CELEBRATING ITF’s 90TH BIRTHDAY
with a foreword by HRH Prince of Wales and a conversation with Catriona Baker on recollections on life with ITF founder Richard St. Barbe Baker

REGREENING AFRICA
Farmers on the frontline reversing desertification

BACK TO ETHIOPIA
How 8 million trees have restored the Wof Washa Forest

CHALLENGING THE CORPORATES
How Greenpeace are working to give local people a voice
Welcome to the 2014 edition of the Trees journal celebrating our 90th Anniversary. We would like to thank our Patron, HRH Prince of Wales, for his encouraging words and Catriona Baker and Janine Sundberg for such an intimate insight into the life of ITF’s founder Dr Richard St Barbe Baker OBE.

In our 90th year it is only fitting that we remind ourselves of the importance of the Sahara Challenge led by Richard St Barbe Baker in the 1950’s. The expedition still informs the work of ITF and others and we feature our Trees 4 Livelihoods project in Mali and also the work of the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership in the region.

We highlight some of the important work being undertaken by ITF’s partners in Africa and return to Ethiopia several years after the end of our project in the Wof Washa Forest to look at its continuing impact.

The role of some multinational corporations on deforestation continues to be a hot topic and Greenpeace Africa tells us how they are working with local communities to give them a wider voice in challenging destructive large scale operations.

We are pleased to announce new funds for community tree planting and forestry projects in the UK and Africa. This follows on from a successful year in 2013 where we were working on 11 projects in 7 African countries. More than 16,000 people directly benefitted from the projects and over one million trees were planted.

Finally we would like to thank all our contributors and the support of the Big Lottery Fund, the Daphne Bishop legacy, Mrs Ros Cruickshank and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in making the publication of this journal possible.
A Message From HRH Prince of Wales

Mahatma Gandhi once said "What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another." How right he was. Trees play an absolutely critical role in ensuring the stability of the global climate and improving the welfare of humankind, in providing global food, water, timber and energy security and in ensuring that our increasingly stressed ecosystems are sufficiently resilient to have adaptive capacity to cope with our seemingly ever-increasing demands upon them.

It is ninety years since the organization that we now know as the International Tree Foundation was founded by Richard ‘St Barbe’ Baker. After serving with the Royal Horse Artillery in the First World War, St Barbe went to work in Kenya as a young colonial forestry officer. Dismayed by the deforestation he witnessed, he worked with the local Kikuyu clan to found ‘Watu Wa Miti’ (Men of the Trees). In the years that followed, the International Tree Foundation (I.T.F.) has made a significant contribution to reducing deforestation, and its programmes now support a wide range of community based organizations in Africa and the U.K. which are working with local people to make a positive difference to the environment and to the livelihoods of some of the poorest people on Earth.

St Barbe had the foresight to recognize that indigenous forests and climate change are integrally linked; the role that deforestation plays in the loss of stored carbon into the atmosphere is now more widely acknowledged, and beyond dispute. Worryingly, the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (I.P.C.C.) report flags up an additional concern that in many regions trees and forests may themselves suffer the impact of increased temperatures and drought, causing increased tree mortality and associated forest dieback, posing severe risks for carbon storage, biodiversity, wood production, water quality, amenity and economic activity. On a more positive note, the I.P.C.C. recognizes the potential of agroforestry – a particularly important strand of I.T.F.’s work – in helping those communities most vulnerable to environmental degradation, poverty, food and nutritional insecurity and climate change to adapt.

As the late-lamented and greatly missed Wangari Maathai said, "we have a responsibility to protect the rights of generations, of all species, that cannot speak for themselves today. The global challenge of climate change requires that we ask no less of our leaders, or ourselves'.

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In this the International Tree Foundation’s 90th Anniversary year, I wish and pray for your continued success.
Where did you grow up?

Sadly I am the last surviving member of the Burnett family of Mount Cook Station. For those of your readers who are familiar with New Zealand, Mount Cook Station is located on the opposite side of Lake Pukaki from Mount Cook Village, one of the most popular and beautiful tourist destinations in New Zealand.

Mount Cook Station has been an incredibly beautiful place to live with its stunning views of Mount Cook and the Southern Alps and my heart remains there even though I have relocated down country.

Mount Cook Station was taken up by my Scottish grandparents, Andrew and Catherine Burnett in May 1864 and the property has remained in our family’s ownership since then.

When Andrew and Catherine first arrived at Mount Cook Station 150 years ago, there were no trees or in fact much vegetation of any kind, as the indigenous people of New Zealand, the Maori, had burnt everything during their hunting expeditions for the giant bird, the Moa. My grandparents had to scour the banks of the Tasman River for firewood to cook on and heat their modest cob cottage until they were able to plant some trees and harvest their own firewood.

I grew up on Mount Cook Station but my education took place in Timaru, the main population centre for the region. When I left Craighead School for Girls in Timaru, I returned to Mount Cook Station to help my mother, Agnes Ellen Burnett with the keeping of the large homestead and caring for the family, shepherds and farm workers employed on the Station. I also wanted to learn about sheep farming and my father encouraged this. I had my own sheep dog which I trained and used when I joined the rest of the team for mustering.

Tree-planting has always been an important part of Mount Cook Station life and from the time my father, Thomas David Burnett, took over Mount Cook Station from his father in 1903 he oversaw the planting of well over 600,000 trees comprising Douglas Fir, Pines, Larch and a number of deciduous trees including Poplar, Alder, Beech, Oak and Birch.

When my father passed away in 1941, my brother Donald and I took over Mount Cook Station and tree planting has continued to be an important part of Station life up to the present day.

How did you meet Richard and what was he doing at that time of his life?

I first met Richard in Dunedin in 1953, when I accompanied my mother to a function in Richard’s honour at Mr Philip Barling’s beautiful property, ‘Glenfalloch’. Richard returned again for a second visit several years later and we attended another gathering at ‘Glenfalloch’ when the Dunedin Branch
of the Men of the Trees was formed.

Richard presented us both with Men of the Trees badges on that occasion.

In 1958 I travelled through Europe with my aunt and then over to England where we took the opportunity to call on Richard’s good friends Douglas and Eileen Thompson who lived near Winchester. It transpired that they had rescued Richard following a bizarre accident near his home at West End, Southampton, when he had been poisoned after coming into contact with weed-killing spray. The Thompson’s took him to their home near Winchester to recover and by chance I met Richard there again and that was very nice indeed.

Richard and I married on 7 October 1959 at the Church built by my father in South Canterbury, New Zealand, known as St David’s Pioneer Memorial Church. This was a “tree wedding” where our guests brought their choice of tree written on a card and the trees were then delivered and planted at a later date.

**Could you describe what life was like married to Richard? Did you accompany him on any of his travels around the world?**

Richard made his home at Mount Cook Station and it became the Overseas Headquarters for Men of the Trees and the Sahara Reclamation Project. Richard continued to travel extensively both overseas and in New Zealand, where he was in demand as a speaker. He soon got into the routine of spending two summers - one in the northern hemisphere and the other one in New Zealand. Richard only ever spent one winter in New Zealand and that was when he worked on ‘Famous Trees of Bible Lands’ which is one of my favourites from his collection of over 30 books.

He would work from his “den” a small building near the Mount Cook homestead which had wonderful views of the Southern Alps across the valley. Life was extremely busy and I assisted Richard as much as I was able to. I helped him with his correspondence and he often used me as a “sounding board” when he wrote.

