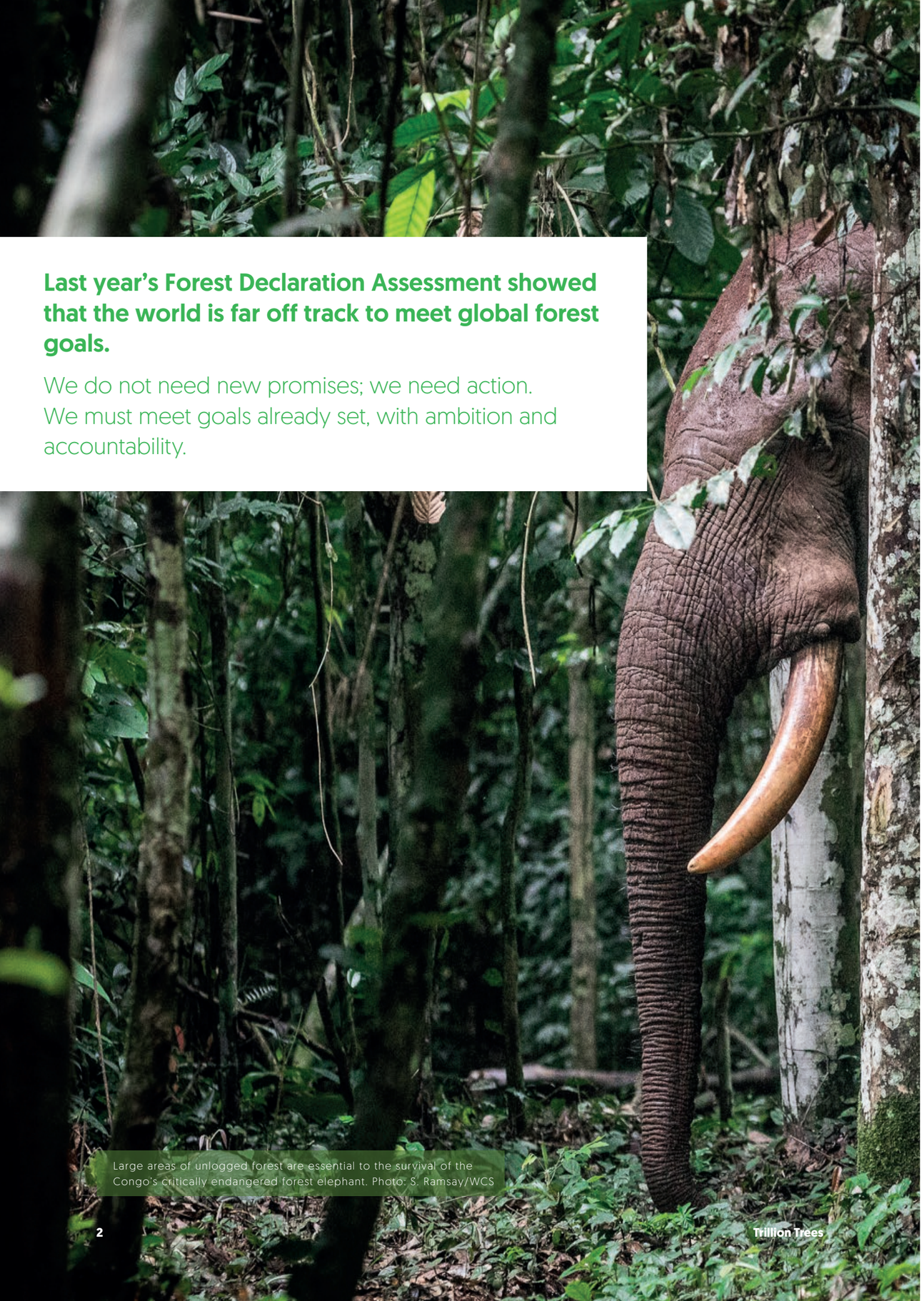
TRILLION TREES

WCS WWF BirdLife INTERNATIONAL

Impact report 2023

Forest protection and quality restoration for people, nature and climate

Miombo woodlands surrounding villages such as Nanjirinji and Mchakama in southern Tanzania. Photo: Jerry Mushala/WWF-UK



Last year's Forest Declaration Assessment showed that the world is far off track to meet global forest goals.

We do not need new promises; we need action. We must meet goals already set, with ambition and accountability.

Large areas of unlogged forest are essential to the survival of the Congo's critically endangered forest elephant. Photo: S. Ramsay/WCS

Letter from our leadership

Forests are critical for tackling the interrelated climate and biodiversity crises.

But *pledges* to protect and restore them have not been adequately implemented. **We do not need new promises; we need action. We must meet goals already set, with ambition and accountability.**

Last year's Forest Declaration Assessment showed that the world is far off track to meet global forest goals: in 2022 6.6 million hectares of forest was lost globally despite pledges to halt deforestation by 2030. The Assessment also reported that barely 1% of funding for forests reaches Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), even though they own and manage over 11% of the world's land and are proven to be effective forest guardians.

We have little time remaining to halt deforestation and restore our forests. As the Forest Pathways Report set out last year, this is achievable - if governments and businesses are prepared to deliver on promises and act now, eliminating deforestation in their supply chains and incentivising forest ***restoration***, before irreversible tipping points are reached.

