

ONE MANAGER, TWO COORDINATORS, SIX LEAD FARMERS AND 100 COMMUNITY CLUBS



Fruit Trees

During the 2025/26 season, we continued to work in three Traditional Authority's areas with 100 community clubs. Between them, they grew and planted 79,377 fruit tree seedlings under the guidance of Maston, our Fruit Tree and Farming Project Manager.

We support each community club for two years, so 50 clubs have graduated this year now that they are fully trained in different areas of improved farming practices. These include making Mbeya manure and compost, as well as recognising pests and diseases and controlling them with homemade natural pesticides.

This year, in addition to the six Lead Farmers, Maston was supported by two Coordinators, Sekeni and Jean.

Sekeni has worked for Ripple Africa for almost 20 years on different environmental projects. In March 2025, he was offered the opportunity to work with Maston, and his experience and knowledge of working with communities has been really valuable when working with the community clubs.

The second Coordinator is Jean. She initially joined the project for an internship and at the end of her three-month placement, we decided to offer her a full time position. Children's Hope Aid Norway part funded her position for her first year, and much like Sekeni, Jean is hard working, passionate about the project, and really engaged with the community clubs.



Each year the team identify 50 new clubs to be trained, and we continue to support and guide the community clubs in their second and final year of the project.

Each club has 10 members of whom at least three are women, and once registered with the project, they work together to build their tree nursery, fill planting tubes and sow seeds. The clubs love the variety of fruit trees grown as everyone has a different favourite fruit, and this year we added passion fruit to the list.

Other seedlings include citrus, avocado, papaya, guava, topi topi (soursop), and tamarind. The clubs also grew tephrosia to use the leaves for natural pesticide.



One new group is Chimwemwe Community Club. With only nine members, they each have a little extra work to do but they are keen to grow fruit trees. One member, Andrew Chirwa, said, "There is not much variety locally so we are happy to be growing a selection of fruit trees that we can enjoy."

Vice-Chairman of the club, Kondwani Banda, said, "We also hope to sell fruits too, and the money will help pay school fees and buy other resources."

The Tiwoneyepu Community Club is also a new group. Each member shared their favourite fruit with tangerine coming out on top. Spiwe, one of the members, said, "We saw others in our community benefiting from this project and we wanted to get involved so we created the club."

Tiwoneyepu Club was one of 17 clubs with guava seedlings affected by pests. Maston taught them how to treat them with ash and copper.





Mayaya 2, Chima Chilimnthaka, and Chipolopolo are three other new clubs that Maston and his team have worked with this year. They were happy to receive training as, despite all being farmers, they said that they were learning natural methods which meant they did not have to rely on expensive chemicals for fertiliser and pesticides.

One training session that we attended with the Chima Chilimnthaka Club members was a lesson on how to make pesticide using tephrosia leaves.

All of these clubs grew avocado, guava, topi topi, tangerine, papaya, and passion fruit seedlings. Vice-Chairman of Chima Chilimnthaka Club, Chawinga Phiri, said, "We all like fruit but mostly we have access to local mangoes and nothing else. I like tangerines and oranges. It will be good to have a variety of fruits to eat."

At Chipolopolo Club it was clear to see the children were excited for fruits as they were helping their parents in the tree nursery.



In addition to the new clubs, we spent time with some of those which had planted seedlings last year including Kakusa Community Club.

Their group is composed of seven women and three men and last year they grew 800 fruit trees including avocado, topi topi, guava, tangerine and papaya. These fruit trees are already growing really well, and this year they are growing 900 seedlings.

Asking the members what their favourite fruit was, tangerine and orange took the top spot followed by topi topi.

Club Chairlady, Stella, said, "The fruit tree seedlings that we planted last season are doing well."

We visited Lackson, Toko, and Maona, members of Kang'ongo Club. Last year they raised 800 fruit seedlings and this year they are raising the same again.

Maona explained, "We donated 40 seedlings last year to the local school and to vulnerable people. We are happy that the school is growing fruit trees as our children then benefit at home and when at school. There is a scarcity of fruit in this area."

Mayaya 1 Community Club were happy with their first year of seedlings and worked together to raise another 900 seedlings. Rose said, "I have already harvested topi topi from a tree planted a year ago."



