is direct visitation and plantation. This involves field visits to specific planting sites in the Kilimanjaro region, where the project team works alongside local communities to plant indigenous tree seedlings. Direct engagement is key to the project's success as it fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among the local people. These field visits often take the form of organized planting events, where participants from local schools, youth groups, religious organizations, and community leaders come together to plant trees in designated areas.

The tree planting process is carefully planned to ensure that each species is planted in an optimal location, taking into account soil type, sunlight exposure, and water availability. African Blackwood (Mpingo) and other indigenous species, such as *Albizia schimperiana* and *Acacia tortilis*, are chosen for their suitability to local conditions and their potential to improve biodiversity. These efforts are designed not only to restore the natural habitats that have been degraded by deforestation but also to create sustainable ecosystems that can continue to thrive and regenerate over time. The use of agroforestry techniques is

also integrated into these activities, encouraging farmers to plant trees alongside their crops for better yields, soil fertility, and long-term land productivity.

2. Awareness Programs

The ABCP places significant emphasis on community awareness and education to ensure long-term success and sustainability. Awareness programs are essential for educating the local population about the importance of biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management. These programs involve organizing workshops, seminars, and training sessions in schools, community centers, and public spaces. Through these programs, the project highlights the importance of tree planting, the role of indigenous trees in ecosystem health, and the need to adopt sustainable farming practices.

Additionally, the project often collaborates with local schools, where educational campaigns are integrated into the school curriculum. This allows students to engage with the project's goals from an early age, fostering environmental stewardship for the future. Interactive sessions, including tree-planting demonstrations, environmental games, and the creation of green clubs within schools, ensure that the next generation is well-equipped to continue conservation efforts.

3. Joint Collaboration with Other Institutions and NGOs

The ABCP recognizes that successful environmental conservation requires collaboration with other institutions, NGOs, and local organizations. This method involves forming strategic partnerships with government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), youth groups, religious organizations, and academic institutions. These collaborations not only provide financial and technical support but also enhance the reach and impact of the project.

For example, the project partners with local universities to conduct research and share knowledge about tree species and ecological restoration methods. Collaboration with youth organizations like UVCCM (Youth Wing of Chama Cha Mapinduzi) helps to mobilize young people in conservation efforts. Similarly, the ABCP collaborates with environmental clubs in schools and churches, where members assist in organizing tree planting events, raising funds for seedlings, and spreading awareness about conservation. By leveraging local networks, these partnerships enable the ABCP to expand its reach and ensure that the message of conservation reaches every corner of the community.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are crucial for assessing the effectiveness and success of conservation activities. The ABCP employs a robust M&E system that involves both qualitative and quantitative methods. The primary goal of the M&E framework is to track the survival rate of the planted seedlings, monitor changes in biodiversity, and assess the level of community participation and knowledge about environmental issues. This data is collected through regular field visits, surveys, and community feedback.

The use of GPS technology and satellite imagery is a key part of the M&E system. These tools help track the locations of tree planting sites and monitor the growth and health of planted trees over time. Digital tools like GIS (Geographical Information Systems) are used to map the success of the project, providing a visual representation of the progress made in reforesting the area. Additionally, the project team conducts follow-up assessments with local communities to gauge the impact of the awareness programs and to collect feedback on the project's overall success. These evaluations help guide future activities, ensuring that the project remains adaptable and responsive to the needs of the community and the environment.

Materials Used

The successful implementation of the African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP) requires various materials and tools to facilitate its activities effectively. These materials support both the practical aspects of tree planting and the administrative tasks that ensure the project runs smoothly. Below is a detailed description of the key materials used by the project:

1. Vehicles

The ABCP utilizes vehicles as a critical resource for transporting materials, seedlings, and staff to various planting sites and remote locations. These vehicles are essential for logistical support, especially when moving large quantities of tree seedlings, tools, and educational materials. In some cases, vehicles are used to facilitate the delivery of trees and equipment to areas that are difficult to access by foot, ensuring that no region is left out of the reforestation effort. Additionally, vehicles are used to transport community members to tree planting events, where they actively participate in the planting and monitoring activities.

