



# Progress Report on Reforestation and Water Retention Projects

**Gekrum Village Sustainability  
Initiatives – January 2025**

## ABSTRACT

This report highlights the progress, impacts, and future plans of the reforestation and water retention initiatives at Gekrum Village, Tanzania. These projects, driven by [Dare Women's Foundation](#), [Maggie's Tour Company](#) (officially Safari with Maggiest Tour Company Limited) in collaboration with [ConservationVIP Volunteers](#), the local community, development stakeholders, and various organizations supporting community development, alongside volunteers, aim to restore ecosystems, enhance water resources, and improve livelihoods through sustainable practices.

The reforestation project has rejuvenated biodiversity, with increased sightings of native birds and animals, improved soil fertility, and effective erosion control. It has also created employment opportunities, supported cultural preservation, and encouraged community-led initiatives such as vegetable gardens and tree nurseries. The water retention project has improved water harvesting and storage, enabling better irrigation and benefiting over 50 households while laying the groundwork for expanded rainwater catchment systems.

This report includes before-and-after visual documentation, community engagement highlights, and an analysis of successes and challenges from 2023 and 2024. It also presents exciting prospects for 2025 volunteers, including tree planting, slope stabilization, and the development of a large-scale water catchment system.

These efforts illustrate the transformative power of conservation, demonstrating how collaborative action between organizations, communities, and volunteers can yield meaningful environmental and socio-economic benefits while inspiring sustainable practices for the future.

**Maggie Duncan Simbeye**  
**Dare Women's Foundation**

## 1. Introduction

In Gekrum Village, every day begins with a difficult journey. Mothers and children walk six to ten kilometers to collect water, carrying heavy barrels and dealing with the growing challenge of water scarcity. At the same time, the forests that once protected the land are disappearing, causing erosion and leaving the soil weak and dry.

In 2018, [\*Dare Women's Foundation\*](#), together with the local community, started two important projects: planting trees to restore the forests and creating better ways to collect and store water. These efforts aim to bring back the environment, improve access to water, and help the community have a better life.

Deforestation, caused by cutting down trees for firewood, farming on steep slopes, and overusing the land, has made the situation worse. The problem is made even bigger by livestock, such as cows and donkeys, which are used to carry water barrels over long distances. Their daily movements damage pathways, erode the soil, and destroy the natural environment.



**FIGURE 1: UNSUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES THREATENS THE FUTURE**

At first, it was hard to start both projects because of limited funds. The community decided to focus on planting trees first, while slowly finding ways to fix the water problems.

The project is now showing great promise, and the community continue to understand their role in protecting the environment and preserving water.

Supporters have also come forward to support these initiatives. Among them is [VolunteerVIP](#) individuals, who, in 2023, conducted a tree-planting program and supported the water project by installing a water catchment system through their donations. Thanks to these efforts, the environment is improving. New trees are growing, the soil is getting stronger, and wildlife is returning.

The projects are now moving forward, but they still need more support to continue and grow. With help from others, Gekrum Village can have a greener future with enough water for everyone.



**FIGURE 2: FROM CHALLENGES TO CHANGE**



## Why this Report?

This report aims to showcase the progress and positive impacts of the ongoing sustainability initiatives in Gekrum Village, focusing on reforestation and water retention efforts. It serves to inform stakeholders, potential volunteers, and the wider community about the transformative changes taking place in the village.



### *Before these Projects*

*Gekrum Village faced severe land degradation, loss of biodiversity, and increased soil erosion due to deforestation.*

*Additionally, limited access to clean water and frequent droughts created challenges for the community, with poor water management systems impacting both livelihoods and overall well-being.*

**FIGURE 3: A REFLECTION OF SHARED WELL-BEING THROUGH INITIATIVES ENHANCING WATER ACCESS, REFORESTATION, AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN THE GEKRUM VILLAGE COMMUNITY**

### ***A Successful Partnership***

*The collaborative efforts between ConservationVIP Volunteers, Maggie's Tour Company, Dare Women's Foundation, and the Gekrum Village community, ensures long-term benefits for both the environment and the local population.*

## Overview of Projects

The reforestation project focuses on planting trees to rehabilitate degraded areas, while the water retention initiative improves access to clean water. These projects contribute to environmental sustainability and community well-being.