Richard used to return to Mount Cook Station in October, quite tired after his overseas travel and he was able to relax and recharge his batteries. He loved to work in the vegetable garden and was a keen compost maker. He set up a very good watering system and loved to potter in the glasshouse which I had given him as a birthday gift. The grape he planted at Mount Cook Station still produces delicious fruit to this day.

He also loved to lie in his long chair with the sun on his limbs but he was soon on his way again to undertake lectures and catch up with his friends in the northern hemisphere. He was truly a world citizen.

Because of my commitments with the running of Mount Cook Station I was unable to join Richard on many of his trips. However, I did attend the first Redwoods Reunion with him at Mill Creek, California, in September 1960.

**Of all the people Richard met, who were the ones who had the biggest impact on him and why?**

This is a difficult question as Richard knew so many people who had an impact on him. However, I would say Senior Chief Josiah Njonjo, Shoghi Effendi and Sir John Chancellor were very important to Richard, and Richard writes about these great men in Part II of my book ‘The Man of the Trees and Other Dedicated Environmental Guardians’.

**Is there an instance in Richard’s life which you think best captures his character and spirit?**

Once again this is a difficult one because he achieved so many amazing things. In the early days there was the Dance of the Trees on 22 July 1922 at Muguga in Kenya when 3,000 young warriors assembled and the first 50 members of the Watu wa Miti (Men of the Trees) were recruited. On that day each member made a solemn promise to do one good deed each day, plant ten trees, seedlings or seeds each year and take care of Trees everywhere.

His work on the Save the Redwoods campaign was also incredibly important as were his Sahara reclamation expeditions. He would be greatly encouraged to know that efforts are continuing in the Sahara and The Great Green Wall project currently under way would delight him.

Even in the latter part of his life, Richard’s spirit never wavered and I helped him plan his ‘Dominion Ride’ for charity in 1962/63 when he rode on horseback from the tip of New Zealand’s North Island to the bottom of the South Island. He was aged 74 at the time.

**What do you consider to be Richard’s greatest legacy?**

Obviously the on-going work of the International Tree Foundation (formerly The Men of the Trees) is a wonderful legacy. I know he would be encouraging members to get behind ITF’s 90th anniversary project to plant one million trees this year and to involve as many others in this project as well.

Richard’s books are another wonderful legacy and I would encourage your members to read any that they can get their hands on. ‘Green Glory’ is essential reading as is ‘Sahara Conquest’ which was named Book of the Year - Millennium Guild of New York M. R. Fresnel Award in 1966 for the book most likely to advance the cause of humanitarianism.

Richard’s other great legacy is undoubtedly the inspiration he gave others to become involved in environmental issues, particularly relating...
to the planting and protection of trees. I know Richard would be immensely proud that his grand daughter Ann Marie Barnes in Sydney, Australia has taken up his cause and he would be delighted at the work Scott Poynton continues to do with The Forest Trust, as well as Barrie Oldfield’s work with Men of the Trees in Western Australia.

“The Man of the Trees” book is a tremendous achievement? What inspired you to write the book?

At age 93, I retired down country due to my health. It was always my intention to write a book when I retired and my first book ‘The Story of James Mackenzie, of the Mackenzie Country New Zealand’ was well received when it was published in 2013. James Mackenzie is a New Zealand folk hero and the Mackenzie District, where I have lived all my life is named after him.

I had always wanted to write a book about Richard and the success of the first book gave me the confidence to write ‘The Man of the Trees and Other Dedicated Environmental Guardians’, which is a far more comprehensive book.

The Richard St. Barbe Baker Collection held at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Canada was an invaluable resource for the book and librarian Patrick Hayes was a wonderful help.

My work on the book was made more difficult because of my failing eyesight, but thanks to the help of Janine Sundberg, my trustee, we managed to do it and the new book has created quite a lot of interest.

Following Richard’s death I am sad to say I lost contact with the organisation and it was wonderful to re-connect following Andy Egan’s email earlier this year. It has been a very enjoyable experience to work on the special edition of ‘The Man of the Trees and Other Dedicated Environmental Guardians’ which we are currently having printed to mark the 90th Anniversary of Men of the Trees/ITF.

90 years on from the foundation of Men of the Trees, and with deforestation continuing apace, how do you see the current situation?

I am extremely worried about the state of Mother Earth and dedicated my book to Her.

For example, at Mount Cook Station climate change has been reflected in our weather patterns and temperatures. Temperatures are noticeably warmer than they used to be and we certainly do not get the hard winters and heavy snow falls we used to.

There was a time when Mount Cook Station land ran right up to the Tasman Glacier, New Zealand’s largest glacier. The Tasman Glacier is retreating at a frightening pace as a result of global warming and there is no doubt that things are very dire for the whole planet.

However, I still have faith that the extraordinary people around the world who are dedicating their lives to saving the planet by halting deforestation, will bring about the change that will save the planet. I have always admired the work His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales does for the environment and also have great admiration for the ‘environmental guardians’ who contributed to Part III of my book.

What message do you have for supporters of ITF and our readers?

Please keep going with your efforts. Involve your family and friends and their friends as well; bring as many other people on board with the ITF as you possibly can. Keep planting trees and remember to protect and care for the trees you already have. It would be wonderful if ITF’s aim to plant one million trees this year could become its annual goal.

In closing I would like to quote Richard when he addressed the meeting on 11 February 1929 which was held to discuss the formation of an association for the promotion of forestry in Palestine - which subsequently became the Men of the Trees:

“The object of the Men of the Trees is to develop a tree sense in every citizen of the world and to encourage all to plant, protect and love their native trees; for forestry is among the oldest and most honourable of all peaceful arts of men and in its practice is unselfish and constructive work.”

Thank you to Janine Sundberg for recording Catriona Baker’s words.
The next phase of ITF’s Tree Power project is now underway with the start of the new school year this month. 16 schools are involved in Devon and Yorkshire.

Tree Power is designed to support schools to teach primary school children in the UK about the importance of forests and trees both locally and globally, so that we raise a generation of environmentally aware, global citizens.

The programme involves an important outdoor learning element as schools are often under pressure to concentrate on intellectual activities over the physical or artistic, which can create detachment from the natural world. This is also an issue outside of the school gate with less than 10% of children now playing in natural spaces like woodlands compared to 40% a generation ago (Natural England 2009).

However as ITF’s previous projects in UK schools have shown, outdoor learning and education about trees can improve children’s concentration, perseverance with tasks and engagement with their studies. Through Tree Power young people will be motivated to become Tree Guardians by planting and managing trees in their school or nearby grounds.

They will also be engaged as Tree Explorers, learning about the importance of trees and forests. Global learning has been shown to be associated with high achievement. It is linked to greater awareness and tolerance of difference as it fosters a sense of global citizenship in children as they grow.

In the long term, Tree Power aims to slow down deforestation by empowering new generations to make informed and responsible decisions in the future, both as consumers and to become Tree Ambassadors supporting action within their communities.

Funding for this phase of the Tree Power project has come from the Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust and from the legacy of Mrs Laura Earnshaw. Mrs Earnshaw had been an active member of the former Yorkshire branch of ITF and the ITF Trustees thought it would be fitting that the legacy would be supporting the next generation of tree guardians in Yorkshire schools.

We will be keeping up to date with the Tree Power project on our website and through our e newsletters.

‘No one will protect what they don’t care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced’ – Sir David Attenborough

In 1664 the horticulturist and diarist John Evelyn published Sylva, the first comprehensive study of British trees. Now authors Gabriel Hemery and Sarah Simblet have taken inspiration from that original work to create a contemporary version. Illustrated by 200 beautiful drawings of trees and woodlands across the British Isles, the book also details 44 tree species describing their history and features.

