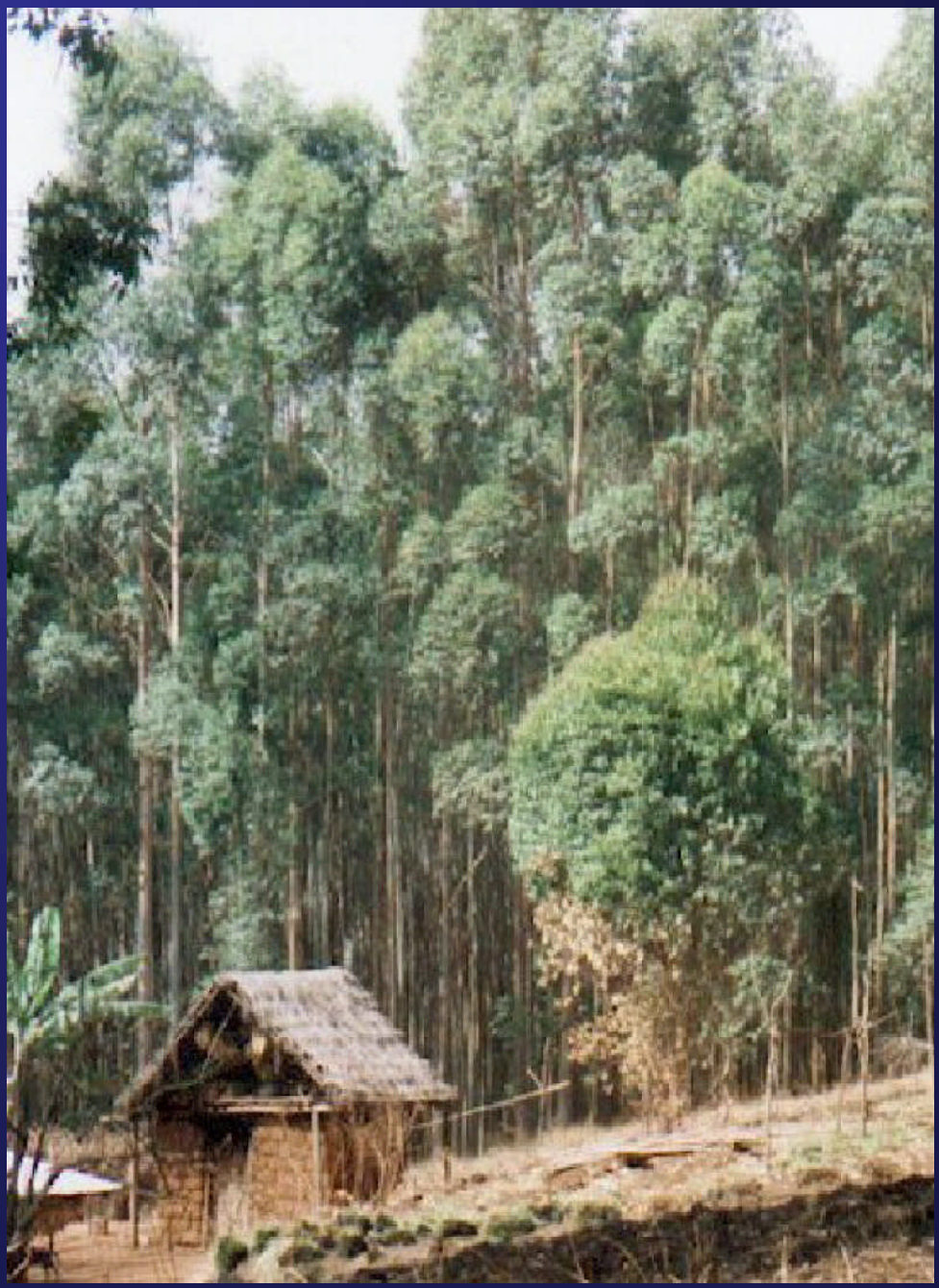
Project Report

Aug 2000
to
Aug 2002



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A description of the organisation and its aims

The Future in Our Hands Education and Development Fund is an independent charity established in 1995. It exists to alleviate poverty and the causes of poverty in developing countries, in a sustainable way.

