

Improved Cookstoves for conservation of Ibanda-Makera Gallery Forest in Rwanda



In Rwanda, firewood accounts for the majority of energy consumption and is the primary cooking fuel for 98% of rural households in the Kirehe District. The distribution of fuel-efficient cookstoves reduces the amount of wood burning, which means less harmful smoke, less indoor air pollution, and fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

The burden of collecting firewood almost always falls on women and girls, as they are responsible for cooking family meals in most rural communities. Without nearby and safely accessible natural resources, women and girls often travel long distances to find sufficient firewood to cook for their families. The improved cookstoves in this project give time back to kids for learning and for women to undertake activities that generate additional income for their families, such as producing woven handicrafts to sell at the local markets.

There are only a few natural forests left in Rwanda. One of these 'jewels of biodiversity' is the Ibanda-Makera Gallery Forest. It covers a diversity of habitats on 169 hectares over two forests: Ibanda, a woodland savannah located in the East, and Makera, a gallery forest with a papyrus swamp in the South which extends to the Akagera River.

The dissemination of these improved cookstoves is important in driving down the need for firewood and protecting this ecosystem. As an additional conservation measure Likano and its local partners have also planted over 110,000 indigenous trees species.

One of the challenges in protecting natural forests in Rwanda is the acknowledgement of an exact border, where a forest starts and surrounding farmland ends. This was also the case for Ibanda-Makera. To tackle this challenge, all stakeholders were invited to input their views, remarks and know-how and, for the first time, a border was recognised by the whole community. A milestone in the conservation of the unique ecosystem. To make this border visible for all and to create a buffer zone, the indigenous pencil tree was planted as a living fence between farmland and the forest.

Conservation education helps pupils to understand and appreciate the natural resources located in the country and learn how to conserve them for future generations. Through conservation education, kids develop the critical thinking skills they need to understand the complexities of ecological problems and the solutions. This project provides support and education to the Ibanda Primary School, helping to ensure the Ibanda-Makera forest is conserved long into the future.

Project impacts and benefits:

- The Canarumwe improved cookstoves are produced locally, creating valuable employment opportunities.
- Fuel efficient stoves provide access to affordable and clean energy to over 60,000 families from low income households.
- Over 110,000 indigenous trees have been planted.
- For the first time, a recognised border was established, enabling deeper conservation of the Ibanda-Makera-Forest.
- Support provided for the local Primary School, including 100 new table-chair combinations sponsored by Likano and manufactured by local carpenters.