

Newsletter

JANUARY 2021

Seasonal greetings to all SGG partners, supporters and friends wherever you may be.

It has been quite a year for us. The first formal meeting of Sustainable Global Gardens [SGG] took place in late December 2005, and 2020 is the first year since 2006 when I have not made a field visit to East Africa. Thus, I have no photographs which have been taken in the last 12 months and which normally take up much of the newsletter space. Under these circumstances what I have decided to do is provide illustrations of where good progress has been made by comparing photos taken before 2012 with some from the same project but taken in the last 3 years. I have also used some past photos to highlight what I now see as critical points in the development of SGG. You will have seen some of these photos before. Sorry, but this is the best I can do.

At this point in the newsletter let me remind everyone that the fundamental purpose of SGG is to make a contribution to UN Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2 i.e. to work towards global poverty & hunger eradication. With that great purpose in mind, I believe we have made considerable progress over the last 15 years – and when I say ‘we’ I do not mean just those working directly for SGG but all our supporters and partners in Africa who are all helping to ‘Make Poverty History’.



I first visited Siritanyi, near Nambale Kenya in September 2008 when many children came hoping for a good meal [see above left]. There were many signs of poverty then e.g. undersized children with ragged uniforms, fungal infections etc. A decade later these OVCs are not only better clothed but also bright-eyed and benefitting from secondary schooling [see top right]. How have Siritanyi women managed to achieve this progress? Apart from joining the SGG feeding programme, they were very active in income-

generation, which started with a simple poultry project [see lower right]. They have been so successful, with most of these women now engaged in small commercial enterprises, that I have needed to limit their table-banking deposit to Ksh 50,000/- [about £350]. The group have also been active with tree-planting. They have reported that they have planted 662 young trees on 10 small farms since April 2019. Good progress, Siritanyi!

Table banking



Despite general progress over the last 12 years there have been plenty of problems during this period. Some of the original orphans & vulnerable children [OVCs] groups failed to organise themselves properly and have fallen by the wayside. Funding has been an almost constant concern because trying to provide a good meal once a week on a budget of £1/child/month when we cater for an estimated 400 OVCs and also

maintain an orphanage for another 50 disadvantaged children means that SGG's annual cost for this programme is more than £6,000. We have balanced this problem of paying for OVC meals, 'food aid', by establishing an income-generation project for OVC guardians – a programme which our partners usually call 'table-banking'.

This photo [see above] shows a crucial point in SGG's development in September 2009 as well as a great personal memory for myself. The OVC food aid project started earlier was a wanted help but it still left many problems, especially costs of schooling the OVCs. In those early years I was constantly besieged by people begging for 'school fees'. In September 2009 SGG offered to match any funds up to Ksh 5,000/- for community groups with an income-generation project. On the deadline day for submission of projects I was besieged by more

than 30 community groups anxious to join the table-banking scheme. Some groups needed to wait 3 hours simply to get into the small, packed room so that they could present their project for SGG approval. It was a very memorable 11 hour meeting! How has tabling banking changed over the last decade? The location of table-banking meetings has certainly not improved. Here [see bottom left] is Upendo group who meet in a member's home while the OVCs are fed outside. Many members of Upendo are ageing widows for whom cultivation is difficult, so their

income generation is often poultry/ goat/pig-keeping. Their profits are normally used to pay school fees for their OVCs. Mukwano group [see bottom right] regularly meet under a tree where income generation is planned & funds allocated to members. Transparency is important. The main difference between 2009 and now is the amount of money involved. In 2009 the maximum a group could invest was Ksh5,000/- but now SGG accepts deposits of Ksh50,000/- with groups typically making at least 30% on their investment.



One great benefit of table-banking is that it decisively shifted our partners out of a sense of dependency into a perception of themselves as enterprise groups wishing to use their own initiative & energy for their own benefit.

Thus, there has been some good signs of increasing local enterprise in recent years. One example would be the new kitchen gardens being established [with the help of some table-banking funds] by the OVC groups.

