



With Mt. Kilimanjaro in the background, farmers and villagers at Makuyuni hired to prepare plot for planting of mpingo seedlings are at work chopping weeds.

Good Gifts Catalog Funds Major Mpingo Planting Projects

During the past two years, the ABCP has been the fortunate recipient of funding from the UK-based charity, the Good Gifts Catalog, which offers opportunities for gift giving on behalf of organizations that promote socially and environmentally conscious projects around the world.

Because of this funding we have been able to start several large-scale planting projects in association with local communities who are keeping careful watch on the progress of the trees.

One such project was started at Makuyuni, a community of about 2000 people 15 miles east of Moshi in an area with good soil fertility and annual rainfall appropriate to the needs of mpingo.

To start the project, Sebastian consulted with the Village Chairman, who had a favorable reaction and talked to

the Village Committee Council, which has the management of public lands within its scope of responsibility. After a meeting with the town residents and approval by the village Land and Environmental Committee, all parties agreed to offer acreage for the project. Since the area was covered with thorn brush, it was agreed to begin with clearing an area of 7 acres. The thorn brush growing there is *Acacia mellifera*, a plant of wide renown because of its curiously hooked thorns which grab onto clothing and animal hide. These bushes are popularly known as “Wait-a-Bit” because if you run into them, then you are forced to “wait-a-bit” until you can untangle yourself.

The first task was to clear the *Acacia* thorn, which was daunting, but care-

(continued on pg. 2, see Good Gifts)

Cottonwood Foundation Awards Grant to KEEG

The Kibosho East Environmental Group (KEEG) operates a tree nursery on Mt. Kilimanjaro in close cooperation with Sebastian Chuwa. Their nursery plot is within sight of his home so there is a continual exchange of ideas and coordination of plans between Sebastian and the group.

This year the ABCP applied for funding for the KEEG to enable it to implement a tree planting project to insure livelihood needs and environmental protection in their ward of Kibosho East, directly south of Kilimanjaro National Park. Established in 1973, the park covers an area of 291 square miles and is surrounded by a half-mile strip which is a forest reserve. The people on the lower slopes of Kilimanjaro have traditionally been permitted to enter this reserve to harvest grasses (most of the mountain’s farmers practice zero-grazing and stall-feed their animals) and to procure downed timber for firewood and building purposes. They are also known for their expertise at bee-keeping and many have established bee-hives in the trees of the reserve.

Recently the government has closed this half-mile forest strip to public access and incorporated it within the park boundaries, so it is now illegal to enter the area. This has caused great hardship to those who have come to rely on forest products to meet their normal needs.

(continued on pg. 2, see Cottonwood)

Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.

-- Martin Luther



Rows of holes dug to plant mpingo seedlings recede towards a security hut built by the Makuyuni villagers at the edge of the planting area. A photo slide show of the project can be viewed on the ABCP website.

(Good Gifts, continued from pg. 1)

fully executed. The roots, about a foot deep, are also dug out. Ultimately, though, the thorn brush turned out to be a beneficial material because when piled up by the villagers around the periphery of the acreage, it became an impenetrable fence, serving as a barrier to village livestock and wild animals.

The seedlings transplanted to Makuyuni were grown at the Moshi Mpingo Plot (MMP), where two full-time workers are now employed by the ABCP.

Another area being planted is at Kilindini, where the superintendent of the local primary school had already planted 100 mpingo trees after meeting Sebastian at a workshop and becoming interested in the work of the ABCP. The



Moving the thorny acacia brush into place to create a boma, a brush fence that protects the planting field from livestock.

have been planted.

One point to emphasize is the importance the ABCP attaches to follow-up care and ensuring that the seedlings planted survive their first crucial years.

One technique that is being used is to take a filled inverted plastic water bottle with a tiny pinprick opening and bury it in the ground to water the plant in the first year, in case rains are not sufficient. Since mpingo requires much less moisture than many other species, this extra amount can make the difference that will insure survival.