**FIGURE 4: VOLUNTEERS AND VILLAGERS WORKING TOGETHER DURING THE REFORESTATION PROGRAM ON NOVEMBER 2023.**

## 2. Reforestation Project

Before reforestation efforts began, the area around Gekrum Village looked very different from the green landscape it has today. The hillsides, once full of trees, were slowly cleared for firewood and farming.

This loss of trees caused many problems. Heavy rains washed away the topsoil, making the land less fertile and filling water sources with dirt. Without the trees, the village was more exposed to droughts and floods. Wildlife, like birds and insects, disappeared, affecting the balance of nature.

Villagers also struggled with less clean water, lower crop production due to poor soil, and greater exposure to the sun's heat and other harsh weather.



**FIGURE 5: THE BARREN HILLS OF GEKRUM VILLAGE TELL A STORY OF DEFORESTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL LOSS, WHERE GREENERY LUSH ONCE THRIVED**



## Visual Progress: Hilltops and Slopes of Gekrum Village

The hilltops, once bare and dry, are now covered in green, with blooming trees and thriving grasses. Soil erosion has greatly reduced, protecting the area from mudslides during heavy rains. More birds and insects have returned, improving the local ecosystem.



**FIGURE 6: THE HILLSIDES HAVE CHANGED FROM DRY AND EMPTY TO GREEN AND FULL OF LIFE**

The hilltops and slopes around Gekrum Village, where the November 2023 volunteer group worked, have undergone a remarkable transformation. What was once barren land is now very green, with flourishing trees and reduced soil erosion.



**FIGURE 7: THIS VISUAL PROGRESS IS A TESTAMENT TO THE SUCCESS OF THE REFORESTATION EFFORTS ON NOVEMBER 2023**

## Community Involvement in Sustaining Plantings

Villagers actively participate in monitoring tree health, watering, weeding, and protecting the area from fires. Local committees decide on tree species to plant and where they should be located, ensuring cultural relevance.



### ACTIVE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

- Local Monitoring
- Cultural Integration
- Security
- Watering and Maintenance

*The community involvement helps make the project successful in the long run and builds a sense of community ownership.*

**FIGURE 8: COMMUNITY MEMBERS WATERING YOUNG TREES AND CLEARING WEEDS FROM THE PLANTING SITE.**



## Current Status of Trees and Bushes

Many of the planted trees have grown strong, offering shade and reducing soil erosion. Thriving bushes are helping to support biodiversity and make the ecosystem more stable.



**FIGURE 9: MATURE TREES AND THRIVING BUSHES ON THE SLOPES.**

## A Sustainable Future

*The true success of the reforestation project lies in its sustainability. By consistently practicing conservation efforts and involving the community in ongoing care, the project ensures a brighter future for Gekrum Village.*

*Continued tree planting, proper maintenance, and community-led initiatives will not only safeguard the environmental gains but also foster a thriving ecosystem for generations to come.*



## Impact on People and Biodiversity

The reforestation efforts have significantly increased biodiversity in the area, with the return of birds, insects, and other wildlife.

Community members now enjoy more shaded areas, and elders have started sharing traditional knowledge about medicinal plants.

Community members are coming together in various meetings to discuss starting vegetable gardens and nurseries

The project helped create jobs and made it fun to visit the area, and the girls have expanded their biking team ready for more tourism activities like biking and birding.

**FIGURE 10: RESTORED BIODIVERSITY AT GEKURUM VILLAGE**

Reforestation has helped tourism by making the village closer to Lake Manyara National Park more beautiful. The new trees bring more animals and better views, which attract tourists. Visitors can enjoy nature walks, birdwatching, and learning about the local culture. Since the village is very near the park, more tourists come, giving the people chances to earn money through guiding, selling crafts, and hosting visitors. This has made the village an important place for people visiting the park.

***NB: The controlled soil erosion has effectively protected community houses from mudslides during past rainy seasons and continues to provide this crucial safeguard.***



### 3. Water Retention Project

Before the water retention project began, life in Gekrum Village was significantly impacted by water scarcity. The unpredictable rainfall patterns often left the community facing dry spells, making access to clean water a constant struggle.

Villagers, especially women and children, had to walk long distances to fetch water, which took up a lot of time and energy.

This made it hard for them to focus on other important activities like farming, going to school, or taking care of their homes.

The lack of reliable water sources also contributed significant health risks, increasing the vulnerability of the community to waterborne diseases.



