



Moringa Groves Project

Interim report – December 2020

This exciting new project, part funded by FOMA, is already in the latter stages of preparation ready for the main roll-out beginning in January 2021. All is on target.

The aim is to provide high-grade nutritional benefit freely to hundreds in the impoverished areas, by establishing “Moringa Groves” - woodlots of 100 moringa trees—in 3 rural villages.

Moringa is a local tree, fast growing, with leaves that contain a range of impressive nutrients, delicious served as a green vegetable or salad. Despite this it's under-utilized mainly due to difficulties protecting it from marauding livestock which graze freely. So this project is trialling woven modular fencing panels made with traditional skills from local materials.

To begin the project, three villages were chosen—Bilison, Mangulenje and Bongwe—all within monitoring distance from the OHP Centre.

Meetings were held to introduce the plan, then voluntary committees formed to manage the groves' implementation and care. Once approved, OHP staff assessed the donated land for suitability, then trained in producing compost—an essential element in the planting of the groves

Moringa leaves contain vitamins A,B,C,E & K, calcium, protein, potassium, iron, copper, zinc, all 9 essential amino acids and 46 antioxidants.



Compost manufacture—October

All three committees have constructed 2 initial compost pits, the contents will “mature”, and be ready for use in January.



Left: Bilison's Village Head, taking part in compost preparation for his village's moringa grove.



Mangulenje Village's volunteers preparing materials for compost



Bongwe Village compost-pit site

The annual rains are currently happening, and so the villagers are busy preparing and planting their own fields, hence the plan to begin training in January as a response to the local situation and labour requirements.

Preparing seeds

In the meantime, seeds have been sown in plastic tubes in our tree nursery on our site in Chiringa. We have 300 moringa and 300 glycidia seedlings already growing and they'll be hardened, ready to plant out in the community groves in January.



By December moringa & glycidia seedlings are growing well in our Tree Nursery





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Fencing Panels



Some time was spent in researching how best to construct the panels—in the end it was decided that we'd use panels 2m long and 1.2mts high, instead of 1.5mtr long, at similar cost. They are woven bamboo in a hurdle-style, familiar to us in the UK, but unheard of in this part of Malawi. The value of these is they are "temporary", and can be removed after a year or two when the planted glycidia takes over as the living fence, protecting the grove. The gate will then be re-fitted on that fence line.

We encouraged staff to experiment with design, and they found that elongating the main struts into spikes to sink into the ground greatly increased stability of the fence. They tried butting panels together and overlapping edges, and found that overlapping also increased durability. They're currently experimenting with gate design—all of this innovation is developing their skills and abilities, by challenging the "status quo". Usually fencing is ordinary grass on a bamboo frame, built in situ and seen as a short-term fix, needing to be replaced often.

The first 50 fencing panels have already been constructed, and sprayed to prevent weevil damage. More will follow as "reserve" panels in case any need replacing for any reason.



Spraying panels against weevils



The first 50 panels are already on site



Experimenting with fence erection....

Next steps.....

In the New Year, the Training Day will be held in our Training Hall, when all the committee members from each of the 3 sites will come together to learn in detail, how to establish the groves. Diagrammatic plans with precise measurements will be provided, the process taught, and challenges discussed. A lunch will be provided which is always extremely popular as many in the remote communities are hungry at this time of year.

Committees will learn how to measure and prepare the land, how to plant and care for seedlings, erect fencing panels and establish the living fence

After training, the land will be prepared by the villagers, trenches and pits dug, fences erected, and seedlings planted later in January, helped by OHP staff who will continue to monitor progress during future months.

Committees have already received tools—pails, hoes and shovels to help them prepare the compost, and as they begin the groves' preparation, they'll receive more of each plus a wheelbarrow and watering cans to help them further.

Because of the state of hunger, it's anticipated that we'll provide a simple meal each day the committee members are working to get the land ready, during an intensive 10-day period. (This, and training costs, are outside FOMA's funding).

Finances are proceeding as planned—all receipts will be forwarded with the final Project Report in early 2022, if that meets with FOMA's approval.

Thank you for your support.