Soil Improvement

Throughout the year, the clubs have been making Mbeya manure and biochar. Biochar has the potential to be game-changing for farmers in Malawi as it acts like a sponge retaining water long into the dry spells. It also improves soil fertility reducing the need of fertilisers which are expensive in Malawi.

Typically, clubs will use a little Mbeya manure in the planting tubes but the majority of this, along with the biochar, is used when planting out.

Maston, Sekeni, Jean, and the Lead Farmers carried out orchard training with the clubs ahead of planting. It is then all hands on deck as the club members and their families prepare their land which includes digging the correct sized holes at certain spacings to allow the seedlings to grow and flourish. Once the land had been prepared, each club divided their seedlings between the members so that everyone received a selection of different fruits.



Biochar is a type of charcoal produced by the efficient burning of crop waste with limited access to oxygen. When mixed with animal waste and water (a process known as charging) and added to the soil, it increases the soil's nutrients and increases water retention. Biochar is like a sponge. It will absorb nutrients around it and not release them until a plant root actively extracts them.



In August we welcomed three senior chiefs, Traditional Authorities Zilakoma, Fukamapiri, and Malengamazoma, and village chiefs, to visit fruit tree nurseries and see previously planted fruit trees and how they are bearing fruit.

Maston, the Project Manager, said, "The chiefs fully appreciated the great support that we, Ripple Africa, are providing to their communities. Clubs that we worked with previously are now earning a stable income by selling fruit. They asked if we could extend our reach to improve the livelihood of many more local families."

Ahead of the official planting out date, Maston demonstrated dry planting. He said, "People do not think that the seedlings will survive if it is not the rainy season so this demonstration is important to show them how they can survive if planted correctly."

Several demonstration sites were chosen including one with Mazembe 2 Community Club. Dan, Elizabeth, Newton, and Ireen are first year club members. Dan said "We know fruits provide good nutrition, and we can earn money too. We were interested in how dry planting works especially with the hot weather in November. We used Mbeya manure and biochar when planting, and we do have access to water but the biochar is key as it acts like a sponge. We will plant the rest of the seedlings during the rainy season."



Schools and Community

To mark the official start of the fruit tree planting out season, local schools and students are involved. The clubs donate seedlings and each school has an Environment Club so after poems, songs, and speeches, the students are shown how to plant the fruit seedlings.

This year we supported 22 schools and five health centres in the three Traditional Authorities' areas. We have a number of new schools including Mkhokwe Primary School.

Maston said, "The Primary Education Advisor, Headteacher, School Committees and local Chiefs have appreciated the development. They are grateful to us for planting a fruit tree orchard at the school as they say it will be a learning site and it will provide fruits to the children and generate an income too."



Kapeska Primary School took part in planting seedlings. The youngsters and teachers learned how to carefully take off the planting tube so as not to damage the seedling, then filled the hole with soil and topped it with mulch and a brick cover to stop the local chickens from pecking at the roots.

At Malengamazoma Primary School, the students and teachers were excited by how quickly their papaya trees were growing fruit. Planted out in December 2024, they were already showing their first fruits in June 2025. This hybrid variety is shorter, making harvesting the fruit much easier.



Students of the school's Environment Club were treated to a taste of the hybrid papaya after a training session and they said it was much sweeter!



Pupils and teachers at Chiomba Primary School are also happy to plant out seedlings, and this year they were grateful for the introduction of banana suckers because these will complement the school's feeding programme as they will be able to mash bananas into porridge to make it more nutritious.





Having planted some of their seedlings during a dry-planting demonstration, here are members of Mazembe 2 Community Club planting out the rest of their seedlings during the rainy season. Some clubs like to help one member at a time to plant theirs before moving on to the next member's land.

Much like Mazembe 2, it is also the second year of planting for Mayaya 1 Community Club. Maston provided refresher training, and some of the club members opted to work together to plant the first couple of seedlings before continuing on their own. Rose looks particularly happy that the seedling has been planted.



Meckson was one of the quieter members of Tiwoneyepu Club during our visits, but it was clear that he took pride in keeping the tree nursery clean and organised, weeding the seedlings, and ensuring they were planted out correctly when the time came to plant them.