At the Climate Change COP28 in Dubai, there was hope. For the first time, the final text of an official UN climate agreement included a call to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation by 2030, and nature-positive solutions were recognised as key to mitigating climate change. Nature (especially forests and biodiversity) was recognised as a key part of the solution to climate change. There was evidence of a growing consensus that investing in nature is integral to a thriving economy and that it can deliver returns. However, would-be investors in nature need robust impact metrics and a stronger evidence base for forest restored or biodiversity saved from loss. To increase the supply of nature positive programmes, there is work to do on three fronts: improving the 1) quality of implementation, 2) efficient measurement of impact and 3) enabling policies that allow nature positive services to be recognised and transacted. As a joint venture we were present and active at COP and other spaces last year building partnerships and emphasising how forest restoration can and must be done well.

Trillion Trees is, at its core, an implementing partnership. We came together to combine the deep expertise of three of the world's largest conservation organisations to speed up and scale up the protection and restoration of the world's forests. Everyday our teams are working on the ground in forest landscapes, in partnership with local communities who rely on the forest for their lives and livelihoods, in locations where the greatest impact can be made for people, nature and climate.

We are making progress and addressing these challenges through two restoration initiatives. The Trillion Trees ReForest Fund continues to grow in scale, with over £1 million raised and 340,000 trees being grown since its launch in 2020. And we have begun work on the first pilot project of the Forest Restoration Catalyst - a new approach to deliver catalytic financing for forest landscape restoration at scale and helping conservation partnerships to attain sustainable financing for forest conservation.

This impact report looks at how, over the past year, Trillion Trees implementation has turned pledges to action – delivering forest protection and high-quality forest restoration and developing mechanisms to scale forest restoration. Ensuring the right trees are grown in the right places, in the right way and are monitored, managed and nurtured so forest landscapes are restored for the long term, with all the benefits to biodiversity, to people and to climate that can bring.

Join us.

Richard Grimmett, Director of Conservation, BirdLife International

Dan Zarin, Head of Forests and Climate Change, Wildlife Conservation Society

Will Baldwin-Cantello, Director, Nature-based Solutions, WWF-UK

Pledges to Action: High quality restoration

Global pledges to restore the world's forests have been fast and numerous. Yet, many of these pledges include promoting planting of monoculture commodity crops (e.g. timber) which store less carbon than natural forests and lack many of their biodiversity benefits. *Restoring* forests properly means enabling the recovery of a diverse forest which can deliver benefits beyond carbon: human health, livelihoods of the people who live in and around them, and the protection of the natural world forests harbour. Trillion Trees works with conservation partnerships to restore natural forest landscapes, while at the same time incorporating and supporting activities that bring benefits back to the landscape. This means addressing how the land and natural resources are used sustainably, preventing the causes of deforestation and degradation and, above all, putting people and nature at the centre of restoration efforts.

The global trillion trees community

Over the past year, Trillion Trees has ramped up efforts to support high quality forest landscape restoration, and we have worked with others in the global trillion trees community to get the word out that tree growing is complex and should follow the principles of forest landscape restoration. For example, we joined forces with the World Economic Forum's 1t.org initiative to help explain why natural forests are important, what we need to do to protect them and why forest restoration needs to be done properly and with care. Working together ensures that restoration efforts around the world enable the right trees into the right places, and in the right way. To learn more, you can watch our video here.

To help companies and organisations share good practice and communicate effectively, we worked with 1t.org, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, Nature4Climate and Dr Laura de Molière to publish guidelines for communicating about ecosystem restoration. The *Principles of Restoration Communications* outline how to deliver good communications based on transparency, accountability and participation of stakeholders – and avoid potential greenwashing.

We presented our efforts to support high quality restoration at the 10th World Conference on Ecological Restoration, which saw over 1000 practitioners, donors, and land managers come together to drive the recovery of nature. At the conference, Indigenous leaders urged meaningful, sustained engagement of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in ecological restoration. The conference concluded with the Darwin Call to Action which underscored the urgency of scaling up effective, standards-based restoration efforts worldwide to re-establish a healthy connection between people and nature.

Growing seedlings. Photo: WWF Tanzania

Restoring degraded forests: an under-appreciated climate solution

Trillion Trees partners published a new study in the journal Conservation Biology showing that prioritising the restoration of degraded standing forest, not just deforested lands, could help meet climate and biodiversity goals more rapidly.

Degraded forests include selectively logged areas and others damaged by human activities, but which retain important natural features. Previous studies have primarily focused on reforestation of clear-cut areas, or those converted to agricultural use — including pastures — and subsequently abandoned. However, this overlooks the substantial gains to be made by enabling degraded forests to recover.

These degraded areas are often found next to intact forest, and their restoration can help further protect and enhance these remaining natural areas. Restoring degraded forests represents a strategic and cost-effective option for meeting national and global climate and biodiversity goals. The study provides a model for prioritizing restoration efforts based on where they can best deliver rapid improvements in forest integrity. This prioritization will help land managers and governments target their restoration interventions to maximize efficiency and impact.

