



Gulu Archdiocese

Championing Tree-Planting-and-Growing

GULU - When God placed humanity in the Garden of Eden, the first commandment was not one of domination, but of stewardship: "to cultivate and keep it." Today, that ages-old calling is echoing across the 35 parishes of the Archdiocese of Gulu, spanning the eight districts of Acholiland.

Kijani Forestry has joined the Archdiocese in a partnership that marries faith with action, ecology with justice, and planting with purpose. This strategic initiative flows from the archdiocese's vision of care for creation. Through its Justice and Peace Department, the Archdiocese of Gulu is establishing a Strategic Partnership Framework with Kijani Forestry, ensuring that a traditional corporate development model works with a Church-led mission of environmental and social transformation.

Planting and Growing

The Archdiocese-Kijani alliance is anchored in a thoughtful commitment to stewardship: a shift from merely planting trees to ensuring they grow. The archdiocese brings to this alliance what no corporate entity can replicate or buy – decades of institutional stability, deep community trust, and a vast, structured network of parishes, church communities, and families. Under the spiritual direction of the Church, Kijani Forestry shall operate to fulfill the vision outlined in Pope Francis's *encyclical Laudato Si'*: "On Care for Our Common Home."

"Ecological restoration must go hand-in-hand with social justice and the elevation of the poor," the framework declares. This integral ecology approach ensures that Kijani Forestry's technical execution aligns directly with the Church's pastoral priority: protecting Northern Uganda's most vulnerable from climate-induced poverty and soil degradation.

Pillars of Collaboration

The framework outlines three distinct pillars of collaboration, each reflecting a different dimension of the partnership.

- The Restoration Model: The Archdiocese leverages its extensive diocesan land assets for large-scale

woodland restoration, directing the resulting carbon credit revenue streams to fund its vital pastoral and social programs.

- Medium Scale Model: The Church mobilizes its parish networks to extend opportunity to smallholder farmers. Under Archdiocesan oversight, Kijani Forestry supports these Christian communities by providing agronomic training, setting up tree nurseries, and delivering annual survival incentives to farmers as they await woodlot harvests.

- Biochar Production and Use Model: The archdiocese integrates climate-smart agriculture into its youth and women's ministries, using Kijani's technical support to train communities in onsite biochar production using crop residues to enhance soil fertility and income.

"Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live," reads a statement from the Archdiocese's Justice and Peace Department. The Archdiocese provides the overarching expertise in community mediation, gender sensitivity, and conflict-sensitive land management, ensuring Kijani's activities strengthen local communities

