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NEWSLETTER

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Zimbabwe hosts its first Master TreeGrower Program

The town of Gokwe in the Midlands region of Zimbabwe was the location for its nation's first ever Master TreeGrower (MTG) program in July this year. Hosted by local organisation Abundant Life For All (ALFA), the five-day program trained fifty-eight of the region's leading farmers and government personnel with life-changing agroforestry skills.

Zimbabwe is a land locked country in southern Africa with a population of approximately 14 million people, covering an area about half the size of New South Wales. As a nation, Zimbabwe has experienced significant challenges in recent years with hyper-inflation reaching a mind-blowing level of 11,200,200%, unemployment exceeding 90% and government debt hitting a staggering 151% of GDP. As a result of corruption and disastrous government policies, a country that once proudly exported agricultural products now has a serious food security problem with more than 1.5 million people in need of food aid.

Like many of the nations where Beyond Subsistence operates, education and empowerment in the area of agroforestry and sustainable farming can have a profound impact on lives. In 2014, two Zimbabweans from the local organisation ALFA, traveled to Uganda to attend our 2014 Master TreeGrower program. Both of these men returned to Zimbabwe feeling empowered and enthusiastic. One of these men, Tavengwa Tete, recently received the Conservation Farmer of the Year award for his local region. His achievements were undeniable. For the majority in the local region, poor conditions led to widespread crop failure. However, Tete achieved an impressive crop yield employing some of his newfound knowledge (see top picture). With results like this, it was no wonder that the team from ALFA was so enthusiastic for a MTG program in their own region!

A team of four from Australia and one from Uganda facilitated the program over a five-day period. The training was targeted and clear. There was a noticeable willingness from local champion farmers to share their knowledge and genuine hospitality was offered by each of the villages visited. The trainers and participants lived together for the week, which enabled wonderful friendships to be formed. The cooks did an amazing job with limited resources.

Participants learned about the basic science of agroforestry and visited numerous farms to see it in action. They discovered trees for medicinal purposes, apiary, nitrogen-fixation and woodlots. Several farms hosted impressive vegetable gardens and others had orchards including mango, banana and citrus. Markets were visited and a new appreciation was gained for the role that trees play in improving and sustaining agricultural production.

The first Zimbabwean MTG program faced numerous challenges. The bus broke down many times, as did every vehicle brought in to replace it. The group ran out of water and curious monkeys shorted out the electricity. There were government curfews implemented during the week of the program, which led to a multitude of police roadblocks for every field visit. The roads were terrible, however the people were resilient, friendly and their faith was real. The feedback was compelling - they appreciated everything that was taught to them.

Perhaps one of the most profound learnings from the Zimbabwean MTG came from a local champion farmer named Donald, whose farm is a beautiful oasis in the desert with impressive plots of eucalyptus, maize, papaya, bananas, mango, citrus and chillies. The latter he supplies to Nandos! Donald stated, *"Buy a raincoat when it is raining and watch where the water is running. In the same way, if the water is leaving your farm, you are losing soils and nutrients! I practice conservation agriculture all the time."*

Special thanks goes to: Dr Steve Enticott and the team at CIA Tax for sponsoring all 58 participants to attend this life-changing training opportunity; The Crawford Fund for its ongoing financial support; the volunteer facilitators Peter Ronalds, Clinton Tepper, David Curry and Joy Tukahirwa; MTG partners SIM & the Australian Agroforestry Foundation.



Pictures: Top - Tete and family with impressive crops; Second - our Australian team; Third - local farm visit; Bottom - Graduating MTG participants

A trip of a lifetime for Josh Ronalds

Josh Ronalds is a fifteen year-old boy from Australia with an amazing story of determination. Where most fifteen-year-olds might be expected to work hard to save money for a motorbike or a trip to Movie World, Josh had his heart set on travelling with his dad this year to volunteer with Beyond Subsistence in Zimbabwe.

Josh's fund raising efforts began by growing vegetables at home then taking them to school to sell to the teachers. Eventually one of his teachers asked what he was saving for and his journey took an interesting turn. His Form Teacher asked Josh and his dad to come in and make a presentation about his proposed African venture. Soon other students got on board, organising a fund raising movie night at the local cinema. Eventually Josh sold out of vegetables but new opportunities arose as his school, church and local media joined the interest and donations started flowing in to assist Josh's mission. What started as a quest to raise a proportion of his travel expenses ended with Josh being able to finance travel for both he and his father plus some extra for the work of Beyond Subsistence in Zimbabwe. Well done Josh on an outstanding effort! Here are some of Josh's reflections on his recent journey:

We stayed in Gokwe, approximately 5 hours south west of Harare. In Gokwe the soil is sand down to 70 metres depth and the region is currently in drought. The main language spoken is Shona followed by English. The political situation is very bad at the moment. We saw lots of open corruption and bribery happen and most people are tired of being hungry and struggling to get a job. Some people haven't been paid in 3 months because the country has no money. Zimbabwe currently has the highest unemployment rate in the world at 95%.