2024 and beyond

Trillion Trees is committed to forest restoration done the right way, ensuring that companies and governments have the rights of Indigenous People, local communities and nature integral to every project and understand that it is a multi-year investment. To achieve this requires significant and immediate investment from both the public and private sectors, to incentivise sustainable, climate-smart land-use. **In the year ahead, we will be focusing on demonstrating good practice through our ReForest Fund and building out our Forest Restoration Catalyst programme to implement our part of the global trillion trees goal – getting 20 million hectares of degraded and deforested land into restoration by 2030.**

Tending seedling nursery. Photo: Elodie Van Lierde

The ReForest Fund: High quality restoration action

The Trillion Trees ReForest Fund is restoring forests all over the world to benefit people, nature, and the climate. We support projects with immediate restoration opportunities, which are nested within larger conservation programmes - landscapes where our conservation partnerships are delivering a shared vision of restoring nature and improving human wellbeing while tackling the climate crisis. Our projects focus on recovering and regrowing natural forests and bringing back the right trees in the right places.

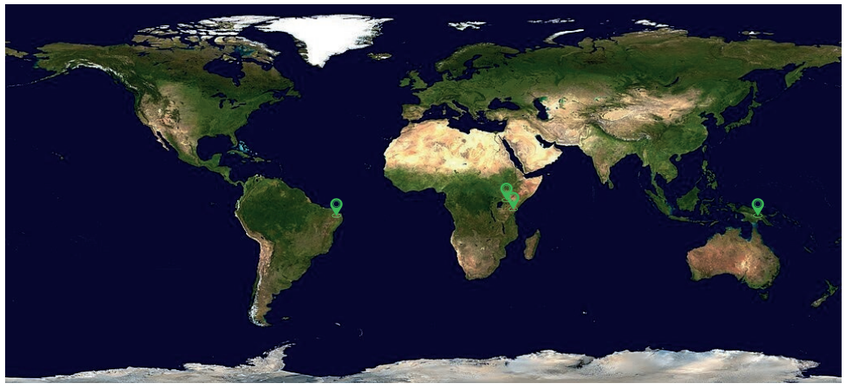
Not all our projects involve tree ***planting***. Some apply techniques to enhance the natural recovery of forest, called assisted natural regeneration. However, ***all*** projects include the management, monitoring, and protection of trees as they thrive, creating jobs and other opportunities for often remote rural communities. Through this approach, we can be confident the forest landscapes we support will survive in the long-term, bringing back biodiversity and building climate resilience for all.

In 2023, the Reforest Fund supported restoration in five landscapes - the Usambara Mountains in Tanzania; Kaptagat forest in Kenya; the Atlantic Forest in Brazil; the Bismarck Mountains in Papua New Guinea and a new project in the Nam Et Phou Louey National Park in Laos, where restoration work will begin in early 2024. Combined, **these projects restored over 142,000 trees and 154 hectares during 2023, benefitting over 2,200 people.**

Read our most recent ReForest Fund report

To date

- **13 landscapes in 10 countries have been supported**
- **340,000 trees are being planted and regrown**
- **£1+ million raised**



Atlantic Forest, Brazil
Trees grown: 14,000
Hectares: 50
People benefitting: 40

Kaptagat Forest, Kenya
Trees grown: 38,300
Hectares: 50
People benefitting: 256

Usambara Mountains, Tanzania
Trees grown: 77,500
Hectares: 43
People benefitting: 1,319

Bismarck Mountains, Papua New Guinea
Trees grown: 12,300
Hectares: 11
People benefitting: 600

Trillion Trees has also secured funding to support four new landscapes in 2024 in the Atlantic Forest, Argentina; Jovel Valley Basin, Mexico; Mbeliling, Indonesia; and Ruvuma, Tanzania.

At each restoration site we support, we have robust and inclusive conservation partnerships with local communities and work closely with them to co-design restoration activities. Support from the ReForest Fund helps these projects expand their efforts on the ground and increase their scale of ambition: growing more trees and restoring forests sustainably to make an impact for local people, wildlife that depends on critical forest habitat, local weather patterns and global climate.

To ensure long term success our restoration tracking tool, FORMAPP, is used by teams to track the performance of restoration efforts. FORMAPP is a flexible monitoring platform built on open source software that is free for projects to access and use. Project teams can adapt the monitoring protocols to their local context with technical support from Trillion Trees. As the trees return to the landscape our project teams and conservation partners monitor restoration areas over several years, carrying out necessary maintenance to keep trees growing. Evidence of their progress is uploaded to the FORMAPP web platform so that impact can be measured across the portfolio.

Seedling nursery. Photo: WWF

The Forest Restoration Catalyst

Meeting the climate change challenge with forest restoration at scale

It is estimated for every $1 spent on nature restoration, at least $9 of economic benefits could be generated from improved ecosystem services[1]. High quality forest restoration is a cost-effective climate solution that is available to us now. However, most projects are constrained by dependency on short term cycles of restricted donor funding, with limited opportunities to access sustainable financing, as impact investors often see natural forest restoration as high risk.

To respond to this challenge Trillion Trees has developed a Forest Restoration Catalyst to help promising conservation partnerships to co-design just transition plans for restoring and regenerating forests, at a landscape scale. These are underpinned by a tailored business model to create long term financial sustainability, building from the nature-positive values generated through forest restoration (Figure 1).

All our landscape partnerships are located where the Trillion Trees partner organisations already have a long-term conservation presence on the ground, robust social and environmental safeguards, a deep understanding of the local context, challenges and opportunities, and where landscape level partners are committed to forest restoration at scale and are co-developing interventions with rightsholders and local stakeholders. This ensures the restoration is part of the bigger picture and helps alleviate the longer-term risks of deforestation expanding into high-integrity forests, provides direct material benefits to local communities, and presents attractive investments for capital investors through climate finance, environmental service provisions, and robust market-based revenues.

