Forests for Future:
Developing forest landscapes for livelihoods and climate adaptation in Southwest Ethiopia

in partnership with
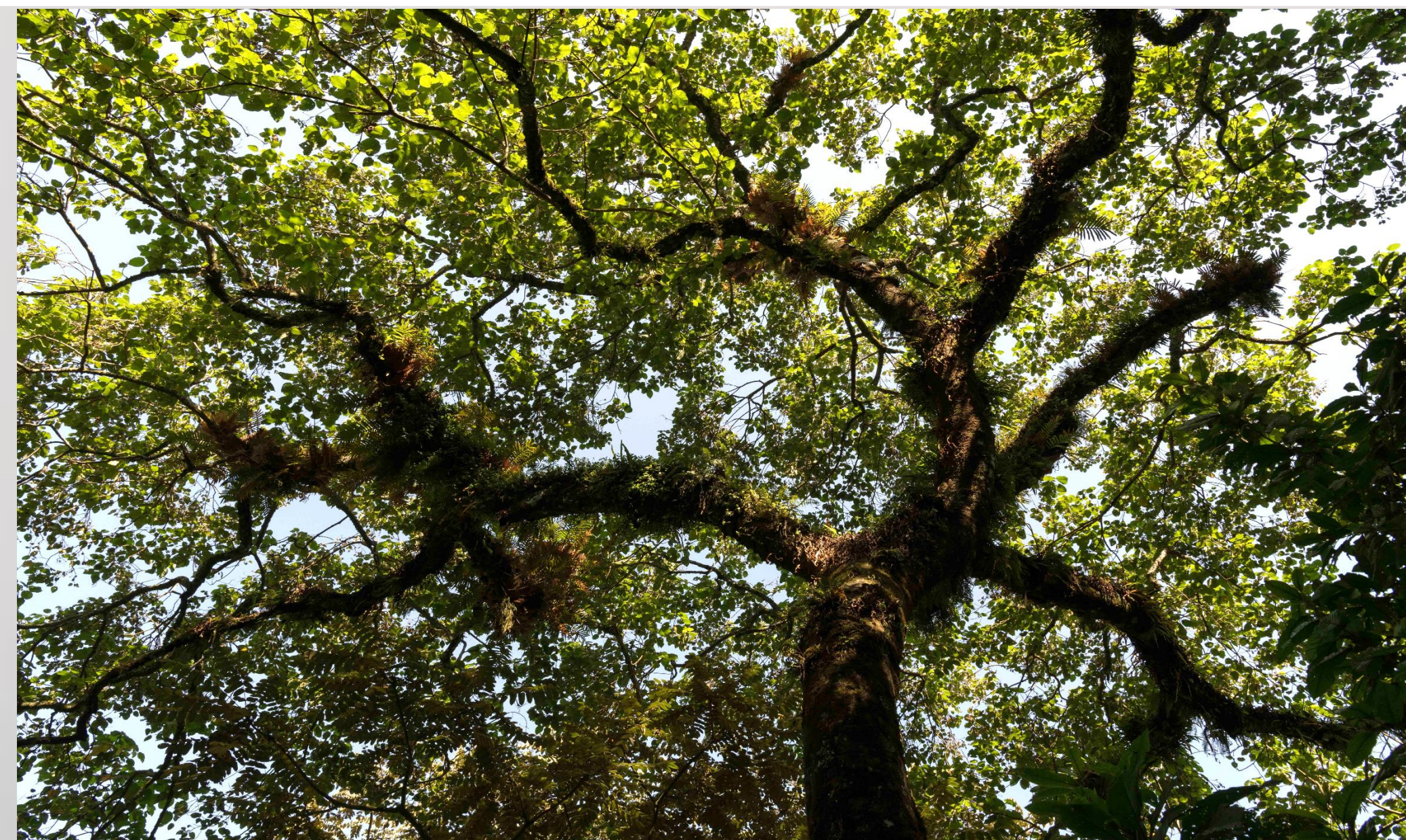
Stefanie Brandes – NABU, Berlin, Germany – Stefanie.Brandes@NABU.de
Ashebir Wondimu – NABU, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – Ashebir.Wondimu2.NABU@gmail.com
Svane Bender – NABU, Berlin, Germany – Svane.Bender@NABU.de

