TerraFund for AFRI100 Project Half-Year Report

January – June 2025

Rebranding of NGARA to NEFEA

In June 2024 “The Network for Natural Gums and Resins in Africa (NGARA)” was rebranded as “The Network on Forest Enterprises in Africa (NEFEA)” in order to address a broad range of forest commodities in the continent. Previous work under NGARA in the website has been retained through a dedicated link.

1.0: Landscape Progress

Our goal is to plant 700,000 trees and 1,000,000 Aloes to restore at least 500 ha. We have enlisted 800 farmers, 112 using FMNR and 688 doing direct planting. KEFRI nurseries raised 597,236 tree seedlings and 250,000+ Aloes. Since project start, we’ve planted 510,222 trees and 30,865 Aloes across 3 phases (Apr–Jun 2024, Sep–Dec 2024, Apr–Jun 2025), restoring 510.1 ha (261.9 ha Tenges, 235.4 ha Marigat, 12.8 ha Mogotio). Jan–Jun 2024: 169,115 trees + 30,500 Aloes (100,000 Cypress in Tenges, 69,115 assorted in Marigat) restored 169 ha. Jul–Dec 2024: 23,093 trees + 365 Aloes (21,701 Marigat, 1,392 Tenges) restored 23.3 ha. Current period: 318,014 trees (144,619 Marigat, 160,600 Tenges, 12,795 Mogotio) restored 318 ha. Marigat nursery now produces 400,000+ seedlings yearly; Kabarnet (Katimok) nursery adds 500,000. We continued to source seeds for Apr–Jul and Oct–Dec 2025 planting seasons targeting 300,000 trees, 900,000 Aloes, and 200 ha restored. Activities include farmer training, bee hive distribution, Tamarind inventory, gum Arabic mapping, and linking Aloe farmers to a Mogotio buyer. Young Aloes will be maintained for planting mid–late 2026.

2.0 Community Engagement Progress

The value chains envisaged to be covered in the training of selected farmers by the end of the next two reporting periods (July – December 2025 and January – June 2026) include optimization of the production and grading of Gum arabic (from *Senegalia senegal* trees), production of herbal soap and shampoos from Aloes under cottage industry arrangement for value addition, juice from Tamarind fruits and honey production and handling. These products will be professionally packaged and linked to the local markets in Marigat, Nakuru, and other towns and cities. Excess Aloe raw materials will be sold to the Chinese investor in Mogotio as part of income diversification measures for participating farmers. An estimated 4,000 farmers will be engaged, with an additional over 22,000 envisaged to benefit either directly or indirectly. To date, 352 individuals have directly benefited from the project's activities through employment. This includes 304 individuals involved in tree nursery establishment and management, 14 enumerators who assisted in collecting baseline data during the identification of target farmers, 11 volunteers, including 8 in the first year, 3 volunteers in the current reporting period, and 23 local administrators who served as contact persons between the project farmers and the project technical team. The individuals engaged in nursery establishment and management participated in a variety of tasks, including but not limited to

seed collection, extraction and cleaning of seeds, site preparation, soil mixing, potting, pricking out, watering, and overall seedling care in the nursery. Since the inception of the project, 239 women out of 352 individuals employed so far have been involved in the project activities, while 252 youths out of 352 employed have been youths, representing 67.8% and 71.5% respectively. During the current reporting period, we engaged 8 out of 75 people in the tree nursery operations at the NGARA-KEFRI nursery from the marginalized communities within Marigat, translating to 13%. 2 out of the 3 volunteers engaged in the current reporting period were from the marginalized communities.