(Cottonwood, continued from pg. 1)

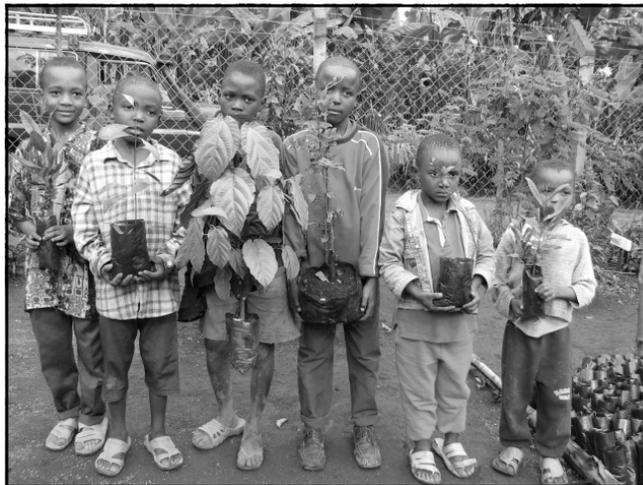
The KEEG is responding to this new situation by growing trees in their nurseries for distribution that will help to replace those natural resources that have been lost to the people with the closing of the forest. With the funding from the Cottonwood Foundation, they will be planting and distributing 15,000 trees of about ten different species.

school has a large acreage of land surrounding it and has taken on the task of planting 5,000 mpingo trees, which will be cared for by the students and school personnel. Two other planting areas are in Kirua and Kilema, where about 4,000 trees

The cultivation of trees is the cultivation of the good, the beautiful and the ennobling in man.
 — J. Sterling Morton
 Founder, The National Arbor Day Foundation

These trees will provide a variety of services. Many of them have multiple uses, i.e., branches can be used for firewood and leaves for animal fodder. Some, such as African mahogany, can be utilized locally for furniture making or sold commercially. Bee-keeping will be supported by planting flowering trees specifically attractive to bees. In addition, since the people rely heavily on natural remedies, the bark, leaves and roots of many trees planted will be used medicinally.

The KEEG has all the infrastructure in place to quickly germinate, pot and distribute a large number of trees. Last year they accomplished a special project of planting 11,000 Silk oak (*Grevilla robusta*) trees, lining the main road in their area. These trees will provide re-



The children of KEEG members are active participants in tree planting for conservation. Here they are bringing seedlings from the KEEG nursery to transport to planting areas.

sources for both domestic and environmental purposes.

We thank Paul Moss, director of Cottonwood Foundation, and all its dedicated volunteers, for their continuing support of the work of the ABCP and its affiliated groups and their selection of the ABCP as a Cottonwood Partner. Over the past ten years Cottonwood has provided us with the impetus and fund-



Members of the KEEG Group load seedbeds with soil pots into which they will plant tree seedlings at their nursery in Sungu Village. Such frames can hold up to 7,000 seedlings.

ing to build our infrastructure so that we are able to grow and distribute increasing numbers of trees each year.

...children are disappearing from the outdoors at a rate that would make them top of any conservationist's list of endangered species if they were any other member of the animal kingdom.
- Tim Gill, British play advocate in *The Ecologist*

Sebastian and Elizabeth Attend International Conference on Childhood Nature Education

In July 2008, Sebastian Chuwa and his wife, Elizabeth, attended an educational conference in Nebraska City, Nebraska, dedicated to childhood nature education. It was jointly sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation, the World Forum Foundation, and the Nature Action Collaborative for Children (NACC), and attended by 300 early childhood educators, environmental activists, landscape architects, and health specialists, hailing from 27 countries.

The objective of the conference was to share ideas and methodology about re-introducing nature activities into the daily lives of children. In developed countries particularly, children are ever less likely to grow up climbing trees, collecting flowers and bugs, and getting dirty playing in the backyard. Instead of experiencing the wonder of nature firsthand and watching its recurring cycles of growth, death, and rebirth, increasing

societal pressures and fears are confining children to indoor spaces, often to spend hours each day watching TV or playing video games on computers.

