

# SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL GARDENS

*Specialising in small-scale horticultural, environmental and social projects in support of UN Sustainable Development Goals 1 & 2, the eradication of global poverty & hunger, and also Goal 13, action against climate change.*

Christmas and New Year greetings to all supporters and partners of Sustainable Global Gardens. We have had an excellent year in terms of progress in Africa, but we are also concerned to hear that Mick Farmer, who has been one of the most active members of the SGG Team, continues to be seriously ill. Mick was responsible for the overall design of our newsletters and giving them a 'professional' look. Unfortunately, I cannot do the same, so this December's messages will be delivered in rather plainer tones. We wish Mick a complete recovery from his current medical difficulties and look forward to seeing him, cheery as ever, behind his desk with a mug of hot drink close at hand.

If we look back over the year, two new developments stand out as sure signs of progress. One of these is the community development project now underway around Nankhunda village, near Zomba Malawi. This project started at the end of 2021 with a Tiyeni training course designed to encourage farmers to till their fields more deeply in order to allow much easier root penetration by crops and greater infiltration of rainwater. This simple technique is sufficient to greatly increase harvest yields and provide better food security in one of the poorest countries in the world. The main developments around Nankhunda, however, were started in January 2023 when a group of local farmers were trained to establish kitchen gardens with double-dug raised beds and accompanied by agroforestry planting.



Perhaps the reason I chose this photo is that it demonstrates that I do undertake some physical work during field visits to Africa. The photo shows, in fact, only the first days work in the establishment of a village demonstration plot. One week later there were 10 raised beds, planted with a variety of vegetables [tomatoes, onions, greens etc]. A few days after that there were about 50 small trees planted. These included fruits [bananas, avocado, mango, pawpaw], *Tephrosia vogellii* to be used as a natural pesticide & soil improver, the multipurpose *Grevillea robusta*, and some indigenous species [*Albizia*, *Faidherbia albida*]. After a few more days the plot was enclosed inside a perimeter fence made of 'bloodwood' posts, bamboo and grass. We now wish to produce two more similar demonstration plots in neighboring villages. Of greater importance is the encouragement for every villager to have their own kitchen garden, with a regular supply of fruit and vegetables.

20 Kensington Gardens, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, NE25 8AR, UK. Tel: +44 (0)191 253 0687

Email: [paul\\_keeley@hotmail.com](mailto:paul_keeley@hotmail.com) or [sgginfo16@gmail.com](mailto:sgginfo16@gmail.com)

Website: [www.sustainableglobalgardens.org.uk](http://www.sustainableglobalgardens.org.uk)

UK registered charity number 1116243 Company registration number 05733281



Until this year SGG paid farmers for trees they had planted, usually as agroforestry trees planted on their own plots. This year we have started payments for farmers to grow rather than just plant trees. Here [see above left] members of Nsanama Women’s Group are sitting in their Conservation Area. They are paid to clear weeds & suppress any fires so that the trees seen in the photo can grow by natural regeneration. In February SGG estimated that there were 3,735 trees growing in this village conservation zone. A small proportion of these trees have been planted with rapidly disappearing indigenous species in order to diversify the forest flora. An important aspect of such forest restoration for the villagers is the preservation of the stream which provides water for the village. Around the village of Nankhunda most of the original forest has been felled, but some farmers have remnants of forest which they want to develop into a “food forest”. The two farmers here [see above right] are neighbours who have agreed to keep the copse on a steep slope between their cultivated fields as a natural multipurpose woodland area with a few planted fruits.

There are other changes which SGG has initiated in the Nankhunda locality. Zomba Forest Lodge, who are our local partners in Zomba, are primarily concerned with forest restoration in conservation areas around the fringes of the Zomba Forest Reserve. SGG is more concerned with agroforestry trees planted on the farms of local villagers, and payments for such planting will begin in January 2024.

The most dramatic changes this year have been at St Dennis Libolina School for the Physically Challenged. When I first visited this school in 2022 I was immediately struck by the depth of deprivation: limited classroom facilities, water tanks in disrepair, a disfunctional kitchen next to a temporary, smoke-filled structure where cooking was done using the traditional 3 stone open fire, unproductive gardens etc, etc – to say nothing of the young children facing a life of physical difficulties. It was an overwhelming experience. Fortunately, within SGG’s compass of friends and supporters there are some very good people, and within eighteen months the school has been transformed. The change in circumstances began when the Rotary Club of Sherwood Sunrisers organised the construction of two water tanks. They were aided by Bungoma Rotary Club who both supervised that water-harvesting scheme and planted about 200 Grevillea around the school perimeter. Later that Rotary partnership funded the repair of the school cooking stoves.

