PROJECTS: KENYA, UGANDA, TANZANIA

PRODUCTION OF MEDICINAL PLANTS TO PROTECT BIODIVERSITY

Project
In Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda people who live near to forests often depend on them. They get from them firewood, building material and medicinal plants. But this puts enormous pressure on these species-rich eco-systems, which are also of central importance to the water balance. In order to counter this trend and enable farmers to make vital additional income, Biovision and its partner organisation icipe are promoting the production of medicinal plants and plant-based insecticides. Local co-operatives work closely with icipe. The active ingredients extracted from the plants are processed to make products that are marketed locally and nationally in Kenya and Tanzania. One goal is to examine traditional herbal medicine products for their efficacy and to produce high-quality plant-based medicines locally. Additionally, all income-generating activities are combined with targeted environmental education: the local communities, particularly farmers’ and youth groups and school classes, are made more aware of the value of the forests.

Relevance
Many of East Africa’s protected forests are not only carbon sinks, which are important for the climate, they are also home to many rare plant and animal species. The unchecked felling of trees over many years and the way individuals have been obliged by necessity to use the forests means that these unique and vitally important ecosystems are threatened with extinction. Biovision supports the creation of alternative sources of income, to counter the over-exploitation of forests. Among other things this will conserve local knowledge of traditional medicine. The dissemination of environmental knowledge will raise local people’s awareness of the value of the forest.

Development Goal
Village communities are helped to tap sources of income by using traditional knowledge to produce medicinal plants and plant-based insecticides in a sustainable way, and to market the products. In conjunction with awareness-raising activities, this helps to relieve pressure on the species-rich forests of East Africa.

Beneficiaries
Those directly benefiting from the project include about 5,000 people in village communities that live close to biodiversity-rich forests: the Kakamega rain forest and the Shimba Hills coastal forests in Kwale and Kinango in Kenya,
the East Usambara mountain forests of Mkinga district in Tanzania, and the 39 forests in the Mpigi district of Uganda.

Achievements
Cooperatives and farming families have been given support in order to optimise the processing and marketing of medicinal plants. Sales of the products has risen five-fold within the space of three years. A number of community libraries have been established, and training courses have been organised to show the beneficiaries how they can protect the environment while generating income at the same time.

Goals
1. Production and sales of plant-based insecticides and medicinal plants and the income of village communities to be tripled by 2015.
2. At least 100 members of village communities to apply their new knowledge and their newly acquired skills to the cultivation of medicinal plants and production of plant-based insecticides and to the running, organisation and management of their production businesses.
3. Participation of members of village communities in activities to protect the environment and enhanced access to relevant information.

Partner Organisations
International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology icipe www.icipe.org; Muliru Farmers Conservation Group (MFCG); Kakamega Environmental Education Programme (KEEP); Tanzania Forest Conservation Group TFCG www.tfcg.org; Dumbule Women Group; LIMA Community Group; Kamili Nature Brands Limited; PROMETRA Uganda www.prometra.org; WWF Eastern Africa Regional Programme Office (WWF-EARPO); Biovision Farmer Communication Programme; East Usambara Farmers Conservation Group.

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