Our partners

Trillion Trees is working with financial service experts, Finance Earth, to develop a package of bespoke support for selected landscapes. Together we are building a set of structured development stages where the landscape partnerships will transition from short-term donor support, to blended finance structures which can build towards self-sustaining outcome-based payments (e.g. carbon, biodiversity, water, livelihoods).

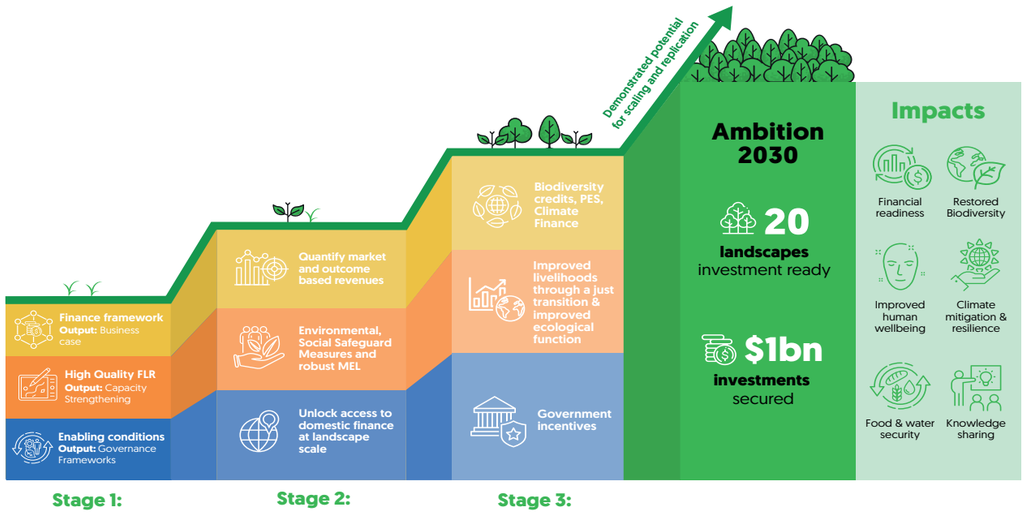


Fig. 1. Forest Restoration Catalyst development stages for landscape partnerships to reach financial sustainability.

Pilot landscape – The Upper Parana, Atlantic Forest

Our first Forest Restoration Catalyst pilot is working with the Trinational Alliance in the Atlantic Forest in Brazil, a UN World Restoration Flagship Landscape which covers 142 million hectares across Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay. It remains one of the top five global biodiversity hotspots: containing 7% of the Earth's plant species and 5% of animal species. An estimated 154 million people, a third of South America's population, rely on the ecosystem services, these forests provide including improved water quality and reduced soil erosion, resulting in reduced water management costs.

Despite this, almost 90% of the Atlantic Forest has been converted for agriculture, particularly soy cultivation, pasture lands, and human development. The new Brazilian government has pledged to ensure illegally converted and deforested lands are restored. However, municipalities and state governments need support to create appropriate incentive packages for forest restoration.

As part of our pilot, we are exploring methods to create finance frameworks that outline potential investment models for nature-based investment. These will cover the upfront costs of incentive payments, and the potential with revenues/repayments based on the value of the environmental services the restoration can provide (e.g. improved water quality) and/or sustainable production of agricultural commodities (e.g. yerba mate tea). All of which increase flows of appropriate finance to support strategic restoration efforts and an integrated landscape approach that protects remaining natural forests, and restores the right trees to the right places.

In addition, the Forest Restoration Catalyst is working closely with the Trinational Alliance to understand the enabling conditions needed to ensure equitable and inclusive governance, and that benefit sharing mechanisms are in place. We are also looking at the policies and legislation needed to support restoration and secure the forests as they recover. Our work is underpinned by standards set by the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) and the IUCN to ensure that all interventions are aligned to High Quality Forest Landscape Restoration standards and principles.

We are working closely across the Trillion Trees partnership to secure funds to pilot additional landscapes in 2024, with a short-term aim of having supported five landscapes by 2026.

Serra do Urubu - Murici landscape, Brazil. Photo: SAVE Brasil

Black and white colobus monkeys. Photo: WCS Rwanda

Snapshot of 2023: local to global

Project strands
- Improved protection
- Quality restoration
- Improved management