The most striking change though has been in the school grounds which in 2022 were simply rough grass kept low by the grazing of the school cow. A few very generous supporters of SGG have funded SCOPE, a Kenyan NGO which specialises in using permaculture methods to transform school grounds into productive food-producing gardens. We are very impressed by SCOPE’s work at St Dennis Libolina, so we hope to support similar work in other needy schools in the future. The two photos overleaf can hardly tell the tale of this remarkable change, so I suggest that you follow a full version of this development by browsing our website [www.sustainableglobalgardens.org.uk](http://www.sustainableglobalgardens.org.uk) and reading about St Dennis Libolina School in the projects section.





The first thing to remember here is that this was largely an empty space when I visited in 2022. This year SCOPE has taught learners [see above left] how to make the typical ridges & deepened furrows which allow a variety of crops to be grown together and rainwater to be trapped. Bananas & yams are water-loving and do well in the furrows, while sweet potatoes prefer the ridges. During the initial establishment of this garden 5 mangos, 15 avocados, & 60 banana stems were planted as well as a wide range of vegetables. What I like about these photos is the involvement of the school community [see above right]. SCOPE reported that during this period in late March a daily average of 15 adults came to see what was being done and some 200 pupils worked to establish their own garden. Later in the year there was a specific training for staff at the school, when the garden was extended to other parts of the compound.

All this activity at St Dennis does not mean that our long-established projects were neglected. Our OVC feeding programme continued, indeed expanded with two new groups joining the programme last January. Their kitchen garden, table-banking and agroforestry projects have also continued apace.

Here [see below left] the women of Nyusa Farmers are providing the communal meal for their orphans & vulnerable children [OVCs]. Each of the 11 OVC groups has a communal kitchen garden where vegetables are grown to improve the nutrition of the OVCs and their households. A regular water supply can be a critical issue for the success of vegetable production. Here [see below right] the CIF group are growing sweet potatoes, tomatoes, sukumawiki etc. Their plot is on the edge of the Lake Victoria swamps so they can pump water, produce vegetables throughout the year, and gain significant income for the group. Other OVC groups away from Lake Victoria would also like to have a community pump to increase vegetable production. One coordinator has mentioned how the availability of vegetables has improved the health of their OVCs.







In January-February the SGG team undertook the final tree count for the 2019-2022 Tropical Tree-Planting & Conservation project, in which a total of 191,118 trees were recorded. With more than 700 plantings in our records it is not surprising that there was a wide variety of tree-planting purposes & strategies. Here in a crowded Chagga plot on Kilimanjaro [see above left] we are counting avocado seedlings under the bananas & between the coffee bushes. The farm near Matayos, West Kenya [see above right] is being developed as an indigenous woodland area, where income is gained from carbon capture. There are some new species which are being introduced. One is *Sesbania sesbans* [see below left], which is being grown as an agroforestry bush to provide livestock fodder and improve soil fertility. In the middle of the last photo [see below right] there is a line of *Tephrosia vogelii* between the coffee bushes. *Tephrosia* leaves when crushed & soaked produce one of the most effective natural pesticides available. They enable the farmer to avoid the use of synthetic pesticides, which are so dangerous to the health of the farmer's family.



There is so much more which could be reported as evidence of progress during 2023, but space here is limited. If there is space for just one more item, I would need to mention the current climate change crisis which is liable to undo all the progress achieved in the localities where SGG is active. I have fond memories of the various improvements made during SGG's first field visit to Zomba District in Malawi earlier this year, but so much progress was destroyed soon after my departure with the devastation caused by Cyclone Freddy. My New Year wish is that we all accept the need to reduce our carbon footprint – even if it means adjusting the prosperous lifestyle we all enjoy. While a reduction in our carbon emissions is the only way out of the climate crisis, you may like to consider during your struggle to reach 'net-zero' the possibility of offsetting some of your footprint by asking African farmers in the SGG network to grow trees on your behalf. The current cost of this carbon-trading is £10 for each tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>e captured. I can assure you that SGG knows hundreds of farmers willing to undertake carbon capture at this price. You can read further details on the website [www.sustainableglobalgardens.org.uk](http://www.sustainableglobalgardens.org.uk). Go on: consider making a contribution to saving the planet as we know it this Christmas. And thank you to everyone who has helped sustain our work this year.

Paul Keeley

20 Kensington Gardens, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, NE25 8AR, UK. Tel: +44 (0)191 253 0687

Email: [paul\\_keeley@hotmail.com](mailto:paul_keeley@hotmail.com) or [sgginfo16@gmail.com](mailto:sgginfo16@gmail.com)

Website: [www.sustainableglobalgardens.org.uk](http://www.sustainableglobalgardens.org.uk)

UK registered charity number 1116243 Company registration number 05733281