Tanzania



Organization: Savannas Forever Tanzania
Location: Arusha and Manyara Regions, Tanzania
Solution: Rangeland restoration for climate resilience in Maasai communities from Tanzania
Factsheet Period: First round of UNDP AFCIA funding (16 months); Second round of UNDP AFCIA funding (12 months)



Seed harvesting in a field at Loiborsiret, Tanzania @Phil Kabuje/UNDP Tanzania

Land degradation affects at least 13% (125,000 square kilometres) of Tanzania's land mass, due to a range of factors including deforestation, soil erosion, changing rainfall patterns and a loss of biodiversity (United Republic of Tanzania, 2018). The Maasai people, who rely on savannas for their traditional way of life as pastoralists, are particularly vulnerable to these changes, with land degradation contributing to increased poverty and displacement. Savannas Forever, a non-profit research and development organization, is leading an innovative grassland restoration initiative that integrates Indigenous plant knowledge—an essential component often overlooked in existing restoration projects in East Africa. This programme focuses on cultivating native plant materials to restore biomass and biodiversity across three rural districts in the Arusha Region, while also empowering Maasai women to actively participate in the emerging "restoration economy."

Key achievements

- Reseeded 32 acres with native plants, helping restore grazing lands and strengthen local livelihoods
- Allocated 16 acres of degraded communal rangeland by the Village Council and General Assembly of Mswakini Juu for reseeding and ecological restoration
- Trained 84 community members on restoring rangelands and producing native seeds
- Supported 80 local "seed champions", mostly women and youth, to lead restoration efforts and manage small plots for native seed production
- Supported 124 "seed champions" to plant native grass and legume seeds on their land
- Conducted 158 site visits for plant growth measurement and data analysis
- Conducted eight focus group discussions for plant identification and project presentation
- Collected 3,300 kg of bulk seeds from communal rangelands and "seed champions", resulting in 1,184 kg of cleaned seeds, processed by women and youth in Arkaria and Loiborsiret
- Conducted forage market analysis through interviews with buyers to understand demand and pricing, in preparation for future commercialization once seed quantities become sufficient



Social impact

- Engagement of Indigenous Maasai women and young people in seed collection, land preparation, and planting has promoted a sense of ownership and responsibility for the restoration and stewardship of grasslands
- Native seed champions profit from selling plant materials (seeds/forage) for restoration and carbon sequestration initiatives implemented by other organizations or the Government
- Increased grassland productivity has supported improved revenue from livestock

Adaptation benefits

- Reseeded rangelands increase biomass and biodiversity, building resilience to drought and floods
- Native plant materials restore biodiversity and ecosystem functions (stabilizing watersheds, reducing erosion, increasing soil moisture, and combatting invasive species)







Innovation

- Integration of Indigenous knowledge on plant species with economic and science-driven climate adaptation strategies
- Planned development of a social enterprise model to ensure the solution sustainability and broader impact

Replication potential

- Savannas Forever intends to expand the scalable model for native plant seed production to predominantly pastoralist areas in northern and central Tanzania and southern Kenya
- Transfer of knowledge to local communities through training and support in seed preparation, packaging, and land management, enabling the model to be replicated in other areas

Funding snapshot

- UNDP-AFCIA grant: US$ 170,000 (initial grant: $60,000; scaling grant: $110,000)
- Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (MACP) grant: US$200,000

Investability	
Sustaining criteria	The initiative is currently fully funded by grants and is looking to transition into a social enterprise to attract investment, with the aim to sell seeds to restoration projects, and carbon and biodiversity credit programmes.
Financial innovation	Improved revenue from livestock production, through increased grassland productivity. Provision of economic opportunities for pastoralist communities that are facing economic collapse.

ADAPTATION FUND Climate Innovation Accelerator

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To read their story, visit UNDP-AFCIA

To watch their video, click here

To contact the initiative, visit Savannas Forever