RIPPLE AFRICA

TREE PLANTING AND FOREST CONSERVATION

APRIL 2023

What a great year it has been for our wonderful tree planting team, Trizzah, Angellah, Fraser, Tiwonge, Wezzie and Cecilia. They have continued to work with individual farmers and community groups in Mzimba District and another 1.8 million seedlings have been successfully raised and planted out.

We expanded the project this past year and now cover the whole District. Before we were working solely in Mzimba North but after discussing our plan for the year with the Forestry Department, we have extended our work to Mzimba South. Mzimba District is a huge area that is heavily deforested but with perfect growing conditions, so part of the team relocated to work with farmers in this area.

Company Reg No: 4823686 England · UK Reg Charity Nos: 1103256 (England & Wales) and SC043082 (Scotland) · US Registered 501(c)3 Charity · EIN 26-2059213

During our visits in 2022, we spent time with the tree team visiting both farmers growing seedlings including those in the new areas, and seeing trees that had been planted in previous years.

The farmers in Mzimba South were extremely excited to welcome the project and during visits to various nurseries, the teams were greeted with singing and dancing. Seeing the motivation for the project is wonderful and we look forward to continuing our work across the District.

Angel Matala, 33, is one of those new tree farmers. He is married to Grace and they have three daughters. He said, "We have a big problem with deforestation but we need wood so planting these trees is important. I am also growing orange trees and I have chillis that I grow and sell."

Angel's four siblings - Stanley, Pilot, Mallias and Arnold - are growing trees too. He continued, "We have distributed our land and between us raised 21,580 seedlings.

L-R: LAND WHERE ANGEL WILL PLANT TREES; SHOWING SOME OF HIS SEEDLINGS; WITH GRACE AND THEIR YOUNGEST DAUGHTER IN THEIR TREE NURSERY

Mzimba Forestry Department are really pleased that the growing season has gone so well. Supported by Ripple Africa, they hosted a tree planting day in February.

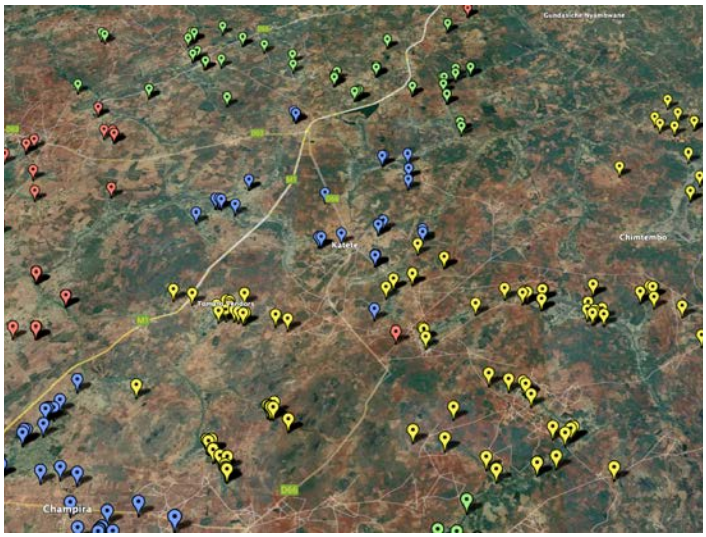
More than 1,000 people attended and our tree planting team, supported by their colleagues from our other Environmental projects, helped to plant over 500 trees belonging to Overton Gulu, one of the farmers we are helping. He was overjoyed at the many extra pair of hands.

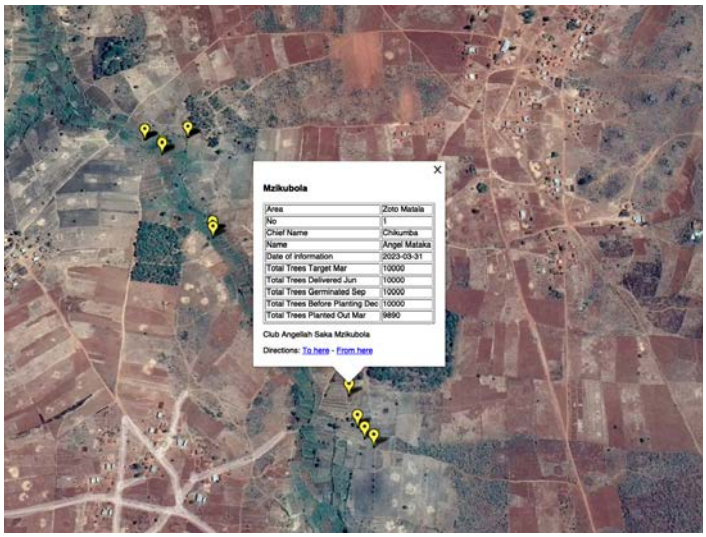
It is always great to visit farmers who have previously planted trees to see the growth and how they are caring for them. The team use this monitoring as an opportunity to train and encourage farmers to coppice brances and tidy up the land to avoid fire risks.

