

SUSTAINABLE FARMING FUTURES WITH FRUIT TREES, VEGETABLES AND CHICKENS



Fruit Trees

We worked with 100 Community Clubs to raise 78,471 fruit tree seedlings during 2024. Although each club is growing slightly less seedlings than last year, this is partly due to the expansion of the catchment area but also to allow the farmers to have the time to grow both fruit trees and vegetables for their chicken business successfully.

We initially started the project in one Traditional Authority's area, then expanded to another in the second year and, in 2024, we extended the project into a third area. This is because there are now so many clubs in the area where the project started and farmers in neighbouring areas were very keen to be included.

We continue to support each Community Club for two years and Maston, who runs the fruit tree and livestock project, worked with five Lead Farmers to provide training to the first year clubs, and support and guidance to those in their second year.

Trainings include when and how to:

- Sow the fruit seeds
- Make Mbeya manure and biochar
- Make natural pesticides
- Plant the seedlings out
- Create basins and maintain soil moisture once the seedlings are planted out
- Protect the seedlings from chickens and goats

The start of the growing season sees clubs building their nurseries, filling planting tubes, and sowing seeds. The fruit tree varieties include pawpaw, guava, avocado, lemon, orange, tangerine, topi topi (soursop), and tamarind.



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Three new community clubs supported by the project this year are Vibatec, Chituka and Katuwa. Rachel Banda, member of Vibatec Community Club said, "The different trainings are so important so we can raise good fruit trees which will help us provide for our families."



Lucy Mwale's favourite fruit is topi topi. A member of Chituka Community Club, she became involved as she wants to provide more nutritious foods to her children and fruits are a great way to do so.



Fellow member Catherine agreed. She said, "Sometimes we are able to give our children breakfast but not always. Fruits like passion fruit, pawpaw, topi topi, and guava are all easy for the children to pick and eat when they are hungry."



Members of Katuwa Community Club have grown guava, avocado, tamarind, passion fruit, topi topi and pawpaw. They have also grown tephrosia seedlings to use the leaves as a natural pesticide.

The members explained that they had already benefited from one of Ripple Africa's Changu Changu Moto fuel-efficient cookstoves so knew to trust the charity.



Zila said, "We like our cookstoves very much and the NGO helps protect the local forests too. When we heard the fruit tree project was coming to our area, we wanted to be a part of it because there are not many fruits growing here.

"During the mango season there is an abundance of mangoes but otherwise we only have bananas, tangerines and some avocados. The children have porridge for breakfast but if we have more fruit available, it will improve their diets."

Both Chituka and Katuwa Club have planted vegetables and raised chicks too.



Each year, to open the planting season, we arrange several events at local schools. When the community clubs sign up, they agree to share some of their seedlings so that local schools and vulnerable people within the community benefit too.

Within the three Traditional Authorities' areas, we supported five health clinics and 25 schools. Maston works with the school Environment Clubs so that the students learn the same skills as the Community Clubs, and each school receives an average of 70 seedlings ahead of planting out.

One event this year was at Malengamazoma Primary School. Local dignitaries were invited including the Traditional Authority and celebrating the fruit tree seedlings being planted out, students performed poems, songs and dialogues including 13-year-old Catherine Manda's poem.

It is my responsibility

It is my responsibility to care for the environment, our national gift. I have responsibility to mobilise and encourage my friends to plant trees around their homes because trees influence rain, give us medicine, fruits, and not forgetting, providing cover to the soil.

It is my responsibility to civic educate my community to plant different kinds of fruit trees. Fruits like guavas, lemons, tangerines, oranges and pawpaws are important to us because they give us income after sale and medicine and vitamins when eaten.

It is my responsibility to encourage my community to care for the trees. Cutting down trees carelessly and having bush fires destroys the environment. Plant more trees brings harmony to the environment. It is my responsibility.



Maston and the Community Volunteers showed the students how to plant the seedlings correctly, and it was lovely to have children from different year groups working together.

Issac in Standard Four was helped by Pempero in Standard Eight, Maston lent a hand to Rebecca in Standard Six, and Standard Eight student Precious was a quick learner, planting out alone.



Prior to the planting out season, Maston and the Lead Farmers spend time with the clubs so that members can prepare their orchard sites, dig planting pits, and apply manure and/or biochar.

