

Creation Care Ministry Meeting
October 13, 2020 via Zoom

Present: Todd Sink, Kylee Krida, Lisa Graumlich, Ruth Mulligan, Marjorie Ringness, Sue Ratner, Kathy Minsch, Norman LeMoine, Carolyn White, Judy Andrews.

The meeting opened with a prayer at 6:30pm.

Marjorie, Carolyn, and Rachel participated recently in an introductory meeting hosted by Jennifer Daugherty with two representatives from **Oxbow Farm**. It was very informative, and there may be a possibility of collaboration with the Farm in the future. We will follow up with Rebekah Gilmore regarding possible youth participation and also consider including a question about Community Supported Agriculture in the Creation Care survey currently being developed.

Marjorie has submitted a **budget request** of \$1,500 to the Justice Ministries Coordinating Team for 2021. This is the same amount as 2020 and represents \$1,000 for an annual contribution to Earth Ministry and \$500 to be available for possible fees associated with film screenings, lectures, etc. Kathy will look up the title of a film about the Duwamish Tribe.

Kylee reported on the progress of the development of a Creation Care Ministry **survey** to be distributed to the entire congregation sometime this winter. Kathy has experience with this type of work and offered to help review the survey once it is drafted.

Small group reports:

Judy reported that the *carbon offset* program group has looked carefully at COTAP.org (Carbon Offsets To Alleviate Poverty) (summarized beginning on page 3 of these notes.) This organization, as well as the carbon offset program through the Episcopal Diocese of the Southern Philippines, will likely be who we will suggest as recipients of donations from the St. Mark's community for carbon offset. Plan Vivo Foundation, a Scottish organization (summarized beginning on page 7 of these notes) was also discussed. They are a very reputable organization that sets the standards for measuring the amount of carbon that is offset by each donation. Plan Vivo does not take carbon offset donations, but COTAP.org and other programs use information from Plan Vivo in determining which projects to support with carbon offset funds. We hope to make a final decision about carbon offset programs and then consider how to best introduce the St. Mark's special carbon offset fund to the congregation.

Marjorie and Carolyn and Lisa reported that the *spiritual practices* group, as well as others, have been in email contact with Cristi Chapman about possible forums related to book discussions, films, workshops. There is special interest around the Awakening the Dreamer videos. This group will arrange to meet soon to discuss this in more detail.

The *measurement* group is meeting regularly and is making progress on developing a survey for the congregation. Ruth has been coaching parishioners on getting signed up on the carbon tracker at www.sustainislandhome.org.

With Carolyn's help, we spent the last half hour of the meeting watching portions of the Awakening the Dreamer series to become more familiar with it. Many found it very moving and would like to view more of it at future meetings and consider how we might share it with the wider St. Mark's community. <https://landing.pachamama.org/awakening-the-dreamer-2-hour-online-course>

The meeting ended shortly after 8pm.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 9, at 6:30pm via Zoom.

Notes submitted by Marjorie Ringness

See attachments below for summaries of COTAP and Plan Vivo
Foundation

COTAP

COTAP is a U.S. based, 501(c)(3) organization.

The mission of Carbon Offsets To Alleviate Poverty (COTAP) is to empower individuals and organizations in developed countries to address both climate change and global poverty. COTAP counteracts your carbon emissions through certified forestry projects in least-developed regions which create transparent, accountable, and life-changing earnings for rural farming communities where income levels are less than \$2 per day.

The Problem

In developing regions around the world, hundreds of millions of people live in rural areas on less than \$2 per day. This level of poverty forces communities to make hard choices between food, health care, and education. It is the poverty level where an estimated 11 million children die every year. Many of these communities are not fits for traditional microfinance, which tends to be primarily urban, and significant portions of their land are not suitable for agriculture.

While there are many promising technical innovations and development programs which can increase crop yields, there remains a geographic limitation on markets where such increased yields can be sold.

The result is that there are farming communities all over the world who could be made much less economically vulnerable if there were a way to generate significant supplemental income from non-crop land usage which did *not* rely on physical distribution.

The proven potential of small-scale forestry carbon projects

Small-scale afforestation, reforestation, and agro-forestry programs have a proven track record of reaching such communities and for creating direct, significant, verifiable and lasting economic benefits for them. One of the most compelling ways to finance such activities is through the sale of carbon credits.

