

GROWTH OF THE TREE PLANTING PROJECT



Our tree planting project has now been split into two: one project is supporting tree farmers growing sustainable sources of timber and firewood in Salima, Nkhotakota, and Mzimba Districts funded by our corporate partners; and the other is supporting tree farmers in Mzimba District who are part of our pine tree carbon project funded by investors.

Non-Carbon Tree Planting Project

This project is run by a team of 13; Lizzie and Tionge each manage a team of two Coordinators in Salima and Nkhotakota Districts respectively, and Smith has six Coordinators working with him in Mzimba District.

With support from District Forestry Extension Workers, the teams identify and register farmers and then support them to build their tree nurseries, fill planting tubes and sow seeds. The farmers are responsible for caring for their seedlings as they grow in the tree nursery, preparing their land ahead of planting the seedlings out, and planting the seedlings during the rainy season.

In Salima and Nkhotakota Districts, farmers and community clubs raised a variety of seedlings including senna siamea, mbawa, mtangatanga and nsangu tree species. These trees, once well established, will provide a sustainable source of firewood and in the longer term, timber. Many of our tree farmers in these two Districts have one of our fuel-efficient cookstoves and therefore use less firewood and only need smaller pieces thereby reducing deforestation and encouraging natural regeneration to take place. In Mzimba District farmers grow pine seedlings which will provide a sustainable source of timber.

During the 2025/26 tree planting season, 1,039 farmers planted 1,213,696 tree seedlings across the three Districts.



Fusani is one of the community tree clubs and it has 25 very enthusiastic and hard working members who were keen to expand their community forest by planting more trees.

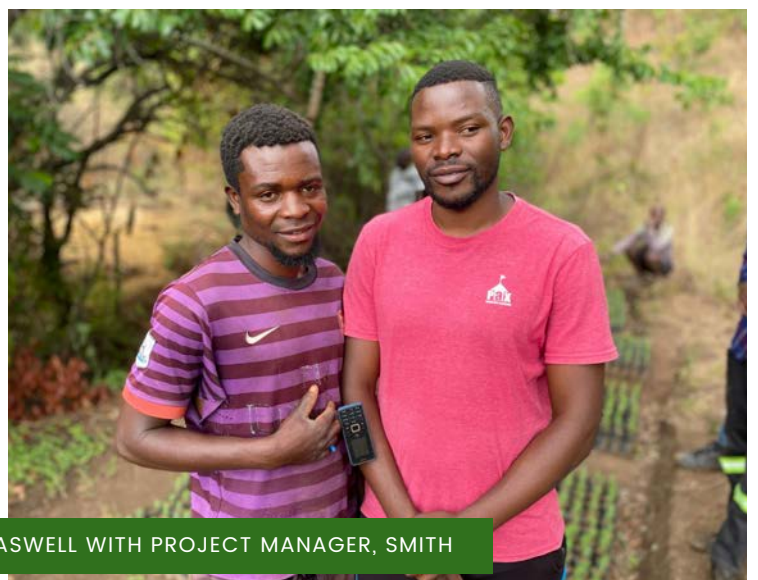
Charles Mwale, Chairman of the club, said, "We are growing 2,000 seedlings this year as we want to provide our village with an ongoing sustainable source of firewood and timber. There is a limited supply of wood in the District due to deforestation but we want to change that."

The club are growing mtangatanga, and gliricidia – a fast-growing, nitrogen-fixing tree. Charles went on to say, "We have a rota and each day two people water the seedlings. We take it in turns to do the weeding too."



FUSANI COMMUNITY CLUB IN THEIR TREE NURSERY, AND THEIR COMMUNITY FOREST

Haswell Mwale is from Mvulu Village and his aim was to raise 1,400 seedlings. He wants to improve the environment and to make money when he can harvest the trees for timber in 20 years' time. He said, "There is a very big shortage of timber in Malawi so I believe the timber will be very valuable and will benefit my family."



LEFT: HASWELL'S TREE NURSERY; RIGHT: HASWELL WITH PROJECT MANAGER, SMITH

Kumalire is another community club, this time raising 7,800 tree seedlings. They too have a community forest and they plan to plant 3,000 of the seedlings there and split the remaining seedlings between them for their personal woodlots.