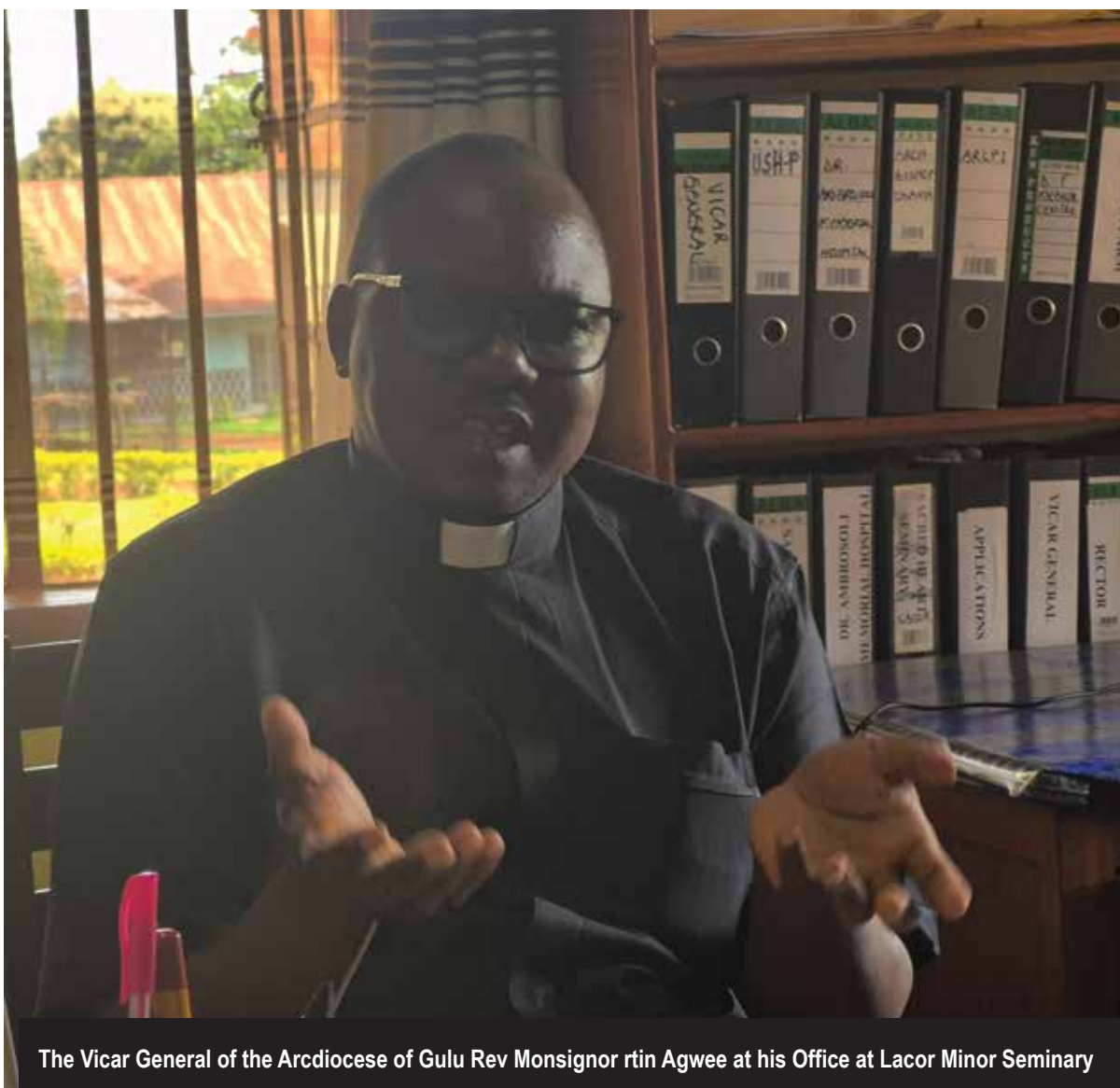
without causing social disruption.

A Covenant for the Common Good

While Kijani Forestry provides technical expertise, it is the Archdiocese of Gulu that grants the initiative its ultimate strength, authority, and permanence, mobilizing parishioners to provide the operational boots on the ground. In this way the Archdiocese anchors the mission with a permanent institutional presence that outlasts standard corporate and development project cycles.

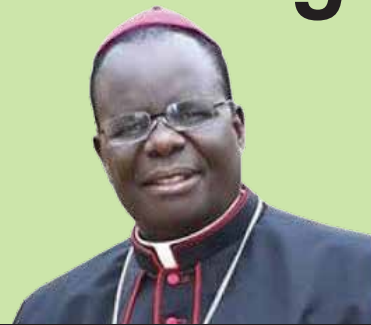
In the end, Kijani Forestry's work in the region gains its purpose through the Church's leadership. This is more than an environmental initiative; it is an act of ecclesial faith and stewardship – a recognition that the earth is the Lord's, and that the Archdiocese is actively guiding its flock to "cultivate and keep" the garden entrusted to their care.

Emphasizing the Church's active leadership in mobilizing the faithful, Monsignor Martin Agwee, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Gulu, announced that Catholic youth will spearhead the tree planting and tree growing drive across all 35 parishes



The Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Gulu Rev Monsignor Martin Agwee at his Office at Lacor Minor Seminary

Church dedicates Diamond Jubilee to Greening



His Grace Raphael p'Mony Wokorach, the Archbishop of Archdiocese of Gulu

FOR-GOD - Gulu Archdiocese has dedicated its Diamond Jubilee to planting-and-growing trees to mitigate climate change and boost household incomes. Speaking on behalf of the Archbishop of Gulu Archdiocese His Grace Raphael p'Mony Wokorach, the Vicar General Monsignor Martin Agwee announced that all parishes, institutions, and families are expected to plant trees on available land, with data on available land to be compiled by the Archdiocese.

