

Increased Ecosystem and Community Resilience

A Success Story of
Latin Mwasi



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



TAITA TAVETA
WILDLIFE
CONSERVANCIES
ASSOCIATION

Introduction

As you walk through, Iyale, a remote village nestled in the hilly terrain of the renowned Taita hills in Wundanyi, Taita Taveta County, the simplicity, scenic and beauty of the place stands out. The village is surrounded by lush green forests that add to the natural charm of the place. The winding streets of the village are lined with trees and the sweet fragrance of wildflowers feels the air with the Taita Apalis, one of the endemic birds to these hills, singing with a melodious tone.

The absence of modern amenities have not dampened the spirits of the villagers, who find joy in the simple pleasures of life. They grow a variety of crops, including maize, macadamia, avocado, and beans. They are contented with what they have, and share their blessings with each other. As you spend more time in this village, you realize that the simplicity of life in the hills is truly refreshing.

Latin Mwasi is one of the natives of this beautiful village. He lives together with his wife and two daughters. Due to climate change, rainfall has not been quite in abundance at the hills thus farmers have been forced to come up with new and resilient methods of livelihoods. Mr. Mwasi began Macadamia farming in 2014.

The 49-year old farmer owns a seedlings nursery named 'Yangu Macadamia' a swahili word meaning "My Macadamia" which he formed after successfully completing a six-day training course on Macadamia nursery and orchard establishment and management at the farmers training college in Ngerenyi. He specializes in Macadamia nursery and orchard management, propagation techniques as well as pests and disease management with his nursery certified by Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) in 2020.



Mr. Latin Mwasi

At the nursery, the seeds are first put in a seedbed awaiting germination. They will then become propagated into potting tubes.

Afterwards, the seedlings would undergo grafting after 6 months from germinating and remain 4 months under a shade net. Germination of macadamia seed-nuts under normal conditions occurs 3-4 weeks after seeding.

The seed-nuts will continue to germinate for the next 3 months. From there they will be grafted after six months and put in a shade net for hardening which may take 4 months before they become ready for sale.

Mr. Latin Mwasi and the wife at the Yangu Macadamia Nursey



A man in a blue polo shirt and a grey cap with 'SUNSHINE' on it is holding a young macadamia tree in a black plastic bag. He is standing next to a large green and white banner. The banner features logos for USAID (with the tagline 'FROM THE STRONGER PEOPLE'), ifaw, and TTWCA (Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association). The banner text reads: 'SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF AFRICAN HILLS AND TSAVO LANDSCAPES PROJECT', 'Objective 4: Increased community and ecosystem resilience', and contact information for the Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association.

USAID FROM THE STRONGER PEOPLE ifaw TTWCA TAITA TAVETA WILDLIFE CONSERVANCIES ASSOCIATION

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF AFRICAN HILLS AND TSAVO LANDSCAPES PROJECT

Objective 4:
Increased community and ecosystem resilience

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A woman wearing a colorful patterned dress and a grey headwrap is smiling and holding a young macadamia tree in a black plastic bag. She is standing in a nursery area with a black shade net overhead.



Increased Community and Ecosystem Resilience



Despite his skills and commitment to Macadamia farming, Mr. Mwasi has encountered challenges in making a livelihood out of the sales of the seedlings. The nursery which had 1000 macadamia seedlings was witnessing low sales and most locals would only afford to buy at most 5 seedlings after a long period. The market price for a macadamia seedling goes for around Ksh.350. This deemed expensive to most of these local farmers who struggle to make ends meet.

TTWCA is collaboratively implementing a 5 year project with IFAW funded by USAID. The project named SMAT, Sustainable management of Tsavo and Amboseli landscapes looks to strengthen capacity and support towards sustainable livelihood initiatives for the local community resulting in improved wildlife and rangelands management vital for ecosystem health and community resilience. Further the project is geared towards increased community and ecosystem resilience.

Through this project, TTWCA conducted a mapping exercise at the hills to establish farmers who could provide seedlings to in bulk not only to help increase forest cover at the hills which are crucial water catchment areas but also enable the community members make a living through the sale of the nuts once they're ready for harvest. The nuts would also be of great nutritional value to the community because they are naturally low in sugar and carbohydrates hence an excellent source of protein. They also contain various essential nutrients such as dietary fiber and antioxidants that help reduce the risk or manage conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and digestive health.

Having met the criteria for selection that was



Over **70** Farmers
received **600** seedlings

guided by the rigorous assessment process, Mr. Mwasi was selected among the many who were identified, to supply these macadamia seedlings.

600 macadamia seedlings were afterwards purchased from “Yangu Macadamia” nursery with one seedling going for Ksh.350. These were distributed to over 70 farmers in the village comprising of youth, women and the elderly.

This significant initiative not only increased his income but also fueled Mr. Mwasi’s determination to continue his work with renewed vigor.



Achievements

After his engagement with the SMAT project, Mwasi would later on increase his production by adding more macadamia seedlings however this time with avocados at his nursery. He further provides extension services to the beneficiaries hence resulting to increased survival rates of the trees.



Mr. Mwasi would wish to expand his nursery and become the sole supplier of macadamia nuts in the coast region. The money obtained from the sale of the macadamia seedlings has enabled Mr. Mwasi pay school fees for his two daughters who are now in primary school. Also, he has been able to complete the construction of his new home that had stalled due to financial constraints. Through this, he has been able to improve his standards of living.



By planting macadamia seedlings, the organization bolstered ecosystem health and fostered resilience in the face of environmental challenges, leaving a lasting positive impact on both the environment and the communities involved; and at the same time strengthening the macadamia value chain in Taita Taveta County.



Improving livelihoods through conservation