Ironically, the news that children often get from TV about the environment concentrates on subjects such as global warming and endangered species rather than its beauty. Educational researchers are now becoming alarmed

and have coined a new word, "ecophobia," used to denote fear of the natural world and environmental issues, often arising from exposure to negative images of nature at too early an age.

The seminal thought for the development of the NACC was a paper presented at a World Forum conference in 2005, co-authored by John Rosenow, president of the Arbor Day Foundation, and his wife, Nancy, founder of Dimensions, an educational research group. It was entitled "Helping Children Love the Earth Before We Ask Them to Save It."

(See: www.worldforumfoundation.org/wf/wf2006_nature/pdf/lovetheearth.pdf).

It pointed the way towards giving children early experiences of nature to awaken their wonder and love. In this way, they can learn to identify and bond with nature at an early age and hopefully

will become good stewards of the environment as adults.

According to the NACC, connecting children with the natural world: 1) Is crucial for their optimal intellectual and physical development, 2) Provides a sense of refuge and healing in a sometimes violent and frightening world, 3) Helps them grow into adults who care about environmental stewardship, and 4) Nurtures a sense of shared community among the world's peoples.

Sebastian Chuwa was invited to participate as a member of the Leadership Team. Elizabeth, who is a primary school teacher, attended as a participant. Both were able to share experiences from their many years of youth conservation work in Tanzania and learn what is being done in other parts of the world.

Since Elizabeth is the first teacher in her district of 800 schools to travel to the US, since returning home she has been called upon to deliver addresses, describing experiences and lessons garnered from speakers and other attendees.



Elizabeth Chuwa at the NACC workshop demonstrates a craft technique she teaches her students at Sungu Primary School, using natural materials. This is a fish motif made of clay, sticks, and straw.

A grant from the World Forum Foundation and the generous support of several private contributors financed travel costs. Sebastian, Elizabeth, and the ABCP wish to extend a heartfelt "Thank You" to those who made the trip possible: The World Forum Foundation, Ewa Robinson, Christa Lyons, and Barry Goode.

Global Connections by oboist Brenda Schuman-Post

Brenda Schuman-Post is a professional musician who, for the past 5 years, has taken on the task of educating musicians, audiences, and the general public to help assure a sustainable future for mpingo/Dalbergia melanoxylon.

I'm a professional oboist. I first learned of Sebastian when I saw, in 1992, the BBC documentary, *Mpingo—The Tree that Makes Music*. Though I'd known about ABCP since it first appeared on the Internet, it wasn't until 2002 that I contacted and later met Bette and James Harris. In 2003, I created a PowerPoint lecture performance called "Mpingo's Fruit: Harvesting the Music Tree – the people, the places, the process," and began to occasionally lecture about Sebastian and other blackwood conservationists. With ABCP help, I won a 2008 Global Connections grant from the organization Meet the Composer. The objective was to travel to Tanzania and collaborate with local musicians "to create via improvisation, a new piece of music that will bond the people who have the trees from which woodwind instruments are made, with the people who play those instruments."



Oboe lesson, Singachini (Teacher's College)

At every opportunity I interviewed Sebastian, asking, "How has the ABCP changed your life?" He said, "I have more work for myself. But the project helps me to travel and my ideas are able to spread. It's growing every day." When I asked for an example he said, "OK, this man here. I have taught him to plant coffee. First he planted bananas. Banana trees are fast growing – one year. Bananas provide shade for the coffee. Coffee is planted under the bananas and also beans. This man is very proud because he has a crop that can feed his family and will soon have 40 pounds of coffee that he can sell and his life will be very different. He can help his children to go to school. The people in the villages, like Makuyuni, have nicer houses, and their children are going to school."

Next community in serious need of help, I'm told, might be Simanjoro. I retain my impression that Sebastian is using mpingo as a way of elevating the spirit of both the land and the people. While over 100 years from now, there may very well be a cash crop of straight, big trees for the making of musical instruments, for the immediate future there seems to be a whole lot of improved farming, better education, and certainly healthier, less impoverished life.



