



Her Worship the Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr OBE,
Councillors and Staff of Freetown City Council present

Transform Freetown

Four Year Report

January 2022 - January 2023



Resilience – Environmental management

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Targets 2022

Target 1: Increase the capacity of Freetown’s 48 wards to recognize risk and identify resilient solutions to prevent and recover from disasters

Target 2: Increase vegetation cover in Freetown by 50%

What we did in the fourth year

1. #FreetownTheTreeTown Campaign – planting, growing and tracking 1 million trees

The pressures of the rapid urbanization are taking an increasing toll on the forest expanse in and around Freetown, with the fringes of the city rapidly pushing up into the mountains of the forested peninsula – leading to a tree cover loss of 12% or 555 ha per year between 2011 and 2018. If this trend is left unchecked, there will be no trees left by 2044. The intensity of the deforestation in the Freetown Peninsula is a critical cause for concern, as the forested area provides vital functions for the city, such as a catchment for water reserves and as a protector against natural hazards including landslides, flooding, coastal erosion, and extreme heat. Compounded by impact of climate change, tree and vegetation cover loss in Freetown and the Western Area peninsula has also created loss of biodiversity and habitat in the forest and woodlands system along the Freetown peninsula, not to forget the systematic destabilization of high slopes. This creates the context of the free flow of water which increases sediment into the river and dam systems. It results in a loss of water capacity of the reservoirs and thus limited access to water for Freetown and the recurring threat of natural hazards and threats to critical infrastructure, life and property.

To seriously address deforestation, the #FreetownTheTreeTown campaign has been not only planting, but growing, and digitally tracking one million trees, restoring 3,000 hectares of land and sequestering approximately 100,000 tons of CO₂ (green and blue carbon). Our approach harnesses low-cost digital technology and creates green jobs for the local communities, and especially for women and youth. We are sustaining and scaling our idea through the sale of “impact tokens” for carbon offsets to institutions and corporations, and also aim to operationalize a blue carbon strategy to finance and incentivize reforestation and other nature-based solutions beyond 2022.



Community grower planting a tree



<https://freetown.treetracker.org>

Planting the trees is only the beginning of the journey. To seriously address deforestation, the #FreetownTheTreeTown campaign has been not only planting, but growing, and digitally tracking planted trees.

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We are at 66% of our one million-tree target! To secure the longer-term benefits, it is critical to maintain and grow the trees, not just to plant them. In 2022, we did replacement planting, i.e. we replaced trees which were destroyed or died (80,000 trees) thanks to the World Bank Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project and CRS funding. We are tracking the trees through the mobile application, the Tree Tracker app, and our community growers are tracking the progress. Tree tracking happens monthly, for which growers receive incentive payments. On top of the replacement planting, in 2022, we have planted 100,000 additional trees in the Guma watershed thanks to AFR100 funds. In total and since the start of the project, we have grown and tokenized around 657,000 trees and mangroves. We estimate to hit the 1m trees target by the end of this year (2023).

We are proud of the creation of more than 1500 direct and indirect green jobs for growers, nurseries and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) who have been engaging growers and daily workers from the communities to support planting and maintaining of the trees, especially at the initial stage of their growth.

Our achievements so far:

- 657,000 trees and mangroves planted
- 54 species of trees, grasses and shrubs
- 70%/30% trees to mangroves mix
- 13 wards covered
- 3 dams/community water sources covered
- 34 roadsides covered
- 88% youth jobs

Green jobs created:

- 1500 direct and indirect green jobs

Supporting our women:

- +40% of our growers
- 30% of the team leads

As a winner of Bloomberg Philanthropies Global Mayors Challenge, Freetown was one of 15 cities awarded \$1 million dollars over 3 years to Roll out a Self-financing Impact Investment System that sustains tree planting and growing.



Women represent more than 40% of the community growers



88% of our community growers are youth

Maintaining high survival rate of our mangroves

It takes up to 5 years for a mangrove to grow. After the audit conducted in 2022, we discovered that out of 60,000 mangroves planted, there were 53,522 left, mainly due to illegal banking. We partnered with National Protected Area Authority (NPAA) to put in place a pillaring system demarcating the mangrove planting area: Inlet View, Dokoti, Cockle Bay, Mafembeh, and Thompson Bay all along the Aberdeen Creek. Thanks to that solution, one cannot cross the pillars and do illegal banking anymore.