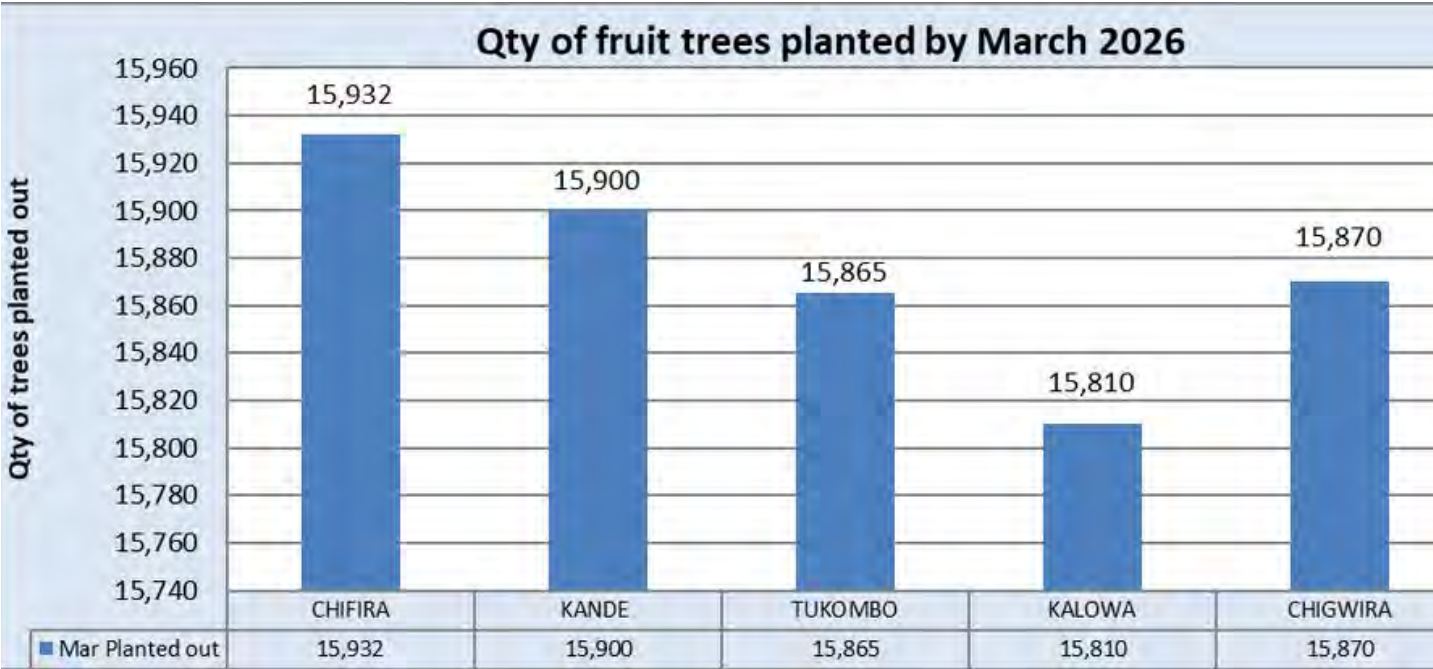
He said, "This is our first year involved with the project so we have a demonstration planting plot, and then we are planting the seedlings on our own land too."

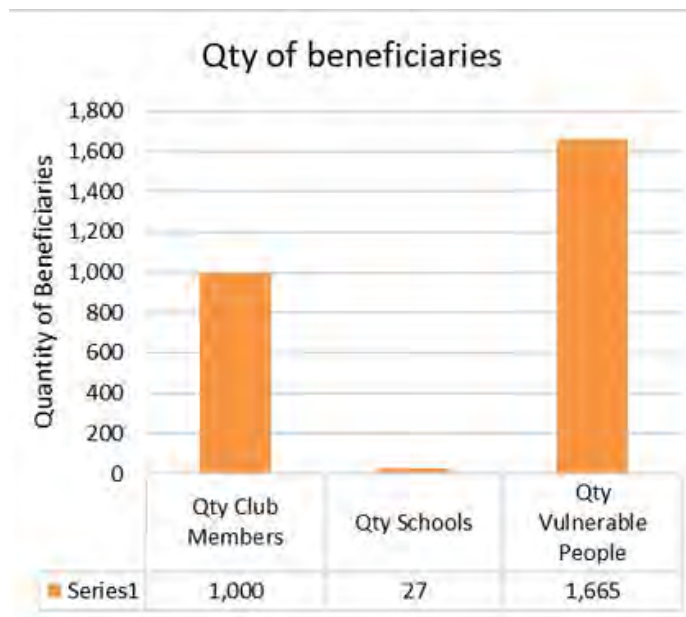




Annie Phiri is a member of Ulemu Club and was another club member excited that the rains had come and it was time to plant out the seedlings. Transporting them from the nursery shade to her land, she opted to carry them in a bucket on her head! Sekeni was on hand to provide planting guidance to Annie and her friends.