Published by Bloomsbury at £50. For further details contact Madeleine Feeny on 02076315718 or madeleine.feeny@bloomsbury.com

Daphne Bishop was a long standing member of ITF, her involvement went back to at least the 1950’s with Men of the Trees and she corresponded with Richard St Barbe Baker. Sadly Daphne Bishop passed away last year but her sister Mrs Ros Cruickshank paid tribute to her saying “she had an innate understanding of the importance of trees”.

Daphne’s background was in horticulture having received an MSc from the University of London and her thesis on potato-root eel worms is still referred to today. After retiring she pursued her interest in painting in oils.

Daphne left a legacy to ITF and in consultation with Mrs Cruickshank it was decided that part of the legacy would help towards publishing this edition of the Trees journal and also support our work in Africa through the Trees 4 Livelihoods programme working in the Sahel region in Mali.

ITF is extremely grateful to Daphne for ensuring that trees are planted for future generations.
ITF is grateful for the continued support of our affinity partners including one of our most recent, Ecotricity, the U.K’s leading green energy supplier. The money Ecotricity makes from customer bills goes directly into creating and developing new green energy sources such as wind turbines, solar panels and tidal energy. They have also initiated the Green Britain partnership of which ITF is a member. It is a wide network of environmental and development organisations, politicians, banks, businesses, media and celebrities focusing on promoting sustainability in energy, transport and food.

Ecotricity are the top energy supplier according to the 2014 Which? Energy Satisfaction Survey and they have had the lowest number of complaints in the industry for the last four years. What is more they will donate up to £60 to ITF if you switch your electricity and gas supply to Ecotricity.

ITF has places available for the Brighton Marathon on 12th April 2015 and we would love you to join our team at the event. We are offering discounted places at £25 and in return we will ask you to pledge to raise a minimum sponsorship of £250. You will receive a support pack with fundraising tips, training suggestions and of course our new ITF “Run for the trees” running vest. Running dressed as a tree is optional. We are here to answer any questions you have and we will be there on the day to cheer you on and support you after the event.

To sign up, you can fill in our form on the website or call us on 01293 227065.

Cynthia Campbell-Savours, a Vice President of ITF sadly passed away at the end of last year. ITF would like to pay tribute to Cynthia, an influential supporter who used her political connections to enable ITF to engage in dialogue with the House of Lords and Commons. She also organised many tree planting occasions in London involving the royals and others.

One such event was to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations. A black mulberry tree was planted by ITF and the then UN Director General, Dr Boutros-Boutros Ghali, on the green directly in front of the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre, Westminster. This prestigious occasion was made possible by Cynthia’s contacts and a plaque on the inside wall of the Centre commemorates the event.

In 2004 Cynthia was asked to nominate her favourite tree. She wrote “From my flat in Whitehall Court I look down on rows of London plane trees that garland both sides of the River Thames. They are a joy to see all year round, and valuable for the birds and other wildlife in London.”
As part of ITF’s 90th Anniversary year we are pleased to announce that we are currently calling for grant applications to our UK Community Tree Planting Programme and our Sustainable Community Forestry Programme (Africa).

These grants have been made possible through our new partnership with the Gloucestershire based family business Worktop Express®.

**UK Community Tree Planting Programme**

The programme supports community scale projects that will:
- conserve, restore and protect indigenous trees and woodlands, forests, habitats and associated biodiversity.
- support community engagement in tree planting to promote reforestation
- increase awareness of the importance of trees and forests to environmental and human well-being and encourage social cohesion and inclusion.

Previous projects have included urban based planting to regenerate heritage woodland orchard for the benefit of wildlife and to create access to trees for disabled children. Wildlife corridors have been planted to link existing wooded areas and for one community, native trees and hedgerows were planted around the whole village, together with a small orchard at the local school.

Grants of up to £1000 are available and we will be looking to support at least one project from Gloucestershire.

**Sustainable Community Forestry Programme (Africa)**

The programme supports community scale projects that will:
- conserve, restore and protect indigenous forest resources, habitats and associated biodiversity
- support community-led natural resource management to promote reforestation
- improve nutrition, food security and local livelihoods through sustainable use of trees and related income generation

We also prioritise support for new community based organisations so that we are helping them to build their own capacity to achieve their aims and objectives. Grants of up to £3,000 for a one year project are available with a requirement to plant at least 10,000 trees per every £1000 of funding.

Projects for both programmes need to start between 1st January and 1st April 2015 and the deadline for applications is Friday 17th October 2014. Full details and application packs are available at www.internationaltreefoundation.org
PUTTING THE “FORESTRY” BACK INTO COMMUNITY FORESTRY

With funding from ITF’s Sustainable Community Forestry Programme, Mpingo Conservation and Development Initiative (MCDI) field research into the environmental factors affecting the timber quality of the African blackwood tree. This is a remarkable tree and the reason for supporting this project and the preliminary results are shared below by Abigail Wills and the Mpingo project team.

MCDI is conserving forests and woodlands in south-eastern Tanzania by creating economic incentives for rural communities to manage them sustainably. The local NGO supports rural farmers to collectively take control of, manage and benefit from communal forests. Once they have the legal rights in place, MCDI helps communities to generate ethical, sustainable and long-lasting forest-based income by selling responsibly harvested timber. This provides incentives for local people to manage their forests sustainably – for their own benefit, for future generations, and for the world.

The woodlands where MCDI work contain some of the greatest remaining stocks of East African Blackwood (Dalbergia melanoxylon), or ‘mpingo’ as it is known locally in Tanzania. Mpingo is one of the most valuable timbers in the world and is renowned as one of the finest woods for musical instrument manufacture. For the communities supported by MCDI, sustainably-harvested mpingo timber is a significant revenue earner; the tree is thus an important means to justify responsible forest management in these areas.

Unfortunately, wastage rates of mpingo used to manufacture musical instruments are high. This is because the sections of wood, or ‘billets’ used must be completely free of defects, otherwise they will split during the machining process. While some flaws are easy to spot in the forest, a fault as small as a pin-hole will lead to a log being rejected at the sawmill. Unfortunately the gnarled and twisted nature of mpingo trees mean that it is often hard to find sufficiently long, straight sections of faultless wood to form billets. Thus, wastage rates at sawmills are in excess of 90% and even more timber in the form of the smaller branches is simply abandoned in the field. This limits the revenue that can be secured by rural communities.

With support from ITF, MCDI is tackling this issue by performing pioneering research into the environmental factors affecting timber quality of mpingo trees. They are doing this by mapping local changes in soil type, fire history, above ground vegetation biomass, and the relative topography of community forests in their project area. MCDI will use this information to determine which factors cause the quality (including colour, heart rot, hollowness, and fluting) and availability (including tree density, size and harvestable lengths) of mpingo timber to vary between trees and in different locations.

MCDI’s field staff are still finalising the data analysis, but their research has already revealed some promising findings. Firstly, mpingo trees seem to be smaller with poor harvestable lengths in areas of grassland which are subject to frequent late season bushfires. Additionally, preliminary analysis suggests that soil type could also be an important factor affecting the abundance of mpingo trees, which tend to be more common in areas with loamy and ‘black cotton’ soils. MCDI will use their findings to identify areas within community forests where mpingo trees are likely to produce the highest-quality timber, as well as where these trees are more abundant; harvesting operations will be focussed in these areas to avoid wastage.