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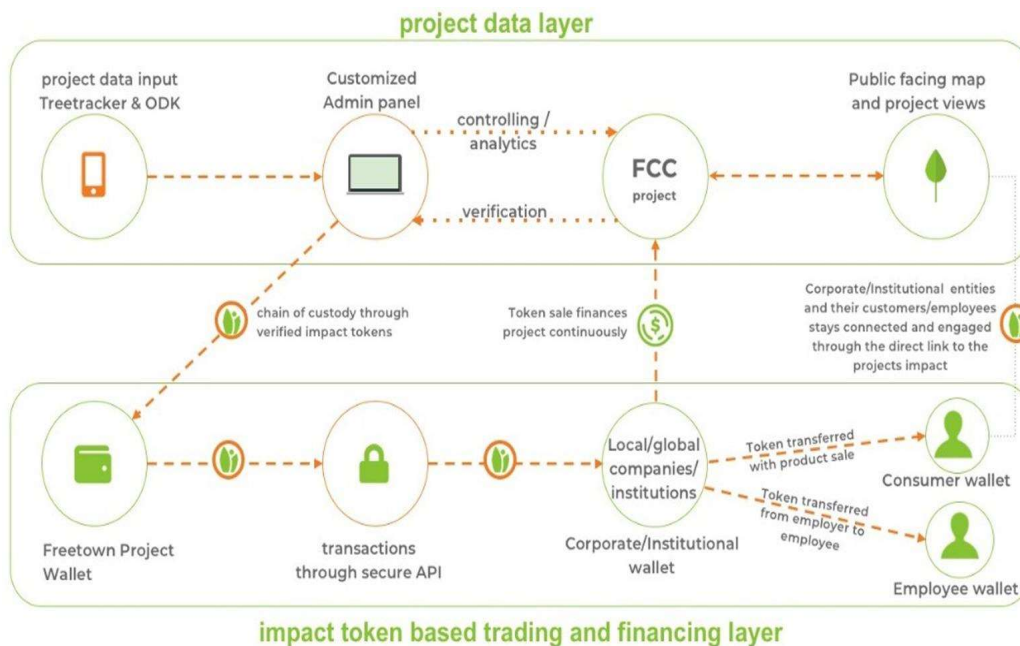
Stakeholders

'Tokenizing' trees to leverage investment from the private market and create a self-sustaining financing model

Currently, the tree tokens are designed to be sold to corporations and institutions through a corporate social responsibility (CSR) contract, targeting corporations and institutions that have made net zero pledges. Ultimately, Freetown intends to use carbon credits/offsets to sustainably fund urban community reforestation and ecological infrastructure projects co-designed with climate vulnerable communities to build equitable and sustainable pathways to climate adaptation (with mitigation co-benefits) to meet the 2030 and 2050 ecosystem-based adaption goals set-out in the Freetown Climate Action Plan.

We are using Bloomberg Philanthropies Global Mayors Challenge Award to build out Freetown The Treetown ecosystem and financing model. Our growing model is about self-financing to generate resources to build more ecological infrastructure that provides locally-led adaptation with climate mitigation co-benefits.

Tracking And Trading Impact



The pathway to self-financing through the carbon market

Thanks to the funding from NaCSA project and Bloomberg Philanthropies, we have secured funding to continue to pay community growers for maintaining and tracking trees in 2023. Through the Bloomberg support, critical to this is the structuring of the carbon project of around 657,000 trees planted so far, plus the remaining 350,000 which we aim to plant in 2023 to hit the one million-trees target. For the remaining planting, we have secured funding with CRS, NaCSA and Bloomberg.



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This base of planted trees will form a carbon market which will help us to sustain operations of Freetown The Treetown until 2030 and to structure high priority adaptation projects in most vulnerable communities.