Such projects have faced a combination of serious challenges in selling their carbon credits. Many would-be customers and/or project investors dispassionately view carbon credits as a single-dimension environmental commodity, of which they are only able to technically value and pay for the environmental component. Relative to other project types, carbon credits from community-focused tree planting projects credits are issued in smaller quantities, they are issued more slowly, and they entail a variety of unique risks, albeit highly manageable ones.

Further, carbon projects entail significant startup, certification, and ongoing management costs. In order to cover their costs and maximize returns, project investors rationally prefer larger projects and shy away from geographically-fragmented, small-scale ones where return/profit potential opportunities do not pool in large amounts in any one place. This, in turn, means that more carbon market volume is transacted under carbon standards which favor large projects, and that in turn puts more momentum behind the market acceptance of such standards, tilting the playing field away from quality, community-focused standards like Plan Vivo.

The small-scale forestry carbon financing gap

The above set of factors has created a financing gap for community-focused forestry carbon projects, whereby project organizers are able often able to obtain a fair per-tonne price, at an early stage, and at volume – but rarely, if ever, are they able to attain all of these factors at the same time. If this problem were solved, then the proven and multifaceted solution of small-scale forestry could rapidly expand, thereby lifting the poorest out of poverty, mitigating climate change, enhancing food security, and restoring landscapes at a much larger scale.

COTAP is founded on the belief that this financing gap, though understandable, is an unacceptable market failure – and a humanitarian injustice – given forestry carbon projects’ proven ability to reach and empower the world’s most vulnerable populations. Who does COTAP believe can fill this gap? Individuals and organizations in developed countries. Virtually all individuals in developed countries have unavoidable carbon footprints, and most are highly concerned about global warming, global poverty, or both.

The need for a crowdfunding intermediary

Every year, small-scale forestry projects plant trees which will result in the projected sequestration and long-term storage of tens of thousands of tonnes of CO₂; however, the average annual individual CO₂ footprint is relatively very small in comparison, CO₂ footprints vary among individuals, and individuals have different preferences and budgets pertaining to how much of their footprint they wish to address.

COTAP is the critical intermediary which fills the gap between individuals and these poverty-alleviating projects by pooling together offset donations from many individuals and organizations and then working with projects to ensure that commensurate quantities of the offset they’ve generated will be retired, which means they cannot be re-sold.

The net effect is that, through COTAP, you’re indirectly employing the poorest people in the world to plant and maintain trees which counteract the emissions which you have not yet been able to eliminate. This empowers you to fight both climate change and poverty with one tax-deductible donation, and it empowers our participating farmers by connecting them with funding that’s at an early stage in the planting cycle, at a fair price, and at significant volume.

COTAP’s Solution

COTAP makes individuals in developed countries, primarily the U.S., aware of the poverty-alleviating power of forestry carbon projects, and COTAP makes forestry carbon credits accessible to individuals in small amounts and as a tax-deductible donation.

COTAP sources carbon offset funds from those who care about both climate change and poverty alleviation, pools those funds, and transparently matches those funds with our partners’ forestry projects in order to fill the forestry carbon finance gap, restore landscapes, and create direct, significant, verifiable, and lasting benefits for the most economically vulnerable people in the world.

All of COTAP's current portfolio projects are registered under the Edinburgh, Scotland-based Plan Vivo carbon accounting standard. With roots stretching back to a research project in Chiapas, Mexico in 1994, Plan Vivo is the longest-standing and most established forestry carbon accounting standard in the world. Plan Vivo is also the only carbon accounting standard which always requires projects to have detailed plans for direct payments to smallholders and community groups. Plan Vivo-accredited projects are projected to sequester over 1.3 million tonnes of carbon dioxide.

More Accountable, Market-Based Philanthropy

COTAP's dual mission, crowdfunding model, and tax-deductible status, together with Plan Vivo's reach, accountability, and transparency, forms a new category of microfinance and a new category of high-performance philanthropy.

In pursuing its mission, COTAP doubles the number of reasons for individuals to take action on climate change and it greatly expands the climate change issue beyond that of a disempowering and single-dimension environmental problem.

COTAP's Vision

On an annual basis, COTAP aims to eventually catalyze millions of tonnes of validated carbon sequestration, millions of planted trees, and tens of millions of dollars in wages to hundreds of smallholder farmers who live on less than \$2 per day. Unlike "crowdsourced" philanthropic models which involve loans, grants, matched savings, or guarantees, COTAP involves *wages*.