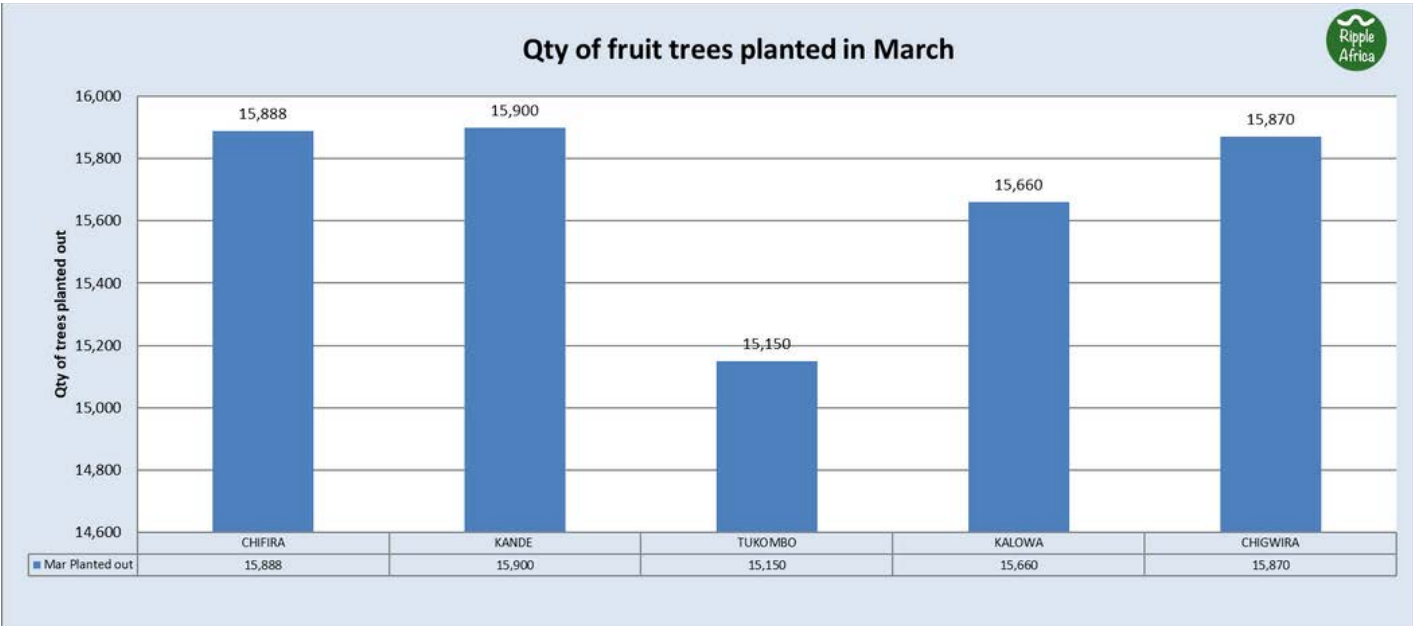
Members of Tutndwi 1 Club planted out the first of their seedlings in December. This includes 20-year-old James. Sharing his story, he told us, "I asked to be a member of this fruit tree club as it will provide me with food and money to buy necessities. I am still at secondary school and my parents struggle to provide money for fees and school supplies. I will be relying on myself in future."



Chigwira Community Club are another club involved for the first time. They are grateful to have successfully raised 800 seedlings including pawpaw, guava, avocado, topi topi, tangerine, passion fruit, and orange.

Their members range from 25 to 60 years old and this predominantly female group work well together to ensure everyone’s skills are utilised. They have grown vegetables too so that they could start a chicken business from the money raised. So far they have raised and sold 20 chickens and now have a further 30 chicks.

There was lots of singing during the planting out session with Liuwzi Community Club which made it very enjoyable. With all members and their families taking a keen interest in how the process works, it was all hands on deck to get the fruit tree seedlings in the ground with basins made, mulch added, and seedlings watered.



This year the Community Clubs supported 1,651 vulnerable people and their families across the three Traditional Authorities. Each family received 10 fruit trees this year, and the Clubs, Lead Farmers and Maston ensure that the trees are planted out correctly.

James’s family is one that has benefited this year. We support James through our Disabilities and Rehabilitation project as he has cerebral palsy. His mother and sister both care for James and they are grateful for the 10 fruit tree seedlings as they will have fruit to eat.

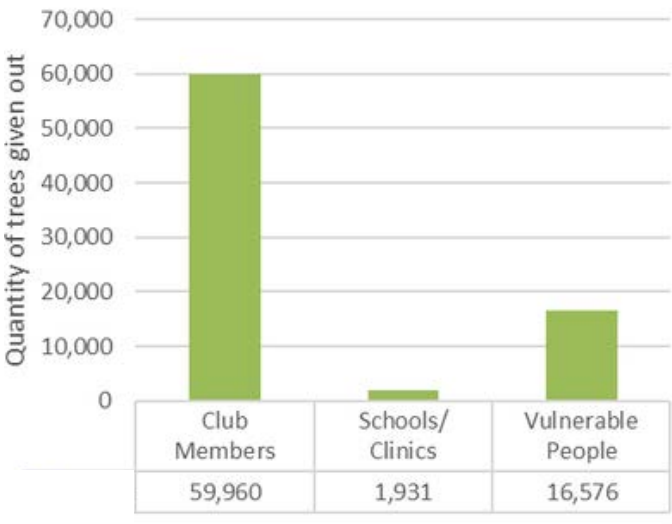
Idah and her mother Helina are some other beneficiaries as is Lameck. Idah has been caring for her mother who has been sick for a long time, and Lameck for his elderly poorly grandmother. This has meant that neither have been able to find work so the fruit trees will provide them with food and a small income.