1 INTRODUCTION

In Ethiopia, forest degradation and deforestation (compare Fig. 5) are serious obstacles to the eradication of poverty and the preservation of biodiversity. Likewise, forests in the Southwest (SW) also have been decreased in their original size and connectivity. This led to isolated forest patches preventing gene flow and reducing ecosystem services and the general gene pool of the forest's flora and fauna. This, in turn, increases the vulnerability of forests and two million people of forest dependent communities.

In order to maintain the last and valuable high forests of SW Ethiopia as carbon sinks, habitats, sustainable livelihood sources and long-term ecosystem service suppliers, NABU – in partnership with Ethio Wetlands and Natural Resources Association (EWNRA) – sets up a capacity building and forest landscape restoration (FLR) project, implemented from 2020 – 2022 in three zones of Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR): Bench-Sheko Zone, Kafa Biosphere Reserve and Sheka Forest Biosphere Reserve (Fig. 1).
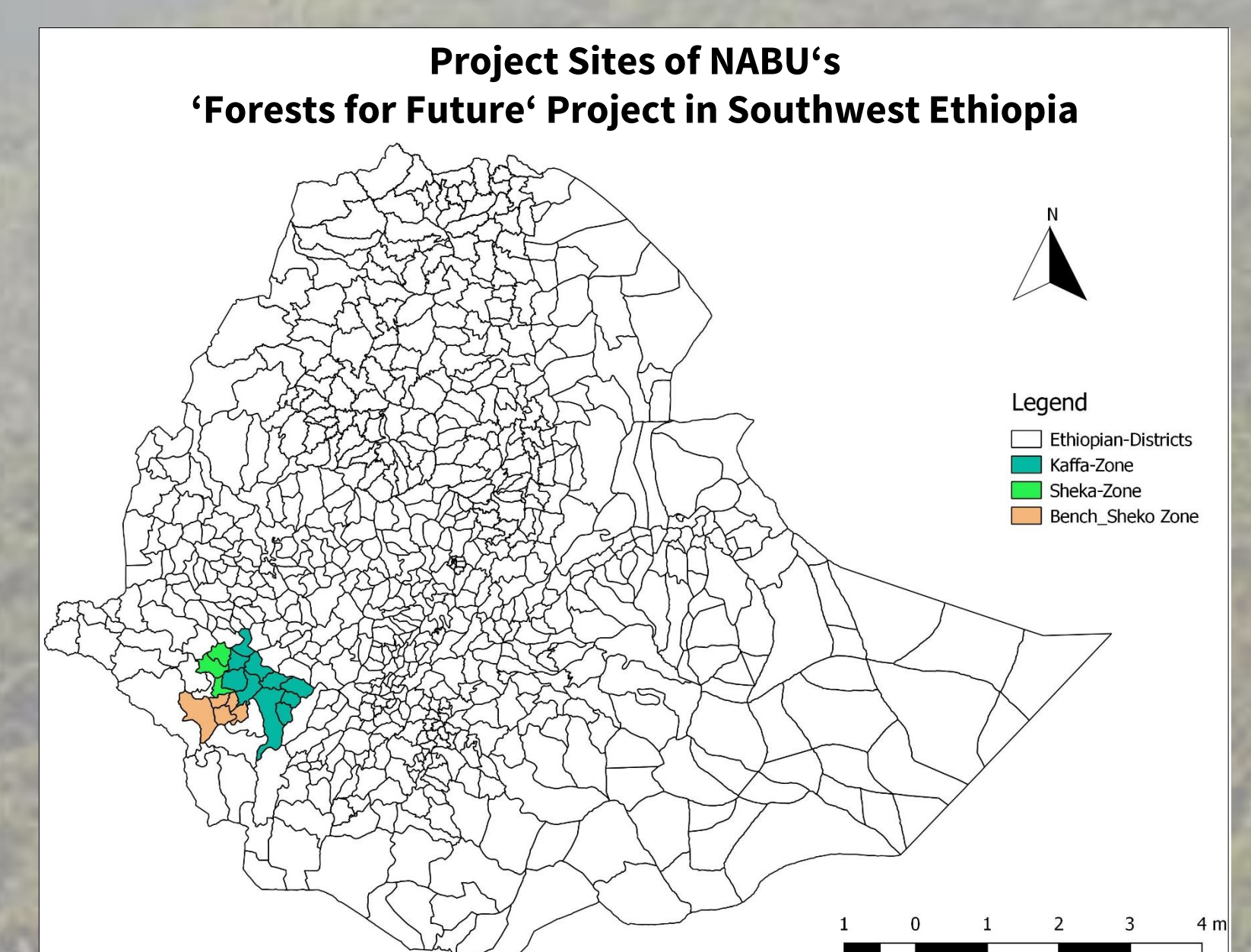
Project Sites of NABU's 'Forests for Future' Project in Southwest Ethiopia

