

Blackwood (Mpingo) Trees

Several years ago, the Muungano Makonde carvers won a grant from a UN conservation program to plant 40,000 mpingo trees at Makuyuni, a village southeast of Moshi. The seedlings were provided from the ABCP nursery, which has received valuable support through the Good Gifts catalogue. The results of this program, in the words of Muungano Carvers: “In 2 years, the project has raised awareness in primary schools located in Makuyuni ward and individuals about the potential extinction of ebony trees. There has been reforestation of the half-mile strip of Kilimanjaro forest reserve along the border with Kilema ward.”

This year, with ABCP funding through the Good Gifts catalogue, the charity is instituting a new initiative at Makuyuni. In Tanzania, the village government has proprietorship of open land around the village area which may be awarded to those who will use it to the benefit of the whole village. In Makuyuni, because of the success of the replanting work of the Makonde carvers, the village government has donated additional land to expand the mpingo planting. This spring they cleared the area of brush which they then used to construct a natural fence (boma) around the plot to keep out cattle and wild animals. It is expected that, on the back of their success, more land will be made available for cultivation in the future. A combination of mpingo and fuelwood trees will be planted. Who would have thought that such a project would also be investing in the future of bagpipers, thousands of miles away?

Another project the ABCP is involved with is The Green Garden Womens' Group (GGWG). Founded in 1998, this group has been active in establishing tree-planting initiatives in several areas around Kilimanjaro. They run a commercial nursery in Moshi and have supplied trees for town beautification, reforestation on Kilimanjaro, and for the domestic needs of local households. They also manufacture fuel efficient stoves for home and institutional use. These stoves reduce the use of wood fuel by 50-70%, reducing the burden of gathering firewood for women. Income from the GGWG also provides educational support for AIDS orphans and public awareness programs to educate on subjects such as AIDS and child slavery.