The Club have raised senna siamea, mtangatanga, and mbawa seedlings. They also have 400 guava seedlings too.

Asked how long it takes to currently collect firewood for cooking, they explained that on average, about eight hours a day. They used to collect firewood three times per week, but now, because they now have our fuel-efficient cookstoves, they only have to do this once per week.

Chianganjano Club is made up of various family members including Veronica, Chimwemwe, Bridget and Elina.

Together they raised 2,000 seedlings which they have planted to create a family forest where they can all benefit from a free source of firewood in future.

Bridget, said, “We travel long distances three or four times a week for firewood so these trees will help but we are also planting trees that will control soil erosion and help the environment. We have been told that next year the fuel-efficient cookstoves will reach our village, this will help us a lot.”

Manford Ntheta is an individual tree farmer who has raised 3,504 seedlings in his tree nursery. This is his first time planting trees but he is happy to be involved because he sees the impact of deforestation.





The Ntenje Forest Club is one of our larger clubs with 23 members, 18 of whom are women.

Some of the members explained that they have an existing forest where the community can come and harvest firewood. The 8,000 seedlings that they have raised will be planted to expand the forest, providing an additional source of firewood in the future.

The group continued, “We each spend between two and five hours collecting firewood several times a week. This is why we want to expand our forest but we have heard about cookstoves that use less wood.”

The hope is that these members will have our fuel-efficient cookstoves in future so that they only need to coppice branches for firewood.

This year some of villagers in Sosola Village formed a tree planting club. Made up of 10 members, they have raised 5,800 tree seedlings together which they divided equally so that each member can plant their own woodlot.

Lute, Maria, and Katenne are three of the members. They said, “We are saving lots of wood by using our fuel-efficient cookstoves. However, we still need a supply of firewood and it is getting expensive. Most of us spent 2,000MK per day on four to five pieces. We can only afford this by farming and selling some of our crops. This is why we are happy to plant trees because we will have our own source of firewood.”

The Nyonia Tree Planting Club has 10 members and they have raised 9,500 seedlings this season.

Two of the members, Luca and Christina, explained that they wanted to plant trees due to deforestation and lack of rainfall. They feel passionately about replanting for future generations. On the day we visited, the club members were busy weeding and watering the seedlings.

We visited Fackson and his youngest son Trapeze who are in their second year of tree planting with Ripple Africa. This year they have raised 1,400 acacia seedlings which are fast-growing and are great for firewood.

Last year, Fackson planted 2,000 seedlings of which only 1,200 have survived as Salima District experienced both flash flooding and droughts last year.

When asked why he wants to be a part of the tree planting project, he said that it is great for the environment, will provide his family with firewood, and will be a good source of income for his family of eight.

Samuel and his wife, Veronica, are in their second year of planting trees too. Last year they planted 1,200 seedlings including mbawa, mtete, and mtangatanga. They only lost 46 seedlings due to termites and flooding. This year they decided to grow 1,600 acacia seedlings.



LUCA



CHRISTINA



ABOVE: SAMUEL AND FAMILY IN THEIR TREE NURSERY
BELOW: PREVIOUSLY PLANTED TREES



FACKSON AND HIS SON





PATRICIA



ALINAFE



MARGARET

Ahead of the rainy season, the farmers and their families prepare their land by digging holes the necessary size and spacing in readiness for planting out the seedlings.

The seedlings are transported from the tree nurseries to the land in several ways but we are always amazed at how the ladies carry the tree seedlings on their heads.

Patricia, from Sombe Village, said, "These trees will enhance the community health by creating green spaces that improve mental wellbeing, soil quality and assist water conservation. This will help combat climate change."

Alinafe lives in Nakudze Village and is part of a community club of 10 members. They have each planted out 1,000 seedlings, taking it in turns to help each other plant them. She said, "I am happy because my village has experienced a high rate of deforestation and now, thanks to tree planting, the area will be covered and protected from strong winds that can destroy our houses."