Fig. 1: Project sites of NABU's 'Forests for Future' project: Kaffa-Zone: Kafa Biosphere Reserve (turquoise); Sheka-Zone: Sheka Forest Biosphere Reserve (green); Bench-Sheko Zone (brown) (map: NABU/Ayenew Mekonnen, 2020)

2 METHODS

- ♣ Participatory forest assessment
  - → Mapping with satellite images
  - → *Ground truthing* with stakeholders (Fig. 2)
- ♣ Increase of networks with forest stakeholders
  - → Establishment of *Southwest Forest Alliance* (Fig. 3)
- ♣ Community-based management plans
  - → *Community appraisals* for identification of degradation causes & conservation measures
  - → Identification of potential FLR/ corridor areas
- ♣ Capacity support program
  - → ToTs, field workshops, community trainings
  - → Sustainable income generation (Fig. 4)

Fig. 2: Participatory forest assessment – verification of forest areas and borders with GPS devices and identification of potential FLR areas (photo: Mathias Putze)

Fig. 3: Increasing networks and exchange of stakeholders in the forest sector and building up capacities by establishing the *Southwest Forest Alliance* (photo: NABU/Ashebir Wondimu)

Fig. 4: Income generation for the local communities, e.g. by strengthening home gardens with agroforestry systems and supporting through materials and trainings (photo: Mathias Putze)

