SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL GARDENS
ANNUAL REPORT TO TRUSTEES 2024-2025

CHARITY DETAILS

Sustainable Global Gardens Registration number 1116243
Registered Address: 20, Kensington Gardens, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, NE25 8AR
Trustees: Michael Farmer, Mary Farmer, Barry Fildes, Rachel Gibson, Paul Keeley, Carole Keeley, John Knapton, Wanda Lockwood. Secretary Sarah King.
The Charity is managed by Paul Keeley who undertakes the fieldwork and report making. There are two formal meetings each year when the trustees agree to ongoing actions for the next half year. The trustees are a very stable group with new recruits being sought either when another retires or if a person expresses a big interest in helping with the work of the charity. Recruitment is always by mutual agreement of current trustees.

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

This is the nineteenth Annual Report to the Trustees of Sustainable Global Gardens [UK charity reg. no. 1116243]. The document has been prepared for the charity's AGM, which is to be held on Thursday 3rd July 2025 at 20 Kensington Gardens, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear, UK . The report covers the period of SGG's nineteenth financial year which ended on 31st March 2025.

The customary approach when writing this report is to look at the objectives of Sustainable Global Gardens as given in the original Business Plan, and then to comment on how far such objectives have been achieved. In the initial Business Plan the five-year target to be achieved by March 2011 was '*the annual raising of £100,000, which is to be transferred through at least 10 & preferably 20 small-scale sustainable projects to poor communities in the Developing World'* so progress could be judged against that long-term goal. As recent SGG Annual Reports have indicated that initial target has never been achieved in the way initially envisaged [i.e. a transfer of £100,000 from the North to project locations in the South]. However, our estimates concerning the annual increase in the aggregate value of trees planted or managed in SGG project sites is well above an annual increased value of £100,000. Of greater importance, SGG is now in informal partnerships with more than several hundred small-scale farmers who are using agroforestry and horticultural innovation to gradually progress out of poverty. Thus, we believe that SGG initial ambitions are being satisfactorily achieved.

Since 2019 SGG has tried to reduce our carbon footprint by limiting our field visits which require long distance air flights to an average of one visit per year. Although this means that this report may sometimes be based on less reliable data, this new approach places greater responsibility on and requires more initiative from our African partners. We regard this as progress because our ultimate goal is to be no longer needed in SGG project localities. Thus, we are pleased to report that SGG's changing role is no longer to initiate development projects but increasingly to respond appropriately to initiatives already undertaken by our local partners.

In this financial year the 'one long distance flight per year' principle was maintained with a 3-week field visit to Malawi in November-December 2024 but no visit to East Africa. Thus, this report is based largely on developments within the ZombTREEZ-Nanakhunda Transformation partnership, although progress in Kenya & Tanzania has not been entirely ignored. This shift in activities is regarded as good progress by SGG because, as has been mentioned on previous occasions, African rural development will only be sustainable when local communities initiate, implement and take full responsibility for their own progress. A reduction in SGG field time in Africa, while maintaining contact with community leaders & funding, is just one small step along that path towards African self-sufficiency.

Progress in Africa is one of the themes I wish to emphasise in this report, as in the last two Annual Reports. Previously, I have cited FOCUSSA, who are based near Matayos in Busia County, and St Denis Libolina School for the Physically Challenged in Bungoma County as showing exceptional progress.

Now I would like to illustrate the changes being made around Nankhunda village near Zomba, Malawi. This project is the first project to combine all of SGG's strategies for environmental & horticultural progress in small-scale farmer communities – which had already proved so successful in Kenya. These strategies are based on extensive agroforestry planting, improved soil management, with the introduction of kitchen gardens as a supplement to maize monocropping. Detailed reports for this early 'pilot project' stage can be found at www.sustainableglobalgardens.org.uk/projects/zomba-treez , but the following comments are based largely on actions undertaken during SGG's last visit in November 2024 i.e. in this financial year.