One tree farmer we have worked with for a few years is Elliott Honde. He has grown 4,000 trees of which some are five years old and others are three years old. As well as growing trees, he has a farm where he grows maize, groundnuts, soya, sweet potato and cassava but he also knows the value of growing trees. He said, "I have six children and want to provide a future for them and for my wife."

L-R: ELLIOTT WITH THREE YEAR OLD TREES; CECILIA WITH NEDSON WITH TREES HE PLANTED TWO YEARS AGO; TRIZZAH WITH ANDREA AND TREES HE PLANTED FIVE YEARS AGO

We are also developing a mapping system whereby we will have the GPS for each tree nursery, and in future, each tree planting site. Whilst we are very fortunate to have had wonderful donors who love the photos we provide of the tree planting, this will add an additional opportunity for people to see exactly where trees are being planted and as the years go on, use Google Earth to see the progress growth of the tree from a birds-eye view. Although we are in the early stages, we are pleased to share our progress so far.





Greatest is 80 and has raised 2,000 tree seedlings. She is planting trees for her family. Greatest said, "I know I will not live to see the fruits of my labour but I wanted to plant trees to secure my grandchildren's future."

Hill Club has 13 members including Lontia. Together they have raised 10,000 seedlings. Lontia said, "We want to protect our environment. Planting trees reduces deforestation and provides us with branches for firewood."

Damiano is part of Madede Club. He said, "My wife and I will be able to sell the timber and use the money to build a good house and pay school fees for our children."

Alfred and his wife Malia have planted 4,500 seedlings. Alfred said, "We wanted to plant trees to reduce deforestation and control soil erosion - and we can coppice branches for firewood."

SOME OF THE OTHER TREE FARMERS WE HAVE WORKED WITH THIS YEAR

COMMUNITY FRUIT TREES

What a great year it has been for Maston, our Fruit Tree Project Manager and the 50 community clubs. Each club has raised between 1,500 and 2,000 fruit tree seedlings, totalling to almost 100,000 fruit trees grown in total.

In addition to pawpaw, guava, lemon, orange, tangerine, mango and avocado trees being grown, many of the clubs are also growing tamarind as there is a commercial demand for the fruit which is used in making a drink.

In addition to teaching the clubs how to grow and raise the seedlings, Maston has carried out various trainings including at the beginning of the rainy season with club members so they knew how to correctly plant out their fruit trees. Some clubs also planted out certain seedlings before the rains started, so have learnt how to make basins and use dried leaves and bricks to maintain soil moisture.

Each Community Club donates fruit tree seedlings to local schools and each school has an Environment Club where pupils can sign up to learn Agricultural skills and then have fun planting the seedlings out.

It is great to see so many youngsters wanting to get involved, and they even go home and tell their parents so they can improve the way they grow or care of existing fruit trees.

The teachers and school committees at the 21 schools we are working with really appreciated the seedlings as "the children will have access to fruit during the school day" and each school receives between 40 and 60 seedlings.

As well as helping schools, the clubs donate seedlings to three local clinics and vulnerable people. Club members support the medical staff and vulnerable people to plant their seedlings. To ensure those most in need benefit, Maston coordinates with Matilda who runs our Disabilities and Rehabilitation, and each person receives 25 fruit trees. Not only will the families benefit, but they are able to sell any surplus at market to generate and income. For many parents in Malawi, caring for a disabled child means they are unable to earn a regular income.

The biochar trials continue and he has monitored previously planted trees and crops, as well as varying the type of animal manure used to charge the biochar and see which one works best. Whilst still in a trial stage, Maston is sharing this knowledge with the community clubs.

However, for Maston, one of the best parts of his jobs is visiting club members when trees start to bear fruit. All the hours of work that is put in is worth it when they literally see the fruits of their labour. Pawpaw and guava are relatively quick producing trees and citrus and avocado trees take a little longer, but as time goes on, it is brilliant to see families consuming fruit at home and a more varied selection of fruit being sold at local markets.