3 EXPECTED RESULTS

- ♣ Joint action on forest restoration and conservation
- ♣ Maps depicting current status on forests in SW Ethiopia
- ♣ Forest Action Plans (FAPs) establishment, pilot implementation and legalisation
  - → forest restoration areas in 9 pilot sites (comp. Fig 5 – 8)
- ♣ Increased income resources for small-scale farmers, PFM groups, community members
- ♣ Direct capacity support of > 2,000 PFM-group members, government representatives, NGO/CBO employees
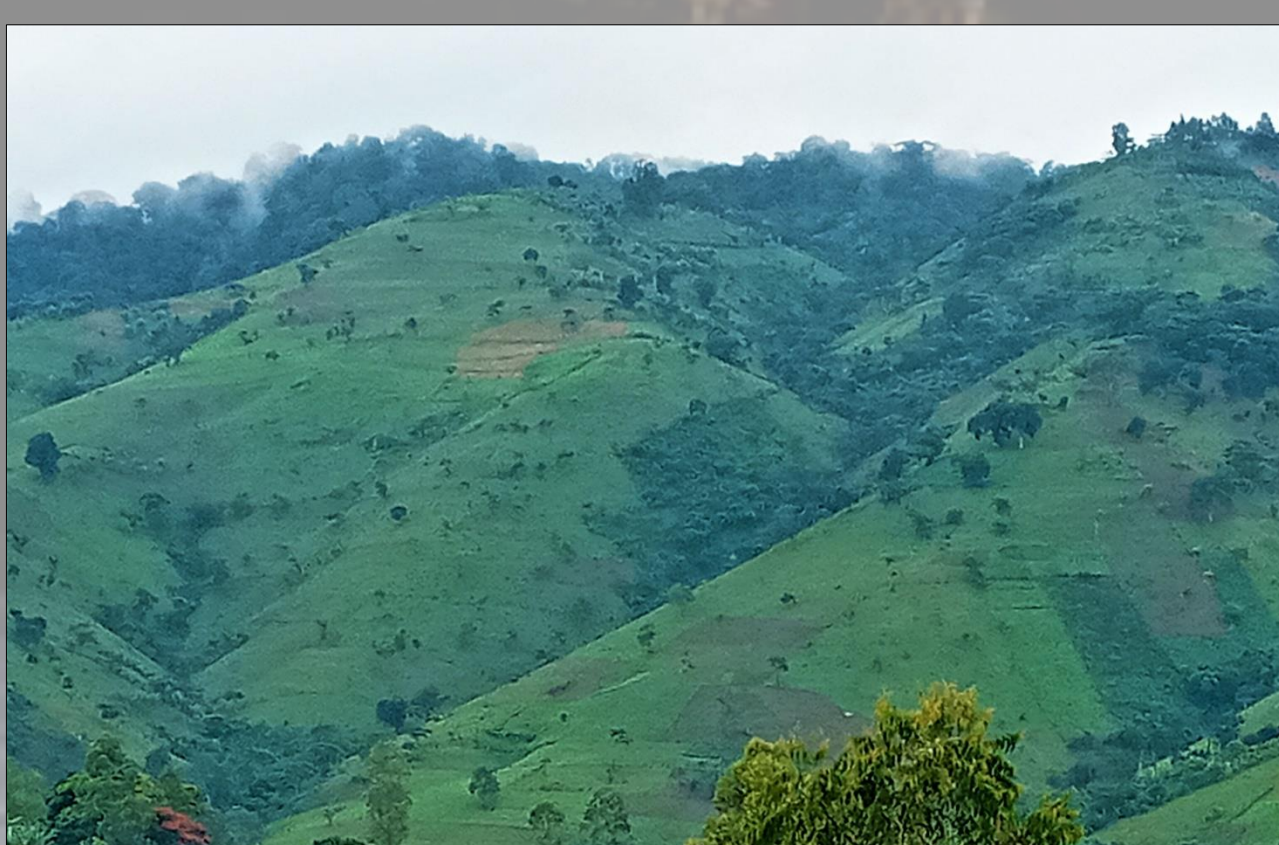
Fig. 5: Potential fragmented areas will be identified and used for restoration measures (photo: NABU/Ashebir Wondimu)

Fig. 6: In nursery sites tree seedlings of native species will grow under the care and management of local communities (photo: Maheder Haileselassie)