2.1 Community Engagement Approach

During the reporting period, many farmers sought to diversify their incomes through tree products within their landscapes, driven by economic hardships, especially those affecting households with school-going children. They prioritized fast-maturing species offering returns within 5–8 years. In Tenges highlands, Cypress and Eucalyptus were highly preferred for their quick yields—poles, firewood, and timber—particularly after the 2018 logging ban on government forests, which boosted on-farm wood prices. Kabarnet KFS nursery responded by focusing on these two species, which thrive in the region's high altitude, rainfall, and cold temperatures. Meanwhile, farmers in Marigat Ward's arid and semi-arid lowlands opted for fast-growing, multi-purpose trees including *Terminalia brownii, Azadirachta indica* (Neem), *Senna siamea, Tamarindus indica, Moringa oleifera, Grevillea robusta, Ziziphus mauritiana,* and *Senegalia senegal*. With support from the project, they are optimistic about harvesting and processing marketable products from these species.

3.0 Top 3 Successes

Over the past six months, awareness of our free distribution of tree and Aloe seedlings for landscape restoration has grown significantly across communities adjacent to Marigat and Tenges wards. We received numerous seedling requests from schools, colleges, NGOs, and farmers in Mogotio, Kabartonjo, Mochongoi, Sacho, Loruk, Barwesa, and Bartabwa. After assessing the needs, we registered the most vulnerable cases for monitoring and performance assessment. However, due to limited stock, we had to turn away hundreds of farmers from these wards and others in Nakuru, Elgeyo Marakwet, Laikipia, and Samburu counties. Basic training on land preparation, planting, and post-planting management was conducted for all new beneficiaries. Notably, farmer engagement increased, with 79 individuals from the Marigat area visiting the nursery to collect seedlings, an improvement from previous periods.

Our team also visited several schools, distributing seedlings and educating students on environmental conservation. During these visits, we conducted comprehensive training on planting procedures, seedling care, and assisted natural regeneration techniques.

4.0 Challenges Faced

During the review period, the project faced financial challenges that hindered several key activities. The purchase and distribution of beehives were cancelled and rescheduled to the next reporting period, delaying potential honey income, as hive occupation occurs July–October and harvests in December/January. The planned purchase of 400,000 potting tubes and related costs was also dropped due to limited funds, leading to reliance on Swaziland beds to meet seedling targets. These require rapid planting within five hours and careful site preparation, but good rainfall distribution this year supported fair success.

The intended purchase of polythene sheets for improvised Aloe greenhouses was also not achieved, causing poor germination and increased seed rot, hence delaying the Aloe programme and raising costs. Additionally, community capacity-building on processing and handling of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) was postponed, resulting in missed income opportunities for ready groups.

Beyond finances, timely access to tree seeds from KEFRI was affected by high national demand due to the 15-billion-tree campaign. Orders were later placed with alternative suppliers. Wild Aloe seed maturity was also delayed due to unusually well-distributed rains, postponing sowing.

5.0 Lessons Learned

To accelerate the growth of late-sown seedlings, we used improved potting soil with more organic matter, applied foliar fertilizer, and weeded frequently. Due to a lack of polythene covers, the team utilized old sheets to raise 250,000 Aloe seedlings. We aim to secure more sheets in the next period to raise over 800,000 seedlings for planting in 2026. The purchase of beehives and capacity building for NTFPs have been rescheduled due to funding constraints.

Training for new farmers continues, focusing on tree species with socio-economic value and proper management. Regular field visits to support farmer engagement and technical advice will continue. With more monitoring and evaluation (M&E) resources, impact could be greater. Farmers increasingly recognize trees as sources of income—poles, firewood,

briquettes, biochar, and carbon credits. We observed knowledge gaps in processing briquettes and biochar, which only require branches or thinnings.

Carbon credits offer a sustainable income stream. Awareness of species with economic potential must be prioritized, with timely M&E and early nursery activities to align with rainfall. The project should explore farmer-led biochar use and tree-based carbon markets, selecting species that optimize sequestration and non-consumptive products. Accurate scheduling of seed sowing is key to guiding nursery managers across TerraFund projects.