After completing 1 million target, we are willing to set a new one of at least 5 millions of additional trees with specific focus on the blue carbon: water sources and marine ecosystem restoration (mangroves along the western coast of Freetown) in partnership with the Transforming Lives Consortium that can sustainably fund adaptation and upgrading interventions in vulnerable communities along the coast. This will represent a second phase of our carbon project.

In Freetown, we could not begin to trade anything until the first trees were planted, tracked and tokenized. Only in 2021, after 250,000 trees had been planted in 2020, could we trade the trees and begin reinvesting.



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Our community growing model: how it works?

#FreetownTheTreetown uses a community growing model, where reforestation is co-designed and co-managed by the community and the city government. Freetown residents are involved in decision-making on where trees are planted and receive payments to plant, grow and digitally track trees on a mobile TreeTracker app. Freetown partnered with a global technology firm, Greenstand, to develop a customized system to track tree planting and growth. The digital system creates a unique geotagged record for each tree planted. Growers revisit each tree periodically to water and maintain it, and to verify and document its survival, receiving micro-payments via mobile money every two months over the first three to five years of the tree's life. Growers' financial compensation is tied to continued tracking. Seedlings have also been procured from local nurseries to maximize the benefits to the local economy. The model has enabled 80% of the total resources leveraged for the project to be injected into local communities. The tree data entered by paid city residents is verified by #FreetownTheTreetown staff, creating a reliable and transparent dataset to facilitate payments and to leverage private investment.



STEP 1: TRACK YOUR TREES

Download the Freetown TreeTracker App for Android to start tracking Growers. Simply snap a photo of your first tree and upload your tree photo to the cloud. Be sure to press SYNC to upload trees.



STEP 2: VERIFICATION

Your tree photo is screened by the Freetown/Greenstand team. Once a tree is verified, eligible growers will be paid for their stewardship. Trees will be captured and displayed on a public web map to ensure tracking of tree survival over time.