More local initiative



By 2018 Judith Khamaya & Fred Wako of Lonely Orphans [see above left] had cultivated a plot to grow vegetables to improve nutrition for the OVCs at Lonely Orphans Centre, Matayos. In late 2019 the CIF group started a kitchen garden to grow amaranth for the weekly OVCs meal and also kales & spinach for income

generation. Although the plot [see above right] was hardly developed by the time of the SGG field visit in October, members of CIF managed to sell Ksh 47,000/- [approx. £350] worth of vegetables by the following June. The estimated value of the amaranth consumed by the OVCs was Ksh 4,200/- .

Similarly Mukwano group reported production worth an estimated Ksh 38,360/- [approx. £270], while Upendo Women's Group produced a harvest of Ksh37,250/- As these 3 groups will have had a 3rd harvest ready by October-November 2020 to add to their income, this is excellent progress towards better nutrition in the locality.

By far the best example of increasing local initiative is SGG's tree-planting project. Among SGG's farmer contacts in Busia very few were planting trees in 2008. However, a major shift in attitudes occurred after 2014 when SGG was contracted to plant 25,000 trees. At this point many farmers we know started to plant on their own initiative and then ask SGG to record & remunerate them for their efforts. This system of paying farmers after they have purchased & planted trees on their own now accounts for most of SGG's tree-planting budget. During the November 2019 field visit I recorded 17,127 trees planted in Kenya since

April 2019 by SGG farmer contacts with a further 9,337 recorded for Tanzania. By November 2020 SGG's coordinators for 10 Busia farmer groups reported a total of 15,343 trees planted since April 2019 by a total of 142 farmers - with several farmer groups still to be counted. Most of this planting has been undertaken with SGG's approval and knowledge, but at the individual farmers initiative. Much of SGG's current tree-planting budget will be used to reward farmers for these initiatives when we next have an opportunity to make a field visit there. The most exciting possibilities for future SGG activity are located in

Tanzania. At present a cluster of Tanzanian Rotary clubs who were partners with SGG during 2017-2018 are coming together to apply for a Rotary Foundation global grant project with a planting target of up to 100,000 additional trees on the slopes of Kilimanjaro. The basic aims of that project are planting avocado trees on farms for increased commercial production, increased tree cover for bee forage & increased commercial honey, and restoration of forests & indigenous species for carbon capture. SGG will not 'own' or implement this project, but we have been at the heart of its preparation.

Mamba Rotary Club will play a crucial role in any Kilimanjaro tree project. Here [see below left] are some of their members showing trees which they have helped plant. In November SGG counted 149 trees, including

92 avocados, planted in the school grounds in 2019. By no means all of SGG schemes in Tanzania are found on Kilimanjaro. Here [see below right] are new Acrocarpus/'Dakika tatu' trees planted on a farm on the lower

slopes of Mt Meru. This planting has been done by Usa River Mali Hai Youth Group who plant thousands of trees each year, and then invite SGG for a glorious day of tree-counting and payment.



So my New Year message is to announce the growing initiative of our African partners and the considerable progress made by SGG since 2005. Is it possible to illustrate that progress in a simple way? To do that I have chosen to return once again to Gladys Ochieng of Mundika

in Busia. The photo above right was taken in September 2008 when I first met Gladys. Note the fence in front of her and the field of poor maize behind. The photo above left was taken a decade later with Gladys standing only a few feet from her previous position. She now has a

fence around her compound with more than 100 mature Grevillea robusta trees. Outside that fence there is now a mango & banana orchard providing food for her 50 children and beyond that a woodlot of an estimated 600 trees - as well as the maize. Great progress, indeed!

Thank you for your support

There has certainly been progress in the fields where we work but I am asking you, on behalf of our partners in Africa, to continue whatever support you have been able to give. Thanks for that support in what has been a very strange year. Carole and I wish you good tidings and a peaceful Christmas festival, and we look forward with hope to the coming year. Let us make it special in a very positive way.

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