Qty of beneficiaries



Qty of trees given out all areas





We are really proud of how the fruit tree project has grown and the impact it is now having for families as their trees bear fruit. This naturally means more food is available to eat, and because each farming family is encouraged to plant more trees than they need, they can earn an income too.

Matthews told us how fruit trees, pawpaw in particular, have helped improve his family’s day-to-day life. Along with his mother, Matthews was part of one of our Community Clubs. When it came to sharing the seedlings, he planted 30 fruit trees at his home of which 21 are pawpaw. He is growing a further 140 seedlings so that they can set up their own fruit farm.

Matthews said, “From the pawpaw tree harvest so far, we have paid the Primary School Development Fund fees, provided new uniforms, and notebooks and pens. Our children also have breakfast before school, and we have saved some money too. When we have needed to, we have bought rice and maize flour. We have money for transport to the clinic if anyone is ill too.”



Other families enjoying the fruits of their labour (see what we did there!) include Elina Manda, Manjiwa Mphande, Mary Mwale, Alice Chirwa, and Mary Mphande. Within a couple of years their children and grandchildren are benefiting from a variety of different fruits including avocados, topi topi, and pawpaw.



During a fuel-efficient cookstove site visit in Mzimba District we met the Lungu family. They benefited from fruit tree seedlings from us in 2017 as we used to provide tree farmers with 25 fruit tree seedlings in addition to the tree seedlings that they have raised.

Medson Lungu was very happy to show off his fruit trees. He said, "We have improved mango trees, orange, tangerine, avocado, and guava trees too. The trees give us lots of fruits which my family enjoy."



On average, each pawpaw tree produces 100 fruits within a season – and there are a couple of growing seasons in Malawi. Like Mathews, most farmers grow numerous pawpaw trees which means they have a lot of fruit and are unable to eat all of it. Therefore, they sell the surplus fruit and earn an income. The average price for one large pawpaw in May 2024 was 2,000MWK (£1/\$1.20).

Another farmer who planted pawpaw trees is Charlotte. Unfortunately not all of her trees survived due to drought. However, this mother of four is still happy as the surviving pawpaw trees have produced a good harvest, and Charlotte is looking forward to planting out more seedlings too.

Charlotte said, “My children and I like the pawpaws and I have been able to sell some to buy pens and schools books for my children.”



Another favourite fruit in the community is topi topi, also known as soursop. Kadula Club members were harvesting for the sixth time. Maston said, “The project is about planting fruit trees and caring for them to have better fruits in the community. It was amazing to see some children harvesting soursop and enjoying it. Their mother Jane, a member of the Community Club, was enjoying the fruit with her children.”



Livestock Farming

For Community Clubs to start their chicken business, everything starts with three packets of vegetable seeds. This year 70 clubs were trained on growing the vegetables and selling the harvest from two packets at market. The harvest from the third packet is for the families to eat.

Maston teaches basic business skills to the Clubs, and they then use the money made to purchase 10 one-day-old chicks, feed, and vaccines. At six weeks old, the Club members sell the chickens locally and they re-invest the money to buy more chicks and establish their business. As time goes on and more money is earned, the Clubs can buy more chicks at a time, and eventually expand their farm to include pigs.

Maston said, "Knowledge is power and we want the project to be sustainable and leading to tangible outcomes that benefit our farmers."



Simeon is one of our Lead Farmers. Here he is with his son Simeon Jnr under their hybrid pawpaw tree. As a member of one of the first Community Clubs to grow vegetables and start a chicken business, Simeon has since been able to set up his own chicken business. He has a rabbit and three pigs too.



Captain Phiri is Chairman (quite a fitting name) of Mayaya Club. He is joined by nine friends and neighbours and this was their first year benefiting from the project.

Captain said, "We are excited to be growing vegetables so that we can start our chicken business. All of the members need food and this project will help us do that."

Maston visited some of the farmers at the market including James Phiri from Matete Club. James was at the market with Stella, Tapiwa and Getrude selling some of their vegetables. James said, "We sell in the morning as fresh sells better rather than wait in the afternoon when they wilt in the heat."

This is Kapati Club's second year involved in the project. The members were preparing to plant more vegetable seeds in their community field, but one member, Poutfa, has managed to buy some of his own land too.