In addition to the fruit tree project, Maston has been developing a chicken project. He has trained around half of the clubs on how to grow vegetables which are then harvested and sold at market. Maston then teaches the club members how to manage their finances and then buy day old chicks, feed and vaccines. After six weeks the chickens are sold at market or to local people and the club can re-invest the money to expand their chicken business. Several clubs are now learning how to keep pigs.

FOREST CONSERVATION

We have a new team member on our Forest Conservation team, Annie Mame. She said, "I am proud to be part of this fast growing charity and I am dedicated in helping communities protect their forests."

Since she started, Annie has been busy meeting the various committees including Chidambo and Chibisa Forest Conservation Committees.

The Chidambo Forest Conservation Committee has been inspired by the Chibisa Committee to protect their trees and create firebreaks. The Chibisa group are seeing natural regeneration and the Chidambo Forest Committee want the same outcome.

Bryne, the Forest Conservation project Manager said, "During the dry season our main focus is to ensure that wildfire should not burn the young trees. As well as making firebreaks, the committees weed and slash grass to protect the young trees. This promotes tree growth."

The committees have also received finance knowledge and support in setting up a Village Bank. Members save money together and small loans are given. At the end of the year, members share the money.

Munkhonkwe Forest Conservation Committee is another group we work with. The Committee Chairman, Anderson Nkhata, said, "We meet once a week to patrol the forest and we are proud that we rarely have any problems. If we catch anyone illegally chopping down trees then they are fined and taken to the Chief. We also confiscate the tools they were using."

ANNIE WITH CHIBISA FOREST CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

CHIDAMBO FOREST CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

L: AREA OF TREES CHIDAMBO COMMITTEE ARE PROTECTING; R: MUNKHONKWE FOREST

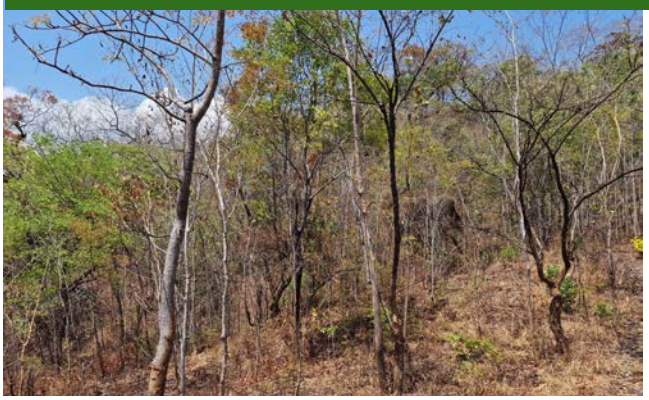
MUNKHONKWE FOREST CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Whilst there has been some great success and many communities striving to protect their existing areas of forest, other areas are under threat as the demand for timber rises.

Local Forest Conservation Committees continue to protect and educate locals on the importance of protecting the forests. However, in Nkhata Bay South, we have experienced challenges with areas of forest being chopped down.

In Kande, an area close to our head office, there are no trees for timber so people have been cutting down and selling trees from the nearby forests. Our Forest Conservation team in the South, led by Skip, are currently looking to see what action we can take to empower the communities around here to protect their trees.

ABOVE: TREES BEING CHOPPED DOWN FOR TIMBER; BELOW: NKHOMA FOREST AND TEMPORARY SHELTERS



We also went on a hike with Nkhoma Forest Conservation Committee to see the forest and learn first hand how they work with the community to protect the forest.

The Committee Chairman, Keston, explained that with the demand on land, people from neighbouring Districts have tried to move into the hills.

He said, "A family settled in the hills and chopped a couple of trees to build temporary shelters. We worked closely with them to explain why they couldn't live in the forest and the importance of protecting it. Along with the chief - who allocated them land in the lowland areas - they have relocated and have promised not to chop down trees in the protected area. They now have a fuel-efficient cookstove so will only need small branches or deadwood for cooking.

In Choma Hill, the Forest Conservation Committees continue to educate communities and carry out joint patrols with the Forestry Department to confiscate illegal charcoal.

Across the year, they carried out 12 patrols and confiscated a combined 440 bags of charcoal, 61 bicycles and three motorbikes. In addition to these patrols, the Forestry Department carried out other patrols and activities. Over time, these deterrents are reducing the number of charcoal traffickers.

Along with protecting existing forests, we are seeing natural regeneration taking place in areas that were once heavily deforested.

We are encouraging communities to protect these newly appearing forested areas and we cannot wait to see what they look like as the years go on.

On behalf of all the people that you have helped through the support that you have given to Ripple Africa, we would like to say:

TAWONGA UKONGWA (Thanks very much!)