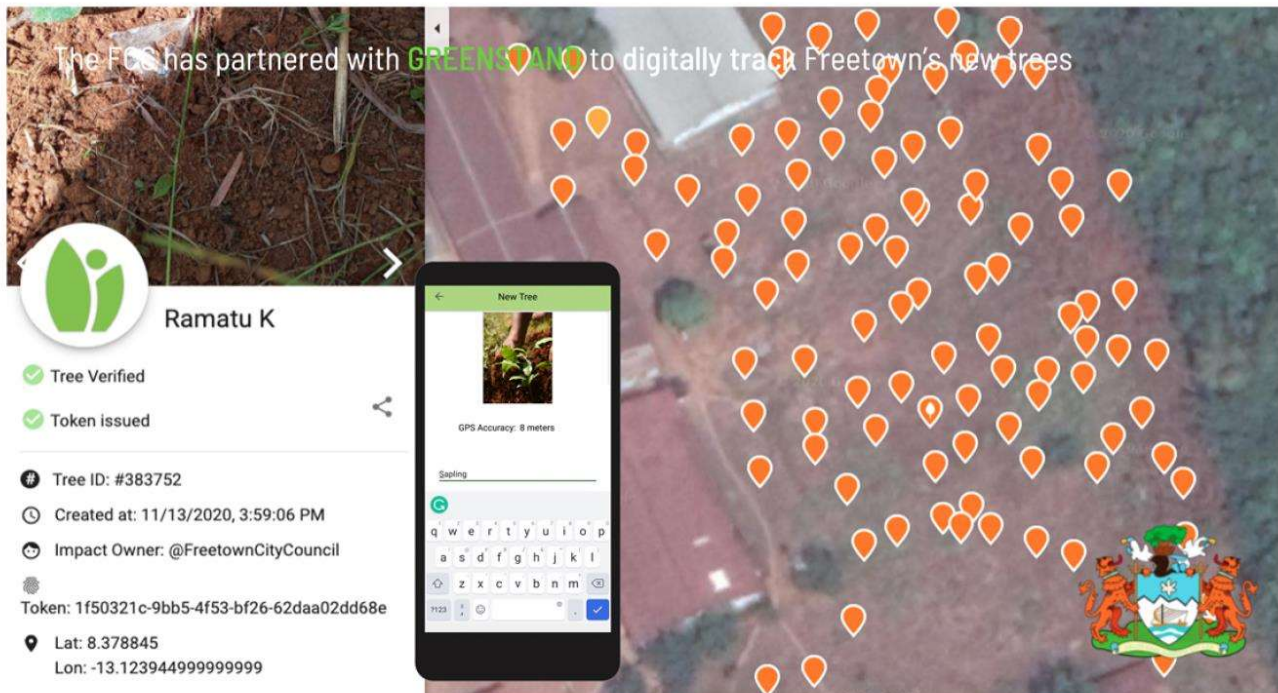
STEP 3: TOKEN CREATION

Verified tree captures and their attributes such as age, species and location are converted into a digital token in each FCC wallet (managed by a 3rd party fund manager).



STEP 4: TRADING

The #FreetownTheTreeTown Campaign will sell impact tokens to corporate and institutional investors and individuals through a retail option (linked to corporate customers). Your impact token can be traded through APIs. These tokens signify positive environmental impact much like carbon offset trading.



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C40 Cities Bloomberg Philanthropies Award 2022: Winning in the United to Innovate Category

In 2022, Freetown was honoured to be selected as a winner of the 2022 C40 Cities Bloomberg Philanthropies Awards under the *United to Innovative* category for our project Freetown The Tree Town. We're thrilled to be recognised as a leader in global efforts to tackle the climate crisis and we stay united in action with other bold and impactful cities paving the way for a greener & healthier future across five award categories.

The Awards winners were announced at the C40 Summit in Buenos Aires, the largest convening of city leaders to address the climate crisis, attended by more than 40 world-leading mayors and scientists, business leaders, campaigners, and youth leaders.

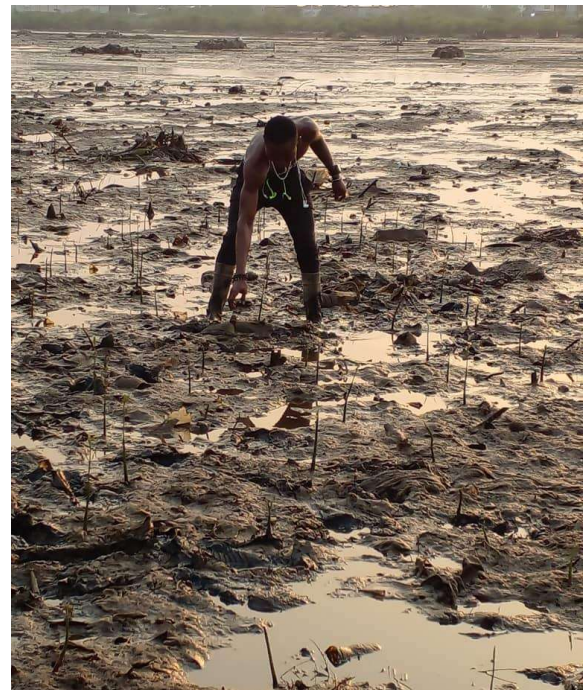
You can learn more about ours and the other 9 winning projects here: www.c40.org/awards-2022



Documenting lessons learnt: 2022 Workshop On Urban Forestry Strategy

To document lessons learnt from the project, all CBOs, our implementing stakeholders NPAA, EPA, MoE, representatives from the World Bank RUSL Project, civil society members and the media participated in the 2022 Urban Forestry Strategy Workshop. The workshop enabled fruitful discussions about the type of species planted, their survival rates, encountered challenges such as ongoing deforestation, land grabbing, and continuous banking at coastal wetlands.

One of the most significant lessons learnt concerned the importance of synchronising the timing of the project's implementation with simultaneous disbursement of funds to the engaged community growers. In 2020, when the campaign started, funds were disbursed late which impacted the survival rate of the trees. Community involvement and commitment are of an extreme importance for the success of this project; financial incentives for the communities and regular payments remain a key factor for maintaining a high survival rate of the planted trees.