COTAP creates a new system whereby the world's most vulnerable perform the tangible *service* of counteracting the unavoidable carbon footprint of individuals in developed countries.

This will not be simple, easy, or quick, but this is one of the many things that is worth doing despite all of the challenges. It requires a movement, and we invite you to join us in our movement to *make tomorrow brighter*.

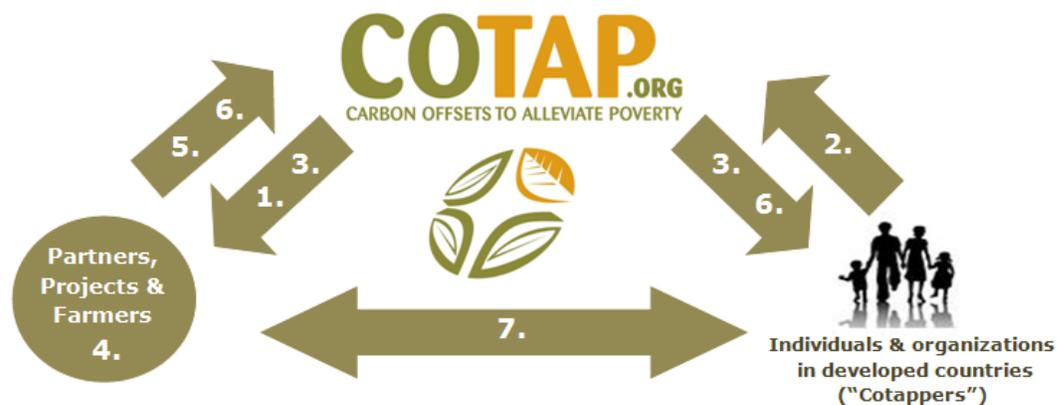
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How COTAP Works

Where Your Money Goes and When

After we receive your donation, you'll receive a detailed receipt [like this one](#), outlining how your tonnes will be divided between projects. COTAP's purchases from projects then show up on the Markit Environmental Registry [like this](#). You can track COTAP's progress and download projects' annual reports, which contain details of community payments and funds received from COTAP, in our [Transparency](#) section.

General Diagram of How COTAP Works (click to enlarge)



1. COTAP partners with certified forestry carbon projects which benefit the poor.
2. COTAP pools donors' carbon offset contributions to purchase registered carbon credits from completed and/or upcoming planting seasons (vintages).
3. COTAP disburses pooled funds to partners and directs them to retire carbon credits on the Markit Environmental Registry on behalf of COTAP donors.
4. A projected 60.4% of offset funds goes to farmers whose plantings and tree growth are verified. The rest covers project operations, equipment, and management.
5. Projects issue annual reports. Plan Vivo Foundation reviews and approves. COTAP also reviews, summarizes, and verifies that projects are in good standing.
6. Partners and COTAP provide updates on projects' poverty alleviation and carbon sequestration impacts to donors throughout the lifespan of each project.
7. Unsurpassable impact-per-dollar: Far-reaching, multiple-impact, long-term, transparent, accountable, structured, and performance-based!

COTAP requires that all of its projects be approved by one or more of the well-established, third-party carbon standards listed below. Because part of COTAP's purpose is to be an early-stage funding source, we also consider projects which are in pursuit of, but not yet approved by, such standards. Expert panel approval and ongoing third-party monitoring maximize our projects' chances of long-term success. Projects' designs must sufficiently cover a very wide range of important factors such as the consultation of local communities and governments, proper selection of eligible planting areas and tree species, land tenure, carbon sequestration estimates,

additionality, permanence, leakage, risk buffer size, and establishment of third-party verifiers and verification schedules. Each project's Project Design Document (or "PDD") can be downloaded from its respective detail page on COTAP.

The Plan Vivo Foundation

The Plan Vivo Foundation is an international, Edinburgh-based charity which has created a set of requirements for smallholders and communities wishing to manage their land and natural resources more sustainably.