The Mpingo Group (from left): Chacha Mnyoro, Mapinduzi Maganya, Brenda Schuman-Post, Magesa Chacha, Charles Magesa. Sixtus Koromba, on keyboard, in front.

Soon after I arrived at Mount Kilimanjaro Sebastian showed me the Makuyuni plot (see story, pg. 1), and drove me down a bumpy rural road to show me a lone mpingo tree. Elizabeth took me to a teacher's meeting, and I played. They'd never heard the oboe, were amazed that it was manufactured from mpingo, and were surprised to learn that we in the West are so dependent upon them and their environment. "Does anyone want to try to play?" I asked. I persuaded two male teachers to honk away with gusto and with much delight for the audience. That happened the next day, too, at Singachini Teacher's College in nearby Moshi.



Kibosho Villager, Mt. Kilimanjaro

Thanks to Sebastian's and Sixtus Koromba's efforts, I collaborated with four astounding musicians. Their traditional music was wonderful, their personalities distinctive and delightful, their dancing uplifting, and their antics hilarious. I have never laughed so much nor been so musically happy in all my career. They are 3 farmers and a fisherman from the Kurya tribe. Their world – no electricity, poor sanitation, no technology – is so radically different from mine and yet the connection – the musical bond, was both clear and intriguing. Despite the language barrier, we became friends. I miss them terribly.

Their handmade instruments are so different from my sophisticated oboe. They had never heard of jazz. So there I was, female, white, mostly classical oboe player, teaching four attentive African men about the history of jazz, how it came to America

via the African slaves. Through hand gesture, singing, recording on an iPod and listening back, they learned to improvise, to listen to one another and to me, to remember, and to follow an unfamiliar musical form. I learned so much I can't even begin to explain it, more about life, I think, than music, and we developed two wonderful pieces, both based upon traditional Kurya rhythm and melody. One we called "Conserve Mpingo" and the other "The Tree of Tanzania". We called ourselves The Mpingo Group and played concerts for hundreds of listeners, in diverse venues – schools, a restaurant, even a wedding. Thanks to financial support from Buffet Crampon USA (buffet-crampon.com), the manufacturers of my oboe, we recorded both pieces, and some traditional Kurya music too. Environmental day, September 27th on Mt. Kilimanjaro, was our culminating performance.



Brenda performs at Ruhatwe Village, Kilwa/Southern Tanzania. ©2008 Steve Ball.

Hundreds of Tanzanians have now heard the sound of my instrument, both as a solo instrument, and in a rhythmically and instrumentally traditional and familiar context. I'm pretty sure that the message has gotten across – this gorgeous instrument, the oboe, is one product of mpingo, and in this part of Tanzania it is vital to replant and conserve the tree.

Later I visited the Mpingo Conservation Project (MCP) run by Steve Ball in Kilwa. Steve says "Sebastian's plantation conditions make for 90% vegetation, meaning that the seed is genetically fixed. Sebastian's method has a chance, especially because the roots will be strong. If the roots are strong then even with a fire, trees in a plantation setting might survive!" MCP is establishing Participatory Forest Management, a government approved plan in which the villagers will be responsible for forest management and will receive all payment for the trees that are harvested from

their forest. I played for a gathering in Ruhatwe Village and one of the villagers said (via translator) that "the music is so happy if you played it for an elephant the elephant would dance!"

On my birthday, I traveled 500 miles by truck, along bumpy dirt roads, with Martin Weischmann, who runs the Mpingo Madera Sawmill in Mozambique. He supplies 95% of the blackwood used in the making of musical instruments worldwide. Martin agrees that with so few mpingo trees in Northern Tanzania, Sebastian has the right idea. Martin also loves how much the ABCP is helping villagers.

Gorgeous bracelets and decorative items are products coming out of Mezimbite Cultural Center near Beira, Mozambique. Allan Schwarz teaches locals to skillfully create high-end items in addition to woodwind instrument billets. Everything bearing the AD Schwarz label comes with a guarantee of sustainability and benefit to his surrounding community. Allan said, "By having trees planted both in groves and on people's property, Sebastian is creating shade to restore those micro-climates to a healthy condition."