He explained, "At the end of our first year working together we divided the profit equally to support our families. I bought some land so that I could grow maize and I hope to grow more crops in the future. I also gave my wife some money to treat herself, and we invested in our children's education."

Linda Phiri from Chiomba Tiyese Community Club was selling vegetables at the market. A bundle of three stems sells for 200MWK (approx. 10p/12c).



Chimango Community Club have completed their first year working together. The members grew vegetables to support their families and to start their chicken business.

Viapani, Club Chairman, said, "We are all farmers but we have not had training previously. This project has taught us a lot about making Mbeya manure, natural pesticides, and how to set up farming businesses. We are very grateful."

Club members were able to buy 20 chicks with the money they made from the vegetables, and when they reached six weeks, sold them for 11,000MWK each (approx. £5/\$6.50).



Mazembe Community Club members have enjoyed their first year benefiting from the project as they were taught new skills and can use these in any future businesses. Two members, Eliza and Gloria, hope to set up fish buying and selling businesses with the profit they receive, and Gladys wants to have her own chicken farm.

Another Club who had a successful first year is Chiomba Tiyese Community Club. They raised 93 chicks and with the profit they bought a pig. The remaining profit was shared amongst the members who have used their shares to carry out home improvements, pay for school fees, and purchase other farming materials.

Len Phiri, Treasurer, said, "We meet every Sunday to discuss how things are going. We were inspired to get involved by other Community Clubs so approached Maston to register our interest. The main challenge we have experienced is local pigs eating some of our fruit tree seedlings."

The Club members can use the chicken droppings when they make Mbeya manure. This manure provides nutrients to the soil and is used when planting out the fruit trees. It is made from ash, maize bran and animal manure which is left for 21 days to ferment.

Maston has continued the biochar training with the farmers too. Biochar is produced by a controlled burning of crop residues and this is then charged and added to the soil to increase its nutrients and water retention.

Chiomba 2 Community Club have made both Mbeya manure and biochar. Limbakani, Club Chairman, said, "We have learned how to make Mbeya manure and biochar. These will help our fruit tree seedlings grow and produce good fruit."



Anozangi, Club Secretary, said, "We work well together and no one lets the group down. We have grown vegetables, set up our chicken farm and now we have pigs."

Maston explained that their pig recently had four piglets and they have another pig which is pregnant too. He said, "Although four piglets is below our expectations, it is a good start. The Club are generating a good income and already they have shared some of the profits so that members can do home improvements before the rainy season, and pay school fees."



There are 11 other Clubs which have started pig farms too. Each Club decides whether to sell or keep the piglets. In 2024, a three-month-old piglet sold for an average 35,000MWK (approx. £15/\$20) and a two-year-old pig sold for 145,000MWK (approx. £65/\$83).





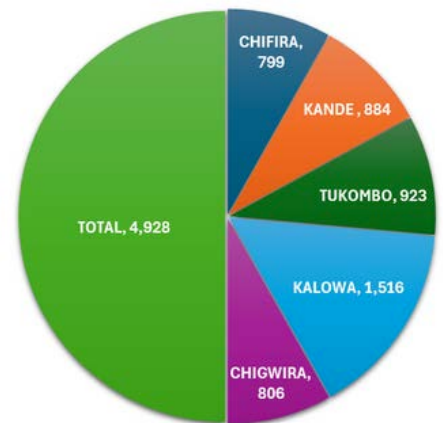
The number of chicks bought, raised, and sold throughout the year has more than doubled from 2023. Between the 70 clubs trained in growing vegetables and setting up their chicken business, they have raised 4,928 chickens. The average profit per chicken is 3,880MWK (approx. £1.70/\$2.20).

Several Clubs in their second year of the project raised around 300 chickens throughout the year and each made just over a million kwacha profit (approx. £445/\$575). This really is a sustainable way for the Clubs to earn an income, not only now while supported by our project but in the future too.

It is important that the farmers raise healthy chickens too. Maston said, "This year we continue to support farmers to vaccinate their chickens and as a result, the chickens were parasite and disease free."



Total qty of chickens per club



Chicks bought, raised and sold by area in 2024





Speaking about working with the community, Maston said, “I like building positive relationships with the project stakeholders and community members. It is amazing when the Clubs sing about how Ripple Africa is there for the community.”

Maston continued to congratulate everyone involved saying the progress made across all activities had led to other small businesses being started.

He said, “In 2024 there were more members venturing into small scale businesses like selling cakes, fish, bananas, tomatoes, and juices. They were able to do this using the money from selling surplus fruits, and from the vegetables and chickens.”

On behalf of the Community Clubs, and local communities benefiting from an improved diet, thank you very much!

