



Mazingira Bora July 2006

Welcome to the July edition of Mazingira Bora! Inside this newsletter you will find

- The latest exciting news from TIST Kenya
- Important training notes for small groups
- Articles written by small groups for small groups

Exciting TIST Best Small-Group Seminars Held

From June 11th to the 16th in Meru and from June 18th to 23rd in Nanyuki, two very exciting seminars were held for group members of some of the very Best Small Groups in the Mount Kenya region. The participants represented groups that had never been invited to a TIST seminar before. Their groups had been chosen based on the following criteria:

- ◆ At least 800 trees in the ground
- ◆ Conservation farming
- ◆ No more than 50% eucalyptus
- ◆ Tree nursery with a variety of species
- ◆ Recruitment of other small groups
- ◆ Evidence of regular meetings
- ◆ Attendance at TIST training events
- ◆ Other group activities
- ◆ Good team work
- ◆ Clean tree groves with trees properly spaced

The seminars were both fun and exciting because the small-group members had proven their expertise and their willingness to work hard to meet the TIST goals. They learned a great deal of information directly from TIST staff about issues like the TIST best small-group practices, the greenhouse gas business, and how to develop best practices for years to come. They also heard talks by experts from ICRAF, the Forestry Department, and speeches from government officials.

Most importantly, the Best Small Groups shared with each other and with the TIST staff the things that they had learned to do very well. They discussed and developed a list of excellent tree species that would be good to have on your farm for 30 or 50 years (see page 8). They also discussed how to organize the TIST program in the Mount Kenya region so that there would be "clusters" of groups within walking distance that could work together to assure very high quality and

frequent training, quantification, timely payment, and to make the TIST program more effective. The results of this organization by “clusters” would be “**small expenditures, Big Results**”. That would mean that more of the greenhouse gas income would be available to go directly to the small groups.

One of the things that was particularly exciting was that the seminars were conducted in Kimeru and Kikuyu (as well as English because of the English-only speakers who were helping to facilitate). All the participants worked hard, enjoyed themselves, and were excited to go back to their home area and discuss what they learned and what they planned to do with other TIST groups.

BSG Seminar, Meru



BSG Seminar, Nanyuki



All of the Best Small Groups who attended, decided that they wanted to work to qualify to become a Mentor Group. This process will take those groups nine months to a year as they prove their capabilities to recruit new TIST groups, train those groups so that they are knowledgeable about the TIST values and are capable of achieving the TIST results, and then do accurate quantification of the groups that they recruit and train. This is an exciting opportunity for new groups to join the TIST program, and also for the TIST program to grow rapidly in the Mount Kenya region.

Currently the Best Small Groups have agreed to work on the following:

- 1) Recruit new groups in walking distance of their own group
- 2) Train at local node meetings
- 3) Do on-site training with the groups they recruit
- 4) Work towards becoming a 'cluster' of 40+ groups, all within walking distance of each other
- 5) Move towards having their own CBO for that cluster
- 6) Count all the trees of their groups and ensure that they are accurate.

Other groups will be given the opportunity to apply to become Mentor Groups as well. Just because your group was not chosen for this seminar, does not mean that your group cannot apply and become a Mentor Group. In addition, TIST Seminars will be regularly held in the Mount Kenya region for whichever groups have proven themselves to be the "Best Small Groups".



One of the Best Small Groups has written an article about themselves:

TIGITHI CONSERVATION ACTION GROUP, Naro Moru Office

Our group joined TIST in March 2005 as a self help group. We have various tree species and it has helped us to plant some of the trees in some of the institutions around us e.g. Naro-Moru Township School, Murder Primary School and the St. Lwanga Catholic Church in town. The total number of trees planted is over 1,800, we plan to plant more trees in these and other institutions such as Aguthi Primary School and Naro-Moru Secondary school.