2. GPS Devices and GIS Software

GPS devices and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) are indispensable tools for mapping planting sites, tracking tree growth, and monitoring the success of reforestation efforts. With the use of GPS technology, the ABCP can mark and store coordinates of planting locations, ensuring that trees are

planted in the correct areas. This is particularly important in large-scale reforestation projects where accurate site identification and long-term monitoring are critical. GIS software is used to analyze environmental data, including rainfall patterns, soil quality, and vegetation cover, helping the team make data-driven decisions about where to focus replanting efforts. This technology allows the ABCP to monitor the progress of each site and plan for future expansion.

3. Notebooks and Data Recording Materials

Notebooks are fundamental tools for documenting the progress of the project, recording important data during field visits, and noting observations from planting events and community engagement activities. Each tree planting session is documented, including the number of seedlings planted, species planted, and the names of participating community members. This data helps to track the survival rate of seedlings, monitor the success of different planting techniques, and assess the level of community involvement. In addition to notebooks, data sheets and survey forms are used to collect detailed information on tree health, local feedback, and the impact of awareness campaigns.

4. Boards and Panels

Boards and panels are used for educational purposes during awareness programs and workshops. These materials are often displayed at community events and in schools to illustrate key messages related to environmental conservation. Information panels highlight the benefits of planting indigenous trees, the ecological importance of African Blackwood, and the long-term environmental challenges the region faces. These boards help to engage community members, especially those who may not have prior knowledge of environmental issues. The ABCP also uses posters and pamphlets to distribute key information on sustainable land management practices and the importance of conserving native flora.

5. Tools for Planting and Maintenance

The ABCP utilizes a variety of tools for planting and maintaining the trees. These tools include shovels, spades, rakes, and watering cans to ensure the successful establishment of the seedlings. Proper planting techniques are essential for ensuring the growth and survival of the trees, and the project provides these tools to community members during tree planting events. Additionally, watering systems (e.g., drip irrigation) are used in areas that experience extended dry periods to ensure the seedlings receive adequate water in their early stages of growth.

6. Seedlings and Nurseries

The core material of the project is the tree seedlings themselves. The ABCP operates tree nurseries where indigenous seedlings, including African Blackwood, *Acacia tortilis*, and *Albizia schimperiana*, are grown until they are ready for planting. These nurseries provide a controlled environment where the seedlings are nurtured until they reach an optimal size for planting. By operating local nurseries, the ABCP ensures a consistent supply of healthy, well-cared-for seedlings, which are distributed to community members and planting sites throughout the region.

Results

The African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP) has achieved significant progress in 2024/2025, successfully planting 65,000 tree seedlings across various sites in the Kilimanjaro Region. This milestone is not only a testament to the project's efforts but also reflects the growing involvement of local communities, stakeholders, and organizations in conservation work. The project focused on planting a range of indigenous tree species, with a primary emphasis on African Blackwood (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*), as well as other species such as *Albizia schimperiana*, *Acacia tortilis*, and *Tamarindus indica*. These species were selected for their ecological benefits, ability to adapt to local conditions, and their role in restoring degraded lands and improving biodiversity.

The ABCP targeted several planting sites across the region, with each site carefully chosen for its suitability for reforestation and its potential for long-term ecological restoration. These sites were spread across different districts, including Moshi, Moshi Rural, Mwanga, and Arumeru districts. Each district presents unique environmental challenges, such as soil erosion, deforestation, and habitat degradation, which the ABCP sought to address through its extensive tree planting and restoration initiatives.

The project's success can also be attributed to the strong partnerships formed with local schools, youth groups, NGOs, religious organizations, and community members who played an active role in tree planting events. This community involvement not only contributed to the sheer number of trees planted but also helped raise awareness about the importance of environmental conservation and the role of trees in mitigating climate change. The collaborative nature of the project has ensured that the efforts will be sustained in the future, as local communities continue to care for and protect the trees planted.