Map
- Trillion Trees conservation reach

1

GUATEMALA

Restoring the country's largest remaining wildland

2

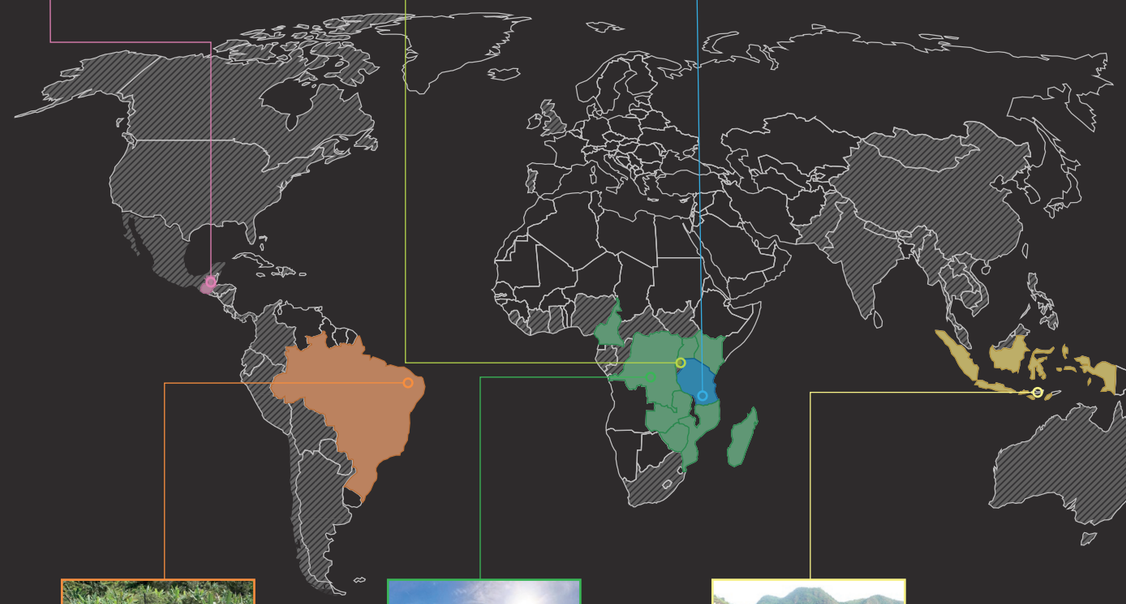
RWANDA

Enhancing community capacity for climate resilence

3

TANZANIA

Harnessing the natural and spiritual values of the forest



4

BRAZIL

Reconnecting habitat for 20 endemic and endangered bird species

5

9 AFRICAN COUNTRIES

An ambitious initiative restoring forests

6

INDONESIA

Sustaining life through forest conservation

1 Quality restoration

Restoring Guatemala's largest remaining wildland: the Maya Biosphere Reserve

453 ha
under active restoration

3,115 ha
under assisted natural regeneration

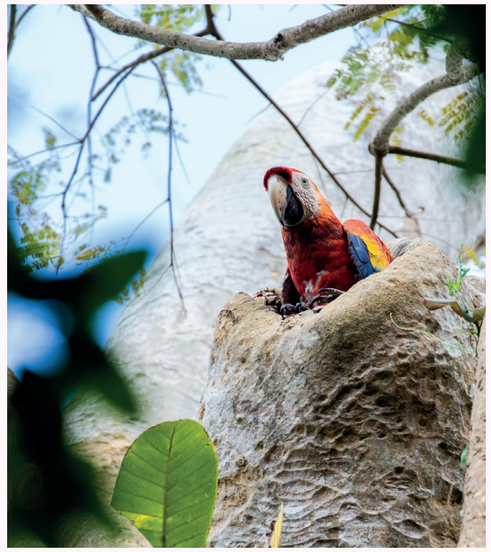
5
local communities engaged

The Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) in northern Guatemala forms the heart of the largest intact forest of Mesoamerica, the tri-national "Selva Maya" of Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize. At 2.1 million hectares, the reserve spans over 19% of Guatemala's territory and encompasses the epicentre of the ancient Maya civilization, including Tikal National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and hundreds of ancient Maya cities. It is home to endangered species such as jaguar, white-lipped peccary, Central American spider monkey, and Baird's tapir, in addition to 500 bird species and 130 species of mammals.

Since 2000, the MBR has lost approximately 32.6% of its forest area to deforestation. Ninety percent of deforestation has resulted from illegal cattle ranching, with some ranches linked to criminal organisations. Deforestation has disproportionately impacted the local communities that manage and depend on the forest for natural resources and cultural survival and wellbeing. Across the eastern side of the reserve, since 2009, the Guatemalan government has removed powerful illegal ranchers from over 150,000 hectares - nearly a third of which remains highly degraded or in pasture. Trillion Trees partner, WCS, engaged local communities to restore forest to pilot sites that were illegally cleared, but pasture grasses sown by ranchers must be removed before forest regeneration can take place. WCS is also supporting the Guatemalan government and local communities to sustain "passive" natural forest regeneration across 3,115 hectares that were illegally deforested 15-20 years prior, but which were never completely seeded with pasture and now require regular patrolling and fire prevention to sustain ecological recovery.

WCS and community partners have established pilot restoration projects in five MBR management units, totalling an area of 453 hectares. These "active" restoration sites are where exotic pasture grasses are being removed to help natural forest to recover and regenerate. A variety of approaches are used, with the main focus being Assisted Natural Regeneration of forest in former cattle pastures. The project has also developed community-led agroforestry approaches on community lands, where crops and trees can be raised together, enhancing the short-term benefits from restoration. For example, in the 170-hectare El Tanque restoration site in La Colorada, over 70% of the area was completely covered in tall, exotic pasture grass. Two years after restoration work began, successful natural regeneration has resulted in new forest vegetation between 1-3 meters tall. In conjunction, the reclamations of illegal ranches and early forest restoration efforts have helped stabilize the MBR's forest cover, with a net balance of +7,197 hectares gained since 2019. The management and prevention of fire is also a critical component undertaken with local community partners, since restored areas will remain vulnerable to fire for the foreseeable future.

Birds are often a good indicator of the health of a forest ecosystem. Since 2019, WCS has been monitoring resident and migratory birds in naturally regenerating cattle pastures and mature forest within the MBR. This work has shown that naturally regenerating cattle pastures increased habitat for a surprising number of bird species, including forest-dependent and threatened species such as the Kentucky Warbler, Wood Thrush and Red-capped Manakin. Next steps will involve monitoring the birds in actively restored areas and comparing the benefits of different restoration techniques on bird diversity.



