



Project Status—One Year On

The first year of this project is now history. After several years of contemplating how to begin such an effort, or if it was even feasible for a private individual to initiate a conservation project in a distant part of the world, the ABCP is now up and running.



SEBASTIAN CHUWA

After some time to track down Mr. Sebastian Chuwa in Tanzania and then through correspondence with him to set up the basics of the project, I sent out 180 fundraising letters in June, 1996. Thanks to

the generous response of some of the individuals and groups contacted, sufficient funding was collected to begin the project. A bank account was set up in Austin, Texas to serve as a clearinghouse for donations in the USA and a foreign exchange account was created in the name of the ABCP at the National Bank of Commerce in Arusha, Tanzania to convert US dollars into Tanzanian shillings for use in the work of the project in Moshi, Tanzania.

Sufficient funds however have not been collected to fully fund Mr. Chuwa's Wish List, which envisioned a donated one-acre plot which would be fenced, a shelter built, and irrigation installed. So work has begun on an initial scaled-down version of the project. The Annual Report included as an insert in this newsletter will fully document the financial status of the ABCP for its first year. Photographs on the next two pages will document the work that has been accomplished to date.

Accomplishments

Starting work on the project before the beginning of the local rainy season in February of this year at Moshi, Tanzania, Mr. Chuwa purchased the basic nursery tools necessary and began clearing brush from a smaller fenced area donated by a friend of the project. This plot is in lieu of the envisioned one-acre plot and about 5 km from it. He then conducted a training session for several interested individuals to acquaint them with the techniques of planting and caring for the Mpingo tree. An attendant, Mama Mariamu, was hired to tend the fledgling nursery for the next several months.

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"My 200 Mpingo seedlings are obviously not enough to make much difference compared with what is being lost. But next year I hope to have 20,000 seedlings to plant. It is vital for me to act now rather than wait until the future when things have reached a crisis..."
Sebastian Chuwa, "The Tree of Music", 1992

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A seedbed was prepared, mulched, and then carefully watered and tended. By April, the tiny seedlings were transplanted into pots. Over 500 seedlings were potted in this initial stage of the project. These plants will need to be carefully tended to protect them from any deprivations by insects or animals, watered and fertilized until they are about 15 months old. Experience has shown Mr. Chuwa that this age is the minimum to insure a reasonable chance for survival when transplanted into the wild. Someday, on a yearly basis, we hope to replant the 20,000 Mpingos estimated to be harvested every year.

Other and Future Efforts

Flora & Fauna International/Sound-Wood has offered moral support and encouragement and has generously shared all the current literature they have available regarding the status of Mpingo, but has been unable to offer funding support at this time. Approaches were made to various timber dealers and woodwind music organizations with little response. Appeals have been published in the *American Woodturner*, the journal of the American Association of Woodturners, and several music journals, also with little response. An application was made for funding from the Local Environment Fund of the Royal Dutch Embassy in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania and was subsequently rejected.

An appeal published in the Bulletin of the Society of Ornamental Turners in London was able to raise £60, to which the Society added £40 of their funds. This fall, several applications to benevolent foundations for grants are pending. Other possible funding sources are being researched and investigated.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
•Margaret Mead•

Securing status as an IRS 501(c)3 non-profit organization would give ABCP the legitimacy required by larger foundations. However, this step would entail the expense of a \$200 registration fee with the IRS, incorporation with the state of Texas and its attendant \$150 yearly corporate franchise tax, and the hassle and time expended in filing applications and yearly returns with both bodies. Money and time would thus be siphoned off from the intent of the ABCP to get some trees planted in Tanzania, but this may be the next necessary step in the evolution of the ABCP.

Some Thoughts on ABCP

This project is an experiment in pure democracy—that is, it is a grass-roots effort to accomplish a worthy goal that the established institutions are passing by. As Buckminster Fuller has said, “The things to do are the things that need doing—that YOU see need to be done, and that no one else seems to see need to be done.” Seeing a need and in community acting together to address that need from the bottom up, instead of having policy dictated from the top down, is still a revolutionary concept. It is an acceptance of responsibility that,



SEBASTIAN CHUWA SORTING MPINGO SEEDS

population unless wise human stewardship intervenes in that interaction. No one with a moment’s introspection would want to deprive the generations of the future of the same blessings with which we have been graced. I agree with the injunction of the writer Leo Tolstoy that “The simplest and shortest ethical precept is to be served by others as little as possible and to serve others as much as possible.” In cooperation in establishing and supporting the African Blackwood Conservation Project, we serve to insure the future viability of a remarkable gift of nature, whether we are around to participate in its benefits or not.

So I give each one of you who have been moved to participate in this effort my heartfelt thanks and applaud your vision in seeing the need for such a project. Together, we have initiated a movement towards the actual replanting of a valuable resource that might someday disappear without such action. Seeds have been planted, small mpingo

course. But we now have something to show for our efforts, and if the energy stays behind this ideal, we will reach a



MAMA MARIAMU PREPARING THE SEEDBED

critical mass that will then begin to draw attention, and with that notice, the desire of others to get on board and help what we have begun. The ABCP may well have the potential of becoming a pilot project to demonstrate a means of conservation and replenishment of the African blackwood tree supported and carried out by ordinary citizens who care. Thanks for joining in the journey.



WATERING THE SEEDBED/SEEDLINGS POTTED



TANZANIA IS IN EAST AFRICA, JUST SOUTH OF THE EQUATOR

even if it benefits us personally, speaks to an altruism that is one of the refining qualities of civilization—to give of oneself for a higher cause. In initiating this project, I do not pretend to have any greater vision than anyone else, but simply took action in response to trends that are apparent.

It is obvious to me that natural resources are diminishing in time with the increasing demands of a growing



DETAIL—MOSHI IS SOUTH OF MT. KILIMANJARO

seedlings are thriving and growing under the loving care of Sebastian Chuwa, and though their number be few, they represent hundreds of future trees that were not growing just one year ago. So the first real steps have been taken in this journey, and I feel it is going to take perseverance to stay the

We can do no great things—Only small things with great love...Mother Teresa

Education

Sebastian has conducted training sessions for local residents around Moshi, as well as with students at local schools. By organizing the children in sports clubs, such as for soccer, he engages their interest while conveying valuable information about conservation issues.

If in time he had materials for teaching such as basic stationary supplies and ultimately a VCR, he would be able to maintain such efforts as well as expand them to a larger area surrounding Moshi. Education about the importance of Mpingo and the need to conserve and replenish it is vital to the long term success of a community-based project such as the ABCP.



POTTED MPINGO SEEDLINGS IN NURSERY—MOSHI, TANZANIA. APRIL 4, 1997.



MRS. MARY SAMBEKE VOLUNTEERED TO TEND SEEDLINGS.

• New Internet Site for the ABCP •

A new site is being created on the Internet World Wide Web to serve as the anchor for the African Blackwood Project. This site will be maintained with all the up-to-date information on the status of ABCP. It will also serve as an information source for a broader worldwide audience, as well as serving as a point of referral to any organizations contacted about support for the project. If you have Internet access, check it out at

<http://geocities.com/RainForest/Vines/4386>



15-MONTH OLD MPINGO SEEDLING FROM ONE OF SEBASTIAN'S EARLIER PLANTING EXPERIMENTS. READY TO SET OUT. MARCH 20, 1997

We can do no great things—Only small things with great love...Mother Teresa



MATURE MPINGO TREES ALONG THE SEASONAL FARM LANDS. MOSHI, TANZANIA

African Blackwood Conservation Project
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So that
the song
of the
Tree of Music
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