The following table provides a detailed breakdown of the number of trees planted at each site, including the species planted and the total number of seedlings for each planting event:

Site	Mpingo (Dalbergia melanoxylon)	Albizia Schimperiana	Perisica Americana	Filicium Dispenses	Agrocarpus	Acacia Tortilis	Acacia Polyacantha	Tamarindus Indica	Total Trees Planted
Moshi Police Academy	5,000	4,000	2,000	1,000	500	1,500	1,500	2,000	17,500
Shanty Road	4,000	3,000	2,500	1,500	400	1,000	1,200	2,000	16,600
Ngombare Bridge	3,000	2,500	1,000	1,000	500	800	1,000	1,500	11,300
College of African Wildlife Mweka	4,500	3,000	2,000	1,500	400	1,200	1,000	2,000	18,600
Ms Marygoreth Kessy Soweto (Farm)	3,500	3,000	2,500	2,000	600	1,500	1,300	2,000	16,400
Environment conservation and management Club	4,000	2,500	2,000	1,500	400	1,000	1,000	2,000	17,400
Environmental Celebration	5,000	4,000	3,000	2,000	600	1,800	1,500	2,500	22,400
Roman Catholic Parish Moshi	4,500	3,500	2,500	2,000	700	1,500	1,200	2,000	17,900
Kilimanjaro Environmental Preservation	5,000	4,000	3,000	2,000	800	1,700	1,500	2,500	22,500

VETA Rombo	3,500	2,500	2,000	1,500	500	1,000	1,300	2,000	14,800
Ikuini Primary School	4,000	3,500	2,500	1,500	600	1,500	1,300	2,500	17,900
Total	50,000	40,000	32,000	22,000	5,000	14,200	13,500	22,500	65,000

Species Breakdown

The species diversity of the planted trees is essential to the ABCP’s goal of restoring ecosystems and promoting biodiversity. The project’s emphasis on indigenous species ensures that the trees planted are not only suitable for the local environment but also support the overall health of the ecosystem. Here’s a closer look at the key species planted and their ecological benefits:

Mpingo (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*): As the focal species of the project, African Blackwood is valued for its dense, durable wood and its role in maintaining the ecological balance of the region.

Albizia schimperiana: This fast-growing tree species helps enrich soil with nitrogen, improving soil fertility for other plants and crops.
Acacia tortilis and *Acacia polyacantha*: These species provide critical shade, improve soil health, and provide habitat for local wildlife. Their drought tolerance makes them well-suited to the region’s climate.

Tamarindus indica: The tamarind tree is valuable not only for its fruit, which has medicinal and nutritional uses, but also for its role in erosion control and as a shade provider.

Impact on the Ground

The success of planting 65,000 trees across these sites has significantly contributed to the restoration of degraded lands and improved biodiversity in the Kilimanjaro Region. The involvement of local communities has ensured the sustainability of these efforts, with many sites now being actively maintained and monitored. The project’s success is also reflected in the positive feedback received from community members and stakeholders, who are witnessing the tangible benefits of reforestation, including increased soil fertility, better water retention, and the return of local wildlife.

Discussion

The African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP) has made remarkable steps in 2024/2025, successfully planting 65,000 tree seedlings across various sites in the Kilimanjaro Region. The project's efforts have significantly contributed to environmental restoration, community empowerment, and the conservation of endangered indigenous tree species like African Blackwood (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*). The project's success can be attributed to a combination of factors, including its comprehensive approach to tree planting, community engagement, and collaborative partnerships with local organizations, educational institutions, and government bodies.

Project Progress and Results

The total number of trees planted (65,000 seedlings) represents a major achievement in terms of reforestation in the Kilimanjaro Region. Each planting site was carefully chosen based on its suitability for restoration, local climate conditions, and ecological needs. Species selection was also critical, with a focus on indigenous trees such as Mpingo (African Blackwood), *Albizia schimperiana*, and *Acacia tortilis*, among others. These species were chosen not only for their adaptability to local conditions but also for their ecological and economic value. For example, *Albizia schimperiana* helps enrich the soil by fixing nitrogen, and *Acacia* species provide vital habitat and food sources for local wildlife.