MCDI’s findings will not only improve harvesting standards of mpingo within their project area. They purposefully designed the research so that it can be used to develop simple, participatory techniques for rural communities to assess their own timber stocks and adjust their harvesting plans to incorporate variants of timber quality. This will empower forest-dependent communities in Tanzania to reduce the proportion of felled mpingo trees which are rejected due to poor quality, thus maximising the revenue they can generate from selling the wood.

www.mpingoconservation.org

MPINGO

Mpingo is the Swahili name for Dalbergia melanoxylon, the East African Blackwood. It is one of the most expensive timbers in the world and is a preferred wood for musical instruments because of its high density, fine texture and exceptional durability. The biggest demand is for clarinets, but it is also used for oboes, bagpipes and wooden flutes.

The mpingo grows very slowly and often in very gnarled and twisted shapes. Harvestable size is not reached until a tree is between 70 to 100 years old. It is renowned for its beautiful dark coloured heartwood which in the best timber is inky black, but generally ranges from dark brown to even an indigo-purple tint.

The durability and sheer hardness of the heartwood means that mpingo is put to specialised uses by indigenous people in making hoes, pestles, knife handles and as supports for houses.

Flowering mpingo (credit Ann-Marie Gregory)

Fluted mpingo (credit Anne-Marie Gregory)
LENDING A VOICE

Large-scale palm oil plantations run by global corporations are increasing in Sub-Saharan Africa. Irene Wabiwa of Greenpeace Africa explains the challenges and tells us why the best way forward for protecting Africa’s forests is working with the people who live there.

If you ever have walked round the entirety of Manhattan Island, top to bottom, on a muggy summer’s day then chances are your calves – and most of the rest of you - would ache more than a little, your clothes would be drenched with sweat and you’d be ready for a rest. Try doing the equivalent trip in similar temperatures, through thick tropical rainforest, and then do it again and you would get some idea of the area that one company intends to turn into a palm oil plantation in the South West region of Cameroon. Or maybe a simpler way would be to fly over it as Greenpeace has done. It would take you more than an hour. Whatever way you look at it, the area is big. Then again, Africa is a vast continent, with an enormous rain-forested area striding across the Congo basin and beyond. And the challenge to protect those forests is colossal.

Those are the kind of challenges that Greenpeace as an organization is designed to try and surpass, with our networks of millions of supporters, volunteers and partners worldwide. But in our work in Central Africa we have also determined that the best way to approach such large issues is at source, and through a series of small but well-targeted steps. This means working at grassroots level with local communities and local partner organisations. We very much believe that by focusing on individual challenges facing specific communities in Africa, we can help disseminate wider issues to wider audiences.

If the forests are to be preserved from an ever-increasing array of threats then the indigenous people who live in those forests and rely upon them for their livelihood have to be the first to stand up for their protection.

Greenpeace has been working in the Congo Basin rainforest region for more than 10 years. As a small yet dedicated team comprised of local African activists, we have sought to develop strong relations at a local level to facilitate the incredible work that many grass roots organisations are already doing.

Together with other NGOs, forest peoples, researchers, supporters and activists we believe that power holders, governments and corporations should commit to a policy of No Deforestation and take decisions that always reflect our own principle of placing “people and forests first”.

The Congo Basin is home to the second-largest rain-forested area in the world and is often described as the “lungs of Africa”. Teeming with thousands of unique wildlife species, home to a huge array of biodiversity and providing a livelihood for estimated tens of millions of people, it also plays an increasingly significant role in stabilizing the global climate. International demand for timber and minerals, coupled with political instability within the continent has provoked widespread deforestation throughout the last few decades.

Another new threat to Africa’s trees now looms in the expansion of large-scale oil palm plantations.

Despite the oil palm playing a key role in African culture and with a long history of production on the continent, industrial scale plantations were, until recently, relatively rare. However, by viewing the ideal conditions represented by the tropical forests of West and Central Africa as something of a new frontier, the companies at the forefront of the palm oil industry in South East Asia have set up shop on the African continent.

The links between devastating levels of deforestation in countries including Indonesia and Malaysia and industrial levels of palm oil production are well established. Such environmental destruction is an eminent possibility for Africa unless this new wave of production is managed responsibly. That is not a guarantee, as many of the recent plantations either already established or in development can be viewed as part of a wider land grab in Africa.

The NGO, GRAIN, recently reviewed all the land acquisitions that have been conducted by foreign investors globally since 2006, and identified Africa as a primary target, with Asian and European-based investors accounting for two thirds of that activity. In another recent report 56.2m hectares of land deals were identified as having taken place in sub-Saharan African since 2000 and recent research conducted by Greenpeace International identified an area of more than 2.6m hectares in 10 western and central African countries that is either earmarked or already...
CORPORATE DEFORESTATION

Put in plain terms that is a lot of land, a lot of it is forested and following the logic, a lot of people live in those forests and rely on them for their livelihoods. Yet all too often these people are the last to have a say in what is done with their land. Many land deals in Africa are opaque in nature. National laws are contravened so that local residents are paid rates by the companies vastly below their true worth. The process of Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) is sorely lacking. One palm oil project Greenpeace is campaigning against is being pushed forward by the US agribusiness company Herakles Farms in South West region in Cameroon. The company operated without a valid land lease for more than three years before being granted one for 20,000 hectares – vastly reduced from the 70,000 hectares they were originally targeting – to convert a densely forested area surrounded by national parks and protected areas that is home to endangered species including the Chimpanzee and Drill, a primate closely related to the baboon. Crucially this illegal project is also being carried out without the company having adequately followed the FPIC process. Many residents in the area are opposed to the project but feel they have had little say over what is done with their bush.

Greenpeace has been working with local Cameroonian NGOs including SEFE (Struggle to Economize Future Environment), Nature Cameroon, and CED (Centre for Economic Development) to help inform villages of what is really at stake if the Herakles project is allowed to continue.

Given the complex system of local villages and governance in the region we are very aware that we need to be respectful and realize that the choice of what people do with their land and forests is their own. In a tour of villages in the proposed plantation area in 2013 around the main centres of Nguti and Mundemba, we distributed information on the Herakles project highlighting what was really happening and what options they had. We at no point were openly criticizing the project, just laying the facts bare.

As an organization we are often accused by companies and our detractors as “anti-development” or “anti-everything” and although it is true that when done correctly some projects can bring economic benefits for communities, the reality on the ground is that, more often than not, this is not the case.

During our tour, conducted by our local partners, it became apparent that many residents had no idea what was truly being negotiated by chiefs and politicians over their land. Some decided they would still put their lot in with the company, but the key idea was to provide the information so they could have all the knowledge to make their choice.

We are also working with one village that borders the concession area, Babensi 2, who declined to sign an agreement with Herakles Farms. Their land was encroached upon and some of their forest destroyed. As Adolf, their chief regent told us: “If this continues, we will see that in the next generation our children will have no land."

A number of recent global studies show that, in most cases, forest-dependent communities are the most effective managers of rainforests. They are able to combine sustainable harvests with conservation simply because they depend on these forest areas as much as they depend upon their crops. Such community-based alternatives are often underestimated, undervalued and undermined by African Governments and donor agency programs.

Greenpeace believes that such alternatives should be strongly promoted and supported and so works with local and international partners to profile such solutions. Last year in Cameroon we participated in a workshop that was the brainchild of the organization ACDIC (Association

Oil palm nursery in Cameroon in a Herakles Farm’s concession area (credit Greenpeace / Alex Yallop)
Citoyenne pour les Défense des Intérêts Collectifs (CDIC) that works to improve current agricultural methods in the country through training, better organisation and market access. The result is better yields and higher incomes.

