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TREE OF LIFE **REFORESTATION INITIATIVE**

JUNE 2020 **PLANTING PROGRESS REPORT**

Acacia trees are indigenous to Kenya's arid and semi-arid areas and the species is known to enhance soil stabilization and fertility, thus contributing to environmental conservation, landscape regeneration, water catchment and in the long run, the survival of biodiversity.

All of the seeds for the first phase of the ZEITZ foundation's Tree of Life reforestation initiative were sourced from the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI). These certified high-quality seeds were germinated and grown into seedlings on Segera and Kisima in Laikipia. The three species of Acacia are:

- i. **Acacia seyal** - a medium sized tree that grows to 17m tall. It has rust-coloured powdery bark;
- ii. **Acacia xanthophloea** – which grows to become a large tree, 15-25m tall with a crown that spreads branching fairly up the trunk;
- iii. **Acacia polyacantha** - also known as 'white thorn', it is a flowering tree which grows up to 25m tall.

Having already mapped out and installed a solar-powered electric fence, to temporarily protect the young seedlings in this rhino-shaped Tree of Life forest on Segera, the first phase of tree-planting took place from 30th March 2020 to 4th April 2020. A total of 55 community members (M 22 : F 33) were engaged in the 5-day exercise, recruited from the following villages surrounding Segera;

- i. Jerusalem = 13
- ii. Kukulai & Shabaha = 21
- iii. Segera Main Gate = 14
- iv. Endana = 7



Germination of Acacia seeds



The seedlings in the nursery



Watering of the seedlings before planting

The first day of planting involved orientation and education, giving the community members guidelines and instructions on safe planting and the required spacing between seedlings.



Mpokicha Lekula with one of the seedlings ready for planting



Planting of the seedlings

After three days of planting, the ZEITZ foundation and Segera management assessed the work and particular areas that needed to be watered. This was due to failed rains and new weather forecasts that indicated the expected April rains would be delayed. The assessment identified sections that would require urgent watering and it was agreed that the planting of further seedlings would be suspended until the rains arrived.

Two days were dedicated to watering the seedlings, with water bowsers used to fetch water from the nearby river (each 5-liter jerrican watered at least 4 seedlings). The watering was sufficient to take the seedlings through two dry weeks.



Watering of the seedlings

The second phase of planting began after the onset of the April/May rains. The exercise took 10 days during 15th to 30th April 2020. A small number of trees that had been planted in the first phase had also dried up and were therefore replanted.

This was the most exciting phase of planting because it was carried out during the rains, with warm showers falling while the team worked (unless the rain became too heavy, in which case planting would be called off until the following day).

There was also engagement of the ZEITZ foundation's All Women Anti-Poaching Rangers, who joined in planting some trees as part of their conservation activities. Some of Segera's other security personnel also helped during their daily patrols.



Security personnel planting trees



Female rangers planting trees

The trees were regularly monitored and formally checked a month after planting, with all sampled young trees being healthy, strong, taller and green. The savanna grass has also grown taller, hiding the planted trees. This is an advantage because the young seedlings are now hidden from local Mpala, small antelopes who are fond of feeding on young soft leaves. The long grass also prevents soil erosion and the dew collected on the grass reduces water stress for the trees.

Approximately 100,000 trees were planted during this exercise. The next phase of the ZEITZ foundation's Tree of Life reforestation initiative is the germination of 150,000 more Acacia tree seedlings in July 2020, with their planting planned for Kenya's next rainy season in November 2020.



Strong green seedlings



Tall grass covering the planted area