

Newsletter

JANUARY 2015

Seasonal greetings to all SGG supporters wherever you may be. This newsletter, usually written in November, has often been used to summarise Sustainable Global Gardens' main developments over the previous year and has usually been sent out to you a few weeks before Christmas.

This year I was working in Kenya until mid-December so this will not arrive until after the New Year. We hope that 2015 is a good year for all of you, just as 2015 promises to be a very significant year for SGG.

In 2014 SGG activities have been dominated by two projects. In February we signed a contract to work as a partner on the OPTIONS project. OPTIONS concerns the promotion of pesticidal plants in Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Zimbabwe. This might not sound that exciting, but scientific opinion is that at least 30% of agricultural production South of the Sahara is lost to pests, either on the plant before harvest [with pests such as the maize stalk borer, aphids etc] or after harvest when the crop is being stored. Most African small-scale farmers cannot afford to use modern synthetic

chemical pesticides, and if they do use them there are many problems related to health issues and overuse of the chemicals concerned. Pesticidal plants, such as pyrethrum, Neem, and Tephrosia, allow improved and cheap pest control without the dangers of synthetic pesticides. Thus, the OPTIONS project provides SGG with an excellent opportunity to make a contribution to improved food security in Africa South of the Sahara, the region of the world most affected by chronic hunger and malnutrition.

OPTIONS Optimisation of Pesticidal plants: Technology Innovation, Outreach and Networks

This project involves both scientific research and dissemination of pesticidal plant knowledge among farming communities. It is this latter activity, especially in Kenya, where SGG is most involved. In 2014 we have made contact with approximately 40 farmer groups, all wanting training and information about such plants.



July 2014, members of Abakhaywa Mulukongo are given Tephrosia seedlings to plant on their own farms

OPTIONS...

The EU-funded OPTIONS project has brought two direct benefits to SGG. One is that it has provided significant funds (€66,680 for the 3 year programme, with €17,181 awarded to SGG in 2014), so we now have financial stability until at least the end 2016. A more important matter is that OPTIONS has brought SGG into a working partnership with some prestigious institutions. The Natural Resources Institute at Greenwich University and Kew Gardens are the other two British partners, while ICRAF and the National Museums of Kenya are the two Kenyan partners. This has enabled SGG to come into contact with hundreds of community groups and other stakeholders – all working towards poverty and hunger eradication.

The highlight of the year for many of these groups was a 3 day national workshop held at ICRAF, the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry, in late October. One of the main tasks for SGG was to establish a ‘pilot scheme’ before that workshop in order to be able to demonstrate to workshop attendants how they could

develop the project in their locality.

The pilot scheme took place among MMO farmers in Busia county. In June they were given Tephrosia seeds to plant in several nurseries. The top left photo shows the first Tephrosia seedlings at Abakhaywa Mulukongo Women’s Group ready to transplant in late July. Here each member was given 20 seedlings to plant on their own farm.

Another SGG task was to complete a baseline survey of farmer groups to find out what they already know about pesticidal plants. Among other things this has enabled SGG to provide paid occasional work for several Kenyans. Here Phaustine Ogolla is interviewing Upendo Women in Busia County (top right photo) about their use of natural pesticides, whereas Carole interviewed a similar group from COSDEP in Kiambu county (see bottom right photo). Often there are many additional benefits from such meetings. The COSDEP women had a tree nursery with thousands of seedlings but no ready market, so SGG bought 1,000 young trees and then gave each woman trees to take and plant on their home farm (bottom left photo).



TREEDOM 25,000 trees which will be sold to companies wishing to offset their carbon emissions...

The second major project is to plant 25,000 trees in Busia County by April 2015. This is based on a contract with Treadom, which was signed in June. Treadom is a commercial company, based in Florence, Italy, who specialise in tree-planting projects where each tree is georeferenced and photographed before being put on the internet and sold to a worldwide market. SGG-planted trees are not yet available for sale, but SGG has received €6,853 for agroforestry work already done in Busia County.

This Treadom project encourages small-scale farmers to develop their plots on agroforestry principles, so that they are growing a variety of trees which can be used for many purposes by the farmer. Such species include fruits, such as this mango planted by Joseph Wafula of Khuyala (see below). Another popular choice is *Tephrosia vogeleii*. SGG is promoting *Tephrosia* as a pesticidal plant, but farmers also plant it as a nitrogen-fixing soil improver. Another plant we wish to encourage is *Moringa oleifera*, and there are now several such trees in Maendeleo Mashinani's demonstration plot (see right). *Moringa* has many uses as a source of nutrition, fodder, vegetable oil, and also as a water purifier. However, by far the most popular species for planting on small farms is the multipurpose *Grevillea robusta*, which provides timber, woodfuel, fodder and is a soil improver which can be planted close to crops.

The great advantage of the Treadom project for Kenyan farmers is that they will receive significant additional income as Treadom have agreed to pay for both planting and caring for these trees.



SGG project round up...

Established projects continue to flourish

The OPTIONs and Treedom projects are both concerned with tree-planting. At present it seems likely that agroforestry will be a major part of SGG activities for the next few years. This, however, will not be large-scale tree-planting, but planting primarily on small-scale farms in association with organic gardening

and permaculture principles. This focus on agroforestry does not mean that nothing else has happened within the various projects which SGG supports. We continue to send funds to the Home for Abandoned Babies in Moshi, Tanzania. We continue to support Breakthrough Foundation with their educational efforts in Juja

Farm, Kenya. Furthermore, we have continued to support table-banking and the orphans feeding programme in Busia County. Also SGG has invested heavily in MMO's new demonstration plot where organic gardening and permacultural systems are being developed.



Young children enjoy a simple Saturday meal prepared by Namulekhwa Wedinye Women's Group (*far left*). Lonely orphan children wait patiently outside the new kitchen for food to be ready (*left*).

Promoting the virtues of pesticidal plants

Recent developments in association with the OPTIONs project mean that SGG has been introduced to many more Kenyan community-based groups. And every time that SGG introduces the notion of pesticidal plants as an alternative to synthetic pesticides, we receive new requests for more training and support concerning these techniques. Thus, it is difficult to see how we can continue with some of our older projects without changing how we support such schemes.

At Machakos in late November I was invited to introduce the concept of pesticidal plants to the annual gathering of INADES. Following an hour long presentation some 17 community groups requested training and further information. These various groups claimed to be representing more than 15,000 farmers. At this point of my recent field trip, I realised that work for OPTIONs could readily expand to become a full time task.



Thank you for your support

As you can see from the above, SGG is preparing for a fully occupied 2015. We wish to thank you for all the support you have given us in 2014, and we hope you can continue to support us as our work expands in 2015. Our greetings from Tyneside, and our wishes for a prosperous 2015 for you all! *Paul Keeley*