Later, in England, I was treated to a tour of the Howarth Oboe factory. I am, apparently, the only musician in history who has ever witnessed the entire process – from finding a tree to the completion of an oboe. Now back in San Francisco, I am simultaneously editing the music CD, the hours of video, the photos, the hundreds of pages of notes, putting together a new, more informed PowerPoint presentation, and hoping to educate and inform a wide range of audiences about what's really going on in both Tanzania and Mozambique regarding the conservation, preservation, and harvesting of African Blackwood.

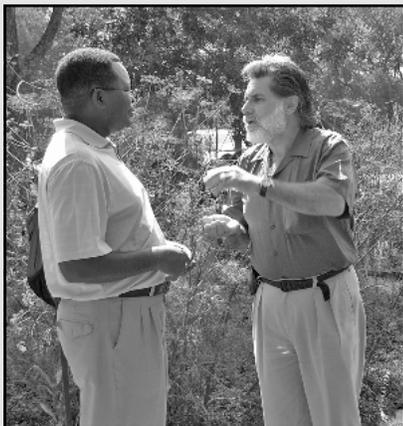
We are all connected. The bond, the unifying factor here, is the music, and it is my commitment to continue to connect with all of you in this way. A new scheme, organized by Paul Harrison, is developing with the intention of unifying us all – keeping us all on the same page. Called Sound and Fair, it is an initiative for sustainable harvesting and fair pricing for mpingo.

Many thanks to James and Bette, Sebastian and Elizabeth, Sixtus Koromba, the Kiagata musicians, Steve Ball (mpingoconservation.org), Martin Weischmann, Allan Schwarz (ADSchwarz.com), Paul Harrison (sustainableblackwood.org). Brenda's website is (oboesoftheworld.com). All photos: ©2008 Brenda Schuman-Post unless otherwise noted.)



Brenda's oboe in front of 2-year-old baby mpingo tree.

American Botanical Council Welcomes Sebastian & Elizabeth Chuwa



After attending the NACC conference (see article, pg. 3), Sebastian and Elizabeth traveled to Austin, Texas to spend time with James and Bette Harris, US directors of the ABCP. During the visit they toured the grounds of the headquarters of the American Botanical Council (ABC), founded by herbalist Mark Blumenthal in 1988. As Sebastian is also a herbalist, skilled in the medicinal use of African plants, he and Mark had many stories to share. The mission of the ABC is to promote the responsible use of herbal medicine by providing traditional and scientifically verifiable information on their safe and effective use. To this end it has published 4 books, as well as a quarterly in-print journal, *Herbalgram*, an online journal, and in-depth archive on botanical topics. In association with the University of Texas and Texas State University it offers internship programs for students of pharmacology and nutrition. And for the truly adventurous one can join an ABC international ethnobotanical tour to an exotic destination. Mark has established an international reputation for his tireless pioneering efforts in bringing this ancient art into the light of modern scientific knowledge and earlier this year was presented the “Natural Legacy” award by Natural Foods Merchandiser.

The ABC journal, *Herbalgram*, in its Fall 2008 issue featured an in-depth 4-page article with color photos about mpingo and the work of the ABCP.

Mpingo is not only used in the world of art, but is well known throughout Africa for its many medicinal remedies. Its roots are used to treat abdominal pain, hernia, intestinal parasites, gonorrhea, headache, rhinitis, and bronchitis. The bark is used as an antidiarrheic or antibacterial and chewed to treat toothache. The leaves may treat throat inflammations, heat problems, syphilis, gonorrhea, and dysentery, and boiled leaves are used topically to reduce swelling. The shavings of the heartwood mixed with lotions can also be used to create a topical cream to treat skin diseases and certain fungi. In Kenya, some of its ongoing over-exploitation can be attributed to its use in curing coughs and stomach pain. In addition to losses for musicians and woodworkers, these medicinal benefits would likewise be a great loss if the tree is not conserved and replanted.

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So that
the song
of the
Tree of Music
will not go
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