

**Discover News-sheet**  
**for colleagues in Africa**  
**July 2019**



Let each person plant ten trees every year!

The climate is changing. I think everyone in Africa knows that! Especially in the rural areas where people depend on rain and sunshine to grow their own agricultural produce for their livelihoods – and lives! Climate change for Africa is a climate crisis!



A beautiful African, indigenous tree in the botanical gardens in Entebbe, Uganda

Why is the climate changing? Mainly because of the activities of the rich world:

- Coal is mined and burned to generate electricity,
- Oil and petrol are consumed for transport;
- Cars and lorries, international shipping and aeroplanes,
- Oil, gas or coal is used to heat houses, offices and factories and to power manufacturing industries.
- Modern intensive agriculture also makes things much worse; forests are destroyed to plant animal fodder, oil is used to manufacture synthetic fertilisers and pesticides and by using these agricultural chemicals much less carbon is stored in the ground. Organic agriculture is far kinder to the earth.

Throughout the world the climate crisis is causing havoc:

- Dry seasons have become longer, which cause crop failure,

water shortages and even forest fires.

- Rainfall often comes late and sometimes even not at all.
- When the rains do come, then it sometimes comes with such force that it causes flooding and landslides which destroy crops and cause people to lose their homes.

What can one do?

We can plant ten trees every year!



A scene of devastation at Kirembe Hospital, Kasese, Uganda, in 2015 after terrible floods swept away some of the hospital buildings. The cause? Deforestation on the Rwenzori Mountains.

It has been suggested that, if throughout the world we plant one trillion trees, then even worse effects of climate change can be avoided, until many more steps are taken to reduce global warming. That means keeping the average increase in temperature throughout the world to less than 2°C.

One trillion trees! That is 1,000,000,000,000 trees!

Today there are 3 trillion trees on the earth. That is four hundred (400) for every person on earth. It sounds a lot! But it is not enough! And still today, more trees are being cut than are being planted.

For each person on earth, we need 133 more trees!

In Africa, trees are cut for firewood and for making charcoal. How many people who cut trees also plant them?

In many continents, large firms destroy natural forest to plant commercial crops. The destruction of the Mabira Forest in Uganda for a sugar cane plantation is just a small example of a massive, world-wide problem. How many firms that cut trees plant them – I fear none! And if they do, they often plant eucalyptus and no indigenous trees.

On the other hand, many countries throughout the world are actively beginning to plant trees. For example, the Kenyan government is currently working with public and private stakeholders to reach their target of 10% tree cover for the country – a large increase from the current 6.2%. Over the past few years the UK government has funded an NGO to plant 9 million trees in a new “National Forest”.

But in the rest of Africa? In your village or town? In your compound and garden?

### The “great green wall”

This is a very encouraging initiative. With international support trees are being planted along an 8000 kilometre long line from west to east across Africa to stop the spread of the Sahara desert. This band is to be 15 kilometres wide! That is a lot of trees!

Objectives: By 2030, the aim is to restore 100 million hectares of currently degraded land; take 250 million tons of carbon out of the atmosphere and create 10 million green jobs. This will support communities living along the Wall to:

- Grow fertile land, one of humanity’s most precious natural assets
- Grow economic opportunities for the world’s youngest population
- Grow food security for the millions that go hungry every day
- Grow climate resilience in a region where temperatures are rising faster than anywhere else on Earth
- Grow a wonder of the world spanning 8000 km across Africa

These outcomes give an enormous contribution to sustainable development!

### The benefits of planting trees

1. Trees influence rainfall. Many trees together prevent desertification, prevent land becoming arid in the heat of the sun and encourage rainfall.



Trees provided shade for meetings and discussions. Here in Kabongezo village in Uganda Rehema Namyalo prepared the group for the forthcoming training event.

- Trees conserve moisture. Under trees and other plants earth remains moist. Under big trees such as *Faidherbia albida*<sup>1</sup> which also improves soil fertility, crops can be grown very successfully. Earth that is exposed to the full heat of the sun dries out very fast. This earth also loses fertility, as the surface soil reaches a high temperature which destroys essential microorganisms.
- Trees influence the local micro-climate Under the trees it is much cooler. These two pictures show a city street, one with trees and one without. See the difference in temperature! There is no doubt as to which is more pleasant for living and working. And also no doubt which is better for most crops out in the countryside.