Much of SGG's monitoring visit to Nankhunda in November 2024 was taken up with two training courses on 'improved soil management'. These courses were based on the training manual produced by Tiyeni, a UK NGO which specialises in such work. See www.tiyeni.org for details. A summary of the Tiyeni deep-bed farming method is as follows:

1. dig to at least 30 cms depth ['double-dig'] & remove any large stones. This is hard physical work so best done in a team [*see above left*]. The value of this is that it allows much better root penetration, increased water infiltration & improved growth of crops;
2. the dug ground is divided into 1 metre wide level planting beds separated by 40 cms deep water retention trenches so that any rainwater is kept on the plot [*see above right*];
3. at the same time as 1& 2 a ditch & contour ridge is made so that surface runoff from higher ground does not wash over the beds. This upper ridge is planted with vetiver grass to strengthen it against soil erosion [*see below left*];
4. the planting beds should be enriched with compost-manure. This is best done a month before planting. This had not been done previously so well-rotted compost was added, especially as the rains had not yet arrived;
5. large stones in the soil are placed at the bottom of the plot as an additional soil conservation measure. The plot is left until the rains are underway, with a mulch protecting the soft soil;
6. each 1 metre wide bed can be planted with 2 lines of maize separated by an interplanted leguminous crop [e.g. soyabeans];
7. within & around the plot agroforestry trees can be planted to increase & diversify food production on the plot as well as giving additional protection against soil erosion.

Maize in this locality usually grows to about shoulder height. These trainee farmers from the Mbedza group [*see below right*] are proud to show their maize, grown where the above method has been used, so much taller than normal. They are anticipating a good harvest.

The real test concerning the value of this soil improvement training is to compare harvest yields on the same plot before and after training. Unfortunately we have at the time of writing only 7 farmers where we can make this comparison. This is a very small sample size which we hope to increase, but it is worth noting that for those 7 farmers there was an average 48% increase in harvest yield on plots where deep-bed farming had been adopted. Since this last sentence was written SGG has received further results from the 20 farmers in Nankhunda Transformation trained in November. The figures we now have must be considered only as 'best guess estimates'. However, the benefits of using the deep-bed farming method are striking. The 20 trainees claim that their aggregate maize harvest before the improved soil management training was 635 kgs, but the total harvest on the same plots this year was 940 kgs. This is an average 48% increase in harvest yield. Furthermore, there is the additional advantage of crops [e.g. soya beans, vegetables etc] grown between the rows of maize. Such an increase corresponds well with claims made on the Tiyeni website. Thus, SGG is anticipating the request to invest more time on such training in the future.

Another SGG action undertaken last November was inspection of the second demonstration kitchen garden, which was established by Nsanama Women's Group the previous February.

This plot was a bare patch of steep, rocky ground with signs of soil erosion in January 2024. By November the Nsanama kitchen garden *[see both photos above]* was flourishing. SGG recorded 10 bananas, 1 pawpaw and 5 Tephrosia as well as one mango, one avocado and one citrus – 3 fruits which were planted long before the garden was established. The raised beds contained more than 50 tomatoes, rape, 5 gourds and maize. There was also a tree nursery with more than 2,000 seedlings to distribute to members. There are two other crops being introduced here. One is vetiver grass which is being used to reduce soil erosion: the other is Tephrosia vogelii which will be used as a natural pesticide.

One of the best signs of progress was that small individual gardens were starting to appear. Here *[see below left]* where there was year round water & abundant goat manure there are 10 tomato plants, 15 gourds & 80 strawberry plants. Gardens without these two advantages *[see below right]* have to wait until the rains arrive.