Some topics covered at the Master TreeGrower training were soils, market opportunities, shade and shelter. Classroom sessions were held in the morning, then we would head off to farms in the afternoon where the farmers would see the practical side. It was mainly a time of open discussion with everyone sharing their knowledge and the farmer showing us what he/she is doing. We visited 2-3 farms per day. Our days were very long as we had multiple bus breakdowns. It would take us more than an hour to travel 30kms. The training went really successfully and at the end the feedback was all positive and the farmers said they found the course very helpful.

On the fourth day of the course we did a school farm visit. I went a bit before everyone else and helped lead a class (about 500 kids, grade 1-4). The lesson was about the importance of education and how it isn't right to be beaten (among other things). I had to give a little talk about the first point, through an interpreter. After a lot of singing and dancing, they split off into soccer, netball and volleyball groups and were using some of the soccer balls I had brought out from Australia. It was a great experience being there.

My highlights were: Meeting and interacting with the people and visiting a local school; Visiting the Zimconserve project (local non-government organisation); Visiting Donald's farm - Donald was one of the course participants, his farm looked amazing; and Travelling on the local transport. Overall I really loved the trip. I felt privileged to help the people in a small way. Thanks to everyone who donated funds or bought my veggies.



Pictures: (from top) Josh and Pete (Dad) with local farmers; The unreliable old bus; and Josh at the school sharing with students.

FROM THE CEO



Training and empowerment is a wonderful thing for people living in poverty. It provides a ticket to a better life, however the temptation can be to hold this information

tight and get ahead of those around you. Through Beyond Subsistence initiatives however, we are seeing quite the opposite.

In the last three years we have facilitated various training programs in Uganda, Niger, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. Our motivation is always very clear - God has given us so much in our lives that we want to freely give something to those less fortunate than ourselves. We encourage the participants to 'hand the baton' of generosity to those around them by sharing their newfound knowledge and skills with their neighbours.

Perhaps one of the most pleasing and unexpected outcomes from our training programs has been the uptake of this challenge. We have been amazed as participants have not only implemented what they have learned but invested in

teaching those around them. Some have formed tree grower or agroforestry networks to increase their impact and jointly tackle community projects. I was privileged to greet one enthusiastic women's group that started from just a few ladies who witnessed one of our stove training programs. These groups continue to train, encourage and empower those around them with admirable commitment to the task.

As a development organisation we can only marvel at these outcomes and continue to find ways to support and encourage each new group that forms. Their commitment, like ours, is to help change lives and landscapes one farm at a time.

Thank-you for your support in 2016!
Jon Lambert
CEO Beyond Subsistence

Fuel-efficient stove training for a fishing village

During late 2015 and early 2016, Beyond Subsistence provided sixty families with training in fuel-efficient stoves.

Mpunge is a small fishing village on the shores of Lake Victoria in the south of Uganda. Its community is made up of displaced people largely from Kenya and northern Uganda, where conflicts and famine have forced them from their homes. As a result, the people are living as squatters on the shores of the lake. Fishing is their primary source of income.

One of the great challenges for displaced people is access to land. Without any legal rights to the land there is little opportunity to farm or even to collect firewood, which is essential to boil water and cook food. The introduction of fuel-efficient stoves is therefore, an extremely worthwhile investment.

When Beyond Subsistence was made aware of the Mpunge fishing village

situation through development partner PresAID, we decided to sponsor a fuel-efficient stove training program.

The workshop took place over a seven day period for sixty families. This included education on the fuel crisis facing Uganda, an overview of the basic science behind fuel-efficient cooking, followed by hands-on training for building, maintaining and using the stoves. Each family ultimately ended up with their very own stove plus the knowledge and skills to pass on to others.

The training started slowly with around forty committed participants attending the first theory session, however this number quickly jumped to over one hundred once the practical

demonstrations began! Many family members joined in to help make the clay.

On visiting Mpunge village in October this year, our Australian team was incredibly moved by the heart-felt thanks that was given for the provision of the fuel-efficient stoves. Several mothers explained to us that their firewood needs had more than halved. Other women outlined how their business profits from cooking fish had increased immensely since gaining a fuel-efficient stove. Their firewood use had dropped significantly and food was now able to be cooked in half the time. Others remarked at how their kitchens are now free of smoke. Perhaps most pleasing of all was to learn that two of the villagers had taken the skills and gone to neighbouring villages to build stoves as a business venture.