Cattle ranching and forest destruction. Photo: WCS

500 ha
degraded land restored

419
new green jobs

300,000
agroforestry trees grown

Tree seedling collection by farmers from nurseries for planting on farms. Photo: Nature Rwanda

2 Quality restoration

Enhancing community capacity for climate resilience in Lake Kivu/Rusizi River Basin

Enveloped between Lake Kivu, River Ruhwa and Nyungwe National Park in Rwanda, Bweyeye and Butare Sectors exemplify the challenges associated with degraded lands, made worse by climate change. These areas are part of the Lake Kivu/ Rusizi River Basin region that supports the lives of over 25,500 people. Many years of unsustainable land use on steep slopes of these sectors have led to serious soil erosion, resulting in sedimentation of rivers, reduced farmers' capacity to grow food, and increasing their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, among others. The impact of climate change in these sites has led to erratic rainfall which exacerbates the situation, causing flooding and landslides, often displacing people, causing crop losses, and sometimes causing fatalities.

With the support of TerraFund for AFR100, BirdLife International in partnership with Nature Rwanda is implementing a restoration project to enhance landscape resilience by restoring degraded agroecological lands, and building resilient livelihood opportunities to support the most vulnerable households in the sectors of Butare and Bweyeye.

In 2023, the project successfully planted and nurtured 300,000 agroforestry and fruit trees, restored 500 hectares of degraded land, created 419 green jobs, and mobilized 3,417 households from 13 villages for tree planting and maintenance. The project also established a dedicated team of 25 Community Tree Stewards, volunteer youth from the community who are helping monitor planted trees by logging data using smartphones linked to an online portal. The Community Tree Stewards also play a central role in community mobilization and spreading awareness about the importance of trees on farms.

Looking ahead, the project aims to build upon these achievements by scaling up restoration efforts and engaging more households in tree planting. The project will also strengthen the capacity of Community Tree Stewards, establish climate governance committees at village levels, and establish a community revolving fund to support community micro-green projects. These efforts will deepen the impact of the project on landscape restoration and community livelihoods.

3 Better management

Harnessing the natural and spiritual values of the forest

The Ruvuma transboundary landscape is hugely important for people and nature, providing critical miombo woodland habitat across southern Tanzania and northern Mozambique. It is richly biodiverse, with over 2000 species of plants, 430 species of birds, and 60 species of mammals, including one of East Africa's largest elephant populations. The landscape is also home to millions of people who rely on the ecosystem services provided by the natural environment, such as clean water, air purification, and flood control. Rural communities across Ruvuma have a deep spiritual connection to the land and the landscape also provides important economic opportunities for local people. There is strong potential to harness the natural values of the landscape to grow its tourism industry, which is one of the most important sectors in both Tanzania and Mozambique, providing employment for thousands of people.

In 2023, Trillion Trees and WWF-Tanzania supported the establishment of two new tree nurseries: one at Kitere Secondary School in the Mtwara region and another in Namupa Seminary School in Mtama district in the Lindi region. This work was part of the Foresters for the Future programme, which has now established a total of seven tree nurseries in schools across the Ruvuma landscape. The project has established five new environmental clubs in the respective schools so that students and schoolteachers can manage the nurseries. The students and teachers gain important experience in raising tree seedlings and overall management of tree nurseries, which have so far produced and planted 31,931 seedlings.

Using the guide to faith-based restoration that Trillion Trees published last year, WWF-Tanzania has also brought faith communities into the national landscape restoration agenda in Tanzania for the first time. Faith-based organisations have been putting the guide to use, mapping their lands and identifying suitable areas for forest restoration. Based on this work, we are translating the guide into Swahili and developing accompanying materials to scale up faith-based restoration work across Swahili-speaking countries. We are also in the process of developing additional training materials for faith-based organisations and trainers who work with them, to enable the message about what good restoration looks like to spread even further.

The work with faith-based organisations in Ruvuma is building the technical capacity of an influential stakeholder group which was already planting millions of trees a year globally and across East Africa, but was previously not contributing systematically to restoration, as trees were not being planted in accordance with best scientific practice. This project has unlocked significant areas of faith-owned lands for restoration to restore connectivity between protected areas, thus increasing available habitat for wildlife, as well as ensuring the health of the regionally important Ruvuma and Rufiji River basins and catchments.

£65,000
mobilised for faith-based restoration

31,931
seedlings raised and planted by schools

5
new school environmental clubs established

Seedling from community nursery. Photo: Jerry Mushala/WWF-UK

20
endemic and endangered bird species

1.65m ha
legally need to be restored

360
organisations working together

Agroforestry management workshop at Pedra D'Antas Reserve Lagoa dos Gatos. Photo: SAVE Brasil

4 Quality restoration

Restoring a UN Flagship Landscape: the Atlantic Forest

The Atlantic Forest is a global biodiversity hotspot, with a huge number of plant and animal species found nowhere else on earth – and home to 5% of all vertebrate species. It also provides fresh water for over 30% of the population of South America. The diverse tropical forest covers 23.5 million hectares across Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay, and has been declared a flagship landscape of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. In collaboration with our partners WWF-Brazil and SAVE Brasil, Trillion Trees has supported the Trinational Alliance for the Atlantic Forest, a collaboration which brings together over 360 organisations across the three countries. The Flagship has been coordinating transboundary restoration actions to restore over 1.6 million hectares of degraded land in the Upper Parana ecoregion.