6.0 Significant Change

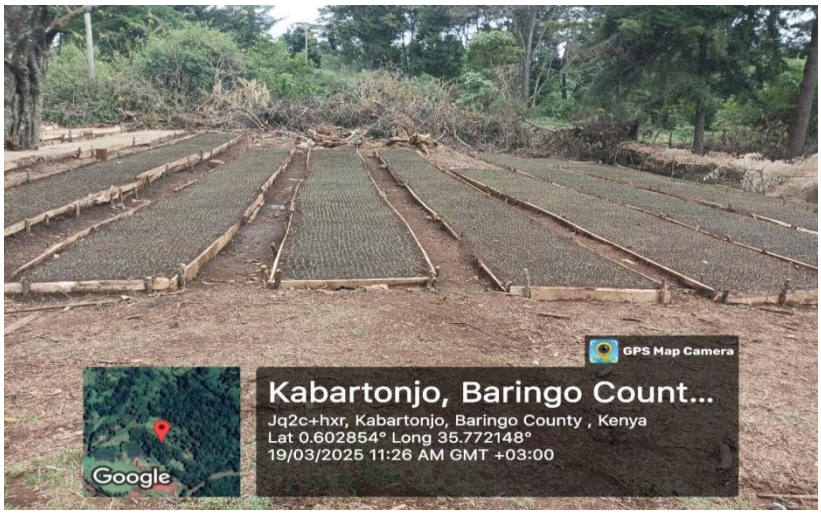
The major impact seen was the increase in number of farms where agroforestry was practiced. Farmers added new lands for tree planting and growing at the same time mixed with food crops. In most farms where tree planting was done in time there was good harvest of vegetables & crops like groundnuts, beans, potatoes and they looked healthy as compared to farms where the crops were grown without trees. This led to increased demand for agroforestry trees especially *Grevillea robusta*. During the field visits farmers had success stories on the use of planted trees for fodder and even medicinal value. For example some farmers were using *Moringa oleifera* and *Azadirachta indica* leaves to produce concoctions for treatment. Some new farmers also requested to be incorporated in the project as participants because of the observed benefits the current beneficiaries are getting through assisted investment in tree growing. This will in the long run contribute to landscape restoration.

7.0 Equitable Opportunities for Women + Youth

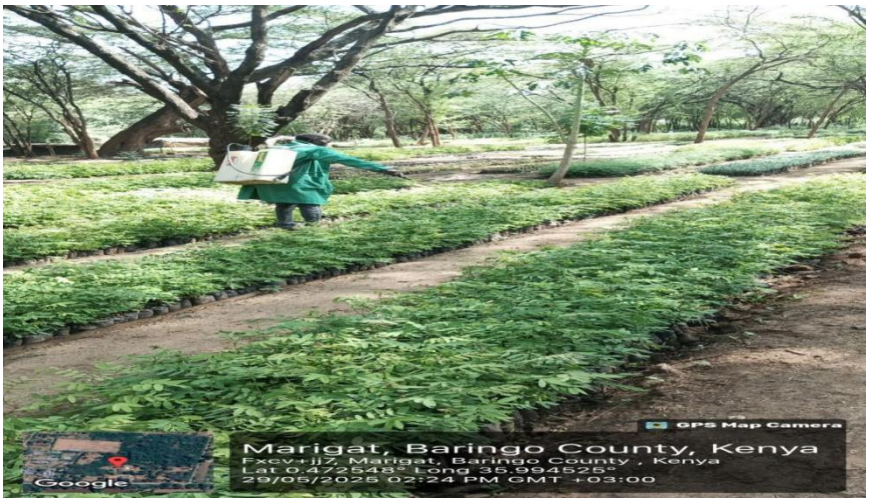
In the current reporting period, activities in the nursery mostly involved women that is 39 women out of 75 representing 52% and 63 youths out of 75 people representing 84%. It was noted that at the household level women and youth were often involved in site preparation, tree planting and tree seedlings maintenance, thus underscoring their importance in landscape restoration. During seedlings distribution, monitoring and evaluation exercise women and the youths were available on most occasions and this contributed to successful implementation of the project activities.

Aloes propagated in the nursery

Assorted tree seedlings in NGARA-KEFRI nursery



Pricked out cypress seedlings on Swaziland beds



Spraying of mealybugs attacking tree seedlings