Margaret is one of the project beneficiaries from Sosola Village. She said, "I am really happy because we know that in years to come we will no longer need to buy firewood as we will have our own woodlots. We may even be able to sell some bundles of firewood to earn money."

Here is Lincy, and members of Ntenje and Yokonia Clubs, off to plant their trees.



LINCY



NTENJE CLUB MEMBERS



YOKONIA CLUB MEMBERS

Mr Mwale welcomed the pine tree project as he appreciates the need for sustainable sources of timber. This year he has raised 2,300 seedlings and he and his family have planted them out on their land.

Mr Mwale said, "I have warmly welcomed the project as it embarks on environmental restoration and sustainability. We will harvest the trees and produce timber which is a source of income, economically boosting our households."

This is the first year that Wainesi has planted trees. With the help of her son, Chisomo, they raised 2,000 seedlings. She said, "I am grateful for this project because it has helped us protect existing trees and replace those we have lost."

Mr. Mguntha has planted 1,560 tree seedlings. He said, "I am very happy and grateful for the arrival of this organisation. Much of the land is bare, and we have long lacked the support that this organisation has now provided. This initiative will help our community restore much of the bare land and contribute to replacing the lost vegetation cover."

Stanley Ndhlovu lives in Chankhanza Ndhlovu Village with his wife and two children. They have raised 4,500 seedlings and were motivated to join the project to guarantee a future income for their family. In addition, they wanted to help fight deforestation.

Stanley said, "Our environment is deteriorating due to people cutting down trees. You can see bare land in this community so to address this is why I am part of this project. Next year I want to plant more trees and these trees, in future, will produce timber that will aid us, and our families, economically."

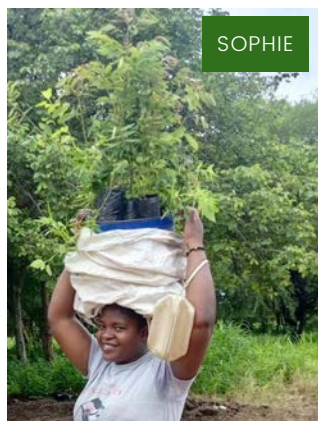


Our teams get involved in the work too, supporting their tree farmers to plant out the thousands of seedlings. Below is Sophie lending a hand to Jailos – they even had her carrying seedlings on her head.

Tigwilizane Community Club from Sombe Village demonstrated more teamwork as they planted out the 7,000 seedlings raised in their tree nursery. They said how they are very happy to be planting seedlings because they know that in the future they will grow into big trees that give shade and wood.

Hastings has planted 1,000 seedlings too. In his tree nursery he raised a variety of seedlings including mbawa and mtangatanga seedlings.

He said, "Joining the tree planting programme with Ripple Africa was the greatest adventure because these trees will benefit me in many ways; as a source of timber, firewood, and giving us cleaner air."



Yesaya is another farmer who has raised and planted 1,000 seedlings. With a determined smile, Yesaya transported his seedlings in a wheelbarrow to his land.

Yesaya said, "Each tree represents a commitment that future generations will benefit from."

Mr and Mrs Londa live in Chisaka Village and with the help of their children, planted out the 2,800 seedlings that they raised. They have planted acacia trees as they will help improve soil fertility.

Mr and Mrs Jimu live in Chisaka Paphala Village and have planted 1,000 trees. They said, "Despite our old ages we are not planting these trees for ourselves but for the hope and growth of our grandchildren."

Mr Statelo, one of our tree farmers, also recognises the importance of teaching children about trees. Gathering his children and grandchildren together, he showed them how to carefully plant the seedlings out. They then worked as a family to plant 1,500 seedlings.

He said, "Due to scarcity of timber and firewood in my community, I decided to plant more trees on my farm. I have planted eucalyptus, mbawa, acacia and mtangatanga seedlings."



This year we supported several primary schools to plant trees too including Katonya Primary School near Masewe Village in Nkhotakota. They planted 800 trees within the school grounds.