Pictures: Left - Theory session; Left Middle - Preparation of the ingredients; Right Middle - New stove in use; Mpunge village fishermen and boats

Uganda receives its third Master TreeGrower program

During October 2016, members of the Beyond Subsistence team spent a wonderful week in the Wakiso district delivering a Master TreeGrower (MTG) program to forty enthusiastic local participants.

Each MTG program gathers a unique group of people with different backgrounds and experiences but a common interest - to learn about how trees can be used to improve their lives and their landscapes. A special bond is formed during the week of presentations, demonstrations and field trips. Relationships are built, local knowledge is shared and a special journey begins for each of those involved. The daily message to those attending is to (i) apply what is learnt; (ii) share freely with those around you; and (iii) care for God's creation. If the participant's enthusiasm, fun and appreciation is anything to go by, the Wakiso MTG is one of the best programs we have run in Africa to date!

Despite three of the four Australian facilitators coming from different States and never having met each other before, there was a wonderful display of teamwork amongst the Beyond Subsistence volunteers. So much so, that each of us were awarded Ugandan names and clothes on the final days of the program!

Our field visits included some amazing farms, a sawmill, tree nurseries and some large-scale plantations. Participants learnt the value of trees in the landscape for both conservation and profit. They had the opportunity to watch some pine logs being processed on a portable sawmill, and each of them gained a new appreciation of the need to grow straight trees! Some of the farms had impressive varieties of fruit and vegetables being grown for niche markets. Others had beautiful plantations of local timber species. Participants learned about the different soils in their region and their impact on plant growth. Everyone had an opportunity to prune a tree and to measure height, diameter and volume. There is always tremendous joy when the classroom theory becomes practical reality!

One of the most confronting sessions was provided by Edith Nakah, a local Ugandan forester, who pointed out that Uganda's forest estate had shrunk from 24% cover in 1990 to just 11% in 2010. This translates to a loss of 2.5 million hectares over a 20 year period due to population pressure and clearing for palm oil, tobacco and sugar production. Without some urgent changes, Uganda is on target to become a very large treeless plain. - *Continued next page*

Perhaps the most pleasing part of the third Ugandan Master TreeGrower program was the investment all participants made during the week to interact, share and learn. This enthusiasm culminated in the formation of a new Wakiso Agroforestry Network on the final day of the program, which will enable the participants to continue the journey of agroforestry development in the local district.

Special thanks goes to: Porta for their generous support to sponsor all 40 participants to attend this life-changing training; Heartwood Plantations for staff availability; the volunteer Australian facilitators Jon Lambert, Trevor Meers, Craig Taylor and Joanne Lewis; our Ugandan team of Joy, Teddy & Ededa; and our Master TreeGrower partners SIM & the Australian Agroforestry Foundation.

Pictures: Wakiso Master TreeGrower participants; Vicent and Beyond Subsistence volunteer Craig Taylor measuring; Beyond Subsistence Wakiso Facilitators (from left) Trevor Meers, Craig Taylor, Joanne Lewis, Jon Lambert and Joy Tukahirwa.



OUR SINCERE APPRECIATION

goes to our wonderful sponsors for their generous support of our 2016 Master TreeGrower programs in Zimbabwe and Uganda. For more information:
porta.com.au ciatax.com.au
heartwoodplantations.com.au
crawfordfund.org



Special Thanks to:

- Our friends at All Souls Anglican Church for the wonderful initiative to recently host a Beyond Subsistence fundraising dinner in Sandringham. Over \$5,000 was raised on the night and several new connections were made. Thanks to all those who attended the evening and generously donated. A special mention goes to Vicar Philip Higgins and Dr Steve Enticott for organising the event.
- Our new friend Wayne Dyson for his fundraising efforts. Wayne will attempt to swim the rip from Point Nepean to Point Lonsdale in the Melbourne Riprace in January to raise money for Beyond Subsistence. If you would like to support Wayne's efforts please go to: <https://personalchallenge.gofundraise.com.au/page/WayneDyson>
- One of our founding board members, Stephanie Lambert. After seven years of faithful service we farewell Steph, and thank her for her many hours of service and incredible support - especially looking after the home front as Jon has traveled overseas. Steph will continue volunteering in our fundraising department amongst other things.
- Teddy Nabawanda and the SEOFS Team in Uganda for the wonderful work they do delivering our fuel-efficient stove training.



Want to help?

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Pray for our work and those who volunteer to make it happen.

Do a **fundraising** activity through GoFundraise and get fit at the same time, see: gofundraise.com.au

Follow us on **Facebook** to keep up with our work.



Our Mission: Beyond Subsistence is a non-profit, Christian organisation that exists to bring about long-term sustainable change through forestry and agroforestry development amongst the world's poorest communities.

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