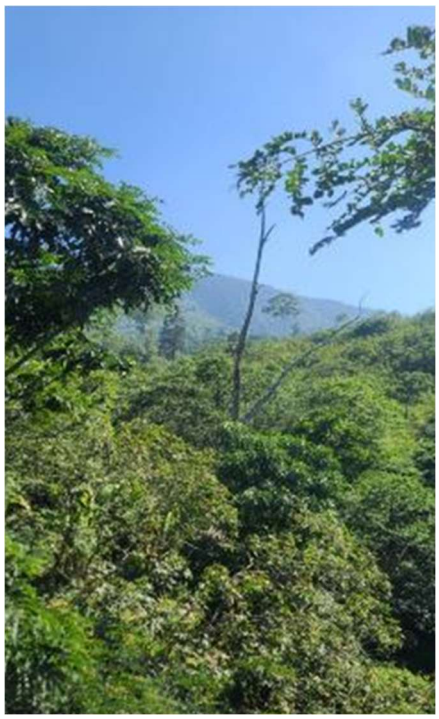
Progress is also being made with small vegetable gardens outside the two demonstration plots. There was insufficient time for a full monitoring here, but a simple survey of 16 farmers' gardens was made in November. Those included in this sample had 28 double-dug raised beds, each of which were producing at least three out of the 14 vegetable types found. By far the most popular vegetable was tomato. This was mainly for home consumption, but some farmers are now producing at sufficient scale for commercial sales. The survey suggested that most farmers were happy with their harvest of vegetables, although some planted vegetables were unsuccessful. This seems to be related to the problem of regular water supply, so attention to this issue will need to be paid if horticulture is to expand here in the future.

The third action during the November monitoring visit concerned agroforestry trees. The current plan is to implement a tree-planting programme over the next few years. This will include the planting of more than 200,000 agroforestry species on the numerous small-scale farms around Nankhunda & Nsanama villages, so that the widespread & evident soil erosion is reduced and farmland protected from environmental degradation. In order to be able to estimate with some precision how many trees have been planted the Nankhunda Transformation team are conducting a baseline survey of what trees are already growing before the agroforestry work gets underway.

There are many households like this in Nankhunda village *[see above left]*. Immediately around the home there is usually a variety of trees, especially fruits. The surrounding maize fields though are often treeless & vulnerable to soil erosion. In this extended family of 6 households 62 avocados & 145 mangos were counted *[see above right],* sometimes in small woodlots but often along the edges of fields. This farm is an excellent example of how agriculture & tree-planting can be combined. The large areas of bare fields *[see below left]* are far more common. On most fields such as this there is ample evidence of soil erosion, so good harvest yields are increasingly difficult to get. This small rivulet is dry for most of the year, but one thunderstorm produces surface runoff and a stream red-brown in colour *[see below right]*. This shows that local farmers are regularly losing two of their most precious natural resources i.e. water and topsoil.

The baseline survey of trees already growing in the project location is not yet complete. However, there are now provisional figures for 10 of the 16 conservation groups within the Nankhunda Transformation – ZombaTREEZ partnership. During the January 2024 monitoring visit [i.e. in the previous financial year] 6 groups who had maintained their conservation area had trees counted on the farms of members. The total for trees counted at this time was 14,187 with total payments to members being MKw 5,018,600/-. A further 2,891 were counted for a 7th group, but they were not paid until November 2024 because they had not completed the maintenance of their conservation area. During the November 2024 visit the membership of a further 3 conservation groups had their on-farm trees counted. For these groups a total of 8,295 trees were recorded.

In the last Annual Report it was recorded that by March 2024 some 19,269 trees had been counted. The figure has now reached an estimated 27,564, with trees for several new groups still to be counted. With this in mind it is anticipated that the baseline estimate of trees growing on Nankhunda Transformation members farms is somewhere between 40, to 50,000 agroforestry trees. The "Community Development Through Environmental Improvement" project, which we hope to start before the end of 2025, plans to add at least a further 200,000 agroforestry trees to this already significant stock. The last Annual Report also mentioned a further 11,853 trees & shrubs found in some of the 15 conservation areas. There was simply insufficient time during the November 2024 visit for continue this particular action. This last figure will be upgraded in the next field visit.



