



Once again in 2022 Discover partners planted and cared for over 33,000 tree seedlings and continued to care for those planted in previous years.

Planting trees is giving many benefits - not only for the environment, but also directly for the families and communities involved: Improved soil fertility and water retention prevent soil erosion, thereby also reducing the risk of flooding, which has threatened the lives and livelihoods of many people in Africa in recent years. Furthermore, the trees provide fruit, herbal medicines and timber, thereby providing income for the families.

An extra unforeseen benefit has been that, because of improved nutrition, enhanced income, and a reduced need to walk long distance to collect firewood, stress levels in many families have declined, and the incidence of domestic violence has decreased.

We are delighted to share this summary of the work of some of Discover's partners in Africa with you.



Martha Nyanga plants a „lucky bean” tree with pupils at the Fern Valley Primary School in Zimbabwe.

Schools work



During Keith Lindsey's visit to Zimbabwe and Malawi in November 2022, he spoke with these pupils at the Fern Valley primary School and was delighted to hear how much the pupils knew about the value of trees.

Many partners in Zimbabwe and Uganda work closely with teachers and pupils to plant trees in the school grounds, which are often extensive and very bare. In this way, children learn how to plant and care for trees and begin to develop a love for nature. They also gain an understanding of the important part care of the environment plays in ensuring their survival during droughts and when the rains are torrential.

When the children are enthused, they talk to their parents, and the teaching spreads

widely.

Tree propagation – seeds collection and their germination in a nursery

For example, Makabuli Yusuf, based at Salem Uganda near Mbale, coordinates a programme in which many communities on the Elgon Mountains in the east of the country collect seeds of many tree species, with a particular emphasis on those that are indigenous. They are then cleaned, and distributed to many community nurseries, before being



Youths in Budaka District, Mount Elgon, collect Jackfruit seeds.

planted on the slopes of Mount Elgon. The people on the slopes of the Elgon Mountains have suffered many landslips, and many lives have been lost- Through the work and dedication of Yusuf and his colleagues, many communities are involved in this programme, and are thus taking responsibility for their future security.



Nelson Moyo in Malawi has his own nursery and coordinates many groups of people who collect seeds of indigenous trees and fruit trees and germinate them in their nurseries. They are then distributed to schools and farmers.

Care of trees and agroforestry

After trees have been planted in the rainy season, they must be cared for. That means, most of all, watering them in the early stages when the

weather is dry. Each planted tree is the responsibility of a specific person. Managed in this way, the survival rate has been very high.

As the trees grow higher, farmers can begin to practice agroforestry. This is where trees provide shade and protection to vegetables growing beneath. The trees may be those that increase soil fertility, such as leucaena, fruit trees such as jackfruit, timber trees such as grevillea or indigenous trees such as *Prunus africana*. All trees provide shade and enable heavy rains to soak into the ground, thus preventing soil erosion and increasing the water table.



Young Bwambale Jaydin stands next to a *Prunus africana* tree. When this picture was taken in April 2022, the tree was already 2½ years old and two meters tall. Yams, beans and cassava are grown in the shade of the trees.

Sometimes there are major challenges!



The picture shows a tree being planted along the boundary of a sugar cane field following a “reconciliation football match” between sugar cane growers and farmers in Kaliro District.

In Kaliro District, Uganda, Eric Kihuluka and his colleagues met resistance when talking to farmers about the benefits of practising agroforestry – the farmers preferred to rent their land to sugar cane growers, who were even telling the farmers to cut trees down. A massive campaign was organised, in which a total of 165 villages were visited, as a result of which the majority of the farmers were persuaded that developing agroforestry provides a far more sustainable future for them and their families in the long term.

Natural regeneration and tree protection.



Joachim Nyamande, Director of Discover Zimbabwe, stands by the fence surrounding the protected area for natural regeneration at the EcoFarm.

Fencing an area to protect it from animals and passers-by can sometimes be a less expensive and more effective way of reforesting an area. The tree species that grow are predominantly indigenous species. The Green4Life project in Zimbabwe has fenced an area at its “EcoFarm” and at two primary schools. Existing trees are thus being protected and trees that spontaneously appear are pruned and protected. Such areas are very attractive, so much so that one of the Zimbabwean primary schools is developing it as a “recreation and cultural centre”.

Biogas as a source of fuel for cooking

The use of biogas as an alternative to firewood for cooking is being pioneered at the EcoFarm of the Green4Life project in Zimbabwe. Biogas units take advantage of the locally available cow and goat manure. Cooking with biogas is clean and smoke free, saving the eyes and lungs of the women doing the cooking. Best of all, the women do not have to walk long distances to find firewood, nor must they therefore carry heavy loads of firewood back on their heads.



A biogas unit at the EcoFarm is the centre of attention for students from the University of Zimbabwe.

Community support



Provision of clean water: Although Discover now concentrates almost exclusively on planting and protecting trees, we have occasionally responded to other urgent needs in the communities. Here in Kasasa village, southern Uganda, for example, under the leadership of Judith Nambi, Discover supported the construction of a protected source of water. As a result, the incidence of diarrhoea and other intestinal problems has plummeted and the community is delighted.

A community clean-up day: Emmanuel Masereka of BioGardens, Kasese, western Uganda, involved over 40 volunteers, including many local leaders, in picking up the rubbish in Kirembe village. 20 bags of rubbish were collected. On the same day 150 tree seedlings of markhamia, grevillea, citrus and cassia were planted. These species were chosen as they are not eaten by goats.



Prevention of flooding

The people living on the foothills of the Rwenzori Mountains in western Uganda have suffered terribly from flooding. As a result of the combined effects of deforestation and climate change, torrential rains have cascaded down the mountainsides, with the result that the rivers have overflowed their banks and caused devastation. In the hope of preventing such catastrophes in the future, Kenja Thomas and his colleagues have planted bamboo along the banks of the River Nyamwamba, as shown in the picture. Bamboo is fast growing and deep-rooted.



Training



Rehema Namyalo gave tree seedlings from her own nursery to a group of farmers she trained associated with the Nyakayaga Child Development Centre in Uganda.

Training continues to be an essential part of the work of all Discover partners, and this is certainly important when working with trees. Whether speaking with farmers or school children, people must know, for example, how best to plant a tree, how to care for it and protect it, what the different species of trees are and their various characteristics, the amazing benefits of agroforestry and the importance of ground cover,

Conclusion

The absorption of CO₂ is seldom mentioned by people in Africa, who are more urgently concerned about meeting their day to day needs. Planting and protecting trees make a vast improvement to the quality of life of the people and

communities concerned. In preventing flooding and enabling communities to survive the ever longer periods of drought, one could even say, without exaggeration, that planting and caring for trees saves lives. Thanks for this goes to the outstanding dedication and hard work of our partners in Africa, and of course to the moral and financial support of our members and supporters here in the UK and Germany, including Winnenden town council. For all, we are deeply grateful.

Thank you for your interest and commitment!

Keith Lindsey and the Discover Team