The headteacher thanked Ripple Africa for bringing this development to the communities. He said, "In the past years of teaching Agriculture I was only able to teach theory but this year the pupils have been able to practice planting trees. These are a living memory of their commitment to a brighter greener tomorrow."



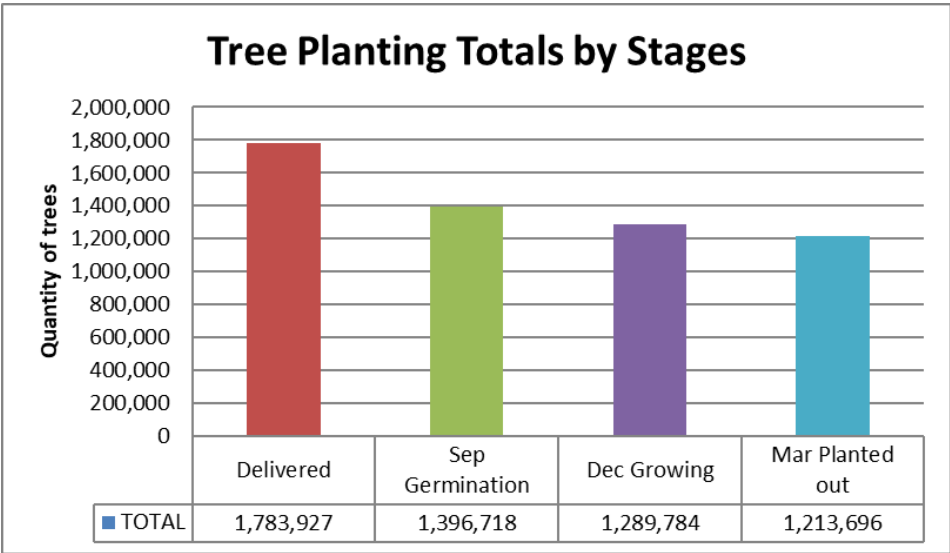
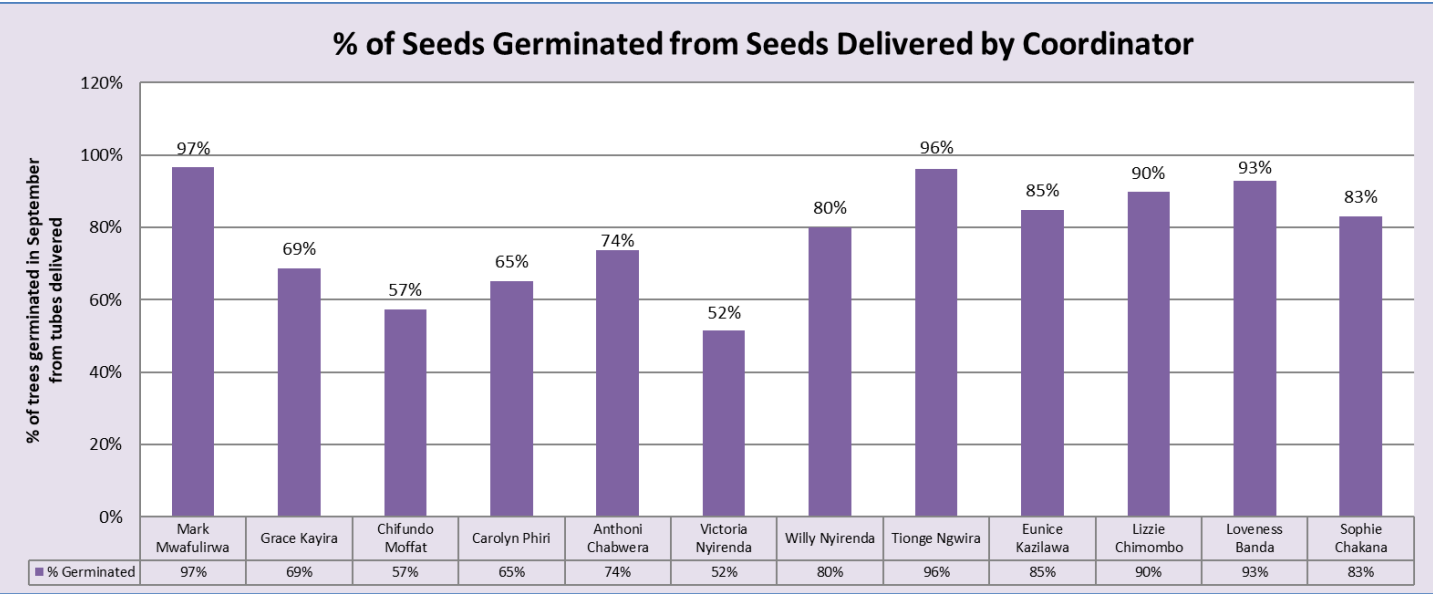
Overall Summary