In addition to supporting these international restoration efforts, Trillion Trees has been working with WWF-Brazil, SAVE Brasil and other co-investors jointly to restore 50.2 hectares of forest in the Serra do Urubu-Murici landscape in northeastern Brazil. These organisations have been working with local landowners to restore and reconnect vital habitat used by 20 endemic and endangered bird species, alongside several other partners, and piloting agroforestry approaches with smallholder farmers. In 2023, they planted 4,484 seedlings from 62 different native species, and provided technical capacity support and education opportunities. These efforts are restoring critical forest connectivity necessary for creating wildlife corridors for species such as birds and small mammals and increasing the available habitat for wildlife. Beyond its ecological value, restoration is bringing socio-economic opportunities to local smallholders.

The collaboration with local landowners has led to the creation of a group called *Coletivo Gagauba*, between three young smallholder farmers who are guardians of agroforestry demonstration sites. This youth group represents a strengthening of community bonds that is essential to the wider development of sustainable agroforestry systems. The need to accelerate the recognition of local communities' rights to own and manage their lands and resources was emphasised in the recent WWF Forest Pathways Report. With the support of SAVE Brasil, this group has partnered with a technical school to offer student internships at the agroforestry demonstration sites. This provides both specialised support for the smallholders and valuable work experience for students. As a result of this collaboration, the farmers' management of this part of the Atlantic Forest landscape has greatly improved, and although behaviour change is a long and ongoing process, there has been great engagement, enthusiasm, and participation in 2023.

5 Better management

Forest Landscape Restoration in Africa:

An ambitious initiative restoring forests across nine countries

Trillion Trees partner WWF is working across nine countries in Africa through its Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) in Africa Initiative. This ambitious multi-country program aims to kickstart the restoration of 13.5 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes by 2027. It has been designed and developed to work with partners across nine countries to contribute to the goals of the African Forest Landscape Restoration initiative (AFR100), in a way that promotes sustainable development, improves livelihoods and conserves biodiversity.

This approach involves working closely in partnership with local communities, governments, and other stakeholders at landscape level to enable the implementation of AFR100 commitments to align with national development priorities. Additionally, the initiative seeks to foster knowledge exchange and capacity building to strengthen local actors to drive sustainable land restoration efforts.

Across the nine target countries (Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe) the Initiative is working with partners e.g. civil society organisations, private sector, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, through active multi-stakeholder platforms to support equity and inclusion. As part of this approach, it has successfully influenced policy instruments and institutional frameworks to accommodate restoration as a national priority. To date, the initiative has mapped and identified more than 4,060,000 hectares of degraded land and deforested landscapes for restoration and has a total of 1,875,932 hectares already under active restoration.

WWF's FLR in Africa Initiative is actively engaging with partners in regional, national and global events. In 2023, these included the African Union High Level Conference on the Global Biodiversity Framework and supporting the AFR100 monitoring meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Here, the AFR100 country focal points, Directors and Monitoring & Evaluation professionals attended the meeting to learn best practices for on-the-ground FLR monitoring, and to provide feedback on their country's commitments, action points and current restoration status.

A key achievement in 2023 was increasing levels of engagement with faith-based groups. Religious and spiritual groups own an estimated 8% of habitable land on earth and have the commitment and capability to mobilise large communities to restore and maintain forests and to be responsible custodians of the land. The FLR in Africa Initiative team is engaging with faith communities in key landscapes in East Africa, bringing faiths into the restoration agenda as a community for the first time and forging links with key religious groups in the region. A pilot project has begun in the Ruvuma landscape in Tanzania.

Looking ahead, priorities for 2024 include refining measurement indicators at a landscape level and building deeper relationships with local communities, to engage those with the deepest local knowledge and who are the custodians of the land and the forest.

13.5 million
hectares to be restored by 2027

1.8 million
hectares already under restoration

9
countries dedicated to bring back forests

Forest Landscape Restoration in Lindi and Pwani. Photo:WWF

8.7 ha
planted around springs

967 ha
forest monitored and managed by the community

879
people participating in forest management

Mbeliling landscape. Photo: Burung Indonesia

6 Better management

Sustaining life through forest conservation in the Mbeliling Landscape, Flores, Indonesia

The Mbeliling Landscape is an expanse of nearly 94,000 hectares located in the West Manggarai District on Indonesia's Flores Island, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Approximately 40,000 people live in 38 villages across the landscape, making their livelihoods from agroforestry, rice crops, and animal husbandry. Community-managed lands account for around 41% of the forested area. Commodities produced from the agroforests include candlenuts, coffee, cocoa, clove, and cashew nuts. Within these forests, 19 globally threatened species are present, including 14 Flores endemic flora and fauna (four bird species, two reptile species, and eight plant species). Four Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) have been designated for this landscape, with an estimated carbon stock of 7,448,191 tons CO_2e.

The forests in the Mbeliling landscape are instrumental in preserving and providing water to support production systems, including the emerging tourism industry in the city of Labuan Bajo. The landscape holds five watersheds and is the water source for the population's daily consumption and agricultural activities.