Plan Vivo projects support smallholders and communities by selling Plan Vivo Certificates. One Plan Vivo Certificate represents the long-term sequestration or reduction of one ton CO₂e, plus a host of other benefits:

- Poverty reduction and livelihood development
- Restoration of degraded ecosystems and biodiversity conservation
- Adaptation of communities and natural and managed ecosystems to climate change (e.g. via watershed protection, soil stabilization)
- Look at '[Plan Vivo Certificates: Frequently Asked Questions](#)' on Exhibit A

About the Foundation

The Plan Vivo Foundation is a registered Scottish charity, set up to develop and oversee the Plan Vivo Standard and System and to lobby for Plan Vivo principles.

The Foundation's charitable aims are:

- Relieving poverty in developing countries through engaging rural communities in sustainable land-use projects
- Promoting environmental protection and improvement through biodiversity conservation and the restoration, protection and management of terrestrial ecosystems
- Building local capacity through the transfer of knowledge, skills and resources to developing countries

The Plan Vivo Foundation has the competence and responsibility to:

- Take all decisions on the registration and status of projects
- Annually review projects and coordinate third-party validation and approve verifiers
- Approve technical specifications and coordinate reviews by experts
- Issue Plan Vivo Certificates in respect of ecosystem services generated and record all issuances in a registry
- Review, update and develop the Plan Vivo Standard in consultation with stakeholders

- Maintain and disseminate clear and up-to-date information about the Plan Vivo System, Standards and projects
- Lobby for pro-poor, participatory approaches to forest management and land-use.

The Approach of the Foundation

- **A tested approach for community land use and forestry programs**

Plan Vivo is a certification body that administers the Plan Vivo Standard – a tried and tested framework for community land use and forestry projects that strive to make a difference. We certify projects that demonstrate sustainability over the long-term and oversee the projects to ensure they truly benefit people’s livelihoods and sustain vital ecosystems. Plan Vivo is internationally recognized for its focus on ethical and fairly-traded climate services, meaning a greater share of climate finance (60+%) reaches those who most need it.

- **Results-based performance links to carbon finance and/or PES**

By quantifying ecosystem services, demonstrating good governance and measuring performance every year, Plan Vivo allows for results-based payments to be made to project participants. Projects generate Plan Vivo Certificates, representing one tonne CO₂e sequestered or avoided plus a range of non-carbon benefits (climate adaptation, biodiversity protection, water provision, etc.) Certificates can be sold on the voluntary carbon market, used solely for CSR purposes or with particular supporters and donors, in order to generate funds for project activities. Participants can be paid directly in cash (where appropriate to do so) and/or indirectly using community funds, e.g. for micro-enterprise development, hospital bills, etc.

- **A landscape approach**

Project interventions may include any improved land-management activities that can generate quantifiable climate benefits, while improving the livelihoods of participants and local ecosystems. Activities are undertaken by smallholders and community groups, typically on their own land, and should be designed with the full participation of local communities. Plan Vivo projects follow a ‘whole landscape’ approach; they are normally made up of multiple participants and interventions, depending on the needs and priorities of the communities involved. This means that projects can be made up of a single area or many separate project areas (e.g. many smallholdings) across a landscape, and can expand programmatically over time.

- **A flexible standard for different contexts**

No two Plan Vivo projects are the same in their aims, context or design. It is crucial that PES projects are designed to fit with local circumstances, meaning the Standard is designed to be flexible and practical to use. It is designed to work in different geographic, socio-economic and legal contexts, and has been developed in close consultation with its users, including projects, purchasers of Plan Vivo Certificates and other stakeholders.

What is a Plan Vivo Certificate?

An environmental service certificate representing the long-term sequestration or reduction of one ton CO₂e, plus additional environmental and social benefits:

- Biodiversity conservation through expansion and strengthening of protected areas and native species
- Poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods through sustainable agriculture and micro-enterprises
- Restoration of degraded and degrading ecosystems
- Adaptation of natural and managed ecosystems to climate change (watershed protection, soil stabilization, regulation of regional micro-climates)
-

Why purchase Plan Vivo Certificates?

Fairly traded carbon

Plan Vivo projects work with poor rural communities who need support to manage their land more sustainably. Buying Plan Vivo Certificates puts money into the pockets of poor farmers and community groups like farmers cooperatives, women's groups and community trust funds – helping communities develop and providing incentives for them to stick with their land management plans – their 'plan vivos'.

Making carbon finance work harder

Plan Vivo projects work with communities who face challenging environmental issues and hardship, who would otherwise lack the financial, technical and organizational ability to implement long-term land-use activities. They emphasize the restoration of natural ecosystems and planting of native trees, which makes 'carbon finance' work harder, and ensures projects benefit biodiversity as well as mitigate climate change.

