



COMMUNITY FORESTRY

U.S. FOREST SERVICE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

In Ghana, nearly 200 people have received increased economic benefits as a result of the adoption of alternative livelihood activities related to natural resource management.

U.S. Forest Service activities increased seedling survival rates for reforestation efforts in Lebanon from 25% to more than 70% as a result of improved technology and capacity building.

With U.S. Forest Service support, 28 communities in West Africa switched to using Kenyan top bar beehives rather than traditional hives that require traditional smoking techniques that often lead to outbreaks of large, uncontrolled bushfires.

In West Africa, communities raised 64,000 seedlings to aid in reforestation of native species, increase availability of species for timber harvest, and enhance the availability of non-timber products such as oil and nuts.

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PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Engaging in technical cooperation with forest communities is a priority for the U.S. Forest Service both at home and abroad. The U.S. Forest Service partners with the U.S. Agency for International Development and other institutions across Africa and the Middle East to improve livelihoods in forest dependent communities. The U.S. Forest Service is particularly well suited to engage in this arena as it has extensive experience pursuing the same goals on the domestic front – at home, the Agency works closely with state forest agencies, private landowners, and communities that live in and around forested areas to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes while ensuring the conservation and enhancement of forest resources

Through the **Lebanon Reforestation Initiative**, an effort supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Forest Service facilitated the planting of more than a half million trees throughout the country (since 2011). The cornerstone of the project is a community-led approach to reforestation that unites municipalities, community stakeholders, the private sector, civil society

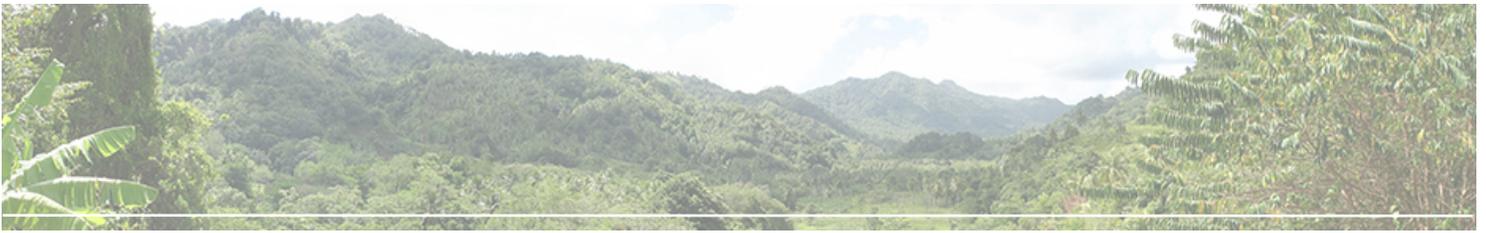


Community members in Lebanon planting a young cedar seedling in order to restore degraded lands and replenish water reservoirs. Photo by Clement Kanj, Clement Kanj Photography

organizations, and other actors in an effort to restore and replant degraded community lands. Since its inception, the project has hired hundreds of local men and women to serve as both technicians – planting and caring for the native tree seedlings – and advocates – engaging municipalities and community champions on the importance of sustaining and enhancing restoration and conservation initiatives. The project’s rigorous community engagement process includes ongoing capacity building and training of municipal environment committees and other community members. After three planting seasons, the program has achieved average seedling survival rates of 70-80% (an exceptional improvement compared to the national average that was about 25% in recent years). This result is due in large part to the introduction of modern tree seedling production and planting methods, grazing and wildfire prevention, and the commitment and involvement of local communities.

In West Africa, the U.S. Forest Service manages the **Sustainable and Thriving Environments for West African Regional Development** program (STEWARD), a community engagement and conservation initiative located in the Upper Guinean Tropical Forest of Guinea, Sierra Leone, and the Ivory Coast. The program centers on engaging with communities that live in or near forest reserves and depend on agriculture, ranching, and market gardens for their livelihoods.





Forest management committee member in Bouanhoe in Ivory Coast overseeing cacao seedlings prior to transplanting. Photo by STEWARD Program

The protected area buffer zones in which these communities reside are continually degraded due to unsustainable farming and ranching practices. Both natural and unmanaged fires damage large patches of forest and forest buffer zones on a routine basis. Poor soil management practices exacerbate the negative effects on the land resources. The STEWARD program works with farmers to advance conservation agriculture and agroforestry techniques, facilitate the establishment of community forests, and build the capacity of forest and fire management committees. Regional and international non-profits partner with community leaders to promote biodiversity and teach skills for improved livelihoods. With more hectares of

community-owned land, more agroforestry plantations, better soil conservation, and fire prevention, communities are actively managing their forests, identifying priority conservation species and zones, and

developing the necessary frameworks to collaborate on natural resources management.

In Ghana, the U.S. Forest Service works with counterparts from the Government of Ghana, local organizations and communities on the **Coastal Sustainable Landscapes Project**, an effort focused on enhancing forest community resilience to climate change and maintaining or improving tree cover while building sustainable livelihoods. Implemented across six coastal districts, the program engages farmers and community members in savings and loan associations. Participants grow their savings to cover school fees and basic needs in times of crop failure or poor market prices. Over time, participating members will ideally build enough savings to fund small enterprises that adhere to sustainable natural resource management ideals. Community members also participate in planting fruit and timber tree species on their degraded farmscapes to increase income sources and to enhance soil fertility and productivity over the longer-term.



Members of the Tweakor No. 1 community in Ghana at a village savings and loan association share purchase meeting as they aim to create a savings account and make small loans to one another to enhance economic opportunity and reduce pressures on nearby forest areas. Photo by Richard Adupong, CSLP

In Liberia, the U.S. Forest Service has advised the Liberia office of the U.S. Agency for International Development on various community forestry activities. These activities focused on increasing community involvement in the management of forest resources, including natural forests, plantations, and agro-forestry systems adjacent to forests, while promoting the sustainable use of forest resources and biodiversity. In addition, these programs aim to increase revenue generation and poverty alleviation through marketing of timber and non-timber forest products while increasing the devolution of authority over natural resource tenure and improving democratic governance.

The U.S. Forest Service works in close collaboration with communities to share technical skill and expertise, improve access to markets for their agricultural products, and increase awareness of important natural resource management and climate change topics. This investment in forest communities – supported by establishing and enhancing partnerships with local organizations and government partners – improves the likelihood of strengthened forest ecosystems over the long-term and the consequent realization of attendant environmental services.