It does this by working in close partnership with poor people and local organisations in developing countries, providing support and sharing expertise on

- development, governance and capacity building of local community organisations
- project development
- fundraising and grants management

In particular, the Fund supports projects which:

- are initiated by poor people themselves, through their local organisations
- incorporate a strong element of education or vocational training
- enhance the status and involvement of women in the development process
- create ecological awareness
- facilitate networking and the sharing of information and experience of development issues

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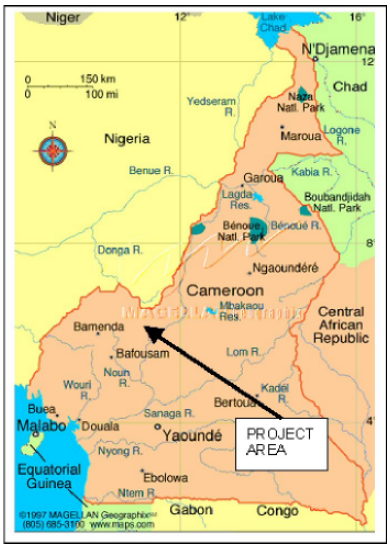
Project Report



The problem caused to women by the spread of eucalyptus trees was brought to the attention of the non-government organisation, Strategic Humanitarian Services, by the Bongkeh Women's Farming Group led by Theresia Wirkom, in 1996 after this group had unsuccessfully asked their husbands to cut the trees down. These men and most other tree owners, could not in fact afford to hire chainsaw contractors.

Thousands of women have to walk up to 15 miles to find new areas to farm.

The project area

The project is situated around Kumbo in the Northwest Province of the Cameroon, Central Africa

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Eucalyptus trees are heavy feeding trees that are capable of draining water and nutrients from the soil in very large quantities to the detriment of any other crops or trees planted near them or in association with them.

Eucalyptus trees were introduced around the 1920s with the aim of solving the fuel (wood) shortages around the grassland region in the middle belt of Cameroon. Prior to this introduction many households had serious fuel wood shortages, the only source of cooking.

Coffee was the mainstay of the area, generating income mostly for men farmers, as only men owned land. Unfortunately, around the 1970s, there was a drastic fall in the price of coffee in Cameroon and the world. This problem, coupled with the disease that attacked the coffee pod before maturity, led to great losses for local farmers. For men to get substitute sources of money, they unconsciously resorted to indiscriminate planting of eucalyptus trees on most of the available arable land, pushing women, who had no say, to walk further away from home in search of farm lands.

Even water sources like water catchment areas are harmed by this development of eucalyptus plantations. By the late 1980s this resulted in generalised water shortages and low crop yields within the project area. There are many villages and even towns with little or no water. Many water standpipes completely dried up. This problem continues today with an even greater impact on the National Electricity Corporation of Cameroon, AES - SONEL, as their dams are not adequately supplied to propel their machines.

From the mid 80s to the early 90s, Government Departments and Traditional Authorities sought solutions through Prefectorial Orders with some punitive sanctions against defaulters who continued planting eucalyptus trees. Traditional leaders also introduced serious injunctions against this continuing increase. All these efforts failed because of the complex and unrecognised nature of the problem.

One of the standpipes that dried up during the dry season.

Our Green Desert!
This is now an expression commonly used by the community to describe the damaging effect of eucalyptus trees.

Because of the effect of eucalyptus on on springs and water standpipes, women walk further to collect water.

PROJECT ASSESSMENT

The project was submitted to the Future in Our Hands Education and Development Fund (FIOH Fund) in 1997 and in April 1999 the FIOH Fund Chairman, Mike Thomas, visited the area to assess the the extent of support for the project. He also provided a grant of £500 from the UK charity, Plant a Tree in Africa (PATIA) to enable eucalyptus trees to be felled and a nursery for 80,000 seedlings (10 species) of indigenous African trees to be established. This work was done over a period of four days during his visit. SHUMAS also provided £500 from its own reserves.

Subsequently a further grant of £1,400 was provided from PATIA for another pilot project. Experience gained from these two projects, plus the reports of 3 overseas volunteers, were used in support of the project application to the Community Fund (later to be named the Big Lottery Fund).

According to a report by the Kumbo Water Authority, the population of the Bui division (which includes Kumbo) in 1995 was approx 283,000 and the growth rate was 3.3% . The urban population is 18% of the total.
The Yeh catchment area (mainly in the ownership of the Nkum Rural Council) covers 3008 hectares and is fed by the Royeh and Kinsaan rivers. Supplies to the Water Authority's catchment have reduced in recent years and this has been attributed to the indiscriminate spread and growing of eucalyptus trees.

Women fetching water

Using land donated by the SHUMAS coordinator's parents, the first pilot project is established at Kongir.

13,000 eucalyptus are felled initially as part of the extended pilot project.