Our group started a demonstration site for conservation farming last year. Even though we had little rain, it looks as though we will be able to harvest a yield. The conservation farming site has done better than traditional farming fields. Therefore three quarters of our group have agreed to do conservation farming this coming season.

Our nursery contains many different species. Two we consider particularly useful are casuarina and bottle brush. These can be used for wind breaks, ornamental purposes, shade and reclaiming rocky or bare land.

We also carry out other activities such as Micro-credit financing. This is done through merry-go-round where members poll-in/contribute a particular amount of money and lend it to 1 or 2 members. In the very near future we would like to start a chicken rearing project. We are also considering bee- keeping activity for the group.

We also work hand in hand with other like minded groups/organizations e.g. the Mt. Kenya Bio-Diversity and Conservation Group which is involved in tree planting, school outreach programs and birding- a hobby used to encourage conservation of the environment through studying of different types of birds we

have in our eco-system and their unique behaviors. Some of our members have had the privilege of studying birds; where there are trees you just can't ignore the birds!



An important lesson – Conservation Farming

In the Best Small Group Seminars we learnt that groups who tried conservation farming had achieved extremely encouraging results. Some groups received over double their usual yield. Other groups received a harvest from their conservation farming plots when their traditional farming plots failed.

We can all remember the devastating drought and famine that affected, and still affects, many parts of Kenya. How many people do you know personally who had to rely on relief food to survive? How many of you directly suffered from the drought this year?

Conservation farming is a technique that works. Each person has the power to change his or her life for the better through adopting this technique. TIST members need to show the community that there IS a way to cope with drought, there IS a way to improve yields, there IS a way to save lives.

Act NOW and see the positive results for yourselves.



Mazingira Bora will be publishing the specific details on how to dig your conservation farming holes in the August and September editions. For now let us ask this question:

What is the importance of Conservation Farming?

- ◆ Small groups that use conservation farming best practices always seem to get some harvest, even in the very worst years when rainfall is little and unreliable.
- ◆ In good years the harvest can be spectacular! Small groups who use conservation farming are seeing a huge difference in their crop yields.
- ◆ Farmers who use traditional farming methods cannot always be certain that he or she will get any harvest. Most years the harvest is small, and sometimes there is no harvest.
- ◆ Conservation farming works by digging the holes for the crops and filling the holes half full with good soil and manure or compost. The seeds therefore get many more nutrients than if they were planted in normal soil.
- ◆ The extra nutrients help the seeds to grow into stronger plants with greater yields. The holes protect the seeds and you can weed around the holes without hurting the germinating plants.
- ◆ The holes are very important. When the rains come instead of washing the good soil and the seeds away, the water goes into the holes and helps the seeds grow more. The combination of the holes and the manure means that the water is held near the seeds for longer so when the sun comes out again it does not take all the water away as fast.
- ◆ After harvest do not burn the crop residues but leave them on the ground. The more residues remaining on the ground the better because they enrich the soil, making it more fertile. Remember that crop remainders can also be used for compost manure.
- ◆ Try to stop animals from grazing on the area. If they graze there will be less crop remainders left covering the ground.

Watch out for the details of how to dig your holes in the next two newsletters. Let TIST groups show people the way forward.



What trees to plant? What trees to pay for?

The TIST program makes it possible for our participants to receive money from the greenhouse gas market for the carbon dioxide that is captured in the growing trees. In order to make this possible, TIST participants need to plant trees that will last 30 to 50 years and grow very large. That will make those trees absorb the most carbon dioxide and improve the environment the most.

At the Best Small Group Seminar in Meru and in Nanyuki the seminar participants who represented some of the very best TIST small groups in Mount Kenya region discussed at length two important issues:

1. *What were the best species to grow on or around their farms that would last 30 to 50 years?*

The list from each seminar is presented on page 8. We encourage you to look carefully at the list and see which species you think would be best for including in your tree planting program.