Despite several challenges affecting seedlings at nursery level during the 2025/26 tree planting season, 1,039 farmers planted out 1,213,696 tree seedlings across the three Districts.

Of the seeds delivered, 78% germinated and 87% of the germinated seedlings survived to be planted out between December and March.

Whilst all three Districts experienced drought and flood issues, farmers in Mzimba District had additional challenges. These included a delayed start for some farmers, poor batches of seeds in certain areas, pests and diseases, and seedlings being stolen.

For the 2026/27 tree planting season we will endeavour to ensure farmers are registered on time and receive additional seeds to avoid too many losses if seeds do not germinate. We will reinforce best practice when it comes to tree nursery location and seedling care to reduce the risk of seedlings being stolen or damaged.



Previous Farmer Visits

As well as monitoring this season's farmers and clubs, we checked in with families from previous years to see how their trees are growing.

Katrina has eight children and six grandchildren. Life has become harder and harder as the years have gone by. She said, "We used to have lots of trees and reliable rainfall. This is not the case now. I wanted to plant trees for my children so that they benefit in future."

She planted 4,000 acacia trees on degraded farmland. Her plan is to plant thousands more and her son, Severiano, is willing to help. He said, "My mother raised me, this is the time for me to give back and help her."

The Kalumo family wanted to plant trees so that they have their own woodlot as they rely on firewood for cooking. They buy firewood because there are no trees where they live but as their trees grow, they will be able to coppice branches to use.

Whilst the majority of their 400 acacia trees are growing well, their mtangatanga seedlings did not survive. John Kalumo said, "A few were affected by pests but people let their animals roam and local goats came and ate them."

Elizabeth and Henderson are proud of the 1,450 eucalyptus, mtangatanga, acacia, and mbawa trees that are growing. They are planning for their children's future.

Elizabeth said, "We have seven children and more than 30 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. These trees will provide poles, firewood, and timber, help fight deforestation and reduce drought."



We visited the Environment Club at Kasamba Community Day Secondary School. Since the trees were planted, the 30 students who are members of the Environment Club take it in turns to make sure the trees are watered, and the ground around them is weeded. Some of these trees are being grown for timber and Tione Magomer, a Form 4 student said, "This will help the school as they will be able to sell the timber and use the money to buy resources to improve the school for everyone learning there."



Former teacher Sylvester and his wife Annie love trees and we are proud to share photos showing how their trees have grown.



Sylvester and Annie want their trees to be healthy so have really gone the extra mile. They have dug a shallow well within their home compound so that they have their own source of water.



Sylvester explained, "From June to November we water the trees every three days. Each tree receives one litre of water."

Chief Bango planted 700 acacia trees in 2023 and 1,200 in 2024. He is delighted that they are growing but he said the biggest challenge that he had faced was rainfall.



Speaking about his motivation to plant trees, he said, "I want there to be trees in my village. There is lots of deforestation so we now buy firewood and it is expensive. We are grateful to have a fuel-efficient cookstove. These trees will provide us with firewood and help forests grow again."



Pine Tree Carbon Project

In addition to our non-carbon tree planting, we have a team of 72 staff, 55 of whom are Coordinators, working with 2,761 additional farmers in Mzimba District as part of a carbon project. This year they planted over 2.5 million seedlings.