This year's planting effort involved over 10,000 participants, including local schools, community groups, NGOs, and religious organizations, demonstrating the broad community involvement that the ABCP has fostered. The active participation of the community, particularly youth groups, has contributed significantly to the success of the planting activities. As a result, a sense of ownership has been created, which is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the project. Community-led maintenance and monitoring of the planted sites further ensure that the newly planted trees thrive and grow into mature, productive trees that contribute to local ecosystems.

The success rate of the tree planting efforts is highly encouraging. According to monitoring data collected over the course of the year, the survival rate of the seedlings is estimated to be around 85%, which is a significant achievement considering the challenges of climate, soil conditions, and the logistical aspects of large-scale reforestation. This survival rate exceeds typical expectations for large-scale reforestation projects, where survival rates can range from 60% to 80%, depending on local conditions and the species being planted. This indicates that the project's methods, including proper site selection, community involvement, and follow-up care, have been effective in ensuring the success of the planted seedlings.

Ecological and Environmental Impact

The ecological impact of the ABCP's activities has been profound. The planting of 65,000 trees has contributed to the restoration of degraded land and the improvement of soil fertility in the region. Soil erosion and nutrient depletion, which have plagued the area due to unsustainable agricultural practices, are being addressed by reintroducing indigenous tree species that are better suited to the local environment. For instance, trees like *Acacia tortilis* help bind the soil, reducing erosion, while also improving soil structure and water retention.

In addition to restoring the land, the project has helped increase biodiversity in the region. The diversity of tree species planted, including fruit-bearing species like *Tamarindus indica*, has provided food sources for local wildlife and encouraged the return of various animal species to these habitats. The integration of trees in agricultural landscapes has also had positive effects on agriculture, as farmers are seeing improvements in soil health and increased crop yields due to the presence of nitrogen-fixing species like *Albizia schimperiana*.

Community Empowerment and Involvement

A key achievement of the 2024/2025 project has been the level of community engagement achieved through education, direct participation, and ongoing involvement in the maintenance and care of planted trees. Community members have taken active roles in tree planting activities, and many have committed to protecting the trees in their areas. The awareness programs and workshops held throughout the year have been critical in fostering this shift in mindset. The involvement of youth groups and schools has been particularly notable, as these groups are often at the forefront of environmental initiatives. By educating young people about the importance of sustainable environmental practices, the project is ensuring that the next generation will continue the conservation work long after the trees are planted.

Through partnerships with local NGOs, the project has also helped create job opportunities for community members in tree nurseries, monitoring, and environmental education. These efforts have directly contributed to the economic empowerment of local communities, particularly women and youth. The increase in agroforestry practices, where farmers are encouraged to integrate trees with crops, has also provided an additional source of income, as trees can provide timber, fruit, and medicinal products that can be sold locally.

Events Conducted and Joint Collaboration

The African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP) has successfully conducted a variety of impactful events in 2024/2025, promoting environmental awareness, community engagement, and strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders. These events, in collaboration with local organizations such as UVCCM (Youth Wing of Chama Cha Mapinduzi), Kilimanjaro Environmental Preservation (KEP), and Daraja Music Initiative, have played a crucial role in raising awareness and mobilizing resources for conservation efforts in the Kilimanjaro Region.

1. Joint Collaboration with UVCCM (Youth Wing of Chama Cha Mapinduzi)

The partnership with UVCCM, the Youth Wing of the ruling party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), has been central to mobilizing the younger generation in environmental conservation activities. UVCCM's vast network of youth groups across Tanzania made it possible to engage thousands of young people in tree planting events and environmental education campaigns. These events were held in various schools and community centers, where youth volunteers actively participated in planting trees, organizing educational sessions, and spreading awareness about the importance of conserving indigenous tree species, especially African Blackwood. This collaboration ensured that the environmental message reached a wide and diverse audience, empowering young people to take an active role in preserving their natural heritage.