2. *What should we do about certain trees that had many benefits for farmers, but are heavy users of water?*

We were lucky enough to have experts from the International Center for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) come to the seminars and discuss these issues with us. Mr. Chin Ong discussed that the eucalyptus tree had been measured as taking 30 L per day of water during its high growth years. Since eucalyptus is evergreen, it continues to draw this high rate of water usage even in the dry season, and can cause substantial declines in the water table during the dry season. The Grevellia Robusta tree (which has been an important part of ICRAF's Agro forestry research, and provides many benefits to the farmer including fodder for the cattle), also is evergreen and shares the problem of removing water from the soil during the dry season.

All of the seminar participants were very interested in learning about these impacts on the environment from a tree species which they had heard Forest Department and other experts encouraging for many years. It left everyone a little confused as to what the right species would be in many areas around the Mount Kenya.

In the Nanyuki seminar the group actually discussed two questions:

- 1) "If some farmers wanted to grow "short rotation" trees such as Eucalyptus, Grevellia, etc. -- -- would you recruit them to be TIST participants or not?"
- 2) "If farmers grew eucalyptus or other short rotation trees, and the TIST program needs to grow 30 to 50 year trees in order to receive greenhouse gas credits, should the TIST program pay farmers for the short rotation trees?"

These are very big policy questions and during the seminar it was decided that using TIST best practices we would gain information from the Nanyuki seminar

participants, go back and discuss in the USA, and then develop a process to include all of the Mount Kenya TIST participants in making a good decision.

Here are the suggestions of the process from the USA team:

- 1) Should farmers who want to plant short rotation trees be recruited to join TIST?

The decision would be made by the local office or mentor group. In other words, if the farmers did not really want to plant trees for greenhouse gas credits, but only for timber, etc., the local office or the local mentor group could learn that and decide not to recruit the group to join TIST. In the alternative, if the mentor group or office thought that the farmers could learn about other species and plant some short rotation trees and also other long-lived species, they would be welcome in TIST.

- 2) Should the TIST program pay for short rotation trees?

This is a difficult question, and the USA team suggests that we take the following process:

- A. We develop four or more options for the decision;
- B. We discuss with the best small-group follow-up seminars in August to determine if there are other options which should be considered;
- C. We then discuss the options developed at the best small-group seminars with the other TIST small groups and knowledgeable stakeholders such as the Forest Department, and district environmental committees, to determine if they have advice or suggestions;
- D. We make a decision on this issue based on the advice from the TIST small groups and the other stakeholders by the end of the rainy season in November. This will allow the TIST small groups to choose what seedlings they are going to begin in their nurseries based on a final policy.

As of now the USA team has identified four options for the policy on short rotation trees in the TIST program. They are:

1. Do not count the short rotation trees for meeting TIST minimum requirements, and do not pay for them.
2. Count the short rotation trees for TIST minimum criteria, report them on the Web, and do not pay for them. (This was the recommendation made in the Nanyuki seminar by the TIST best small-group participants in that seminar)
3. Count the short rotation trees for TIST minimum criteria, report them on the Web, and pay for them at the standard price. If the trees are cut

for timber, the small group will repay the TIST program the payments made to date to plus interest.

4. Count the short rotation trees for TIST minimum criteria, report them on the Web, and pay for them at a reduced price based on how much carbon would remain sequestered for the 30 to 50 year period through a series of growth and harvesting cycles.

We are sure that there will be other ideas and suggestions made by the best small-group seminars, and those will be reported to all the small groups and through the Mazingira Bora. Discuss these ideas in your small-group and see what you think would be best practice. We look forward to working together to come up with the very best solution for the whole TIST program.



Important notes from the BSG Seminars

In both seminars participants were asked which tree species were the best to grow for 30-50 years. Use these lists to think of trees that can stay in the ground, and remain useful, for 30 – 50 years. Remember, TIST trees should not be cut down, unless they are dead, because they have to remain alive, big and healthy to absorb carbon dioxide and qualify for TIST payments.