This initiative aligns with the national "Running Out of Trees" (ROOTs) campaign, spearheaded by the Ministry of Water and Environment. Launched in 2019, the ROOTs campaign targets planting 40 million trees annually across the country.

In March 2026, the Church of Uganda also launched a campaign to plant 15 million trees over 24 months as part of its 150th anniversary celebrations. The Church tasked each of her 39 Dioceses to plant 385,000 trees

At Kijani Forestry, the target of 30million trees in 2026 alone is on course with over 26 million seedlings already distributed to smallholder and medium scale farmers across four sub regions: Acholi, Bunyoro, Lango, and Teso

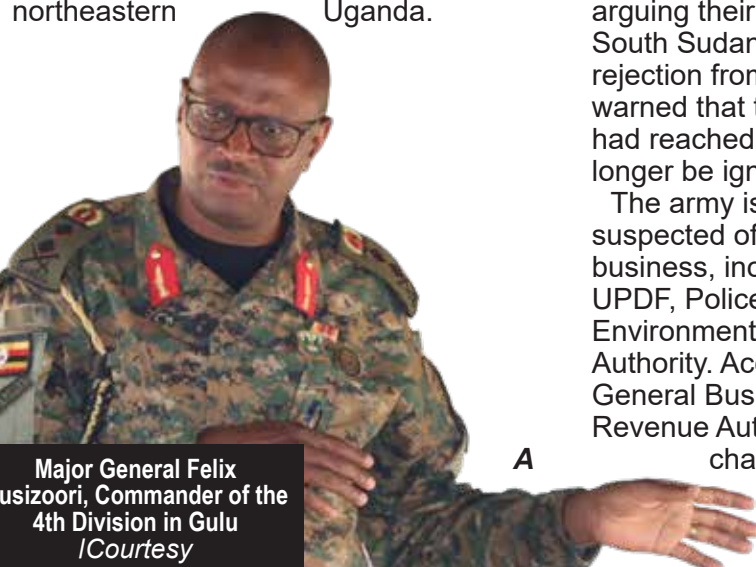


Environmental Security

Reinforcing Executive Order No.3 of 2023

NORTHERN UGANDA – Across northern Uganda, the 4th Division of the UPDF is firmly implementing a unique aspect of its mandate by ensuring the security of not only the lives and properties of the people, but also that of their environment.

At the forefront of this environmental security approach is Major General Felix Busizoori, commander of the 4th Infantry Division, who has the unenviable task of reinforcing Executive Order No. 3 of 2023, which put a ban on cutting of trees for commercial charcoal production across northern and parts of northeastern Uganda.



Major General Felix Busizoori, Commander of the 4th Division in Gulu
/Courtesy

Crackdown on the Edge

General Busizoori's crackdown is beginning to walk the fine line between extractive charcoal burning, which degrades huge tracts of natural forest and woodland, and responsible charcoal production, which is integrating selected woodfuel tree species in traditional cropping patterns to ensure sustainable biomass energy. And the first signs of success are beginning to show.

In late July 2026, local media reported that at least 40 charcoal dealers were detained in Gulu after seeking permission to continue their trade, arguing their charcoal was sourced from South Sudan. They were met with a firm rejection from General Busizoori, who warned that the destruction of forests had reached a level that "could no longer be ignored".

The army is now investigating officials suspected of facilitating the prohibited business, including personnel from the UPDF, Police, Ministry of Water and Environment, and Uganda Revenue Authority. According to media reports, General Busizoori directed the Uganda Revenue Authority not to issue seals for charcoal entering from South Sudan until official confirmation is received that the trade is legal