These photos show natural regeneration of forest cover. The location is a conservation area maintained by Magube choir, one of the 15 groups coordinated by ZombaTREEZ One photo shows the site in 2019 *[see far left]*. The next *[see near left]*is the same site in 2023. This is a startling transformation of tree cover. However, note a dead eucalyptus tree in the middle of both photos which indicate that it is the same site. Note the bare land in the foreground of the first photo. Below*[see two photos on next page]* is the same ground in November 2024

At this point I wish to acknowledge the importance of our partners ZombaTREEZ. They have kindly allowed our use of the first two of the above photos to demonstrate the effectiveness of natural regeneration as a mechanism for both rapid tropical forest restoration and worthwhile seasonal employment for large numbers of villagers in need of income during the hunger months. Furthermore, ZombaTREEZ are the initiators of this forest restoration work, which they started several years ago. Their work deserves wider attention and financial support as they have implemented a strategy where nature is at work, the local environment restored, and the local community benefit. Thank you ZombaTREEZ! See www.zombatreez.com. See an Appendix for a detailed account of this project.

What this establishes is that there is far more real progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals in many parts of rural Africa than is generally appreciated in Europe. Furthermore, this small local example in Malawi demonstrates that when diverse individuals & groups work in partnership much can be achieved for the benefit of hundreds of people, who are currently languishing in poverty. What is required for African development is a continuation of North generosity, a mixture of expertise from both the North and the South, and a willingness among African communities to work for their own benefit.

What about progress in fundraising to support the above type of development? With less time scheduled for fieldwork in recent years, SGG has managed to maintain an adequate income by greater emphasis on fundraising while at home. The total UK income for this 2024-2025 financial year was £34,283.20p, which compares satisfactorily with the 2023-24 income of £32,581.40p. Despite periodic concerns about SGG's financial security, we continue to have sufficient capital to carry out our planned activities. As has been mentioned in previous reports, members of the 11 OVC groups in Busia are usually eager to table-bank. Their local contributions this financial year were a lower than usual, but their deposits provided an additional £2,329. This increases SGG total income to £36,612, which is very similar to last year's figure of £36.861. The bank balance on 31/3/2025 was £13,446.84p. This is similar to the balance at the start of this financial year and is much higher than we would want. However, several thousand of this is funds raised for our new "Community Development Through Environmental Improvement" project in Malawi, which we plan to implement soon.

CURRENT PROJECTS

The major action for this financial year was the fundraising for the Malawi project already mentioned. The estimated budget for this was set at $64,700, so the acquisition of sufficient pledges to cover this has been quite an effort. By the end of the financial year we had sufficient reserved funding to cover this, so we await approval of this project by The Rotary Foundation, whom we hope will be a major sponsor for this action.

The following are other projects where SGG has invested support in this financial year.

- **Project 1, improved water-supply**
  SGG has funded only one small water project this year. This was the provision of a water tank for the family of Macbeth Odero who is SGG's coordinator in Busia. See next page for details of this simple project. The evidence from this one scheme suggests that water-harvesting from a tin roof can be a worthwhile investment. Certainly previous SGG schemes, such as the permaculture gardens at St Denis Libolina School for the Physically Challenged, demonstrate the critical importance of a reliable water supply to extend the growing of crops into the dry season. We have noted that the productivity of kitchen gardens in both Malawi and East Africa is largely controlled by water, so we shall pay more attention to water-harvesting in the coming years.

In 2022 Macbeth sought advice from SGG about how to increase her income to cover mounting educational & medical costs. Our advice was to start her own kitchen garden, which she shares with her mother-in-law. A report in 2023 indicated that the value of vegetables from the garden was an estimated Ksh11,200/- [about £65]. However, this is a locality with limited & unreliable rain. Macbeth had to spend time or precious money bringing water from a distant source. By April 2024 she had saved sufficient funds to table-bank with SGG and install a water-harvesting system for a total cost of Ksh35,000/- [about £200]. In January their kitchen garden report indicated that they had harvested cowpeas, black nightshade, and spider plant with an estimated value of Ksh.15,900/-. This suggests the added value of the tank was Ksh 4,600/- [£28] for this year. The final cost to SGG for this investment was a mere £30.