Community grower planting mangroves

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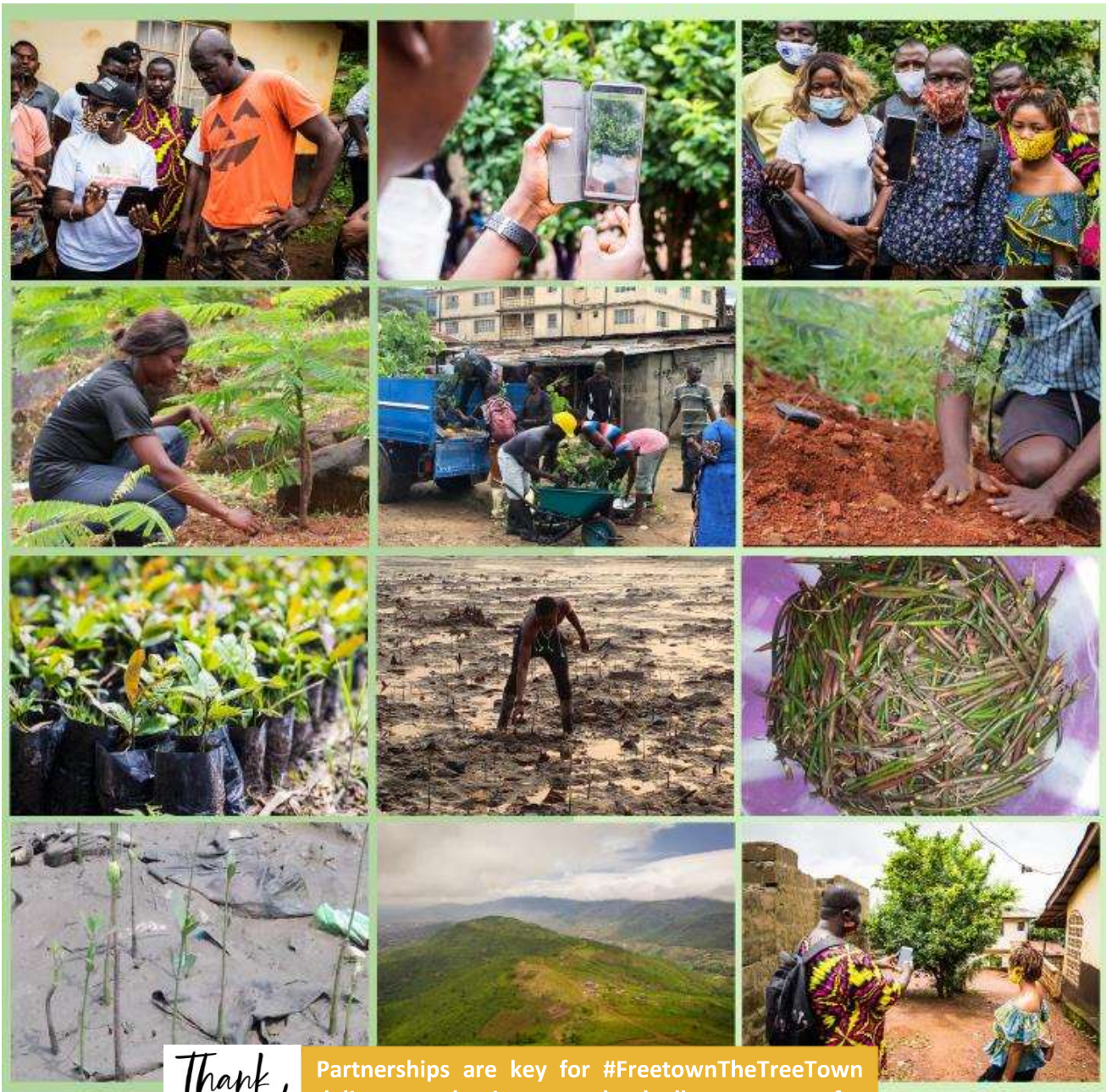
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657,000 trees have been planted, digitally tracked and 'tokenised', with approximately 750 hectares of urban land in and around Freetown restored.



Thank you!

Partnerships are key for #FreetownTheTreeTown delivery mechanism – we thank all our partners for their support in restoring Freetown's biodiversity.