Empowering Communities of Kenya

Project Brief

Community-Led Mangrove Restoration and Monitoring Project in Kenya

janeglavan@distantimagery.org
coryrhodes@distantimagery.com

www.distantimagery.com

Distant Imagery Solutions

Understanding Through Imagery

Introduction to Kenya's Coastal Ecosystems

Kenya's coastal regions are home to vital mangrove forests that provide essential ecosystem services, including coastal protection, carbon sequestration, and support for biodiversity. However, these ecosystems face threats from deforestation, climate change, and human activities. Community-led initiatives like Mikoko Pamoja in Gazi Bay and the Vanga Blue Forest project have demonstrated the effectiveness of local stewardship in mangrove conservation and restoration.

About Distant Imagery Solutions

At Distant Imagery, we're pioneering a community-first model for environmental restoration by empowering local communities to build, operate, and adapt our in-house designed drones and aerial tools. Our approach gives communities full control over the restoration process and the technology, enabling sustainable, large-scale environmental impact at minimal costs.

Our mission is to democratize climate technology by providing communities with the tools and training to independently carry out, monitor, adapt, and sustain environmental restoration projects. This model supports local resilience by ensuring community members have the skills and resources to lead projects, scale restoration efforts, and create sustainable livelihoods without ongoing external dependencies.

Once licensed and trained, communities retain 100% of project revenue generated, fostering environmental stewardship and economic self-sufficiency.

In 2024, we successfully partnered with ADNOC, ENGIE, and Mubadala Energy to plant 5.5 million mangroves using our custom drone technology—demonstrating our approach's scalability, speed, and effectiveness in restoring critical ecosystems. Beyond restoration, we support communities in essential Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) tasks, empowering them to monitor illegal fishing, poaching, land encroachment, and resource use within their territories.

Through the collaborative platform we are building, communities will also share their innovations, modifications, and methodologies, creating a dynamic exchange of best practices and continuously improving restoration outcomes across regions.

Project Overview for Kenya

Dr. James Kairo, a renowned expert in mangrove ecology and conservation, brings extensive experience and leadership to this project. His involvement ensures that the initiative is grounded in scientific rigor and aligns with national conservation objectives. The active participation of local communities, who have demonstrated commitment to mangrove conservation through projects like Mikoko Pamoja, is central to the project's success.

Primary Project Activities

1. **Development of Under-Canopy Drones for MRV**

To improve the efficiency and reduce the costs of Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) in mangrove ecosystems, we will collaborate with local communities to design and build smaller-scale drones capable of flying below the mangrove canopy. These drones will facilitate detailed data collection on forest structure, health, and carbon stocks. Community members will receive training in drone assembly, operation, and maintenance, enabling them to conduct MRV independently and sustainably.

2. **Methodology Development for Data Analysis**

Dr. Kairo and his team of experts at KMFRI will lead the development of robust methodologies for analyzing the data collected by the under-canopy drones. This collaboration ensures that the data is processed accurately, providing valuable insights into mangrove ecosystem health and informing conservation strategies.

Secondary Project Activities

1. Drone-Based Mangrove Restoration Trials

Building on the success of previous restoration efforts, this project will involve the construction and deployment of drones designed for mangrove seed dispersal. Community members will be trained to build and operate these drones, enabling them to test various mangrove restoration techniques. This approach aims to identify the most effective methods for mangrove rehabilitation, enhancing the resilience of coastal ecosystems.

Collaborative Platform for Community Innovation

Example Community Exchange between Brazil and Kenya

This project integrates with Distant Imagery's collaborative platform, where community members can document and share modifications and innovations related to drone technology and restoration methodologies. This knowledge-sharing fosters continuous improvement and adaptation of best practices across different regions and communities, enhancing the overall effectiveness of r ensuring that restoration efforts are community-driven and sustainable.

Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced MRV Capabilities: The development and deployment of under-canopy drones will enable communities to conduct accurate and cost-effective monitoring of mangrove ecosystems, supporting informed conservation decisions.
- Scalable Restoration Techniques: By testing and refining drone-based mangrove restoration methods, communities will identify effective strategies for large-scale ecosystem rehabilitation.
- Capacity Building and Empowerment: Training in drone technology and data analysis will equip community members with valuable skills, fostering self-sufficiency and enhancing their role in environmental stewardship.
- Knowledge Sharing and Innovation: The collaborative platform will promote the dissemination of innovations and best practices, strengthening the collective impact of community-led conservation efforts.

Conclusion

This project exemplifies Distant Imagery's mission to democratize climate technology, fostering community ownership, independence, and resilience. By partnering with Dr. James Kairo and the dedicated communities of Mikoko Pamoja and Vanga Blue Forest, we aim to advance mangrove conservation through innovative technology and collaborative effort. This initiative represents a unified commitment to protecting Kenya's coastal ecosystems and empowering local communities to lead sustainable environmental restoration.

Example of DIS Community Built Drone for Habitat Restoration