The packed room in the town of Kumba and the bustling, excited atmosphere demonstrates the true appetite for solutions of this kind. People travelled many a mile to take part and one, Chief Mbara Rils, from the city of Toko told me: “Thanks to the discussions we had, we answered our questions ourselves. The outcomes will be very useful for the future. The workshop has enlightened me, and now I have an idea of what I should put in place when I get back to my city.”

80% of the population of this region lives in rural communities. People make their living from farming cacao, palm oil and other crops, hunting and collecting non-timber forest products such as nuts and bush mangos. The challenge moving forward is to make sure there is enough land and forest remaining to carry out these aspirations.

Another strong strand of Greenpeace’s work is bearing witness. Unfortunately that is something that is not done enough in many remote forests of Africa. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, where we have worked for many years to stem the forest destruction and illegal logging that fuels a stream of timber headed for ports in Europe and beyond, companies operate with impunity and frequently intimidate local communities, often violently, to ensure the status quo remains.

This behavior is possible due to a lack of effective governance in the country. And it is locals who suffer. In May 2011 the police and military were called by Siforco - at that time a subsidiary company of Swiss timber giant Danzer - to quell protests by local communities in Yasilika that had erupted against the company’s operations and their failure to fulfill social obligations. Many villagers were subsequently injured and had their properties destroyed. There were also allegations of rape. One person later reportedly died of their injuries.

For Greenpeace, the case was clear-cut: Danzer needed to bear some responsibility for the company’s involvement in these violations. We had been documenting conflicts in the company’s logging areas in the DRC since 2005 and this was not an isolated incident. Accordingly we spoke to those people affected, who had their homes destroyed. Through our work and testimonies we and other international NGOs filed a complaint with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

A long 18 months later and in 2013, Danzer were disassociated from the FSC. It may not seem like full justice, and certainly will not bring homes back, but the reputational damage and adverse headlines do at least demonstrate to companies that they need to be responsible for the impact their operations have on the people who live in the forests they target. And it also shows to local African people that they do have options when they have been wronged.

Intimidation of NGOs is also a popular tactic in the area be it through the courts or through violence. In DRC one of our local partners is currently facing charges as are the NGO SEFE in Cameroon for protesting against Herakles Farms and its founder, Nasako Besingi was also attacked by employees of the company’s local subsidiary. Nature Cameroon, another NGO, has been suspended for the “crime” of daring to organize a meeting to allow residents to hear what is happening to their land and livelihoods.

Such incidents and intimidation can be found across Africa. Only when organisations such as ourselves and Global Witness or other NGOs use our resources to give local organisations and local people a voice which can be heard further afield will they feel they are not alone and they can take steps to protect their environment, protect their forests and protect their livelihoods. That their voice can be heard.

Residents of Babensi 2 Village visit the area and sit on a pile of timber logged for the creation of an oil palm plantation belonging to Herakles Farms. Despite their opposition to the project, Adolf and other villagers have discovered that Herakles Farms have ignored their wishes and bulldozed tracts of forests belonging to the village.

“ANOTHER STRONG STRAND OF GREENPEACE’S WORK IS BEARING WITNESS. UNFORTUNATELY THAT IS SOMETHING THAT IS NOT DONE ENOUGH IN MANY REMOTE FORESTS OF AFRICA”
REGREENING AFRICA’S DRYLANDS

AFRICA’S GREAT GREEN WALL

An African partnership to combat desertification and the effects of climate change
By Dr Moctar Sacande and Dr Serene Hargreaves

Green walls - Historically, ‘walls’, ‘green belts’ or ‘green walls’ have been established to fulfil various purposes, usually for the strategic protection of places, people and wealth. The Great Wall of China for example, was built more than 2,000 years ago to protect the newly unified country from foreign invaders and still stands today. Green belts were proposed to create a new relationship between cities and rural areas and to serve not only as lungs to cities, but also as limits to the expansion of cities. Today green belts are vital to urban harmonious development, contributing to people’s well-being. One of the original large scale barrier-plantations, or green walls, was the ‘Great Hedge of India’. It was established in 1843 as a customs barrier for salt taxation and was maintained for over 30 years. More recently, in the 1970s, some of the most famous large-scale planting projects include the ‘Algerian Green Dam project’ started in 1972 which was abandoned 20 years later. The ‘Three North Forest Shelterbelt’ ongoing programme which began in 1978, also known as the ‘Green Great Wall of China’, was designed to combat desertification and control dust storms over the capital city. Ecologically, all these large-scale planting projects are designed to reduce the effect of desertification and thereby improve the livelihoods of people.

The story of Africa’s Great Green Wall: The idea for Africa’s Great Green Wall (GGW) around the Sahara dates back to 1952 when Richard St. Barbe Baker, a British forester and the founder of the International Tree Foundation (ITF), proposed an international ‘Green front’ to act as a front-line of strategic planting of trees to contain the desert. His idea took shape after a 14,000-mile expedition through the Sahara, which he undertook with a team in the early 1950s. Following the expedition, Baker believed that a joint effort involving the French and British colonial administrations, to plant a large belt of forest trees from French West Africa to Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, could reclaim the desert. In 2002, the concept was re-proposed at the special summit in N’Djamena during the celebration of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. It was approved by the Conference of Leaders and the heads of the member states of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States during their seventh ordinary session held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in 2005. Since then, the GGW concept has developed considerably and lessons learned from the past have led to an understanding of the need for an integrated multi-sectoral approach that will lead to sustainable results and impacts. Since Baker’s initial tree planting concept 60 years ago,
Africa’s GGW has evolved into a rural development programme, aiming to tackle the detrimental social, economic and environmental impacts of land degradation and desertification.

**Kew’s involvement and commitment:** The ambition of reforestation efforts within the GGW initiative which will stretch from Senegal’s Atlantic coast in the west to Djibouti’s Red Sea in the east—the likes of which the world has never seen before—sounds like an impossible dream. However, learning from past mistakes and capitalising on current advancements in science and technology, it is a reality that is taking root. In collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership (MSBP) at Kew is restoring Sahelian land in West Africa. Following the efforts to conserve seeds of the world’s flora and a successful restoration model that Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, experts have devised, the MSBP is helping to mobilise, train and support communities in four border regions in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The MSBP is using its unique expertise to ensure that seeds of environmentally well-adapted and economically useful local (tree and herbaceous) species are collected and planted in communal land and village forest landscape and agroforestry systems, that are managed by the communities for themselves and their livestock. In the first two years, an estimated total of 0.7 million seedlings and over 200 kg of seeds from 40 useful native species, including forage grasses for livestock, have been planted. The newly planted area covers nearly 1,500 ha of farmer-managed land across 80 villages. The keen interest it has created has indicated that these figures will be rising in the coming years. These areas are among the first green bricks, building the foundations of the living wall that will eventually reach across the Sahel and beyond.

With grateful thanks to the Dr Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation for supporting RBG, Kew and the Africa’s Great Green Wall Pilot Project in Burkina, Mali and Niger (see www.kew.org/msbp; contact: m.sacande@kew.org).

**REGREENING WEST AFRICA**

**RESTORING LIFE TO DEAD SOILS**

With declining soil infertility causing chronic food insecurity in the West African dryland areas, agroforestry is humankind’s best hope for creating a sustainable, climate-resilient agriculture in the region, writes Peter Gubbels of Groundswell International:

Many small-scale farmers in the dryland areas of West Africa are caught in a downward spiral of low crop yields, hunger and malnutrition. Because of climate change, rainfall patterns have become increasingly erratic. Droughts and crop failure have become frequent. But the underlying cause of the chronic food security crisis is declining soil fertility. For many years, smallholder farmers removed more soil nutrients than they returned. This has resulted in exhausted, infertile soils. As one female farmer in the Kaffrine area of Senegal remarked to me: “Our soils are dead.”

