"We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation that can do something about it."

– Barak Obama

Cross River, Nigeria Chapter Report Planting Season March - August 2023

Our Nigeria chapter is about restoration that is youth-led and youth-focused. All volunteers are students or young children taking the time to make a better future for other youth and themselves. In an area where there were previous fires, water insecurity, and high food insecurity, our Nigeria chapter aims to focus on communities that are often forgotten in climate action and restore Nigeria to its biodiverse ecosystems they once had.

Our team is frequently called the "EcoLearners" by other locals in the community. Locals celebrate them as they are working with one another. Focusing on these often ignored areas is crucial for ending climate inequality.

This chapter is over three years old. With access to 8,000 hectares and permission to restore, we have many long scale goals to grow EcoLearners to reforest thousands of trees and remove tones of litter. We do this through community engagement events, educational events, and restoration volunteer activities.



Planting Locations



Akogbe (Wide Cross River)



Ogoja (Wide Cross River)



Cross River

3 hectares are currently under restoration. We are working with ten schools, including the University of Cross River. The funding we used has gone to buying seedlings (\$680), equipment, soil, and transportation (\$320), as well as maintenance of the plants (\$350). The tree species and plants selected included banana, almond, ube, palms, Iroko, African corkwood, and more expensive native plants like *Hannoa klaineana*, the red ironwood tree, African Mahagony, and Klainedoxa gabonensis. We also planted Idigbo. The more expensive plants are more likely or are endangered and we found it necessary to prioritize those plants. We are looking to plant Teak as well. It is important to note that planting a tree is not synonymous to growing a tree - these are merely the seed prices. This is why Ecolearners works to ensure that each tree has the nutrients necessary to survive, which typically costs more per tree. This is how we expect and get such a high survival rate.





Chapter Leader Nathaniel Molang

Nathaniel Molang is the leader of the Cross River, Nigeria chapter and has worked with EcoLearning Together since its founding. A dedicated student and changemaker, he is working for a Masters at the University of Cross River State (Unicross), and is especially interested in sustainable architecture. From a young age he has had many expressions of interests in environmentalism, working on restoring his local community in Cross River state through litter cleanups and planting native species. Seeing his community suffer from a lack of environmental biodiversity was very hard for Nathaniel, inspiring him to join nonprofits to make a bigger difference. Before joining EcoLearners he has worked with multiple other NGO's on restoration.

How did we monitor the trees?

While we have access to 8,000 hectares, it can be quite extensive and hard to keep track of where we plant. That said, we work on a few hectares at a time to ensure we are paying attention to where and what we plant. Every area we plant has photos documenting it, and those photos contain geo metadata that metadata can be imported into Google for us to track which locations have which trees.

Every time we plant a tree, notes on the planting area and the number of trees in that planting area are documented. When plants do not do very well, we assign them a number and calculate out of the total planted trees the remaining surviving.

Using these notes, we are able to deduce how some of these plants have died. This year, a few of our plants died from a lack of water - it became quite dry in Nigeria - and trampling, either from tourists or other animals. This was apparent due to shriveling in leaves and lack of height in other plants.

We also keep a watch list of which plants are not doing very well, but are still alive. We ensure we provide proper nutrients on these ones so we can nurture them to be healthy.

Restoration Approach

We want to plant biodiverse and dense forests. Rather than working one hectare at a time, we start reforesting a couple hectares at a time and plant the trees throughout them, having an eventual goal of planting around 1000 trees per hectare. This approach is essential to ensure the same species are not planted too close to each other to avoid possible disease competition within the plants. Allowing an ecosystem to thrive is fostering symbiotic relationships between the different organisms.

Once we get the larger trees planted, we plant smaller plants that can benefit the larger trees and can fill in space. These are plants that are guaranteed to not rob too many resources or take too much space. We usually plant these when the trees are a little more mature.





How do we ensure funds go directly to tree planting?

Every month, the chapter and the main organization calculate the amount of trees to plant in that month, and the necessary funds to do so. The funds are sent to our chapter leader to purchase the seeds, equipment, and soil, and all receipts and invoices are collected. These funds are funds only for the restoration, not for event logistics.

Every month, our chapter crew checks on previous planted trees and notes them in our database.





Expansion

We can definitely scale up the number of trees planted and this is something we would love to do in 2024. We want to plant around 7,000 trees in 2024.

The largest blockade in our restoration process is not enough funding. As a student-led smaller organization making grassroots change, it is harder to obtain funding. Nevertheless, we appreciate all the lovely generosity our current donors have given as 100% of their donations have gone to restoration efforts in Nigeria!

The second hardest thing to tackle is water insecurity. This is something we are working with other local nonprofits and Unicross University to tackle. Increasing biodiversity can actually lead to higher access to clean water, and we hope with our restoration efforts, this problem can also be worked on.

Donate at ecolearners.org/donate or scan the QR code below!



