



If there are no challenges, you are not trying hard enough!

No-one could say that Eric Kihuluka in Uganda is not working hard enough, nor that he has not faced enormous challenges in the past few years.

Eric has so actively and successfully promoted agroforestry in Kaliro District, that many farming families are already benefitting from a better standard of living.

Some people who had left for the towns are returning, because now they see the opportunities for a better life are in the very place that they previously experienced as a dead end.

But Eric, who has been working so hard for the benefit of the community, has faced serious challenges, which have led to violence and even the loss of lives.



Participants in a training event on banana management, planting windbreaks and fodder trees held in November last year.

The problem is sugarcane. Sugar is big business in Uganda. If farmers practice agroforestry and become self-reliant, they are not willing to lease their land for sugarcane production. The sugarcane company sends in people to 'persuade' farmers to rent their land. These men do not take no for an answer and can become very aggressive. Homes have been set alight and several people have died.

The sum of money offered by the representatives of the sugarcane factory is very attractive for poor families, but the money is quickly spent. This leaves families in dire poverty, which can lead to children

being malnourished. With no access to land the men have no work, are inactive, tensions in the family increase, men start drinking or migrate to the towns in search of work leaving the wife, or the oldest child, to raise the family alone.

From July to December last year Eric and his colleagues held many meetings in the villages and spoke with large numbers of farmers. They explained that making a deal to allow their land to be used for growing sugarcane has led to many disasters – not only for families but also for the environment. Sugarcane growing is a monoculture that impoverishes the soil, and harmful chemicals used to destroy the grass contaminate both the soil and water sources.

In December the police escorted Eric to visit 8 villages where he conducted conflict resolution meetings, with success. Thanks to your support, I was able to provide Eric with the funds he needed to make the payments, which are essential in Uganda for police protection especially if a police vehicle is required.



The remains of a family home following the violence. I do not show the gruesome pictures of charred human bodies.

With no time for a break, Eric is now working long days with a team of young people on the agroforestry demonstration farm that he is developing. As I reported in January's newsletter, the 9 acre (4,6 hectare) site is already a training resource for tree growing and agroforestry, which includes keeping domestic animals. It is visited by school groups and farmers. They aim to make the facility self-financing through the sale of young pigs and cows, as well as fruit and vegetables, especially green bananas (matoke) which is a local staple food.

They have set up an irrigation system and recently planted, among other things:

1000 young green banana seedlings.

2000 watermelon seedlings.

5000 tomato seedlings.

2000 aubergine plants.

1500 Japanese aubergines.

Elephant grass for animal feed.

The land purchase has been made possible through the generosity of the owner, who believes in what Eric is doing and is accepting payment well below the market price. Even so, 3000 Euro is still needed to complete the purchase.

Purchase of seedlings, transport, working clothes and modest payment for the worker team adds a further 2500 Euro to the sum required between now and our early summer.

You, our supporters, have already been very generous. However, if you could encourage your church or a local company to help, or suggest another possible source of support, we and Eric and his team



Isooba Labani, a student at Pearl Secondary School, carries trays of tomato seedlings ready for planting.



Students distributing animal manure prior to planting.

in Kaliro District would be more than grateful.

As I have mentioned in previous newsletters, Eric has linked with all schools in Kaliro District who now know the importance of school gardens and planting and caring for trees. He has also partnered with all key political, religious and non-government organisations in Kaliro District and they are now committed to working together for the development of the district. What has been achieved in the name of Discover is very remarkable.

Keith Lindsey and the Discover Team