

MALAWI AGROFORESTRY EXTENSION PROJECT: INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS STORIES FROM FARMERS

October 2002

AGROFORESTRY AND SOIL CONSERVATION

Mr Samison Banda, 48, from Mchinji RDP in Kasungu ADD is one of the beneficiaries of Agroforestry and Soil Conservation Practices with assistance from MAFE Project. He manages his farm together with his sister and two nephews.

He started farming in 1979 but did not follow proper land husbandry techniques even though his field lies on a hill slope. As a result, ridges and crops were often washed away by heavy storms. "I used to plant three to four times every year because ridges were broken and crops were washed away by rain water." He said regrettably, "The size of my land decreased every year. My field was cut by gullies which grew deeper and wider every year." Subsequently, his crop yields started dropping tremendously and poverty levels rose.

Life had no direction. Later in 1993, agriculture field staff from Mchinji RDP trained him and other farmers in better land husbandry and agroforestry practices. The same year he put his ridges on contour, made box and tied ridges and planted vetiver grass. He also started practicing *Tephrosia* Undersowing and Improved Fallows. In 1994, he planted *Faidherbia albida* trees on about half of his five-acre piece of land. Since he started practicing soil and water conservation measures and agroforestry techniques, soil loss has decreased tremendously, and soil structure and fertility have significantly improved from *Tephrosia* leaves. Besides that, *Faidherbia albida* trees now have grown big enough to contribute towards soil fertility improvement.



“Now I harvest enough with little or no chemical fertilizers,” explained Mr. Banda with a big smile on his face. “My garden preserves enough moisture throughout the year even when there are dry spells. Usually I am the last person to suffer from drought in the catchment,” he boasted. He also obtains fuelwood from *Tephrosia* stems, pesticides from the leaves, even cash after selling excess *Tephrosia* seed. He made K4,500.00 from this year’s sales. “With this money, I have managed to buy new clothes for my family, a good radio, and two bags of mineral fertilizers,” he remarked. “When I am growing dry season dimba crops, I use vetiver grass to mulch my crops,” he concluded.

This farmer has preserved indigenous trees above his field for fuelwood and poles. The trees also reduce rain-drop impact on the soils which decreases water run-off.



Tephrosia with maize to improve soil fertility

TREE PLANTING

Mr John Zuzen Mponda is a smallholder farmer from Kendekeza Village in Lilongwe ADD. Kendekeza Village is a Total LandCare Impact Area. He grows tobacco, groundnuts, maize and sweet potatoes for food and cash. This year he has embarked on dimba farming using treadle pump irrigation.

For a long time, he never realized the need for planting trees until he started facing acute shortages of fuelwood, poles for construction, traditional medicine, marking farm boundaries, and homestead planting. “I used to spend a lot of money on wood,” he said. He soon embarked on tree planting around his homestead and farm land.

"Since I started harvesting from this plantation, I am glad to report that I have no problem of poles for farm construction. I just go behind my house and cut the trees I need," remarked Mr. Mponda. When he has no money, he sells some of his wood. "I feel very good each time I sell wood to others. It is like I get back my money which I spent on buying wood from others before I planted my own trees."

"I have planted some *Faidherbia albida* trees with my crops to improve soil fertility from leaf fall. In addition to trees, I have planted vetiver grass to reduce water runoff in my fields," said Mr Mponda. He has also observed that trees help bring more rain. It was interesting to hear the remark; "We are going hungry today because we cut down all the trees," said his wife. They are very thankful to MAFE Project for the legacy of tree planting it has in the village.



Homestead tree planting for fuel and poles

DIMBA IRRIGATION

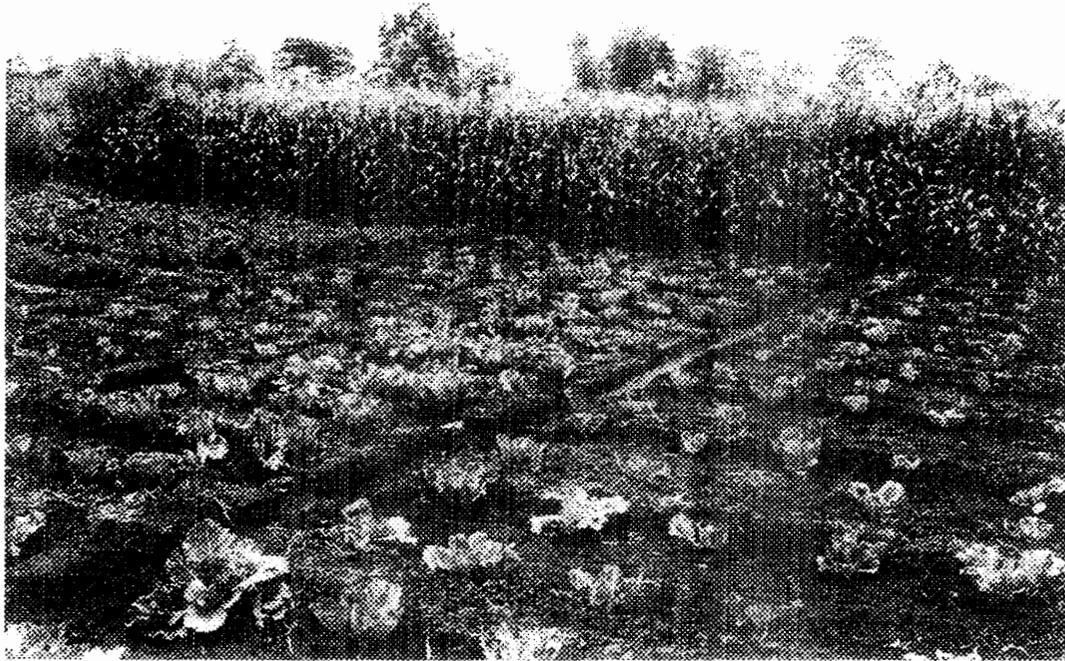
Story 1:

Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Jareck are irrigation farmers using the treadle pump within the Total LandCare Impact Area at Kendekeza Village, Buli Site. Although this is the first season of using the treadle pump, they have already realized many benefits.