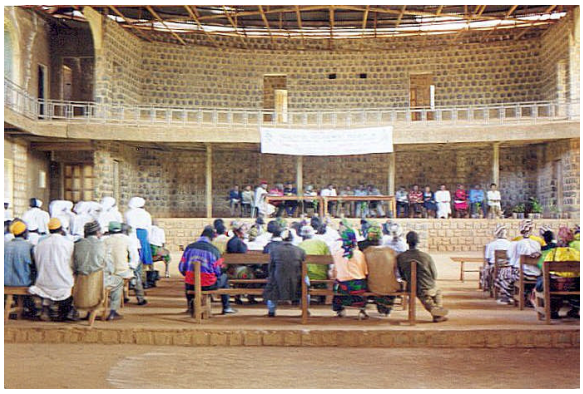
Young children are also responsible for collecting water.

PROJECT SUBMISSION TO THE COMMUNITY FUND

A project application to fell half a million eucalyptus trees and raise 1 million indigenous trees in nurseries primarily to improve the health of over 3,000 women and their families and enable the women to farm and obtain water close to their homes.

The application was submitted in January 2000 and approved in August of the same year. The project was inaugurated in November 2000.

The project was launched on the 3rd Nov 2000



The inaugural meeting in the Cathedral Hall, Kumbo

The project activities included:

- Nursing more than one million seedlings of indigenous African tree species in two Large nurseries with added advantage (medicine, fruit, etc.) that could replace the eucalyptus trees .
- Felling more than 700,000 eucalyptus trees around water sources and farm land and replacing them with indigenous African tree species (nitrogen fixing, fruits, medicine, etc.) all capable of promoting wildlife and increasing the badly lowered water table in farmlands and water catchments.
- Providing more than 200,000 trees to women farmers for agro-forestry purposes. (See also outcomes on page 8).
- Training more than 50 village water management groups on how to protect and manage water catchments through sustainable approaches.
- Carrying out an extensive campaign on the effects of eucalyptus trees on the environment and promoting the use of more than 40 species of indigenous trees that can replace the eucalyptus trees.

More than 30 water catchments have been protected with more than 1,500 households (families) benefiting.

Nursery for 1 million seedlings at Mah

More than 40 species were raised

Part of Council land cleared of eucalyptus

Women tending crops on land rented from the Council (Taunga system) in 2001

Pygum Africanus (Also called Prunus Africana) trees only two years after planting seeds in the pilot nursery.
This species is important for its bark which is in high demand for treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia, an increasingly common ailment in older men.
Hence it is an important cash crop.

Planting starts on private land soon after tree felling in April 2001. Most women will farm land owned by husbands or relatives, whilst others will rent land owned by the Council or farm Council owned land or that of private owners to whom they will pay a proportion of the profits of from the sale of the crops (the Taunga system)

Men and women working together to pot a total of 1 million seeds at Mah nursery

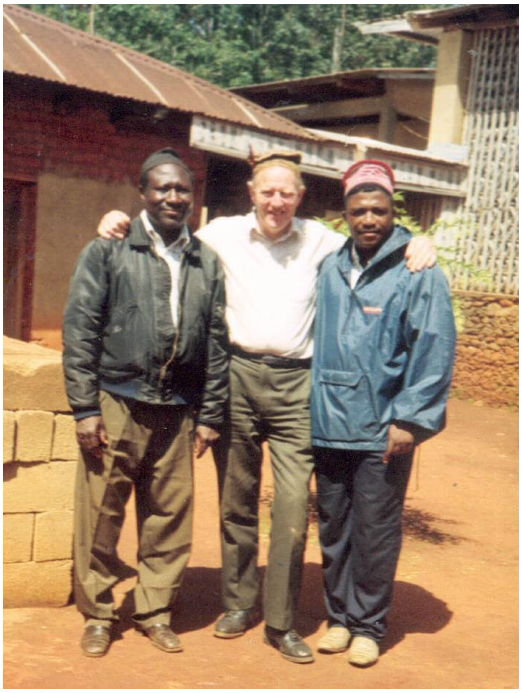
Thousands of women start planting on land close to their homes - April 2001

Glenys Thomas helps with planting seeds during monitoring visit in April 2001

Second planting of seeds at the pilot nursery at Kongir in April 2001

Some of the eucalyptus logs cut on site ready for building work

Part of the Kilim Natural Upland Forest where many of the nursery seeds were gathered



Mike and Glenys Thomas visited many womens groups throughout the region

Mike Thomas with regional coordinator, Sakah Henry (left) and general coordinator, Ndzerem Stephen (right), SHUMAS

Spraying with pesticides to protect against ant attack

Transporting seedlings to their final locations

Mike Thomas joins women beneficiaries and SHUMAS staff on part of the 15 mile walk to new farming area at Nkuf

Lorry transporting some of the felled eucalyptus logs

PROJECT OUTCOMES

· 5,000 women have returned from farming in far-off areas to farm close to their homes.

