

Newsletter

DECEMBER 2019

Seasonal greetings to all SGG partners, supporters and friends wherever you may be.

It is now fourteen years since the first inaugural meeting of Sustainable Global Gardens in December 2005. Since then I have been working on a more than full-time voluntary basis in an effort to establish a series of grassroots projects to alleviate poverty & hunger within East or Southern Africa. The progress we have achieved would have been quite impossible without Carole also working on a near full-time basis after she “retired” five years ago, and without the very considerable support from friends and SGG partners in Africa.

As I wrote last year, SGG does not really know how many supporters and friends we have. With this in mind I am using this newsletter to provide illustrations of projects which SGG has helped start but where most of the progress is actually the result of others funding and labour. I would also like to give some examples which show how much progress is being made in some of our projects. This progress is not “us” at SGG: we are celebrating the work of everyone, everybody who is contributing to ‘Make Poverty History’.



These pictures summarise progress at the FOCUSA school near Matayos, West Kenya. In 2010 [see top left] children were taught under the tree or in traditional wood & mud buildings. Those old classrooms were still in use in 2013 [see top middle], but then matters changed when COCO, another Tyneside charity, started to invest in better school facilities. The school now has more modern

buildings [see main picture above], but perhaps better still FOCUSA has a series of income-generating projects [eg. fish ponds, poultry, agroforestry] which will ensure long-term sustainability [see top right]. SGG activities here include feeding of the children, support for income-generation schemes as well as tree-planting.

New Hope Emaseno



Here is Gladys Ochieng of New Hope Emaseno in 2008 [see above left]. She is standing in front of her mud & thatch house, holding a small child Faith. Gladys herself has needed a great deal of faith, because before my next visit in 2009 her house was destroyed during a storm. Her response to this calamity was to establish a Children's Home for those in the locality who were without a proper shelter. For the last decade she has provided a home for up to 50 children who have had nowhere safe and suitable to stay. Gladys has also had to face severe challenges in her caring for Faith. While she was still an infant Faith was diagnosed as having an incurable heart complaint and thus not expected to live more

than a few years.

The great news is that Faith is still alive, now twelve and looking stronger than ever. Moreover, many other young children who have received care and attention at Gladys's Children's Home now have prospects of a better future. Here some of the 50 residents who live with Gladys are enjoying a game of football within the compound [see above right]. During her long struggles Gladys has been helped by SGG, who have provided much of the food for the 50 residents as well as improving facilities, such as the kitchen, beds. We have also supported her by promoting tree-planting.

Gladys now has several hundred trees on her small farm, and these

provide her with a source of income for the family and fruit for the children.

After a decade of struggle some of Gladys's worst difficulties are being solved by SGG sponsorship as she now has a secure supply of food and an adequate house for her 50 children [see main photo above]. However, problems will continue to exist. There is the difficulty of finding funds to pay the costs of schooling. There is the long-term issue of finding training & employment for these children. Some matters are more personal: one long-term resident was recently diagnosed with bone cancer and had her leg amputated at the knee.

Progress has not been limited to the orphans & vulnerable children [OVCs] groups. We are beginning to see significant changes in the landscape as a consequence of SGG tree-planting over the last five years. In 2017 Tyneside Rotary Club made a donation to SGG's tropical tree-planting

project. Those funds were partly used to facilitate the restoration of Ngarasero Forest, near Usa River in Tanzania. The upper photo on the left was taken in April 2018, and the lower photo was taken in November 2019 from exactly the same location.

Restoring Ngarasero Forest



This is the edge of Ngarasero Forest in April 2018. By that time some 1600 seedlings of indigenous species had been planted to try and restore the forest but most of these trees were still below shoulder height. Much of the ground at this particular location had suffered from felling by nearby villagers, and this site was more 'bush with shrubs' rather than forest. Note the dead tree, which is clearly visible, some 200 metres away.



This photo was taken from the same location on the footpath eighteen months later. Note the same dead tree in both photos. By now many of those seedlings planted some two-three years ago are well above head height, and the forest is restoring itself. SGG thinks that this specific project may be of interest to those wishing to plant trees as their personal contribution to combat climate change. If so, note the details given later concerning Gosforth Rotary Club' tropical tree-planting project. For the moment though I would like to thank members of Usa River Mali Hai who planted most of these trees and who assisted me while I counted some 1925 trees young trees on 21st November.

It is likely that tree-planting will continue to be a major part of SGG's activities next year. Gosforth Rotary Club is currently implementing an agroforestry project with a planting target of 100,000 trees in the next couple of years. During our recent

monitoring visit to Kenya and Tanzania we made reference to 20,847 trees planted since March 2019. Of these 8,555 have been reliably counted, while a further 10,650 have been pledged to be planted before the end of next May. Others have been

claimed but not yet confirmed. If you wish to contribute to this ambitious tree-planting scheme, please refer the SGG website at: <http://www.sustainableglobalgardens.org.uk/tree-planting>

There are two other developments which deserve mention here. One is the **expansion of kitchen gardens**. In previous newsletters it was reported

that the Demonstration Plot at Matayos was approaching self-sufficiency, and that SGG was looking for new locations. What has happened

in 2019 is that all 9 OVC groups have agreed to start their own kitchen garden primarily to provide better nutrition for the children in their care.



The kitchen gardens of the 9 OVC groups which provide care for some 450 children are at different stages of development. Lonely Orphans have

a well established garden with black nightshade, gourds and sukumawiki on display [see above right]. Mukwano's plot was less developed

by the time of my October monitoring visit, but they have a healthy crop of sukumawiki [see above left].

The **OVC feeding programme** is the oldest continually running project in Busia. Some groups [e.g. Upendo, Lonely Orphans, Siritanyi, Gladys Ochieng] have been supported for more than a decade, but others gave up the feeding programme because of lack of funds or poor management.



If a group drops out of the programme it is quickly replaced by another eager to take advantage of SGG support. This year we have welcomed 2 groups to the OVC feeding programme – CIF and Nyusa Farmers. This photo [see left] shows CIF members attending the first monitoring session undertaken by SGG Director Carole Keeley in October. Carole is currently preparing a report on all 9 OVC groups, and this will be posted on the SGG website before the end of January.

Thank you for your support

Seasonal greetings to all SGG friends, supporters and partners wherever you may be. As Carole and I wait for our family to join us for our Christmas festival we wish all of you the peace, happiness and refreshment of Christmas within your families and communities. We hope also that next year brings progress, prosperity and a renewed sense of optimism to all our project partners, and that our many supporters continue to help "Make Poverty History".

Have a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

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