- **Project 2, support for 500 orphans & vulnerable children [OVCs] in Busia.**
  SGG continues to support approximately 500 OVCs with the weekly provision of a nutritious meal. We regard this basic "food aid" programme as a funding priority as we continue to see improvements in the well-being of these children.

The total cost of this feeding programme for 500 orphans/vulnerable children is now £7,920 per year with SGG paying £1.20p/month for each orphan or vulnerable child. This is sufficient to provide a communal meal once a week. Here *[see left]* is such a meal at Nyusa Farmers. The children are holding aloft their bananas, as the guardians are aware that SGG wishes to increase fruit consumption by these children.

We are constantly concerned about the possibility of failing to reach this budget target, but once again we have managed to secure sufficient funds for what the SGG Directors regard as a priority project. For this budget to have been reached SGG would like to thank various Trusts, including the Lady Leech Fund, the Community of the Presentation, Paradigm Norton, the Kent family, Belacqua Trust, Steni Trust, & Shelton Trust who are all funding not just the feeding programme but all four components of this OVC project for their generous contributions and also SGG individual supporters of this project. A sincere thanks on behalf of our African friends!

- **Project 4 –table-banking.**

  This activity usually takes place once a year during SGG's monitoring visit. As no visit was planned for 2025, it looked likely that this very popular income-generation scheme would be absent during this financial year. Matters changed during SGG's January meeting of Directors when it was agreed that this was a crucial poverty alleviation action. I would like therefore to thank those Directors who dug into their pockets so that this programme could continue.

  Funds for this activity were transferred on 31st March i.e. the last day of the financial year, but the table-banking was done a few days later, so the main report for this activity will be part of the next Annual Report. It is sufficient to mention here that the local contribution was an estimated £2,329 while SGG's donation to the OVC guardians was £974.

- **Project 11 Tree Planting & Conservation in Africa.**

  In terms of activity, participating farmers and spread of locations this is by far the biggest of SGG's current projects. There are now several hundred small-scale farmers planting, growing or caring for trees, so it is no longer possible for SGG to count & confirm tree numbers at every location. We are now developing a new strategy which will enable us to make reasonable estimates of growing trees.

  It is Tanzania where SGG has least time to make monitoring visits, but where all projects involve tree-planting. There are two main strategies to deal with this situation. In Same District we have four friends whom SGG has known for several years. They propose planting schemes to SGG, and we offer what funding we have. They then produce a report with tree counts undertaken by an independent monitor paid by SGG, if we are unable to confirm tree counts. Around Kilimanjaro we employ a young Tanzanian to confirm tree counts at various locations and to write reports, which we can later check when we are next in Tanzania.

At the end of the previous financial year, SGG was very impressed with the tree-planting work done by our friends in Same district, so they were awarded a £500 grant and asked to do the best they could manage. Their report indicated that they had distributed 6,656 seedlings at 5 different locations. At Ndolwa in the Pare Mountains seedlings were given to the local school & farmers in the village *[see above left]*. Many of the seedlings were planted in schools located in Same town, such as Mother Kelvin Secondary School *[see above right]*. The plains around Same are notorious for being hot & dry with plenty of desertification, but there is now a campaign to 'make Same green'. Many of the locations with adequate tree cover in Same are enclosed school grounds, but our friends have also attempted planting in public spaces such as Same bus station *[see below left]*. Monitoring of tree cover is also undertaken around Kilimanjaro. The last large count was done in the last financial year, when 4,138 trees were recorded on Kilimo Bora farms. Since then particular attention has been paid to the preservation of trees suitable for carbon capture *[see below right]*. SGG proposes to pay £1 for such indigenous trees which are preserved for 5 years, with funding raised by those who wish to reduce their carbon footprint. The payment for the equivalent of at least 1 ton of CO2e per year is £10.