For centuries, small-scale farmers in the savannah and sahelian zones in West Africa maintained soil fertility through two traditional practices. Both involved trees. The first was natural fallow. After four or five years of cultivating a field, a farm family would restore soil fertility
Reclaiming land in Mali (Sahel Eco)

by leaving the field fallow for 10 years or more. The natural re-vegetation of trees and shrubs slowly restored soils by bringing up nutrients from lower soil layers, providing shade, and producing leaf litter. Trees would grow back from the extensive webs of living roots and stumps lying hidden beneath cleared fields.

The second traditional practice was the land use system of ‘agroforestry parklands’, in which farmers deliberately retained certain valued species of trees on their cultivated land. Such trees became an integral part of their agricultural system. Some combination of trees provided food, fuel, fodder, medicines, firewood, and also contributed to soil fertility, water conservation, and environmental protection. The full-grown trees left in fields caused some reduction in crop yields due to competition for light, nutrients and water. However, farmers accepted this due to the economic and ecological benefits that these selected trees provided.

Food crises

For centuries, trees played a critical role in maintaining sustainable livelihoods in the drylands of West Africa. Today, however, demographic, economic, and ecological pressures have all but wiped out these traditional practices. Since 1970, the population in the Sahel and savannah zones of West Africa has more than doubled. Land holdings have consequently shrunk in size. Many farmers are now unable to leave their land in fallow long enough for trees to restore fertility. Faced with declining crop production, they expanded the land under cultivation. Today, most farmers in the West Africa drylands grow food crops, year after year, on the same plots of land. Natural fallow exists no more.

The impact of semi-permanent cultivation and the use of ploughs has greatly diminished the underground stock of tree stumps and roots. Continued felling of trees has left fragile soils exposed to erosion by wind and water during the torrential storm season. Under the battering raindrops, a thick, almost impermeable crust often develops on the soil, making it harder for rainwater to soak in and for germinating crops to emerge. As the older trees in the fields die off, no new trees are replacing them. The inevitable consequence is reduced harvests, increasing food insecurity, and hunger.

The recent experience of Adams Seidu, a farmer in northern Ghana is a vivid example. In August 2012, to cope with a bad harvest, Seidu, had to apply the “one-zero-one” strategy for his children and the “zero-zero-one” strategy for himself and his wife. “One” represents a meal, “zero” represents no
“IN RESPONSE TO SUCH MASSIVE FOOD CRISES, AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE PLEDGED TO INCREASE SUPPORT FOR AGRICULTURE TO 10% OF THEIR NATIONAL BUDGETS. BUT THE CRITICAL ISSUE IS “WHAT TYPE OF AGRICULTURE?”

In response to such massive food crises, African governments have pledged to increase support for agriculture to 10% of their national budgets. But the critical issue is “What type of agriculture?” The dominant trend, influenced by agribusiness, massive funding by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Bank and donors such as DFID, is for larger scale commercial agriculture based on chemical fertilizers, hybrid seed, irrigation, pesticides, herbicides, and mechanisation. This industrial approach to agriculture, often to support export crops, is applied to the best land, in order to generate good returns on investment. Agroforestry is not being considered as a viable alternative.

The reality is that the mass of smallholder farmers living in ecologically fragile, risk prone dryland areas earn less than $1 or $2 per day. They cannot afford expensive industrial agro-inputs. Because chemical fertilizers have become very expensive, they are no longer economically feasible for staple food crops. They are also are a high risk because of frequent crop failures cause by drought.

A more intensive and innovative form of agro-forestry is the real long-term solution to replenishing soil fertility. Agro- ecological farming principles are essential in enabling smallholder farmers to transition to an economically productive, sustainable and resilient system of agriculture, and to enhance food security.

Re-greening

International Tree Foundation (ITF) is contributing to a rising ‘re-greening movement’ in the African drylands. In partnership with the Malian not-for-profit organisation Sahel Eco, it is sharing the techniques of Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR). FMNR is changing farmers’ approach to managing trees on their land, teaching them to minimise competition with food crops through regular pruning. Once established, trees produce valuable products year after year. Importantly, FMNR is accessible to even the poorest of families.

Villagers have reported significant benefits, including: improved soil fertility, improved agricultural production, decreased household expenses, increased income, and enhanced biodiversity through the restoration of indigenous trees on agricultural land. ITF’s ‘Regreening Sokura’ evaluation concluded that Sahel Eco had succeeded in reversing the long-term trend of tree loss on agricultural land in the dryland areas of the Sokura district. Nearly treeless fields in Sokura’s villages are now progressively increasing tree cover, reaching up to 120 trees per hectare.

Perceptions are slowly changing. Sokura farmer Hamadou Ali Konaté said: “It was through project activities that I understood the importance of trees for the yield of my crops and even to improve my family’s income. I understood that the protection of young shoots can help to reduce the amount of manure my field needs and also supply fuel wood for my family by pruning the trees as they grow.”

Despite these successes, formidable obstacles remain. Many national level policy-makers lack knowledge not only of the benefits of agroforestry but also of the negative impacts of conventional agriculture. A common belief is that introducing trees into fields will negatively affect agricultural crops, and inhibit the spread of modern, mechanised farming based on monoculture crops and external agro-chemicals (which are often subsidised). Most countries do not include agroforestry in the curricula of either their agricultural or forestry schools, and national extension services often have limited knowledge of new agroforestry systems. There is a similar lack of understanding in the national forestry services, whose conventional reforestation projects have often failed due to the harsh environment of the Sahel.

Through its support of local agroforestry partners in the Sahel, ITF is contributing to the emerging Evergreen Agriculture movement, which seeks to reinvent the integration of agriculture and trees in a radical, but entirely practical way. The common vision for the drylands of West Africa is a future in which many food crops will be grown under a canopy of trees. Practitioners of Evergreen Agriculture have succeeded in sustainably doubling or even tripling cereal crop yields in many parts of the African continent, while improving resilience to drought. Agroforestry is one of humankind’s best hopes for creating a sustainable, climate-resilient agriculture in West Africa.

Peter Gubbels has lived and worked in West Africa for 24 years. He obtained his Masters degree in Rural Development at the University of East Anglia. Peter currently lives with his wife, who is Ghanaian, in her village in northern Ghana, where they grow much of their own food. He is a co-founder of Groundswell International, a non profit organisation which works in nine countries to strengthen rural communities to build healthy farming and food systems from the bottom up.
TF’s Trees 4 Livelihoods project, funded by The Big Lottery Fund and delivered by partners Sahel Eco is contributing to long term efforts in Mali to tackle the challenges of unsustainable land use practices, deforestation and declining soil fertility. Starting in 2013 it is a 4 year community-led programme of activities at village, commune and regional levels working in the district of Mopti in Centre of Mali.

With a per capita GDP of around $3 a day landlocked Mali is one of the 20 poorest countries in the world. About 80% of the 15 million inhabitants are dependent on farming, fishing and livestock production and thus highly vulnerable to climatic shocks, such as the recent droughts (2005, 2009 and 2011) which triggered a food security crisis across the Sahel. But droughts are only part of the story. The recent Pathways to Resilience (2011) study by Peter Grubbels indicated that the current crisis is fundamentally due to an erosion of household resilience as a result of high levels of food insecurity, poverty and malnutrition. Rebuilding this resilience requires actions which go beyond emergency food aid and social protection to address the underlying long-term causes such as unsustainable land use practices, deforestation and declining soil fertility.