Here are members of other community clubs planting out their seedlings including Mfundu Club, Kachere 1 Club, Ulemu Club, and Chatonda Club.





Support for Vulnerable Households

Across the three Traditional Authorities' areas, 1,665 vulnerable people and their families were supported with fruit seedlings. Each individual or family received 10 seedlings and our team helped them to plant them out.

Lifa Mkopoka is an elderly gentleman living on his own. Therefore, local clubs donated some fruit trees to him last year, and they have planted more this year including the guava and passion fruit seedlings.

Maston, the Project Manager, said, "Lifa's guava tree is just one year old and has already started producing many fruits. When we planted the seedlings, we applied either biochar mixed with chicken manure, or just chicken manure as part of our testing to show what method supports the tree growth the most. Biochar mixed with chicken manure was more effective."

Nolah is another beneficiary receiving seedlings. She has a goitre, (an enlargement of the thyroid gland), so a balanced diet can help support overall thyroid health. Nolah said, "My favourite fruit is soursop. I am looking forward to eating all of the fruits these trees give me."



Graduation and Sustainability

As we complete the planting out of this year's fruit tree seedlings, we must congratulate our Growing the Future club graduates! After two years of acquiring knowledge and skills from the various trainings provided by Maston and his team, these clubs are prepped and ready to continue their farming independently!

Grades from Mazembe 2 Club is one of those graduating. She said, "The past two years have been a great opportunity for me to learn a lot. This is an avocado tree I planted in my first year and already it is growing avocados."

Joseph is a member who graduated a year ago from one of our Tukombo clubs. He is still growing fruit tree seedlings and has become quite creative with his planting tubes in order to cut back on reinvestment costs.

He said, "It's easy to collect empty sugar bags and fill them with good soil to grow the seedlings."

This project is as successful as it is self-sustaining. These clubs are equipped with the physical skills and business mindset to reinvest some of their profit back into their farms. We are all about empowering people to create brighter futures for themselves.





MADALITSO



CHRISTINA



GRACIOUS, MOFFOT, SARAH, AND ROMEO

A brilliant part of this project is being able to measure the impact in a relatively short space of time as many of these fruit trees grow and start bearing fruit within six to nine months, and others within a couple of years.

We are seeing more fruit available in local markets, and parents and guardians are able to provide fruit to their children before and after school which is fantastic – including Madalitso.

Madalitso's twin daughters Christina and Axa, and son Efran, love the sweet papaya, as do Gracious, Moffot, Sarah, and Romeo whose father and grandmother are club members.

Passion fruit is a winner as it takes just six months from planting the seedling to harvesting the first fruits. Little Chimwemwe was happy as he was able to pick some passion fruit to eat, and he helped his grandmother Sellah to pick some to sell. They are selling at 200MK (approx. 8p/11c) per passion fruit.

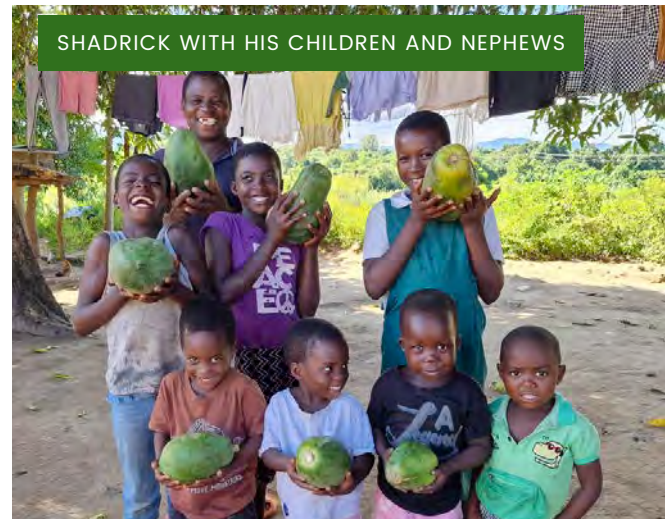


CHIMWEMWE



JEAN, PROJECT COORDINATOR

Shadrick has been growing fruits for a few years and his papaya trees regularly produce at least 100 fruits each. He said, “I harvest a few at a time so that they ripen and do not get wasted. Some weeks I can make 15,000MK to 20,000MK, (approx. £7/\$9 to £9/\$12). I use this money to buy soap, food and home supplies plus exercise books for the children. We are saving some money too as I want to finish our house.”