Fig. 7: Seedlings that have been cultivated in tree nurseries will be planted in identified re-/afforestation sites (photo: NABU/Abdurazak Sahile)
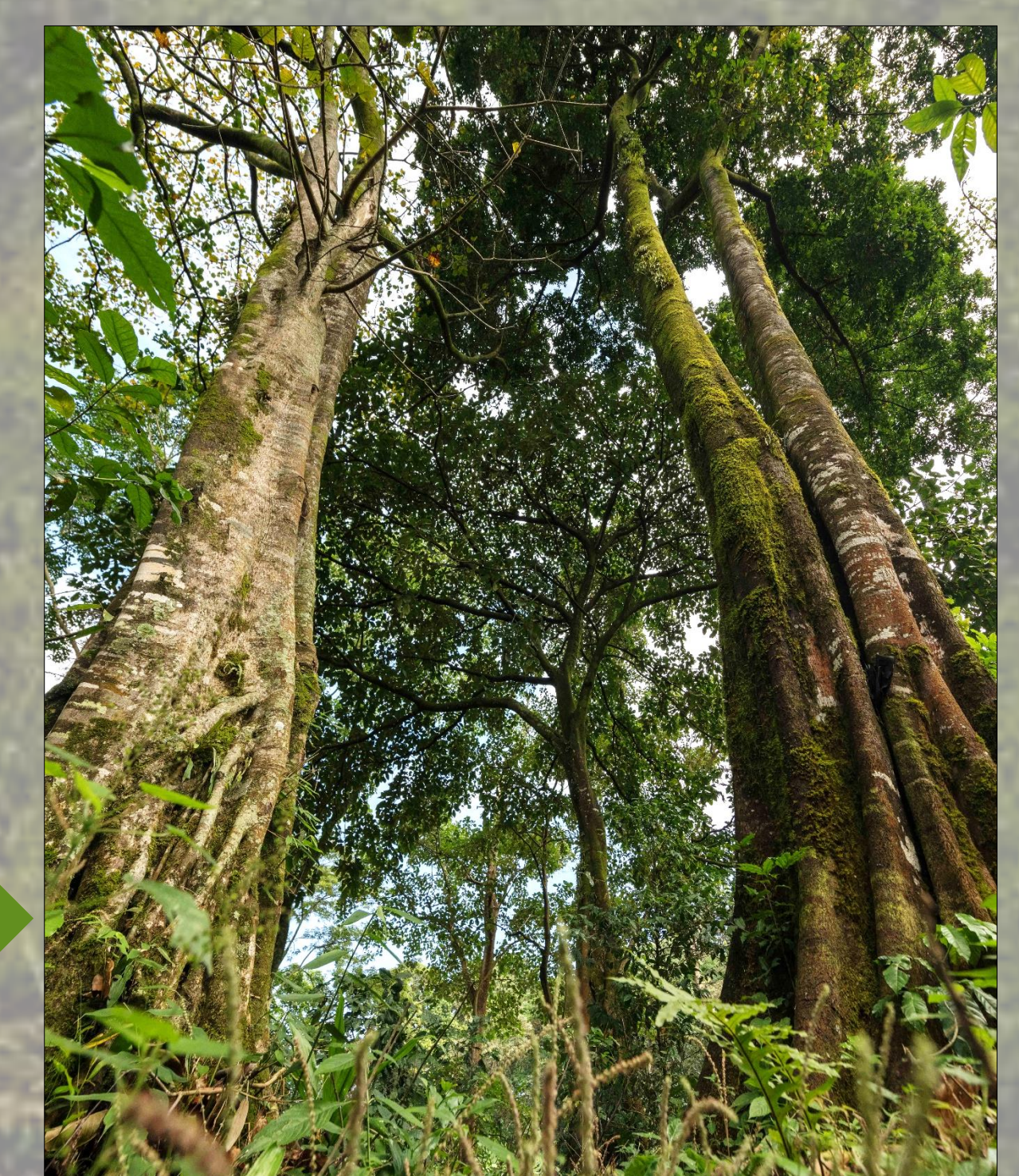
Fig. 8: The survival & growth of the trees will be monitored. They will close gaps, build corridors and contribute to the increase of carbon sinks and maintenance of ecosystem services (photo: Maheder Haileselassie)

4 CONCLUSION/ OUTLOOK

In the past, information and experiences in the Ethiopian forest sector have not been well exchanged on a broad level between different stakeholders. In order to act against the increase of fragmented forest patches and vulnerability to climate events we want to create a big network through the *Southwest Forest Alliance*, find synergies, exchange data/information and jointly develop clear steps for the process of restoring Southwest Ethiopia's forests. The capacity building measures and management plans (FAPs) will contribute to forest conservation, hence, climate adaptation as well as livelihood improvement of, indirectly, over 2 million local forest dependent community members. The project's methods and outcomes also build a basis for follow-up measures on FLR beyond the three project zones and can contribute to Ethiopia's 15 million hectare FLR commitment. For more information and following the progress visit https://forestsforfuture-ethiopia.com