



Progress Report

Southern Kenya

December 2021

1. Introduction

Dear Laurens,

To start this progress report with, I would like to thank you again for your support to JustdiggIt and our programs in Kenya. With this report, I will give you a general update about JustdiggIt, our regreening programs in Southern Kenya and our activities so far.

Last May, we officially launched our new regreening program in the Singida region in Central Tanzania. With a primary focus on FMNR, this regreening program aims to regenerate 8 million trees by 2025. So far, we have started in 66 villages and we will gradually add at least another 180 villages in the coming years. Recently, we also expanded our running program in Monduli, Northern Tanzania, where we work with local pastoralists and combine natural regeneration and water harvesting to give the ecosystem a boost. In general, we are happy to share that we are growing as an organisation, in terms of employees, programs and impact.

This report will zoom in on the work that has been and will be done with the support of Boat Bike Tours. Recently, we decided to 'move' your donation to another area in Southern Kenya, which we will explain in the following sections. We hope this report gives you a good update on the work so far and steps lying ahead. If you have additional questions, we are of course happy to answer them!



2. Recap – Work so far

In the previous report, dating from June 2021, we explained our plans for the new restoration program in the South Rift Valley in Southern Kenya. During the last 6 months, we have been working hard to better understand the landscape and the communities that live here. Together with Meta Meta, one of our technical consultants, we have done a thorough study. Through both a desk study and field research, we studied the topography, ecology and geology of the area and looked into soil types, vegetation types, soil degradation processes, land management, wildlife and several more aspects. We then had several workshops with representatives of the local communities, to understand their perception of the landscape, their vision, land use and which problems they experience. This involvement of local communities is of crucial importance. In all restoration programs, JustdiggIt and partners work closely together with communities to make sure the understanding of restoration needs align. Since the ownership of the landscape and the responsibility for implementing and managing the restoration interventions always lies with the communities, restoration can only succeed if the communities are invested as much in the program as we are.

As explained in the previous report, we expected to implement three possible interventions type in this new restoration program: soil bunds, grass seed banks and improving grazing management. The first two are physical interventions, whereas the last one is a soft intervention that relies more on establishing and strengthening grazing committees and rules. Based on the explorative studies and community workshops, we concluded that the landscape characteristics and restoration needs of the communities were not in line with the physical interventions we have in mind. Therefore, we concluded that we would not construct soil bunds in this program. Instead, we will focus on interventions that increase water availability in the dry seasons, improving grazing management and combatting invasive vegetation species that encroach grazing areas. In the coming months, we will continue detailing out the restoration plan. Because this progress will take several more months and this restoration approach does not match with what was presented to Boat Bike Tours, we decided to use your donation to boost the expansion of our existing restoration in the Chyulu Hills, just east of the South Rift Valley.

3. New Program Area – Chyulu Hills

The Chyulu Hills are located in the South of Kenya, about 100 kilometres south-east of the South Rift Valley. This is no new terrain for JustdiggIt, as we have been working here since 2016. Since then, we have dug over 150,000 soil bunds at five different locations. Recently, we have been working on expanding our running programs in this area by adding new areas where we will construct soil bunds. This expansion will run through two different channels. Our [online bund platform](#) has been proven successful during the last few years and has allowed us to implement three of the five bund plots in this landscape. Through the second pathway, we work together with partners like Boat Bike Tours to create positive, green impact for the ecosystem and communities. With both pathways, we will expand our existing restoration programs in this landscape.