SHADRICK WITH HIS CHILDREN AND NEPHEWS

Octasi and his granddaughter Medfy planted avocado seedlings three years ago. They have started producing avocados and the family are selling some of the harvest. Each avocado sells for 500MK each (approx. 20p/30c). Octasi said, “We have generated an income which will support the family.”

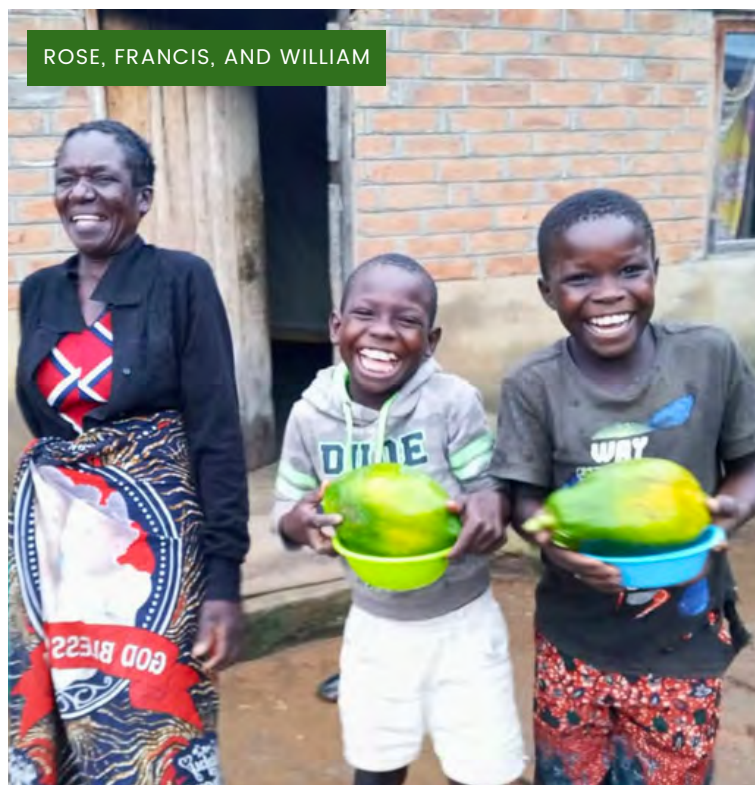


SHADRICK

William and Francis live with their grandmother Rose, a member of a former club. They are already enjoying the papaya harvest but William is patiently waiting for the lemons to be ready so he can help his grandmother pick them and sell them.



MEDFY AND OCTASI



ROSE, FRANCIS, AND WILLIAM



WILLIAM

Vegetables and Livestock Farming

This year we extended our vegetable and chicken project to work with Beach Village Committees (BVCs) and Forest Conservation Committees (FCCs).

These committees are made up of volunteer members who give their time to protect their section of the lake or forest. Therefore, to help provide them with an income generating activity, we included 15 of the committees as a trial. We also worked with a few women's and men's groups which were created through our Family Planning and Sexual Health Project.

These 15 committees, along with 75 of our community clubs, received three packets of vegetable seeds and were trained in making Mbeya manure, natural pesticides, sowing seed beds and growing vegetables.

It was explained to the clubs and committees that the harvest from two packets of vegetable seeds was to be sold, and the third packet was for their own consumption. Maston, Sekeni and Jean then taught basic business skills and the process of starting the small chicken farms.

The clubs use the money earned from the harvest to buy 10 one-day-old chicks. They buy feed and vaccines too. At six weeks old, the chickens are ready to be sold and the clubs then reinvest the money to buy more chicks and establish their farming enterprise.





At Kadula Club there is extra work for the members as four of their 10 members have travelled to Tanzania in search of jobs. Despite this, Victoria and Juliana said that they are managing well.