Tried and tested

Plan Vivo is a tried and tested system, used in projects since the 1990s, based around the idea of empowering people to manage their resources. Risk management is built into every stage:

- Community-led planning of activities, based on local needs and capabilities
- Staged implementation and performance-based payments linked to successful monitoring
- Diverse portfolios of areas and multiple species
- Buffers of unsold carbon maintained to cover risk of losses (risk pooled between projects)
- Independent certification and continued oversight

Projects are subject to annual reviews and third-party verification to ensure continued conformance to the Plan Vivo Standard. Plan Vivo Certificates are recorded and tracked through the independent [Markit Environmental Registry](#).

Past and present purchasers include: Antalis, Arla Foods, Blue Green Carbon, Camco, Ceramica Sant Agostina SPA, City of London, Classic Africa Safaries, the Coop, CO2Focus, Creative Artists Agency, Embassy of Denmark, DFID, Enviromarket, EValue, FIA Foundation, Folksam, Global Cool, Hambleside Danelaw, IIED, Its the Planet, Live Climate, Man Group, Marks and Spencers, Max Hamburger, Nedbank, Piqqo, Puma, Reforestamos Mexico, One World

International, Save the Children, Tetra Pak, U&W, Uganda Carbon Bureau, World Bank, and others.

Exhibit A

Frequently asked Questions

Plan Vivo System and Standard

What is a Plan Vivo project?

A Plan Vivo project is a project working with rural communities to improve their management of natural resources, that the Plan Vivo Foundation has registered, following independent validation against the Plan Vivo Standard.

Who can use the Plan Vivo Standard?

Any organization working with rural communities can develop a Plan Vivo project.

What is the difference between the Plan Vivo Standard and other ‘carbon standards’?

The Plan Vivo Standard is developed exclusively for use in community-based projects using a “payments for ecosystem services” approach. This means that activities are undertaken directly by smallholders and community groups, who receive staged incentives and support from a ‘project coordinator’. The Plan Vivo Standard is supported by step-by-step guidance and procedures for project development.

Who oversees the Plan Vivo Standard?

The Plan Vivo Foundation oversees and develops the Plan Vivo System and Standard in consultation with projects and other stakeholders. The Foundation annually reviews projects and issues Plan Vivo Certificates based on implemented and monitored activities. The Foundation is a registered Scottish charity, based in Edinburgh.

Plan Vivo Certificates

What are Plan Vivo Certificates?

Plan Vivo Certificates are environmental service certificates, each representing the reduction or avoidance of one metric tonne of carbon dioxide, plus livelihood and ecosystem benefits. Plan Vivo Certificates are generated and sold by Plan Vivo projects to support their activities.

How are Plan Vivo Certificates quantified?

Each project quantifies its ‘carbon impact’ using peer-reviewed and approved technical specifications. Carbon benefits are calculated conservatively against a baseline, over a crediting period appropriate to the activity.

Are Plan Vivo Certificates ex-ante or ex-post?

The Plan Vivo Foundation approves both ex-ante and ex-post methodologies, so Plan Vivo Certificates may be either ex-ante or ex-post depending on the project and activity. For both ex-ante and ex-post methodologies, the same requirements apply in terms of long-term monitoring, carbon buffers, independent validation and verification. Ex-ante crediting, particularly for carbon

sequestration (tree-planting) activities, has been shown to be instrumental in getting projects off the ground in poorer countries.

What activities are eligible to generate Plan Vivo Certificates?

Currently the activities that are eligible to generate Plan Vivo Certificates are afforestation and reforestation, agroforestry, avoided deforestation, forest conservation and restoration.

How much do Plan Vivo Certificates cost?

Each Plan Vivo project sets their own prices and negotiates with buyers and other supporters (NB Organizations may purchase Plan Vivo Certificates for different drivers than carbon offsetting). To find out up to date prices for Plan Vivo projects, contact the project coordinator directly, or alternatively contact the Foundation for further information.

How do I know the project activities would not have happened anyway, without the purchase of Plan Vivo Certificates?

Plan Vivo projects are highly additional; they work with rural communities who would otherwise lack the financial, technical and social capacity to implement long-term land-management plans. Projects must pass an additionality test showing they are not the direct result of legislation, or commercially viable in their own right.