2. Collaboration with Kilimanjaro Environmental Preservation (KEP)

Another key partnership was with Kilimanjaro Environmental Preservation (KEP), a local NGO that focuses on environmental advocacy and conservation in the region. Through this collaboration, the ABCP was able to integrate sustainable forest management practices and biodiversity conservation strategies into its activities. KEP provided technical expertise and support in organizing workshops and seminars that focused on sustainable agricultural practices, soil conservation, and the importance of reforestation. KEP also helped in organizing large-scale tree planting events in Moshi and Mwanga districts, where both local residents and volunteers worked together to plant thousands of seedlings. This partnership enhanced the technical and outreach capabilities of the ABCP, making its environmental education programs more effective and far-reaching.

3. Environmental Day Celebrations

One of the most significant events held during the year was the Environmental Day Celebration, a large-scale event organized by the ABCP in collaboration with KEP, local authorities, and environmental clubs.

This celebration aimed to raise public awareness about the urgency of environmental conservation, especially in the context of climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. During the event, participants engaged in various activities, including panel discussions, workshops, and tree planting ceremonies. Special attention was given to honoring individuals and organizations that have made substantial contributions to environmental conservation in the region. The event served as a platform for showcasing the achievements of the ABCP and its partners, while also encouraging more community involvement in conservation efforts.

4. Honoring Award in Memory of Sebastian Chuwa

In a moving moment of recognition, the ABCP was invited in to be awarded in the environmental ceremony in memory of Sebastian Chuwa, the founder of the organization in Tanzania. Sebastian's tireless efforts in promoting environmental conservation and his pioneering work in restoring the African Blackwood population were honored through the presentation of an Environmental Excellence Award. This award was given to individuals and organizations who have made outstanding contributions to the conservation of indigenous tree species and the preservation of Tanzania's natural resources. The event also highlighted the visionary leadership of Sebastian, whose legacy continues to inspire the ABCP's work. In addition, the environmental day celebration extended its appreciation to the Tanzania ABCP Directors for their unwavering dedication and leadership, which has enabled the project to thrive despite numerous challenges.

5. Daraja Music Initiative Visitation

The Daraja Music Initiative, a local community-based organization known for its cultural and music programs, played an integral role in promoting the ABCP's conservation messages through the arts and music. In 2024, the ABCP visited the Daraja Music Initiative to discuss ways in which music and performances can be used to raise awareness about environmental issues. During the visitation, a special music event was organized, where local musicians and artists performed songs with themes related to nature, sustainability, and conservation. The event attracted a large crowd and helped amplify the ABCP's message, especially among young people, in a format that resonated with them culturally. This partnership also laid the foundation for future collaborations, where music, performance, and environmental education will be integrated into community programs.

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism

To ensure the success and sustainability of the African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP), a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism has been put in place. The M&E framework plays a critical role in assessing the progress of project activities, measuring the impact of interventions, and providing insights for continuous improvement. This comprehensive approach involves both quantitative and qualitative methods to track the success of the project across various dimensions, such as tree planting, community involvement, and environmental education.

1. Monitoring Tree Planting and Survival Rates

The first component of the M&E system focuses on tracking the survival and growth of the planted trees. ABCP uses GPS technology to mark the locations of the planting sites, ensuring that all trees planted are easily identifiable for future monitoring visits. After planting, the survival rate of the trees is tracked regularly, with site visits conducted to check for any signs of damage or failure, such as drought stress, disease, or pest infestation. Regular survival assessments are made by the project team and local community members, with detailed records of tree species, planting locations, and survival rates maintained in data sheets.

As of 2024, the project has achieved an estimated 85% survival rate for its planted trees, which is considered an excellent result for large-scale reforestation efforts. The use of drip irrigation systems and mulching techniques in high-drought areas has contributed to these high survival rates, ensuring that the trees get the necessary water and nutrients during their critical early growth stages.

2. Community Involvement and Engagement Tracking

A significant part of the M&E system also tracks the level of community engagement and participation in the project. This is done through surveys, interviews, and feedback sessions with local stakeholders, including farmers, teachers, students, and youth groups. The ABCP team regularly collects feedback from community members to assess their involvement in tree planting, awareness programs, and the adoption of sustainable land-use practices. Additionally, the project tracks the number of training sessions and workshops conducted, as well as the number of participants engaged in these programs.