From a tree planting perspective, the project runs in a similar way to our non-carbon tree project. Coordinators, with the support of Area Managers, run awareness meetings to explain the project and register interested farmers. Then, with the help of Tree Volunteers and Lead Farmers, they work with the farmers to ensure tree nurseries are built, planting tubes filled, and show them how to transplant germinated pine seedlings from nursery bed to planting tubes.

Training is provided to the farmers on how to prepare their land, known as marking and pitting, ahead of millions of seedlings being planted out when the rains start.

However, to be part of a carbon project we have to register with a carbon accreditation body. This requires significantly more funding to enable us to carry out the rigorous requirements to prove beyond doubt that the project is generating carbon credits.





JOSEPH



ELTON



PATRICK

Joseph, Elton, and Patrick each have exceptional tree nurseries. Farmers are trained to set out their seedlings in groups of 200 in their nurseries so that it is easier to manage and count. Joseph has raised 3,500 seedlings, Elton 4,800, and Patrick, 2,200 seedlings.

Rameck Chirwa and Mlowoka Chirwa, no relation, have also been busy. Rameck has enough degraded farmland to plant out 7,000 seedlings, and Vincent has 3,000 seedlings.



RAMECK



VINCENT

This is the first year of tree planting for 62-year-old Aliness. She has planted 800 seedlings in her woodlot and she actively participates in all of the activities that are involved with raising and planting seedlings.

Here you can see a tree planting demonstration on her woodlot. Community members were trained on the correct planting techniques. Aliness said, "The trees represent a future for environmental protection and improved livelihoods for my family."



ALINESS



Davat is another farmer in the project. He is 60 years old and at the start of the season he wanted to plant out 600 seedlings and we are happy to say that he was successful!



DAVAT

Davat expressed his gratitude and passion for all the good things that come with the trees “when they are out there breathing” and is looking forward to more years of bringing nature back to its best colour – green!



BRIGHTWELL



SIMON

Brightwell Mumba, Simon Chiumia, Elesiya Kamanga, and Mr and Mrs Thera are more tree farmers. They have planted out 600, 1,069, 600, and 1,000 seedlings respectively.



ELESIYA



MR AND MRS THERA

Mr Thera said, “We are very excited to be planting trees because they will help us when we are older as we will rely on these trees as a source of income.”



In addition to the tree planting component of the project, the carbon requirements require our teams to carry out other activities throughout the year, and beyond, for the life of the trees in accordance with necessary compliance measures. These include soil and biomass sampling, teaching farmers the benefits of pruning and thinning trees – and how to do this – and plotting woodlots on an app to allow for long-term monitoring of the trees as they grow.



Forest Conservation

Our project covers 340 sq.km of forest and works with 180 Forest Conservation Committees in three locations.

In Nkhata Bay District our team consists of John (Skip), Andrew, Catherine, and Owen, and in Mzimba District we have Bryne, Hope, Annie and new staff member Ntombi who joined the team in April. In Kandoli Forest, we support Forest Conservation Committees by funding awareness meetings ahead of the dry season.

In Mzimba District the aim is to protect and help regenerate Choma Hill which was lost to charcoal production, and in Nkhata Bay District it is about protecting existing forests.

The Forest Conservation Committees continue to patrol their forested areas, make firebreaks to avoid wildfires getting out of control, and remove weeds and clear grass which helps to stimulate secondary tree growth. In Mzimba District, our team, and Forest Conservation Committees, support Forestry Guards to set up patrols and roadblocks to confiscate illegal charcoal and timber.

Patrols during 2025 confiscated 411 bags of charcoal, 80 timber planks, 14 bicycles, two motorbikes, and two cars.



This year we have been updating local bylaws as several sections were out of date. Our teams support the Forest Conservation Committees but it was becoming more challenging to deter people from illegally chopping down trees as the fines, in today's money, were not that high.

Therefore meetings have taken place with various local organisations including Village Natural Resource Committees to discuss and amend the bylaws.

One Forest Conservation Committee confiscated a chainsaw and the owner was fined 500,000MK. The owner negotiated the fine down to 250,000MK (approx. £110/\$145), and when a fine is paid, any confiscated tools are returned.