15 Ways of Differentiating Responsible Charcoal from Traditional Charcoal		
Aspects	Traditional Charcoal	Responsible Charcoal
Wood Source	Mined more often than not illegally from Natural Forests, Woodlands, and Protected Areas	Sustainably Harvested from Managed Plantations, Woodlots, or Invasive Species in Protected Areas
Deforestation Impact	Severe – Clear Cutting and Forest Degradation	Minimal – Planting Exceeds Harvest Four-Fold, Allowing Forests to Regenerate
Production Method	Earth Mound Kilns or Pits with Poor Combustion and High Wood Waste	Efficient Kilns or Retorts (e.g. Casamance) with Controlled Carbonization
Wood-to-Charcoal Conversion	Low (8-15%) Conversion Rate	High (25-35%) Conversion Rate
Smoke & Pollutants	High Levels of Smoke, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), and Particulates.	Reduced Smoke, VOCs, and Particulate Matter
Carbon Emissions	High Net Emissions due to Deforestation.	Lower Emissions per Sack; Coppice Regrowth Captures CO ₂ .
Worker Safety & Rights	Often Informal; No safety Gear; Susceptible to Child Labor; Low Pay.	Formal; Fair Wages; Protective Gear; Regulated Working Conditions.
Legality	Often Illegal; Non-Compliant with Presidential Ban or Local Laws.	Licensed, Compliant with National and Local Legislation.
Traceability	No Traceability; Source of Charcoal remains Unknown.	Supply Chain Documented; May Carry Certification (FSC, PEFC).
Pricing	Lower Market Price with Externalized Environmental and Health Costs.	Higher Initial Costs due to Sustainable Practices, Traceability, and Certification.
Packaging	Unbranded, without Consumer Information on Contents. Sold by Bulk.	Branded, with Consumer Information on Contents. Sold by Weight.
Consumer Confidence	Unknown Wood Species, May Contain Contaminants or be Mixed with Soil.	From Known Wood Species; Consistent Quality, and Ethical Choice.
User Health	High Indoor Pollution – Linked to Pneumonia, COPD, Lung Cancer.	Lower Indoor Air Pollution – Fewer Respiratory Infections.
Local Revenue	Unpredictable, Hard to Collect.	Predictable; Cost-Effective to Collect.
Long-Term Viability	Finite – Leads to Resource Depletion and Scarcity.	Renewable – Can be Sustained Indefinitely.

there. For ordinary Ugandans, the crackdown has created a crisis of its own. Charcoal prices have surged from 30,000 to 80,000 shillings per bag.

purpose-planted woodlots under secure tenure, using improved kilns and verifiable licensing.

Kijani deploys 50 additional Motorcycles to support farmers



Kijani Forestry has acquired 50 new motorcycles to support farmers and ensure that the millions of seedlings distributed are planted and survive. This brings the number of motorcycles deployed in the region to 209. Kijani Staff are deployed in all parishes in the districts where we are operating.

A Different Model for the Way Forward

Meanwhile, data from Kijani Forestry shows that since 2021, over 39,000 farmers across 28 districts in northern Uganda are now growing over 8.6 million trees for responsible charcoal production.

With Kijani's farmers forming the vanguard of the new, responsible charcoal industry, General Busizoori is confidently deploying the UPDF to execute a decisive rearguard action that is ensuring the retreat of extractive charcoal burners from our natural forests and woodlands.

The distinction between "extractive" and "responsible" charcoal is becoming the conceptual boundary underpinning Executive Order No. 3. Extractive charcoal is produced by clear-cutting natural forests with no replanting obligation, while responsible charcoal is grown on

Choosing the Right Model

As the army intensifies operations against illegal charcoal, the choice facing Uganda is stark. The extractive model destroys forests and enriches a few at the expense of communities and the environment. The responsible model, as Kijani's farmers are proving, offers a pathway where woodfuel is grown, not extracted, and where the energy needs of millions can be met without destroying the country's natural capital.

Kijani has already invested in the infrastructure – over 8,000 community nursery hubs, 9 central nurseries, and 964 field staff supporting farmers. What is needed now is the political will to bridge the gap between a destructive past and a sustainable future. The farmers of northern Uganda have already made their choice. It is time for the rest of the country to join them.

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Cultivating a Just Transition

How Kijani's Sustainable Fuelwood Model Aligns with Uganda's National Framework

GULU CITY - As Uganda charts a path toward sustainable development, Kijani Forestry's responsible charcoal approach emerges as a practical embodiment of the country's Just Transition Framework for a green, resilient, low-carbon economy and society.