**FIGURE 11: COMMUNITY EFFORTS IN EXECUTING WATER RETENTION STRATEGIES AT GEKRUM VILLAGE**



## Infrastructure Improvements (2023–2024)

Two large water tanks and reinforced catchment systems have been installed, providing over 3,500 litres of water during short rains. These systems support irrigation and household needs. Plans are underway to increase the capacity of existing systems, allowing the village to store water during longer droughts and support larger-scale agriculture.

*"Recognizing the long-term impacts of water scarcity on the community, a water retention project was absolutely essential for the sustainable future of the Village."*



**FIGURE 12: NEW BEGINNINGS FOR CLEAN WATER ACCESS**

## Benefits to the Community

The water retention project has improved access to clean water, and reducing water scarcity. It has also enhanced resilience during dry seasons and strengthened the plans for the establishment of vegetable gardens and nurseries.



A Reliable Water Source for:

- ❖ **Domestic Use**
- ❖ **Irrigation**
- ❖ **Livestock**

*This improved access to water has enhanced the quality of life in the village and reduced the burden of water scarcity.*

**FIGURE 13: CLEAN WATER: A LIFELINE FOR COMMUNITIES.**



#### 4. Achievements and Insights

##### Key Outcomes of the Projects

The projects made Gekrum Village a much better place.

- Increased tree cover and biodiversity in Gekrum Village.
- Reduced soil erosion and improved land health.
- Enhanced water security through rainwater harvesting.
- Empowered the community through active participation and skill development.
- Created jobs in security, tree monitoring, and project coordination.
- Supported their culture and encouraged people to share their skills and wisdom.
- Community-led initiatives: Meetings to establish vegetable gardens and nurseries.

**FIGURE 14: COMING TOGETHER IN A SENSE OF UNITY BRINGS JOY TO EVERYONE INVOLVED**

The reforestation and water projects in Gekrum Village are making farming and livestock-keeping better. The trees help stop soil erosion, improve the land, and bring more rain, which helps crops grow well. The water retention project gives farmers and animals enough water, even in dry times. The trees also provide shade and food for animals like grass and leaves. Hence, it has reduced the time-consuming, burdened activities and left time for other development activities like education, small businesses, and community work.



## Lessons Learned from Community Collaboration

Strong community involvement has been critical to success. Regular training and monitoring have empowered locals to take ownership of the projects. These lessons are guiding plans for future initiatives.

## Long-term Vision for Sustainability

The ultimate goal is to establish Gekrum Village as a model for sustainable development, with thriving ecosystems, robust water infrastructure, and self-sufficient communities.



**FIGURE 15: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT**

## 5. Challenges and Lessons Learned

- Addressing Drought and Erosion

While some trees were lost to drought, most survived due to community efforts. Erosion control measures, such as planting grasses and reinforcing slopes, have been effective.

- Community Monitoring and Maintenance

Regular monitoring has ensured that project assets, like water tanks and trees, remain functional and productive. Community members have taken ownership of maintenance tasks, ensuring the projects' sustainability.

## 6. Future Plans (2025 and Beyond)

- Expanded Reforestation Efforts

Future plans include planting more trees, expanding the water catchment system, and reinforcing slope areas to prevent erosion. These activities will enhance the sustainability of current efforts.

- Large-Scale Water Catchment System Development

The expanded system aims to support irrigation for larger agricultural projects and provide clean drinking water for a wider population.

- Volunteer Opportunities and Activities

In 2025, volunteers can look forward to hands-on activities like tree planting and erosion control workshops. These experiences will provide a meaningful connection to conservation efforts.



**A GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS WHO PREVIOUSLY PARTICIPATED IN  
THE REFORESTATION PROGRAM**

## 7. Conclusion

The sustainability initiatives in Gekrum Village have made significant progress in restoring the environment, improving water security, and empowering the community. The success of these initiatives is a testament to the power of collaboration and the dedication of the Gekrum Village community.

We encourage individuals and organizations to support these ongoing efforts by:

- Volunteering their time and skills.
- Making donations to support project activities.
- Spreading awareness about social, economic and environmental issues in our villages by supporting companies and NGOs that support these communities by watching our documentary at <https://youtu.be/toL9PT57IVo?si=BonjJHViwF0rZKl9> and also visit these websites: <https://maggiestourcompany.com/> and <https://darewomensfoundation.org/> and share about this truth.

*Together, we can continue to build a sustainable future for Gekrum Village and its people.*