Victoria said, "We have the knowledge already from last year, this year is about practical work. We water the vegetables twice a day and rotate whose turn it is. We are growing rape at the moment but we have grown mustard too. Last year our vegetable harvests made 390,000MK (approx. £170/\$225)."

Chipolopolo Community Club is a club in its first year and it is hard to decide who had the harder job, the members who harvested the vegetables or Chikondi who had to balance them on her head all the way to the market. Chikondi then sold each bundle of three stems for 500MK (approx. 20p/30c).

The trial gardens with BVCs and FCCs were successful too. In one week, Mauluka Forest Conservation Committee made 27,000MK (approx. £12/\$16). The FCC Chairman said, "This will positively, and easily, change our livelihoods."



This year we trialled outdoor chicken runs as the majority of clubs raise their chickens either in an outbuilding or in a spare room within one of the member's homes. By building these runs, it allows the club to easily clean the chicken coop and gather up the droppings for manure making purposes.

We came up with a simple model using bamboo and netting, and Madalitso Club were happy to be our pilot club. Grades said, "The only concerns we have when the chickens are outside is the threat of dogs and snakes, and the potential for them to be stolen."

Maston explained to the group that they do not leave the chickens outside when no one is home, and since building the chicken run, Grades says it is much easier to clean and ventilate the coop, improving health for everyone involved.



Tiwoneyepu and Mayaya 1 Community Clubs are two other groups who have built chicken runs. Meckson, from Tiwoneyepu Club, said, "We take it in shifts to water the vegetables and from one packet, we harvested and sold 90,000MK (approx. £40/\$50) worth of vegetables. This allowed us to buy 10 one-day-old chicks. Sadly, one died but the others we have raised to six weeks old, and we have sold two for 23,000MK each (approx. £10/\$13). Next time we will buy 15 chicks and repeat this process. It is nice to have the chicken run outside during the daytime and then we transfer them inside before it gets dark."

It was a similar story at Mayaya 1. They sold their vegetables for 70,000MK (approx. £30/\$40), bought 10 chicks but one died. Rose, said, "We bought and administered the vaccine. We have sold one chicken at 22,000MK (approx. £10/\$13) and have other people coming to buy the others."



Meeting Kachere 1 Club members, it was clear to see their enthusiasm in being part of the project too.

We met Victoria and and Julius in the vegetable garden where they were tending to the vegetables grown from the second seed packet. Victoria said, “We sold the first harvest for 120,000MK (approx. £50/\$70) and we are hopeful to sell the Chinese cabbage for 200,000MK (approx. £85/\$115). We have a lodge close by which has been purchasing from others, and people in the village too.”

This club was able to afford 20 one-day-old chicks which live at Victoria’s house but the members, including Leonard, take it in turns to feed them, give them fresh water, and clean them out.

During 2025, a total of 4,619 chicks were bought, raised and sold, with an average profit per chicken of 4,920MWK (approx. £2.15/\$2.90).

In 2025 two clubs made over one million kwacha in profit each (approx. £430/\$575). One club raised 230 chickens and the other 328 chickens. On average, each club raised 50 chickens, and demand remains strong with local boarding schools being amongst regular buyers.



Last year, from the profits from selling their chicken, Chiomba 2 Community Club had managed to purchase a pig at the end of the first year and this year they have managed to purchase a second one. Limbakani, Chairman of the club, explained, "We have two pigs which are about to have piglets, and we have 10 chicks. A piglet sells for 50,000MK (approx. £20/\$30) and a chicken for 22,000MK (approx. £10/\$13). We saved all of the money we earned last year to get our farm started and we are happy as a club that we are succeeding."

Anozangi, Secretary of the club, continued, "Our children are learning about fruit trees and farming too. They know how to make Mbeya manure, and with the animals, we now have lots of animal waste which we mix in."



Chiomba Tiyesse Community Club had a very successful first year in 2024. They raised 93 chicks and with the profit they bought a pig. This year, they have been able to purchase two more pigs. In addition, there are 20 other clubs which have pig farms, 10 more than last year which is a great development.

In addition to pigs, a few other club members have decided to keep rabbits since graduating from the project. They said the rabbit droppings are great for their crops.

Maston said, "It has been a great development in communities, the project is really changing the livelihoods of many local families positively. Fruit trees will generate income for years to come, and vegetables and chickens are a great business to local families. The skills and knowledge acquired from our training workshops help these families achieve self-reliance."