In 2021, Walter Obote's siblings dismissed tree planting as a drain on soil nutrients. They were voicing a common concern among smallholder farmers in Acholi. Today, the Obote family in Gweng-Diya, Gulu District, is earning Annual Tree Survival Incentives, preparing for sustainable charcoal harvests, and shall look forward to additional carbon credit payments from the Kijani Fund from 2031 onwards. Their transformation illustrates what happens when environmental restoration is deliberately designed to lift people out of poverty – a principle at the heart of Uganda's newly launched Just Transition Framework.

The Charcoal Challenge and the Just Transition Imperative

Uganda's forest cover plummeted from 24 percent in 1990 to just 12.7 percent 2016 and rising to 14% today. Besides expanding agricultural land, much of this loss was driven by unsustainable harvesting of woodfuel for charcoal. Over 90 percent of Ugandan households rely on charcoal or firewood for cooking – a dependence that not only devastates forests and woodlands but also burdens women and children, who spend hours collecting fuelwood, and exposes families to harmful indoor air pollution.

The Government of Uganda's Just Transition Framework 2025, developed alongside the Fourth National Development Plan 2025/26 - 2029/30 (NDP IV), directly addresses this challenge. It recognizes that "the pathway to sustainable development should be fair and equitable for all Ugandans," and that structural changes – like shifting away from clear cutting of natural forests and woodlands to sustainably farming woodfuel for charcoal production – must assess and mitigate any significant welfare risks that may result from implementing Uganda's broader sustainable development efforts.

Kijani's Alignment

Kijani Forestry's sustainable forest management and responsible charcoal model demonstrates how the Just Transition Framework's seven principles can be operationalized in practice.

- **Support Livelihoods:** The Framework insists that "where transition results in job losses or significantly affects small businesses or livelihoods, those affected must be



Walter Obote in his woodlot of White Teak (*Gmaeina arborea*) in Gweng-dia, Gulu District. Obote is among the 52,000 farmers who have been paid by Kijani /Stella Aculu

supported". Kijani's model does precisely this by transitioning traditional charcoal producers from illegal, destructive practice of clear-cutting natural forest and woodland to sustainable woodfuel production. Farmers receive agronomic training, free tree seeds and potting bags that enable them to raise seedlings to plant and grow woodlots for sustainable woodfuel. Charcoal burners are re-trained and re-tooled with Improved Charcoal Kilns and Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) for responsible charcoal production.

- **Create Decent Jobs:** Transitions should be "explicitly designed to create new, decent jobs". As soon as government directs on responsible charcoal production, the now 90,000 strong and growing army of Kijani farmers will become the vanguard of the new green economy guaranteeing decent, new jobs: producing sustainable woodfuel; harvesting and converting woodfuel into charcoal; sorting, packaging, and branding responsible charcoal; and transporting the product to markets.

- **Support Affected Households:** Where transition creates hardship, "adequate support measures must be available". Kijani's three-stream income model – five years of annual

tree survival incentive payments, charcoal/timber sales, and carbon credit payments – provides affected households with a strong safety net while building long-term wealth.

- **Remediate Historical Environmental Damage:** The Framework requires that transitions "should not leave behind unaddressed environmental risks". Kijani's Forest & Woodland Restoration Model, first piloted on 500 acres in Amuru district, restores degraded landscapes – in this case a former charcoal-burning hotspot – prioritizing indigenous tree species suited to local conditions, conserving biodiversity and sequestering carbon stocks.

- **Wide Social Engagement:** "Affected stakeholders must be meaningfully included" in transition planning. Kijani's Nursery Hub Model empowers farmers to co-create the means of restoring tree cover in their communities through establishing tree nurseries on their own land using their sweat equity. At the Nursery Hubs, farmers learn innovative agroforestry approaches for implementation in their gardens.

Aligning with National Strategies

The model also directly supports Uganda's National REDD+

Programme. Strategic Option 2 specifically promotes "sustainable fuelwood and commercial charcoal production" through "commercial smallholder and community bioenergy woodlots" and "improved charcoal kilns linked to bioenergy woodlots" – precisely Kijani's approach.