Although very little tree counting was done in both Kenya and Tanzania, SGG is confident that tree projects are increasingly widespread in East Africa. Furthermore, they are not only one of the best strategies for poverty & hunger eradication, but they are also crucial for climate change mitigation. We anticipate that in the 2023 to 2028 period SGG will be able to confirm agroforestry planting or growth through natural regeneration of more than 250, 000 trees in either Malawi or East Africa. Furthermore, we believe that the many farmers who participate in such work should be satisfactorily paid for their efforts and "eco-services". Thus, SGG will need to undertake considerable fundraising in the near future.

- **Project 15 - the promotion of organic gardening & permaculture.**
  The main horticultural actions which can be confirmed by field visits took place in Malawi. These, however, have been reported earlier in this report. Moreover, considerable progress continues in Busia. Two reports have been sent by SGG's Busia coordinator Macbeth Odero which cover the period of this financial year. Details are available as an Appendix. In summary, it can be pointed out that the total cost for two periods of vegetable production was £1,988, while the estimated value of the harvest for all 12 groups was £4,287. We would particularly like to thank the Catriona Hargreaves Charitable Trust for supporting this horticutural development.

Siguli Orphans Centre need a lot of vegetables as there are more than 60 children to feed each day. They reported an excellent harvest *[see above left]* of sukumawiki, cowpeas, amaranth, pumpkin leaves & pig-weed for the August 24-March 2025 period with an estimated value of Ksh. 59,175/- [about £350]. They have the advantage of a large garden, but much more important a nearby source of water for irrigation during the dry season *[see above left]*.

FUTURE PROSPECTS & RELATED ISSUES

If one examines the full portfolio of projects described in recent Annual Reports, it is clear that SGG is now paying more attention to the implementation of project activities in Zomba District, Malawi. This is entirely justified by the fact that Malawi is one of the economically poorest countries in the world, and it has been SGG's policy to give priority to the poor whenever this is practicable. Most of the countries below Malawi in HDI rankings are in a state of war, political instability, or environmental collapse, all of which make project implementation very difficult with the limited resources available to SGG. As the latest Human Development Index data ranks Malawi as 172th out of 193 states in the world, whereas Kenya ranks 146th, it is reasonable to increase SGG's efforts in Malawi as we encourage our partners in West Kenya to become more self-sufficient.
Those who wish to know more details of the SGG-ZombaTreez project are invited to read the Appendix: Final Report on SGG-ZombaTreezProject[17.12.24] The activities mentioned there will all be included, we expect, in a future Rotary project where SGG is a key partner.

If there is a second trend of growing importance in SGG's project portfolio it would be climate change mitigation by funding African farmers to keep already mature trees for carbon capture. SGG is painfully aware that all our development efforts over the last 18 years could be in vain if climate change is not limited. It should be noted that in 2024 the annual global mean temperature was the highest on record. Furthermore, it was the first time that the global mean temperature exceeded the pre-industrial temperature by more than 1.5C. Previously we have noted African concern about climate problems, and now we have started addressing this issue in practical terms. We also have a list of land owners with at

least 50 trees suitable for carbon capture. What we lack is sufficient funding support to encourage those with mature trees to preserve them for climate change mitigation. SGG will certainly encourage more tree-planting, forest restoration and carbon capture in the next few years, but we shall also encourage those in the Economically Developed World to reflect more fully on how they can reduce their carbon footprint.

There remain many challenges for SGG to face in the coming years, but our prime message here is that there are many signs of progress towards our fundamental aim of global poverty & hunger eradication. Within such a context, I wish to thank all of you, our supporters, for whatever contribution you have been able to make to our many successes this year. All supporters of Sustainable Global Gardens have a vital part to play in the development and progress of the charity, so I look forward to working with you in the coming year on Sustainable Development Goals No 1 and 2, the eradication of extreme global poverty and hunger, and SDG No 13, which is climate action. My best wishes to all of you.

Paul Keeley
SGG Managing Director
16th June 2025