



Uganda is Getting 3 Million New Trees

15 July 2020

Human settlement, agriculture, and logging have not been kind to the world's trees, and in turn, have been nothing short of disastrous for the animals that call those trees home.

Reforestation efforts seem like a natural fix – planting trees is good for the climate and good for wildlife – but it's also a slippery slope into green colonialism when done in developing nations. Yet there are ways to approach reforestation with respect for local communities and in which everyone wins; and the newly launched "Wildlife Habitat & Corridor Restoration Project" in western Uganda appears to be just such an effort.

Announced on July 14, also known as World Chimpanzee Day, the project is a partnership between the Jane Goodall Institute and reforestation non-profit One Tree Planted.

The plan is to plant more than 3 million trees, supporting long-term and large-scale restoration of the Albertine Rift Forests. The area is an important habitat for endangered chimpanzees, as well as more than 50% of birds, 39% of mammals, 19% of amphibians, and 14% of reptiles and plants of mainland Africa. By joining forces, the two groups intend to not only restore and manage these ecosystems but importantly, to support local communities as well.

"We're honored to be joining forces with the renowned Jane Goodall Institute to execute a reforestation initiative of this magnitude," said One Tree Planted founder, Matt Hill. "This project will allow us to impact both the ecosystems and communities of the Albertine Rift Forests, ultimately providing significant ecological, socio-economic, and cultural benefits to the area."

The project will be informed by the Jane Goodall Institute's Tacare program, an innovative, community-focused conservation and development approach that partners with local people to create sustainable environments with conservation in mind. The program has proven successful because it is both driven and embraced by the communities involved.

As One Tree Planted explains, the program will work to "ensure the long-term protection of wild chimpanzee and other ape populations and their habitat, through promoting local governance and management of natural resources, and advancement of alternative sustainable livelihoods."

Given that millions of hectares of forest have been lost in the area over the last quarter of a century, the trees will be a welcome return.

"We need to protect the existing forests. We need to try and restore the forest and the land around the forest that has not been degraded for too long, where the seeds and roots in the ground can sprout up and once again reclaim that land and make it an amazing forest ecosystem," said Dr. Jane Goodall.

The Wildlife Habitat & Corridor Restoration Project will be implemented based on four key goals, as explained by One Tree Planted:

Restore degraded areas on community land in the Albertine Rift region of Uganda by planting native and nursery-grown seedlings with the involvement of local communities.

Rebuild devastated zones in Kgombe Central Forest Reserve by immediately restoring ecological functions to the area and setting the foundation for the long-term recovery of the forest to its natural state.

Promote agroforestry practices on community land by educating individuals on how to integrate trees into farming systems, which will ultimately preserve productive ecosystems and adapt to climate change.

Strengthen forest monitoring and law enforcement by training individuals to monitor their forests using mobile, cloud, and satellite technologies. This will allow for more efficient data records of wildlife presence, illegal human activities, and threats within the target landscape.

In addition to the planting of 3 million seedlings, 700 households will be trained (and supported) in sustainable agroforestry practices for their land.

Understanding that for conservation to be successful and enduring, socio-economic needs can not be ignored, One Tree Planted says that the project will continue to support over 3,500 households in sustainable livelihoods through:

- Smoke-free and more efficient wood-burning stoves
- Improved agricultural practices
- Establishing community-managed enterprises and microcredit programs;
- And sustainable production techniques that increase incomes while protecting forests.

The program will also create management groups to monitor the forests and protect watersheds to improve groundwater for wells and streams.

The project formally begins in 2020; seedlings will include a variety of local trees, based on the needs of specific planting sites. Species include Khaya, Maesopsis eminii, Cordia africana, Milicia excelsa, Albizia, Mitrigyna stipulosa, Fantunia, Trichilia species. Lova, trichiliodes, and Ficus. A veritable playground for chimpanzees who have watched their habitat disappear for far too long.

For more information and how to help, visit One Tree Planted.

Source: <https://www.treehugger.com/uganda-is-getting-3-million-new-trees-5071308>