

Discover Newsletter – May 2024



Preventing fatal landslides on the slopes of the Rwenzori Mountains in Uganda

Dear Friends of Discover,

Many years ago, Robert Bwambale in Maliba, near Kasese in Uganda, formed the group “Bumbura Maliba” – meaning “Discover Maliba”. The group has over 60 members.

In September 2017 there was a serious outbreak of typhoid in Maliba Sub-County. Members of Bumbura Maliba visited over 100 homes, inspected the toilets and made recommendations about hygiene and how the toilets must be improved. With support from Discover Robert then organised in February 2018 a 2-day district seminar which was attended by 101 people, 61 women and 40 men. The participants included many community leaders, such as teachers, local authority officials and religious and political

leaders. As a result, people worked together to improve health and hygiene not only in Maliba Sub-County (population ca. 55,000 and area 217 km²) but also in the entire Kasese District (population ca. 750,000 and with an area of 3390 km² it covers half the area of the Rwenzori Mountain range). The event was very successful: Today there are very few cases of typhoid,



5 of the participants of the typhoid conference who received T-shirts. The slogan on the back: “Bumbura: By working together the entire community in Maliba can be healthy.”



Robert Bwambale (right) with farmer Paul, one of many farmers who have planted indigenous trees such as the *Prunus africana* shown here.

certainly in Maliba but also in throughout the Kasese district.

Over the past 3 years Robert and Bumbura Maliba have concentrated on planting trees. For this reason: The climate crisis has had a severe impact on the entire area below the Rwenzori Mountains. On several occasions torrential rains have caused the rivers flowing from the mountains to flood, destroying homes, crops and even the Kilembe Mines Hospital, which has had to be completely relocated. Many lives have been lost. Many displaced people are still living in a camp for displaced people.

In 2023 alone, 3800 tree seedlings were distributed and planted in Maliba and neighbouring sub-counties. Robert reports that, whereas at first farmers needed to be persuaded to plant trees, today they understand how important trees are and constantly come to him asking for more seedlings.

As a result of the major tree planting work that has been undertaken, the impact of the climate crisis has been significantly reduced. The tree canopies and groundcover provided by vegetables, and especially beans, ensure that the heavy rains soak steadily into the ground instead of causing major soil erosion. Trees have been planted in



Kabughho Joy helping her parents to plant trees in their garden. Robert says, "This is the next generation that we want to equip with a love of trees."

several locations to stabilise the ground where landslips had previously occurred. Deep-rooting bamboos have been planted along the banks of the rivers prone to flooding near human settlements.

In drought periods, because of the tree and ground cover, much more moisture is retained in the soil. Much less water is lost through evaporation.

But the communities lying under the Rwenzori Mountains never know when the next disaster will occur. The slopes of the mountains are very extensive – the Rwenzori Mountain range is 120 kilometres long and 65 km wide. Many areas are devoid of trees and the risk of landslips is very real.

The latest landslip occurred only just over one week ago in the neighbouring sub-county to Maliba. No lives were lost, but many buildings and other property were destroyed. Robert immediately reacted by saying, "The entire



This landslip occurred at midnight on 24 April in Buhunga village, Kilembe Sub-County.

Rwenzori region has more than 6 Districts. The leaders of this region should pass a law to demand that landowners must plant trees on any bare land. In this way the danger of landslips would be much reduced. Otherwise, if we do nothing, more tragedies will occur."

Building on the success of the previous experience with the issue of typhoid, Robert will organise a training conference for about 100 stakeholders – community leaders of all sorts who can educate the local population, promote targeted tree planting and have influence on local policies. Recommendations will be submitted to Maliba Sub-County, and from there hopefully to Kasese District authority.

The total cost of such an event will be about 1000 Euro (ca. £870), or about 10 Euro (£8.70) for each participant. This includes the costs of organisation, a simple lunch for all and t-shirts for at least 50% of the participants printed with an appropriate slogan. T-shirts may sound like an extravagance, but people wear t-shirts proudly and they are an effective form of encouragement and advertising.

We are always very grateful for your financial support, without which our work would not be possible. Our immediate need is to be able to fund this training conference.

With many greetings,

Keith Lindsey and the Discover-Team

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