BirdLife Partner, Burung Indonesia, has been working in the Mbeliling Landscape since 2007. A multi-stakeholder co-management scheme has been established to improve landscape governance and ensure sustainability is at the heart of local policy and planning. There has been emerging agroforestry business incubation among the local community, and growing practices of sustainable agriculture for daily subsistence. The active role of communities in forest management is key to maintaining the forest's stability and protecting its biodiversity. Communities in Mbeliling have been actively protecting the forest by monitoring, forest rehabilitation, and conserving the water springs.

Approximately 10,000 hectares of forest area have undergone significant natural succession from a degraded state to a mature secondary forest. Such an impact can only be achieved if the forest is kept undisturbed for a long enough time, allowing the forest to recover on its own. This has allowed improvements to water sources and there are at least 40 healthy springs in 16 villages.

By 2023, 8.7 hectares of areas around the springs and community gardens were planted with 4,513 trees. A further 967 hectares of forest areas are regularly monitored and well-managed by the community, with the active participation of 879 people from 17 villages in Mbeliling Landscape.

Companies Supporting Conservation for sustainable water supply

Burung Indonesia initiated the formation of SiALIR, an association of 28 water supply, hotel, restaurant and other tourism-related companies in Labuan Bajo, to support the communities' conservation initiatives and protect the water catchment area. This 'Payment for Ecosystem Services' scheme has been a win-win: communities can ensure they have sustainable forest resources, and the water companies have a sustainable supply for their business and daily needs of Labuan Bajo residents. Upcoming restoration activities supported by Trillion Trees will reduce the pressure on the forest and expand the wildlife habitat in Mbeliling. Moreover, it will strengthen the role of SiALIR. Through Trillion Trees support, Burung Indonesia assists SiALIR in mobilizing the downstream communities and/or business entities to collaborate with the upstream communities in Mbeliling for restoration activities.

Harnessing the power of football, for forests

Trillion Trees is working with *Football for Forests*, an initiative which aims to mobilise the world's 3.5 billion football fans to engage in climate action through the restoration of forests. The football pitch is often used as the measure of deforestation, but *Football for Forests* reverses this narrative, giving fans the chance to restore tropical forests, pitch by pitch.

Trillion Trees is delivering forest restoration for the initiative in the Colombian Andes, restoring habitat for the Andean bear and critically endangered brown spider monkey. With the help of *Football for Forests*, and backing from the German development agency, GIZ, WCS is working with the communities of the Cañamomo Lomaprieta indigenous reserve to restore forest in the territory's three guardian hills. This area supplies vital clean water to the surrounding population. Thanks to *Football for Forests* and GIZ, this work will be expanded in 2024 to include the restoration of watershed protection forests above the city of Cali and the restoration of wildlife corridors in the Middle Magdalena Valley.

Football for Forests hosts the global Forest League on its App which allows football fans, the clubs they support, and corporate sponsors, to contribute to restoration projects, committing a cash amount for each goal their team scores. Fans and clubs can then compete to raise funds and restore more forest.

The collaboration with *Football for Forests* offers the potential to restore many more landscapes in Colombia, Brazil and the rest of the tropics.

The project partnership was launched at a joint event held at COP28, the climate summit in Dubai, together with Climate Focus and a member of the Colombian Ministry for the Environment.

COP28: Promoting quality restoration at scale

The recent United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties 28 (COP28) saw a **'beginning of the end' of fossil fuels**, and for the first time the agreement included a call to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.

Trillion Trees worked alongside partners in the forest conservation and restoration community to amplify the message that forests play a crucial role in meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement and safeguarding the planet for future generations. As well as an event to launch our partnership with *Football for Forests*, we hosted:

- A high-level reception to close Nature Day. Delegates were invited to mark their country or organisation's progress, action and commitments to delivering against the global goals for nature and climate
- A roundtable briefing on mobiising innovative financing for forests
- A joint event with WWF-UK on addressing forest footprints and investing in forest restoration

Keeling Curve Prize Finalist

The Trillion Trees ReForest Fund was selected as one of 20 finalists in the annual Keeling Curve Prize

Established and run by the Global Warming Mitigation Project, The Keeling Curve Prize recognises projects and programs from around the globe spanning five categories that are effectively reducing, removing, or replacing greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere. Applicants undergo a rigorous screening process conducted by a team of climate experts. The ReForest Fund was selected from a pool of nearly 300 high quality applications.

We understand that to fight the climate and biodiversity crises and ensure a liveable future, simply saving the remaining forests we have is no longer enough. We must also restore forests on a massive scale. **Trees take time to grow and complex ecosystems are not created overnight.** This will require systemic changes in national policies, initiatives and finance to ensure it is done well and lasts for generations.

At the same time, we need to support organisations and communities to have the capacity to meet high quality forest landscape restoration standards and provide targeted support to where large-scale restoration can be achieved. Without this support, it will be difficult to meet the challenge and deliver on promises and pledges made.

You can make a difference. Right now. Support us to help make it happen.

Join us.

Superb bird of paradise (*Lophorina superba*), Papua New Guinea
Photo: Elodie Van Lierde

TRILLION TREES

WCS WWF BirdLife INTERNATIONAL

Trillion Trees is a joint venture of BirdLife International, WCS and WWF to urgently speed up and scale up global efforts to protect and restore forests.

trilliontrees.org

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RESTORE OUR PLANET

Trillion Trees is grateful for the foundational grant and convening of the partnership by Restore Our Planet.
restoreourplanet.org