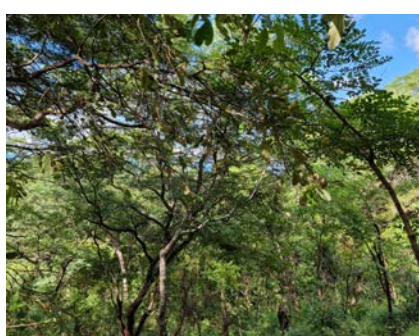
The Committee keep the money, and they used some of it to hire a vehicle to ferry sand for a community building project, and the rest to buy work boots, tools, and to fund more patrols.



Njasa Forest Conservation Committee explained that the challenges are real. Mabush is the Chairman and he said, "The forest is too big to manage so we need paint to mark the boundaries but even so, people from the Southern Region of Malawi are moving in and chopping down our trees to sell in Lilongwe and Blantyre."

He continued, "The ones we catch we take to the Chief and they pay a fine but these fines are small as the economy has changed. We try to educate the offenders, some even go to court. They are not local people so they don't care."

Mabush is keen to involve local children so that they learn about the importance of forest conservation as they will become future committee members.



Catherine Banda, one of our Forest Conservation Coordinators, provided a Q&A to explain the how the project works.

Q: How do people know what trees are protected so to not cut them down?

A: Coordinators work with local Chiefs who show the villagers the protected areas.

Q: What about strangers who don't live in those villages?

A: The Forest Conservation Committee carry out patrols, and the local villagers can fine anyone they catch who is cutting down a tree in a protected area. They can then use that money to do more patrols and build more signs showing it is a protected area.

Q: What about people who are new to a village?

A: Any new settlers meet with the village Chief who will educate them on the protected areas.

Q: How do the Community Volunteers help?

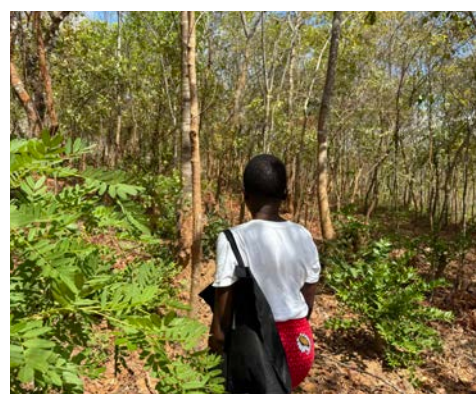
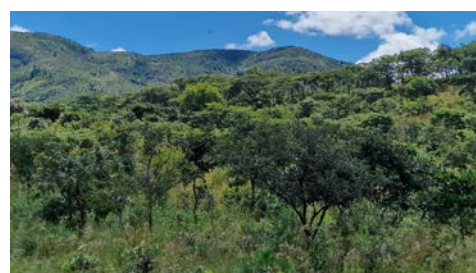
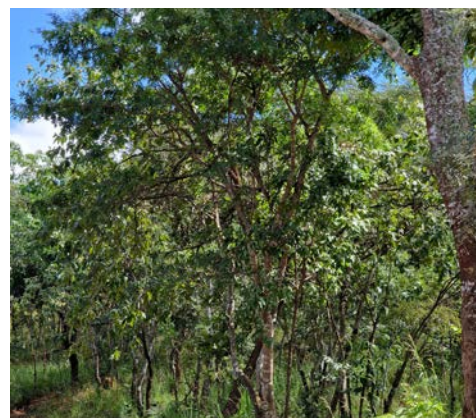
A: They patrol the protected areas with the committees but they also teach people about soil erosion, the benefits of using a fuel-efficient cookstove, and farming on correct land.

Q: Are there Committees located up in the hills?

A: Yes, even in the hard to reach areas there are Forest Conservation Committees because people from other Districts will still come to illegally cut down trees.

Q: Are there any other ways that the Forest Conservation Committees can generate an income?

A: Yes, in some areas they have beehives or they forage for mushrooms to sell. One Committee set up a soap business, I (Catherine) have taught some of the women how to cook different dishes and how to make clothes. I teach them how to budget and save money, and some of them have set up Village Banks.





