

Newsletter

DECEMBER 2017

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Seasonal greetings to all SGG partners, supporters and friends wherever you may be. Carole and I hope that all of you have a relaxing and refreshing Christmas period with your families, and that next year brings progress and prosperity to all our project partners.

In 2017 agroforestry projects have continued to dominate SGG activities, much as they did in the previous three years. However, the aims and location of those agroforestry schemes have changed significantly during this year. Previously, most OPTIONS project work involved outreach activities in Kenya, but early this year such outreach shifted to Tanzania and Malawi. Although the OPTIONS project formally finished in

June, we hope to continue with similar outreach training whenever and wherever the opportunity arises. The Treedom project in Busia County, West Kenya has been our other major tree-planting project since 2014, but this year that project has progressed rather slowly. The farmer participants in Busia have already planted 32,446 trees which are registered with Treedom, and they now await payment for their work. This project had a planting target of 25,000 in 2014 when the project started, so by now those farmers have several thousand trees above that initial target. This is surely good evidence of a strong interest in tree-planting among Kenyan farmers.



SGG knows hundreds of farmers in Busia County who wish to plant trees. Those farmers have different intentions and choose a variety of trees to suit their particular situation. Rehema Kazi [see left] has a small wood where she encourages the growth of indigenous species. SGG has counted more than 400 *Markhamia lutea* trees growing in this relatively small plot. Rehema gains an income from sales of wood and honey, and benefits from a regular supply of local fruit e.g. the jackfruit in the foreground. The shamba [main photo] of Mohamed Wandera in Matayos illustrates a more conventional approach to agroforestry. Here he has planted *Grevillea robusta* between rows of sweet potatoes. The great advantage of *Grevillea* is that their roots grow downwards rather than sideways, so they do not hinder the growth of crops planted nearby. Within Mohamed's small farm there are 86 fruit trees planted, including mangos, avocados, pawpaw and citrus fruits.



Trees planted at Kisamgara School

Most OPTIONS and Treadm planting since 2014 has been in Kenya, but since July the main focus for agroforestry has shifted to North East Tanzania. The reason for this change is that the current President of Rotary International has requested that all rotarians, anywhere in the world, plant at least one tree. As there are more than one million rotarians scattered around the world, this could be a significant planting of trees. Since July Carole and I have visited 16 Rotary clubs to give advice on tree-

planting and to show the several benefits of planting in tropical locations. A consequence of this is that we have received so far a total of £4,530 for tree-planting in East Africa. Several of these donations are for fruits, so we are not quite sure how many trees we shall be able to plant with such funds, but we anticipate the final figure being approximately 20,000 new trees. Furthermore, we still have several clubs to visit in the New Year, and donations continue to arrive in the post.

These pictures illustrate three different types of Rotary club tree-planting projects in Tanzania. A popular project is to improve the school environment by tree-planting on school grounds, thereby promoting environmental education while also engaging the youth of Tanzania. Here Mwanga Rotary [see main picture] are improving the grounds of Kisamgara School, where more than 3,000 young trees have been planted. By contrast Machame Rotary have established a tree nursery with more than 1500 avocado seedlings [see above right]. Rotarian Dr Kweyu who owns this plot hopes to improve the general health of the community

by encouraging greater local consumption of avocados. Machame Rotary are also promoting the growing of *Moringa oleifera*, again for health purposes. Mwika Rotary have planted many trees close to local streams to try and regenerate water supplies. Here [see right] the man in the foreground is standing next to two young *Acrocarpus fraxinifolius*. The large tree in the background is a remnant of the original riverine forest. Local farmers believe trees help secure water supplies, and it was pointed out to me that the stream above this tree was dry, but from the tree roots a new spring emerged.



A meal for orphans at Mukwano



There has been much progress with the OVCs. Photographs show that there is a marked improvement in their general condition over the several years of SGG support. However, there is still much to be done. In Mama Gladys' Children's Home [see right] there are now 45 children staying in the 5 bedrooms – which explains why she is having a new boys dormitory built and why SGG is providing another bunk bed for her. Thank you to everybody who has helped Mama Gladys provide assistance for these very underprivileged children.



50 OVCs meet for a weekly meal provided by Mukwano Self Help group [see main picture]. Upendo women celebrate receiving table-banking funds which will allow each member to buy a small goat [see above].

Although SGG is gaining a reputation for agroforestry work, we are still very active in providing support for approximately 400 orphans &/or vulnerable children [OVCs] around Busia. This work includes supporting the 9 women's groups who provide a weekly meal for the OVCs. However, we wish to promote more sustainable ways of supporting both the home-based orphans and their guardians. For example, we offer table-banking

support to the OVC groups, so that OVC guardians can participate in income generating activities. During this current Rotary year Newcastle-Gosforth Rotary Club have donated funding so that each of these OVCs can plant 1 banana plant & 4 other trees in the shamba of the household where they live. The connection between orphans and tree-planting may not be immediately obvious to readers, but many farmers in Kenya use trees as

reserve "banks" – where trees can be sold if there is a sudden need for cash to pay for schooling or medical expenses. We have been accepting "trees for school fees" as a legitimate practice for several years now. The additional step which farmers need to remember is that "if you cut one tree, plant two" – and this simple message is becoming more widely accepted.

Matayos demonstration plot

One of the most successful activities of 2018 concerns the Demonstration Plot in Matayos. This project to show new horticultural techniques and products to the local community was progressing very slowly until last year when FOCUSA, Khuyala Self Help Group and Lonely Orphans, 3 OVC groups located close to Matayos, decided to take over the plot and use it to provide fruit & vegetables to improve the nutrition of the OVCs under their care and also to generate income. Using a combination of innovations [e.g. double-dug raised beds, agroforestry, permaculture methods of water conservation, increased composting] with a focus on indigenous vegetable production and fruits, these farmers now have one of the most productive gardens in the locality.

There are now several new vegetables growing in the demonstration plot. Here [see above right] Phaustine Ogolla shows a local variety of onion where the bulb stays in the ground but the leaves are harvested. Other new crops include yams, gourds, and bambarra nuts. Phaustine's concern is to improve child nutrition within his community and also to promote permaculture practices. Mohamed Wandera has established an orchard in the lower part of the demonstration plot. The main fruits here [see below right] were bananas and a few pawpaw, but since this photo was taken in April he has planted about 15 lemons and more than 20 pawpaw.



Thank you for your support

All this activity has meant that Carole and I have had a full, busy, challenging year – but a very rewarding one. But as the year comes to a close, we are also aware that our African projects are largely dependent on the funds and resources which you donate to SGG and which we can then transfer to our less prosperous partners. May I thank you for all the support you have given to Sustainable Global Gardens this year, and may I wish you all the peace of Christmas and prosperity in the coming year. Thank you. *Paul Keeley*