These are issues which the Trees 4 Livelihoods project is tackling through four key areas which were identified by extensive research. They are:

**Declining soil fertility**

This is the major concern of all dry-land farmers. In the Mopti district it affects yields of rain fed millet and sorghum crops and leads to soil erosion. The Government provide some agricultural support with subsidised fertilisers and improved seed varieties and a few NGOs support market gardens and tree planting in some villages. However very few NGOs like Sahel Eco are promoting sustainable agro-ecological farming methods.

The conventional approach to soil infertility by applying mineral or organic fertilisers is untenable as most subsistence farmers in Mali cannot afford them, even with government subsidies. Furthermore, they do not have access to sufficient livestock to supply all the manure they would need. The approach being taken by Trees 4 Livelihoods is based on promoting the ecological benefits of trees through the widespread adoption of Farmer managed natural regeneration (FMNR) techniques to restore tree cover and fix nitrogen in the soil. Rather than the use of cash or ‘food for work’ schemes to reward farmers for adopting FMNR, this project brings about a permanent change in farmers’ land and tree management practices through farmer-to-farmer learning.

This approach was first used by Sahel Eco in the 1990s which resulted in the successful reforestation of over 3,000 hectares of farmland.

**Severely degraded land and land tenure**

Over 250 ha of land, in 7 villages were identified as being affected by such severe degradation that it was no longer in productive use. These infertile and abandoned sites were sparsely vegetated with drought resistant trees...
Declining access to resources due to unsustainable management of the Koubaye forest leading to the felling of trees. This is a long standing issue as in 2008 Sahel Eco supported work led by the Forestry Service and municipal and traditional authorities to develop a draft Forest Management plan for Koubaye. Since then, although the communes have had support from other projects to develop Environmental Action plans and promote community tree planting, the Forestry Service has not yet adopted or implement the joint management plan. However this is an important issue which needs perseverance. Improving access to resources in the Koubaye forest requires a substantial shift in attitudes and practices within the forestry service, in favour of more sustainable and inclusive management in collaboration with forest users.

Trees 4 Livelihoods requires stakeholders to reach consensus over land use, beneficiaries and tenure arrangements and to sign written commitments before receiving training and other support. Beneficiaries will then carry out much of the work themselves on a voluntary basis, using simple, low-cost soil and water conservation techniques combined with FMNR.

Declining access to forest resources

The priority issue for two communes was a declining access to forest resources due to unsustainable management of the Koubaye forest leading to the felling of trees. This is a long standing issue as in 2008 Sahel Eco supported work led by the Forestry Service and municipal and traditional authorities to develop a draft Forest Management plan for Koubaye. Since then, although the communes have had support from other projects to develop Environmental Action plans and promote community tree planting, the Forestry Service has not yet adopted or implement the joint management plan.

However this is an important issue which needs perseverance. Improving access to resources in the Koubaye forest requires a substantial shift in attitudes and practices within the forestry service, in favour of more sustainable and inclusive management in collaboration with forest users. Discussions during the project planning workshop in Ouagadougou in June 2012 revealed that for sustainable management of the forest of Koubaye, all user groups of the forest resources need to be involved in the implementation of the Forest Management Plan. It was agreed that Trees 4 Livelihoods will support a ‘process for change’ led by municipal and community leaders. They will work together with forest users to bring social and political pressure for a change of practice within the forest service and their own communities. This change will favour more sustainable and inclusive management of the Koubaye forest, leading in the long term, to improved access and sustainable use of enhanced forest resources.

Women’s livelihoods and access to non timber forest products (NTFP)

Women from across the Mopti district were concerned with the declining access to socially and economically important wild fruits and other NTFP’s including those collected from trees on agricultural land. They include the desert date (Balanites aegyptiaca), “jujube” (Ziziphus mauritania), tamarind and Acacia nilotica.

Trees 4 Livelihoods has chosen to focus on the links between access to trees and women’s livelihoods and to strengthen the capacity of women to develop sustainable and profitable businesses trading in NTFPs. This approach supports and motivates women to become actively involved in land and forest management processes in which, by tradition, they are rarely included. This option is a combination of two approaches to developing rural enterprises - Market Analysis and Development (MA&D) and the Competitive Agricultural Systems and Enterprise (CASE). It uses participatory tools to help women analyse resource availability, socio-cultural constraints, and market opportunities and consequently prioritises the potential of NTFPs for improved production and trade. It then focusses on developing product based ‘enterprise clusters’ to strengthen links between village based producers, developing cooperative approaches to reach new markets and attract buyers interested in premium quality.

Trees 4 Livelihoods has now been underway for one year and the Sahel Eco team have recently sent us a report of progress of the project so far.

In 17 villages video projection sessions were held on subjects such as pruning techniques and the restoration and conservation of water and soil. FMNR practical training sessions have begun on helping to conserve moisture and nutrients in the fields to prevent desertification; to facilitate access to firewood and to improve the yield of agricultural production in the field. This has been reinforced by farmer to farmer exchange visits to learn from previous successful experiences in the field. During this first year of implementation, 3069 people were involved in these
activities.

The recovery of severely degraded land has been the subject of a series of negotiation meetings between landowners, beneficiaries, village chiefs and local councillors. This culminated in the signing of 33 agreements for 98 ha to be restored for agricultural purposes of which 12 ha is for grazing purposes. The restoration work will be done by the beneficiaries with the technical support of the project.

In order to facilitate sustainable management of forest resources, *Trees 4 Livelihoods*, with the support of the government offices of Water and Forest organised two training sessions with forest users. They focussed on the law defining the principles of national forest area management in Mali, and their own roles and responsibilities in sustainable management of Koubaye. Following the two sessions an action plan for sustainable management of the forest was established and the Association for the Development of the Koubaye Zone committee was reorganised.

In assisting women to identify NTFPs with the most potential for sustainable enterprise development, training sessions were organised for 435 women on the MA&D approach which focussed on eight non-timber forest products; jujube, tamarind, balanites, palmyra palm, shea butter, grape, Hene and Saban.

During the next twelve months these activities will progress with the introduction of new initiatives such as setting up FMNR demonstration lots and running an FMNR competition for farmers.

You can follow the progress of the project through the ITF E newsletters and on our website.

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**FMNR** is a simple low cost farming technique which can be used by farmers to restore tree cover on agricultural land, bringing multiple benefits including improved soil fertility.

Instead of clearing land completely when preparing their fields, farmers select and prune stems which have sprouted naturally from indigenous tree and shrub stumps. By pruning side branches and culling unwanted stems, very rapid re-growth can be achieved. Farmers may also sow seeds onto their fields to re-introduce valuable species. The trees help to restore soil fertility by releasing nitrogen and protecting the ground from erosion by wind and rain, and from very high temperatures in the dry season. As the trees mature, the pruned branches provide a local source of firewood, reducing the time women spend gathering fuel for cooking. The trees produce fodder for livestock (which in turn leave behind soil-enriching manure) and fruit, seeds and leaves rich in nutrients, which women harvest to enrich their household’s diet and to sell.

Fanta (credit Sahel Eco)

“My name is Fanta Timbo, I live in Komio Village in the municipality of Borondougou Benkadi. I am a housewife but I also run a small business that sells tamarind and palmyra as well as other non-timber related forest goods.