We visited Kalani Forest Conservation Committee to see how they are continuing to protect their forest. Simon is their Chairman and he was proud to share updates.

He said, “People can see the benefits of having trees, even being able to forage for mushrooms saves us money. We are setting up more beehives too, we have seven but our vision is to have 50 so that we have a sustainable business which will help us help our children. We have been saving money in the Village Bank and when we had enough, we bought timbers to make the hives.”

The group have been carrying out other activities including “singling out” which means they remove single trees, improving the overall growth and quality of a forest. They also collect any deadwood to use as firewood.

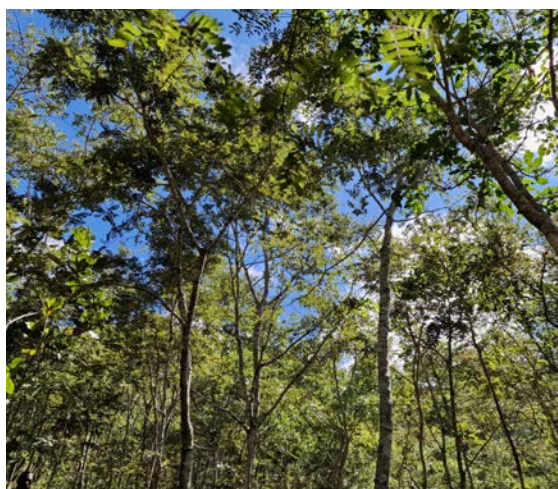
Simon continued, “When we started, the trees were like cherubs, little baby ones. Now they are growing and we want to transfer our knowledge to others so that the trees continue to grow.”



Kunene Forest Conservation Committee are also experiencing the benefits of protecting the forest. This Forest Conservation Committee has 12 active members and 23 other members who support at various times throughout the year making firebreaks and weeding.

Ireen is the Chairlady and she is passionate about protecting the forest. She said, "There are approximately five hectares of forest and it is our responsibility to protect the old trees and encourage new growth. Since we started in 2018/19, we now have beehives in the forest and there are wild animals including snakes, monkeys and rabbits. Mushrooms grow too so we collect the edible ones for relish."

The families involved in the Forest Conservation Committee benefit from the honey in the beehives, and they catch rabbits too. Ireen's son, Gift, is 18 years old and instead of catching wild rabbits, he has set up his own rabbit farm so that he can earn a living.



Meeting three generations of the same family is always a pleasure. Kevin, Ireen's grandfather, joined the visit to the forest. He moved to the area in 1986 and he said, "When I moved here for work there were not many people. Now there are many and the problem is they want to cut down the trees for charcoal and timber. I am happy to see trees growing again."

The Kunene Forest Conservation Committee know charcoal producers and sellers. One is a neighbour, Sanderson. He said, "I want to protect the trees but I have four children who I need to provide for. There is demand from the city for charcoal and by selling it, I can clothe my children and pay school fees."

This is a big issue across Malawi. There are no real alternatives for city dwellers, and therefore, charcoal is still in high demand.

Briquettes

In 2025 we worked with seven clubs to make briquettes. They burn agricultural waste and turn it into this alternative cooking fuel; a potential solution for those living in the cities and using charcoal.

During the year, these clubs made 712 50kg sacks of briquettes which they have sold. The groups, which includes Chiomba Club, sell around eight to 10 sacks a month to local customers. However, in 2026 we will be expanding the project and having 60 clubs so that we can trial the briquettes with more households in urban areas, including Mzuzu which is a big charcoal using area.

Overall

Despite the challenges facing the forested areas in parts of Malawi where we are working, this is such an important project and the Forest Conservation Committees, and our teams, remain dedicated to serving their communities to protect this incredible natural resource.

Our tree planting and fuel-efficient cookstove projects provide solutions to some of the causes of deforestation and support the protection and regeneration of forests in Malawi.

On behalf of everyone involved, thank you very much for your support.



SANDERSON AND HIS WIFE, JUDITH



CHIOMBA CLUB MAKING BRIQUETTES