Permanence and risk management

How is delivery of Plan Vivo Certificates ensured (how do I know the trees won't be cut down later)?

Risk management is built into every stage of the planning and delivery process. Projects are run by **established in-country organizations** with strong technical and social capacity. Approved project technical specifications contain comprehensive analyses of risk and prescribe risk management and mitigation measures (e.g. fire management, pest control). Participants sign **long-term 'sale agreements'** committing them to their *plan vivo* (management plan). Sale agreements lay out a monitoring schedule where **staged payments** are received in return for meeting performance targets (the principle of 'conditionality'). Each participant has a management objective, e.g. sustainable timber or fuel wood production or non-timber forest products like fruits or honey to ensure they benefit from the activity and the activity becomes embedded in the area i.e. it would not be economically rational for participants to discontinue the activity.

Projects hold **risk buffers** (reserves) of unsold carbon credits to cover any unexpected carbon losses. Projects are annually reviewed by the Plan Vivo Foundation to ensure systems are being implemented and monitored effectively, and continuous support and advice is provided. Projects undertake **third-party verification** within five years to ensure continued compliance with the standards, delivery of ecosystem services and strengthen project design. Where verification shows projects are not achieving expected emissions reductions, **corrective actions** are imposed and cancellations can be made from risk buffers.

How do you know trees will not be cut down in other areas instead of the project area (leakage)?

Plan vivos are designed to ensure carbon losses are not displaced. Producers must show they are not reducing their food production below sustainable levels, so trees are not being substituted but added to existing crops and other uses such as livestock grazing. For avoided deforestation activities, leakage is minimized using an integrated approach to planning. For example, if a main driver of deforestation is extraction for fuel-wood, communities may need to plant small-woodlots. If a driver is illegal charcoal production because alternative livelihood options are limited, the project may mitigate displacement through diversifying income from payments for ecosystem services (PES), and developing new sources of income e.g. beekeeping groups, furniture making.

Project development

How much does it cost to develop a Plan Vivo project?

Project development costs can vary considerably depending on the size, location and complexity of the project, and on the capacity of the project developer and requirement for external support e.g. technical support. Some indicative guidelines of project development costs can be downloaded from this [page](#).

Who is involved in project development?

The key participants in Plan Vivo project development are the project coordinator and the community. The project-coordinator is the overall manager of the project and should be a non-governmental organisation with strong links to local groups and, ideally, experience working with the target groups (groups that the project aims to benefit). A project coordinator may work with an external project developer or technical consultant to build their capacity in developing a Plan Vivo project. The level of support required will depend on the administrative, social and technical capacity of the organisation. The Plan Vivo Foundation provides guidance to project coordinators and developers, but does not directly participate in project development. For more information go to this [page](#).

Benefits of Plan Vivo projects

How does Plan Vivo improve livelihoods?

Plan Vivo projects improve and diversify livelihoods, increase social and physical resilience to climate change in the following ways:

- **Building financial capacity:** Payments enable farmers to invest in sustainable, economically viable systems that reduce dependency on aid or government support. Activities are designed with management objectives such as producing sustainable timber and firewood, non-timber tree products like fruits or honey, or increased productivity through agroforestry. Carbon payments help to diversify income and overcome financial barriers to land-use change.
- **Building human and social capacity:** Farmers become more socially resilient through the relationships that are cultivated during a project's life-span. Through joining groups, sharing skills and knowledge communities can build networks that reduce their vulnerability. Communities may also gain better access to land through projects where project coordinators are able to help communities secure legal land-tenure.

- **Building physical capital:** Through projects, communities can gain access to better equipment, seedlings and other means which increase their capacity to sustainably manage their resources.

How does Plan Vivo conserve and restore ecosystems?

Plan Vivo projects build natural capital. Trees make the physical environment more resilient, improving watersheds and biodiversity conservation, protecting crops, preventing soil erosion and increasing productivity (with little input of labour) through nutrient recycling and shade. By introducing agroforestry systems, farmers benefit from more balanced agricultural systems. By increasing the use of systems like agroforestry and woodlots for timber and fuel wood, projects aim to reduce pressure (e.g. from agricultural encroachment and firewood and charcoal extraction) on local forests and conservation areas, helping to protect local biodiversity and watersheds.