The money generated from my business goes to supporting my family but it is mostly used for the care of my children.

Sahel Eco offered business advice regarding trading as well as running workshops to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our enterprises. With the acquired knowledge we were able to increase our sales of non-timber forest products and making it a more profitable business.

I would like to thank Sahel Eco for supporting women in our village and helping us to successfully promote our activities.

Sahel Eco’s efforts are welcome as they have enabled us to decrease abuse of our forests so we can begin its regeneration.”
The Wof Washa Forest is one of the most important sources of water for North East Africa. 80 per cent of the Nile originates in Ethiopia from areas like Wof Washa, with environmental pressures impacting downstream on the rest of Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt.

ITF first started working to reverse the degradation of the Wof Washa Forest when our partner SUNARMA (Sustainable Natural Resources Management Association), was asked to take over running the Keyit nursery in 2005. ITF supported this process and following a successful handover and running of the nursery we funded two further satellite nurseries closer to the remote communities who lived deep in the forest.

Although the ITF project ended in 2012 the benefit to the environment and local communities continues as Susan Oldham of SUNARMA reveals

Verdant. Magnificent. Scarred. Wof Washa Natural Forest is all these things and more. This ancient forest located in the North Shoa Zone of Amhara Region, some 200km north east of Addis Ababa is Ethiopia’s oldest State forest. It was set aside by the Shoan King Zeray Yacob in the 14th century but in more recent years population pressures, expanding agriculture and the need for fuel and timber have led to the gradual shrinking of the forest area. It currently covers approximately 8200 hectares and straddles across three districts where the East African branch of the Great Rift Valley and the Central Ethiopian Highlands meet. The scenery is breathtaking with elevations ranging from 1650m to 3700m. In 1992 the forest was estimated to contain 252 species of plants, many of them medicinal and endemic to the area. Fast forward twenty years and this number had dropped to 193.

This corner of Ethiopia is home to 57,430 people. This is where SUNARMA has been working tirelessly since 2002 to halt the tidal wave of devastation metered on Wof Washa forest by engaging local communities to help protect it, while giving them access to alternative livelihoods, improved agricultural practices and income generation. SUNARMA works with a number of stakeholders such as government offices, local and international organisations, communities encircling the forest and its UK registered sister organisation, Action Ethiopia.

Through the introduction of a participatory forest management approach and the formation of FUG’s (Forest User Groups), SUNARMA’s project now reaches all corners of the forest. Communities living around the forest had previously been excluded from having any say or involvement in the management of the forest despite so many people being reliant on it for their livelihoods. Now, through the FUGs, communities have a central role as stakeholders together with government. They are actively embracing this new role with a renewed sense of ownership as forest stewards. They receive training and support to enable them to better manage and use the natural resources around them, gradually reducing and reversing the degradation of years gone by.

One of SUNARMA’s great successes in Wof Washa has been its tree nurseries. There are 7 project demonstration nurseries, which ITF generously supported, as well as group and individual farmer nurseries in all 14 kebeles (wards) in which the project works. These nurseries have produced and distributed more than 8 million trees so far, 1,934,410 in 2013 alone! This covered a total area of approximately 400 hectares. Seedlings produced include indigenous varieties such as Juniper, Podocarpus, Olea and Hagenia as well as fast growing exotic varieties including eucalyptus and tree lucern. The indigenous species are used for ‘enrichment planting’ to cover the scars left by deforestation within the forest while the exotic species are planted in woodlots around homesteads where families can have easy access to them for their own use. This process is helping to discourage further plunder of the forest although some illegal cutting still takes place. Forest guards, many of whom are
CONSERVATION & SUSTAINABLE USE OF INDIGENOUS PLANTS FOR THE BENEFIT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

By Tiziana Ulian and Alex Hudson

Kew’s Millennium Seed Bank (MSB) partnership is the largest ex situ plant conservation programme in the world which focuses on plants most at risk of extinction and which have important potential future use. Seeds are collected and stored in seed banks in their country of origin and duplicated in the MSB in the UK.

Since 2007 Project MGU1 - the Useful Plants Project (UPP) has been working with MSB partners in Botswana, Kenya, Mali, Mexico and South Africa to conserve and sustainably use indigenous plants which are important to local rural communities.

Indigenous plants are identified and prioritised for importance to local communities through literature review, ethno-botanical surveys and community workshops. Most of these species are used as food for humans and/or animals; many are used in medicine, and some of them are an important source of construction material and fuel.

Products developed from the morama bean (Photo T.Ulian)

Seeds of these indigenous species are collected and stored in seed banks in the country of origin and duplicated in Kew’s Millennium Seed Bank in the UK to ensure their long term conservation. In parallel, the most important species are propagated and planted in community gardens to make them available to local people to help sustain their daily subsistence needs.

Since the start of the second stage of the project, in 2011, activities and partnerships have been added to the project to provide opportunities for local communities to develop sustainable income-generating activities and to support the in situ conservation of useful plants through their reintroduction into managed areas. In Botswana, where the project is delivered by the Botswana Colleague of Agriculture (BCA), the focus has been on the domestication of potential agricultural crop plants and the development of food products from them. Tyloesma esculentum (Burch.) Schreiber, the morama bean, is one such important plant which was prioritised by all communities because of its high nutritional value. The seeds are usually roasted, giving a flavour which resembles roasted cashew or chestnut. The extracted oil has a pleasant nutty flavour similar to almond oil but slightly more bitter and is suitable for domestic purposes. Morama beans are also boiled with maize meal, or ground and pounded to a powder, which is used to make porridge or a cocoa-like beverage. In some areas small tubers and young stems are also roasted and eaten, with a delicious flavour.

There are 7 project demonstration nurseries, which ITF generously supported, as well as group and individual farmer nurseries... These nurseries have produced and distributed more than 8 million trees so far, 1,934,410 in 2013 alone!
In Kenya, the project, led by our partner, the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI), has been establishing experimental woodlots to demonstrate the use of indigenous species in reforestation programmes versus the use of exotics such as eucalyptus species. These exotics have been widely used in the past, affecting the natural vegetation and impoverishing the soil and water availability in the soil.

In Mali, sacred forests, which are natural plots demarcated for public or individual ritual ceremonies in villages, are being restored by our collaborators at the Rural Economics Institute (IER) through enrichment planting of useful plants which have been propagated through the project.

Across all five countries several community groups have been involved in the project, ranging from farmer groups, women’s associations and traditional healers to primary and secondary schools. Local people are involved in all project activities and have been receiving training in plant conservation and propagation while local facilities have been enhanced to cultivate and use plants sustainably. At present the project has compiled information on ca. 1600 species and conserved more than 700 species, while involving 25 rural communities and 36 schools.

A scientific approach is applied at all stages of the project, supporting the conservation and sustainable use of plants and involving a wide range of experts from different disciplines, including botanists, horticulturists, agronomists and foresters. Several studies have been carried out which contribute to the increased value of the species the communities view as important by applying research in ethnobotany, seed ecology and biology, plant physiology and phytochemistry.

The UPP has helped to confirm the potential of biodiversity conservation to contribute to human well-being through the enhancement of food security and human health, the improvement of the community livelihoods, and the strengthening of the capacity of local people to face environmental changes. This approach of using indigenous species with local communities at the centre of their selection for conservation and supported by complementary research, may represent a model for other regions of the world where biodiversity conservation should be integrated with improved human well-being.

1The name MGU reflects the generous support provided by the philanthropist who funds the work of the Useful Plants Project.
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