· There is now a general awareness of the negative effects of the eucalyptus trees. Individuals, Councils, churches and organisations are now trying to replicate the project, though on a very limited scale.

· The productivity of most farmers in the area has increased as more farmland has been reclaimed and the soil fertility has improved through planting of nitrogen fixing species and practice of the Taunga system. Farmers now practice more permanent farming systems in the process. Agro-forestry and organic farming systems are also practiced. 200,000 seedlings of nitrogen fixing trees were distributed for agro forestry.

· Water tables have risen and springs recovered during the dry season as a result of removing the eucalyptus trees. Women collect water closer to home.

Wood obtained from the felled eucalyptus plantations has been a good source of income for the owners, and many of them have used the money to improve their farms while others have used it for other income generating activities.

· Wildlife has also been enhanced. Many species of birds are now being seen visiting the tree plantations

· Many groups and individual farmers are now involved in bee farming in the newly established plantations or among trees planted as a result of the Taunga farming system.

· The Microclimate of the area has been improved upon.

. Young people, especially orphans and the disabled, have benefited from the training and some capital for alternative income generating activities. A general improvement in the local economic situation will generally ease the serious unemployment problem. This program has benefited more than 400 youths.

. Many schools within the North West Province have visited the tree nursery to learn about the different species of indigenous trees and their uses, or they have carried some seedlings from SHUMAS tree nurseries and planted them around their schools.

. Many individual youths and youth groups have also visited the tree nursery and learnt about the different species of indigenous trees and their uses. Others have already established their small scale farming and have been using some of the trees for agro forestry purposes to combat the generalised poor soil resulting from over cropping.

. Over a two year period 1,119,000 young tree saplings were outplanted in farming land, natural forest and water catchments.

. More than 64 water supply stand pipes were restored and 79 additional springs emerged/recovered during the dry season.

Nitrogen- fixing trees growing together with crops - 2003

Pygum Africanus tree plantation - 2 years after seeds were raised in pilot nursery - 2001

NITROGEN-FIXING TREE SPECIES
USES

Acacia Angustisima	**FW,CH,TR,MN,FO,NF,OR**
Acrocarpus	**FW,CH,PL,TR,NF,OR,SD,BO,LF**
Albizia Adientipolia	**FW,CH,GM,EC,SF,NF,WC,SD**
Albizia Falcat	**FW,CH,TR,GM,EC,SF,NF,WC,SD**
Calliandra Calothysus	**FW,CH,GM,EC,SF,NF,WC,OR,FR,LF**
Cassia Spectabilis	**FW,CH,PL,SF,NF,OR,SD,FR**
Entada Abisinica	**FW,CH,GM,SF,NF,FR,LF**
Leucaena Diversi	**FW,CH,PL,AD,GMEC,SF,NF,WC,OR,LF**
Leucaena Leucocephala	**FW,CH,PL,FO,GM,EC,SF,NF,WC,OR,LF**
Maesa Lanceolata	**FW,CH,PL,FO,GM,EC,SF,NF,WC,OR,LF**
Newtonia	**FW,CH,PL,TR,FN,CV,MN,GM,NF,WC,OR,SD**
Parkia	**FW,CH,PL,TR,FN,CV,MN,GM,SF,NF,WC,OR,SD**
Schizolobium	**FW,PL,NF,OR,SD,BO,LF**
Tephrosia Vogelli	**AF,NF,FW,BO, (Noodles)**
Tetrapleure	**FW,CH,TR,FN,CV,MN,NF**
Trema	**FW,CH,PL,TR,FN,CV,GM,EC,SF,NF,WC,FR,LF**

The species above also have many other uses. See below

KEY

CF- Contour farming; SC - Soil conservation; AD - Animal feed; WS - Water shed; AF - Agro forestry;

BF - Bee farming; FW - Firewood; WC - Water catchment; CH - Charcoal; TR - Timber;

NF - Nitrogen fixing; OR - Ornamental; SD - Shade; BO - Boundary; LF - Livestock fence; FT - Fruit;

MN - Medicine; FN - Furniture; EC - Erosion control; FR - Fire resistance; CC - Cash crop;

CV - Carving; PL - Poles; GM - Green manure; SF - Soil fertility; FO - Fodder