Furthermore, the recently launched Uganda National Agroforestry Strategy (2024/25–2033/34) provides "a clear and coordinated framework for expanding agroforestry" to "restore degraded landscapes, protect biodiversity, and strengthen climate-resilient livelihoods". Kijani's model integrates trees into farming systems, using coppicing techniques that allow harvests every three years from the same acre – creating a sustainable cycle of income.

Contributing to Tenfold Economic Growth

At the launch of Good Forests Foundation Uganda in December 2025, Assistant Commissioner of Forestry Issa Katwesige emphasized that the forestry sector "must clearly showcase its contribution to the national agenda of achieving tenfold economic growth, particularly through wood processing and downstream value addition". Kijani's integrated value chain – from nurseries to sustainable charcoal production to carbon credits – demonstrates precisely this contribution.

The model addresses what the Just Transition Framework identifies as the informal sector challenge: "the charcoal economy tends to benefit middlemen over producers, perpetuating cycles of poverty". By guaranteeing farm-gate off-take at harvest, Kijani ensures that wealth reaches the smallholder rather than intermediaries.

A Blueprint for the Future

As Uganda implements NDP IV, Kijani Forestry's approach offers a replicable model for just transitions across sectors. It aligns with the Framework's instruction that "support measures for affected groups are identified and designed so that the outcomes of transition are consistent with the principles" of justice and equity.

For Walter Obote's family and thousands of other farmers, this is not an abstract policy – it is a pathway out of poverty and into profitable stewardship of the land. As one farmer field coordinator explained, "That incentive motivates the farmer to grow more trees". In this way, Kijani is not just planting trees; it is cultivating a just transition, one acre at a time.

Kijani Leads ROOTs Campaign in Tree Planting

KAMPALA – Kijani Forestry has emerged as the single largest tree planter and grower in the Running Out Of Trees (ROOTs) Campaign. According to official statistics released in the Ministry of Water and Environment's (MWE) 2025 Annual Performance Report, Kijani Forestry led 31 participating organizations, planting a phenomenal 6,919,515 (45.8%) of the 15,100,493 trees across 21 districts in the Acholi, Bunyoro, Lango Sub-Regions.

This achievement builds on the strategic alignment established between the Ministry and Kijani Forestry. Speaking during the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between both entities in 2023, Dr. Alfred Okot Okidi, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Water and Environment, highlighted the critical need for direct corporate intervention. "Irresponsible harvesting of natural trees and illegal commercial charcoal production remains a big threat to the environment," Okidi noted, adding that the MoU directly addresses this vice by engaging with the private sector.

Unrivalled Impact Across 21 Districts

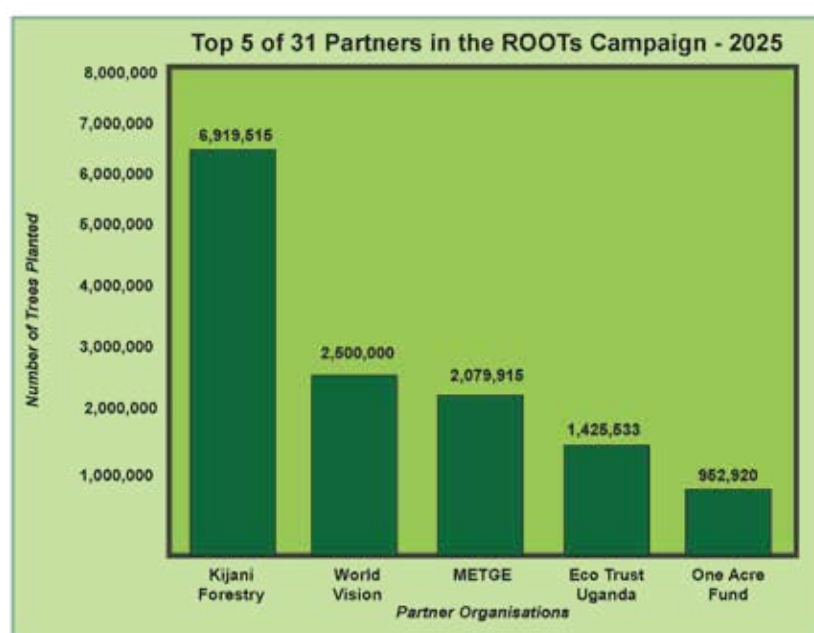
Kijani's contribution alone represents nearly 17.3% of the ROOTs Campaign annual target of 40 million trees. Operating across 29 districts in five key sub-regions – Acholi, Bunyoro, Karamoja, Lango, and Teso – Kijani managed this tree planting feat with thousands of smallholder farmers through an incentivized agroforestry approach that integrates woodfuel, timber, fodder, bee forage, and live-fencing trees in traditional cropping patterns.