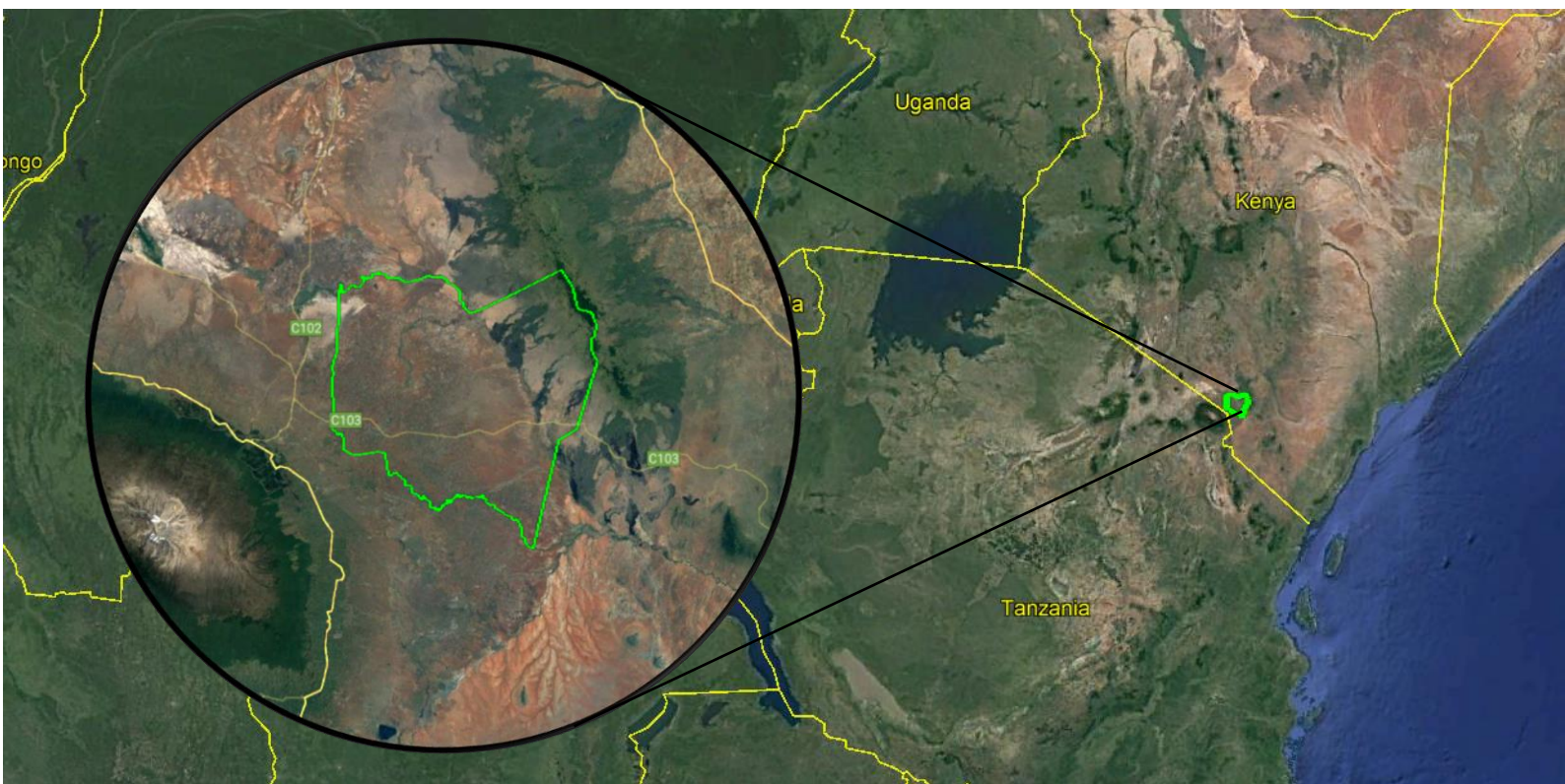


Figure 1 Kuku Group Ranch in Southern Kenya

4. Next steps

At the moment, our local team has identified three potential intervention areas in the Kuku Group Ranch (Figure 1), which will now be discussed and prioritised with the communities and their leaders. As the communities are already familiar with our work and interventions and see how much impact our restoration programs can make, we expect that this process will happen smoothly. After this, we will start implementing in the first quarter of 2022, before the start of the rainy season.

The contribution of Boat Bike Tours to Justdiggit will be used to co-finance the implementation of these new bund areas. In the first quarter of 2022, we will construct at least 20,400 soil bunds, of which 9,057 are made possible by Boat Bike Tours, covering approximately 255 hectares of heavily degraded rangelands. In the second half of 2022, scheduled for August, we will start the implementation of another intervention area where 3,550 Boat Bike Tours-soil bunds will be implemented. These bunds will bring the intervention area under – what we call – intensive restoration, which means that it is directly affected by our interventions. By digging soil bunds, excess rainwater will be caught and has the change to slowly infiltrate into the soil instead of flowing downstream. This water is then kept in the soil and is available for plant growth after the rainy season. This can boost plant (predominantly grasses) growth throughout the whole year. As more grasses return and vegetation cover increases, rainwater can naturally infiltrate more easily. Grasses break open the crusted soil with their roots and form a physical barrier for excess rainwater, as they

gradually take over the function of the bunds. With increasing vegetation, the quality of the soil increases as well, as improved soil structure and increased soil organic matter enable the soil to retain more water. This is crucial for the resilience of the landscape, as it provides water to the vegetation throughout the whole year. On top of that, we strongly focus on zero-grazing management during the first few years of implementation, which allows the landscape to rest and recover. In the meanwhile, we support the communities and grazing committees in establishing and enforcing grazing management plans for the whole region, which ensures more sustainable land use.

Our interventions also positively affect the land around the area under intensive restoration. Firstly, as excess rainwater is caught and prevented from running off, severe erosion downstream is reduced or even prevented. As soil erosion is one of the main drivers of the degradation of the landscape, tackling erosion is very important. In the long run, when the intervention area is restored, substantially more grazing land will be available for the communities, which reduced the grazing pressure on other grazing areas. As overgrazing is another cause of land degradation, properly managing grazing pressure is of crucial importance for sustainable use of the landscape. This way, our interventions have a positive impact on a vast area of a degrading landscape on which the livelihoods of several thousands of pastoralists so heavily depend.

We will update you on the progress made in the next report, which is scheduled for June 1st 2022. If you have any questions in the meanwhile, we are happy to address these!