- Trees prevent soil erosion and landslides. A vast amount of fertile top soil is lost every year as heavy rains wash soil into the rivers. Tree loss of the mountains prevents rainwater from being absorbed into the ground, when it is then able to feed springs and water holes. Instead it swells the rivers which come down the mountainsides in torrents, which cause great damage, as on the slopes of the Rwenzori and Elgon Mountains in Uganda.
- Trees help to clean the air of pollution. It is estimated that 90% of the world population suffers a shortened life expectancy because of dirty air. Ninety per cent!!! The causes are mainly cars, lorries and pollution and smoke from houses and factories, but rural Africa is also affected because women cook using wood fires, usually with no chimney.
- Some trees provide fruit, some provide medicine, some provide timber for building and making furniture and some increase soil fertility.
- Trees provide habitat for insects, birds and animals. Many insects, especially bees and butterflies, pollinate our crops. Birds are very beautiful, and birds and animals together are part of the rich heritage that makes Africa different from the rest of the world. Once they are lost, they are lost forever!



Judith and Patrick in Jinja have established a very large garden and a successful business with the name Busaino Fruits and Herbs. They have a big variety of trees, which provides ideal conditions for a wide range of plants and habitat for many species of birds.



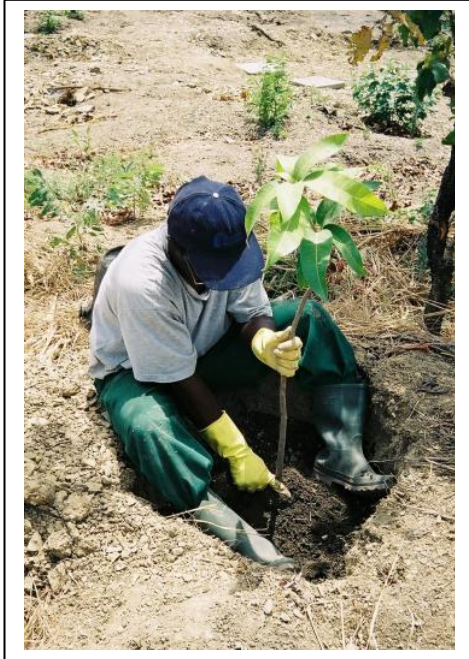
<sup>1</sup> [http://www.worldagroforestry.org/sites/default/files/F.a\\_keystone\\_of\\_Ev\\_Ag.pdf](http://www.worldagroforestry.org/sites/default/files/F.a_keystone_of_Ev_Ag.pdf)

## In conclusion

Please, wherever you live, make it your target, and encourage every member of your group, to plant at least 10 trees every year. In this way, together, we may avoid the worst effects of climate change.

## Examples of tree planting initiatives from SALEM International in Togo and Uganda

The SALEM tree initiative in Togo has a large tree nursery and is engaged in a programme to reforest neighbouring hills.



When trees are planted, they must be planted with care, and then watered and cared for. Here a large hole has been dug in the dry earth. This was filled with compost, which both fertilises and help to retain moisture, and the tree is being planted leaving a depression, so that when it is watered the water goes straight to the roots.

The project leader in Togo, Gbati Nikabou, has very happily reported that, two weeks ago, on his reforested hillside it rained heavily. In the town, only a short distance away, there was not a single drop of rain. Trees are a blessing!

When SALEM-Uganda was established 38 years ago, a variety of indigenous trees were planted. Today when people enter the site, they ask, “How is it that the air is so cool and fresh?” The answer is clear!

Nearby on Mount Elgon, deforestation has caused terrible flooding, landslides and loss of lives. SALEM-Uganda has a large tree nursery and is part of a major tree planting initiative on the mountain. The picture shows part of their tree nursery, an essential item in any major tree planting activity.

I wish you success!

When you have planted as many trees as possible around your home and village, visit your local school and plant trees around the school compound with teachers and pupils. It is vitally important that children appreciate the importance and urgency of tree planting – and know the benefits they can enjoy from those trees.

Keith Lindsey