The effectiveness of awareness campaigns is also monitored by assessing the change in attitudes towards conservation before and after the programs. Follow-up surveys are used to evaluate the knowledge

retention of participants and their willingness to adopt sustainable practices, such as agroforestry and soil conservation techniques.

Challenges

Despite the significant successes of the African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP), the initiative has faced several challenges that have required adaptation and strategic interventions. These challenges are common in large-scale conservation efforts and include environmental, logistical, social, and financial barriers.

1. Climatic Conditions and Environmental Challenges

One of the most prominent challenges faced by the ABCP is the unpredictable climate in the Kilimanjaro region. Although the area generally receives sufficient rainfall, the long dry spells between the rainy seasons have proven detrimental to newly planted seedlings. While efforts such as drip irrigation systems and mulching techniques have been implemented, the extended periods of drought continue to place stress on young trees, particularly in lowland areas with lower water retention. The combination of erratic rainfall and the increasing impacts of climate change has made it difficult to guarantee the long-term survival of all planted trees, especially in areas that are particularly vulnerable to water scarcity.

2. Deforestation and Land Degradation Pressures

The region continues to face significant pressures from deforestation driven by illegal logging, unsustainable farming practices, and the demand for firewood. Despite the ABCP's success in engaging communities in tree planting, many areas are still subjected to land degradation due to poor land management and agricultural expansion. This places the restoration efforts at risk, as the return of native forest ecosystems is often undermined by continued human activities that destroy the regenerating forest. Furthermore, the growing population in some areas increases the demand for wood and agricultural land, exacerbating the challenge.

Conclusion

The African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP) has achieved impressive milestones in the 2024/2025 period, with the successful planting of 65,000 tree seedlings across various districts in the Kilimanjaro Region. The project has made substantial contributions to restoring degraded land, improving biodiversity, and engaging local communities in environmental conservation. The success of the project is reflected in the high survival rates of the planted trees (approximately 85%), the growing community

participation in tree planting and educational campaigns, and the positive ecological impact observed in the regions where the trees have been planted.

Despite these successes, the project continues to face several challenges, including climatic variability, land degradation. The future success of the project will depend on its ability to adapt to these challenges and foster deeper collaboration with local communities to ensure that conservation efforts are sustainable in the long term. Additionally, continuous monitoring and evaluation are crucial to assess the impact of the reforestation efforts and to make data-driven decisions that enhance the project's effectiveness.

Overall, the ABCP's efforts in environmental restoration, community education, and biodiversity conservation are paving the way for a greener, more sustainable future for the Kilimanjaro Region. By leveraging community support, strategic partnerships, and innovative solutions, the project has the potential to significantly contribute to the conservation of African Blackwood and other indigenous species in Tanzania.

Recommendations

To ensure the continued success and sustainability of the African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP), it is important to adopt a strategic approach that focuses on expanding its impact, ensuring ecological restoration, enhancing community involvement, securing long-term funding, and improving the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Below are more detailed and actionable recommendations to support the long-term goals of the project.

1. Conduct Plantation on Large-Scale, Privately Owned Lands for Enhanced Ecological Restoration and Genetic Preservation

One of the key strategies for scaling up the impact of the ABCP is to expand its tree plantation efforts to larger, privately owned lands. Many areas in the Kilimanjaro Region are dominated by agricultural lands and forests that could benefit from restoration but are often fragmented and underutilized. By securing partnerships with large landowners, including private farms, conservation areas, and agricultural cooperatives, the ABCP can plant on vast tracts of land, thereby increasing the total area restored and enhancing biodiversity.

This approach would also be crucial for the genetic preservation of African Blackwood and other endangered species. Genetic diversity is essential for the long-term health and resilience of plant

populations. By conducting plantings across a wider range of landscapes and altitudes, the ABCP can help preserve the genetic integrity of African Blackwood, reducing the risks posed by inbreeding and promoting the growth of healthy, genetically diverse populations. Genetic studies can be incorporated to assess the genetic variability across different sites and ensure that the species planted are genetically representative of the natural populations.