Firstly, they thank the organization for making the pumps available and providing training. With the pumps they are able to irrigate a bigger piece of land in a much shorter time than when they were using watering cans. "My crops are growing much faster because I give them enough water with the pump," said Mrs Ireen Jarek.

Secondly, they are expecting a lot of financial gains from green maize, vegetables and tomatoes. "We will have food and cash at the time when many people suffer in the villages," said Mrs Ireen Jareck

Thirdly, Mrs Jareck said, "I am very happy with dimba cropping with a treadle pump. The program has encouraged my husband to spend most of his time with me working in the dimba, instead of drinking with his friends." Mrs Jarek also claims that people in the village respect them for the bumper crop produced during a period when there are acute shortages of food.



*Mr and Mrs Jareck's dimba: cabbages, beans and maize above;
tomatoes and maize below*



Story 2:

Mr. Ntabeni Jere is a farmer based at Ephangweni Village near Embangweni in Mzimba South. He was given a treadle pump and input pack by one of his brothers after undergoing training in irrigation organized by MAFE/TLC staff in July 2001. Mr. Jere previously used rudimentary methods of irrigation to grow vegetables on a very limited scale. After exposure to the treadle pump technology, he is now self-sufficient in maize as well as vegetables.

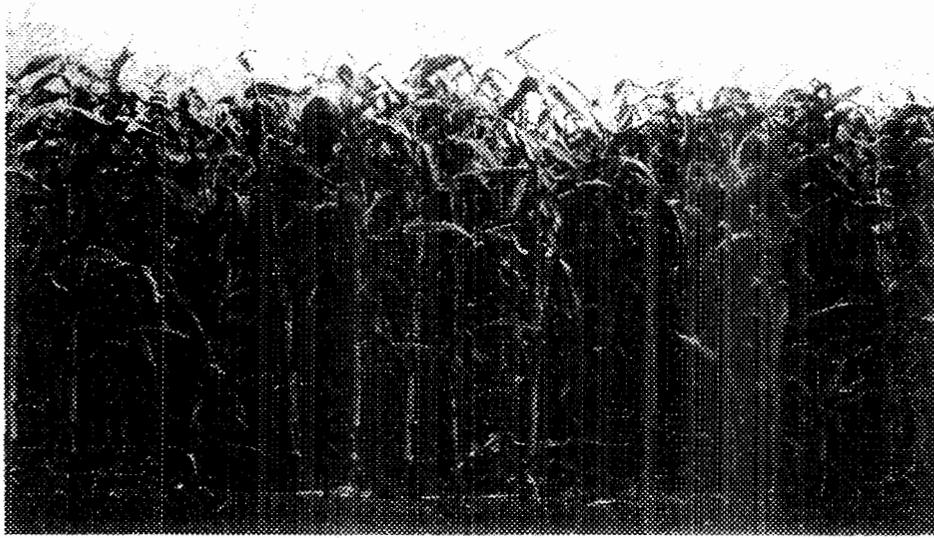
He says of the technology "I am able to do things on my own, and grow 2 crops of maize under irrigation. The first crop is planted in May which I harvest green and sell at Embangweni trading center. The second one is planted in July which is harvested dry and used for food when my maize stocks start to decline from November-December. I live in an area that has never received support from donor funded projects, and for this reason, most households depend on donations from their relatives living in towns. For me, this technology has elevated my status in the village since I am no longer dependent on relatives and others for food. Furthermore, the training I received from MAFE/TLC has enabled me to adapt the technology to improve water distribution".



Chinese leaf and maize in Mr Jere's dimba

Story 3

Mr. Samson L. Modayi is a smallholder farmer based at Kambewa village in Lilongwe West, TA Malili. The farmer was exposed to treadle pump irrigation in 2001. He is one of 10 farmers of Kambewa farmer's club formed last year. The club benefited from a loan of MK3,400/farmer which included a treadle pump and an input pack. Due to the severe food crisis in the village, this farmer decided to grow maize during the month of August 2002.



Mr Moxayi's maize dimba

He is excited about his achievements. He has grown maize on an area of 0.207 ha, with approximately 20,000 cobs. "If I decide to sell this maize green at the lower price of MK5/cob, I will make an income of MK100,000. This will be a large profit since I used only 3 bags of fertilizer totalling MK4,000, maize seed at MK500 and family labour valued at about MK20,000. The rest you can calculate for yourselves", he says smiling as his wife looks at him with satisfaction. Then he goes on to say, "If I keep the maize to dry then I can expect to harvest not less than twenty-four 50 kg bags. Can this not take my family to April/May 2003? If 50% of the households in my village have access to this technology, will we still be talking of relief food? — I do not think so".