Kijani's Director for Government and Partner Relations Michael Tebere says "We plan to share our insights on enabling farmer uptake of tree growing with the government, especially our daring Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payments Scheme. We are developing a Cost-Share Proposal for the government that shall hopefully increase the Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payment to Shs500 per tree per year for the first five years of tree growth. Try telling that to farmers and hear their responses!"

Kijani's output nearly tripled that of the second-ranked organization



Kijani Trainees participate in Forestry inventory bootcamp training. From time to time, Kijani takes staff through refresher trainings to ensure accurate data for tree counting/Petra Laker



(World Vision with 2,500,000 trees), and surpassed the combined totals of the next six largest tree planting organizations participating in the ROOTs Campaign – Mount Elgon Tree Growing Enterprise, Eco Trust Uganda, One Acre Fund, ABSA, Good Forests Foundation, and Total Energies EP Uganda.

The foundation of Kijani's success lies in its community-centered model and strategic institutional partnerships. By pairing technical agronomy with grassroots network mobilization – including partnerships with the religious institutions and

cultural institutions – Kijani has turned tree planting and growing into a viable socio-economic opportunity for rural communities.

Through its 6-Acre Smallholder Farmer Model, thousands of Kijani farmers receive training and inputs that enable them to provide quality seedlings to establish sustainable woodfuel and timber woodlots on their own land. Simultaneously, Kijani's climate-smart On-Field Biochar Production Model

equips farmers to conserve and enhance soil fertility using crop residues, ensuring that environmental recovery goes hand in hand with rural prosperity.

Rooted in Commitment

As the Ministry of Water and Environment accelerates momentum toward Uganda's Bonn Challenge pledge to restore 2.5 million hectares of degraded landscapes by 2030, Kijani Forestry continues to set the benchmark for operational scale, survival monitoring, and community empowerment.

Kijani Trains Staff on Forest Inventory and Data Safeguard

PAKUBA - Last Saturday, Kijani Forestry concluded a Six-Day Forest Inventory Boot Camp with 20 Forest Inventory Team Coordinators and Technicians at the Kijani Research & Development Farm in Pakuba Village, Paibona Parish, Paicho Sub-County in Gulu District. Each Coordinator-Technician Team is responsible for verifying trees planted and growing prior to disbursement of Kijani's Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payments to farmers.

At the heart of Kijani Forestry's smallholder model is the belief that accurate data builds community trust. Because registered farmers receive Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payments directly tied to the verified survival of trees they plant and grow on their land, field staff must capture complete and precise data on tree numbers, species and sizes from every participating woodlot.

The primary goal of the boot camp was to equip Kijani's Forestry Inventory Teams with the skills required to engage participating farmers effectively, conduct precise tree measurements, and ensure the absolute integrity and completeness of all data collected.

Designed as a blended learning experience, the training balanced theoretical classroom instruction with hands-on, practical field exercises. In the classroom, participants built a strong foundation in forest inventory principles, data collection standards, and the rigorous scientific protocols required for carbon accounting and ecological monitoring. In the field, the teams applied these concepts directly in live woodlot environments, practicing plot setup, tree measurement techniques, and real-time digital recording under actual field conditions.

By continually refreshing the technical skills of its field staff through these recurring boot camps, Kijani Forestry reinforces the scientific baseline needed for carbon credit verification while maintaining total transparency in its farmer incentive program.

As these newly trained field officers return to their respective districts across the region, their work ensures that Kijani's growing woodlot network continues to deliver both verified environmental restoration and dependable economic rewards for local farming communities.