Best tree species identified by participants in Nanyuki

Muhuru	Mukurwe	Murema	Mukorobia
Muiga nyoni	Munderendu	muthwa	Mungirima
Mutero	Mugumo	Mutundu	Muruai
Muna	Muiruthi	Muhugu	Mukuyu
Muiiri	Mukoe	Nandi frame	Muthanoi
Mutati	Mutati	Muthengera	Murundu
Mubondo	Mwanda	Jakaranda	Muthaithi
Mukaragati	Muthanduku	Murera	Muthiga
Mutarakwa	Mukinduri	Mukambura	Murembu
Muthiti	Mugaita	Mukoigo	Mukuyu
Muringa	Mukeu	Muembe	Mukandamia
Muratina	Muhuti	Murigu	Muheheti

Best trees species identified in Meru

Mururi	Mukui	Mutuntu
Mukwego	Muuru	Mukaramatu
Muringa	Murera	Murama
Pondo	Mukima	Mugumo
Camphor	Mukongoro	Mucegera
Mutero	Murana	Mutuati
Mwiria	Jacaranda	Muteere



Latest Statistics

Our five Kenya offices have been working hard to facilitate the program in their area. Here are the statistics as of 14th July 2006:

Office	Registered Groups	Groups with signed GhG	Groups quantified	Quantified trees
Central Meru	183	66	76	84,887
Chugu	389	300	196	142,555
Kinyaritha	355	119	197	124,197
Lamuria	100	75	14	14,101
Naro Moru	264	203	146	160,422
Ntugi	299	112	154	90,897

Some additional news from some offices:

Naro Moru Office.

In the month of June 2006 the payments of G.H.G were made smoothly to the groups who had their trees quantified e.g. River Dep B, Jacaranda, Kanini Kega G.A.P Etc all of them totaling to Ksh 96,000

Beatrice a Journalist from the French Press Agency visited a node meeting at the Jacaranda Group where she had a chance to talk to group members about TIST. She was taken around by Bernard and had a productive meeting with TIST director Joshua Irungu.

We have opened new areas such as Mukogondo in Timau where we have upcoming groups from wholly grazing community of the Maasai. In addition to that we have made an impact in Sagana scheme where we have now almost 25 Groups. We have also made inroads to areas like Warazo jet, Maston and Munyu to make sure that there is no area which is lagging behind. This will be made easier by the trainers and the mentor groups working together. Last week Naro—moru office managed to take 6 mentor groups which were trained at Christ the King in Nanyuki for one whole week. This will help to fill the gaps encountered by the scattered groups of this area. TIST program is also establishing well in Burguret area and in the meantime we have more than 27 groups under the umbrella name of Burguret Rivers Water Users Association "BRWUA"

We as Naro Moru office are working very hard to achieve our goal and make sure that TIST program is well established by filling the gaps in areas where the groups have initially been very scattered. We are have also tried to harmonize previous

trainers and the mentor groups to work together - soon the whole community will know better about TIST activities

KINYARITHA OFFICE

Kinyaritha office members have worked hard. In Miathene people are impressed about TIST because now they are very busy planting trees and learning more about how these trees purify air in our surroundings.

They have also continued to teach people about other benefits from tree planting. They have taught people how to use land which could not be used for food production by planting trees. Planting of trees is a creation of Jobs to many people who were idle before the program started in their areas.

Many people have also learnt that Conservation farming is a workable solution to increase their food production. Many have practiced it and had good harvests and are still encouraging many more to practice it.

We have also managed to reach out to areas like Kiguchwa and many people became interested in TIST program and they have started clusters in their areas.

LAMURIA OFFICE

On 8th June there was a Division field day organized by stakeholders from the area, and we got the opportunity to promote TIST to many partners including Nyeri Farmers Sacco. Some groups have already dug holes for conservation farming, and people are being trained on energy saving cook stoves. Our trainers are discouraging the planting of trees that consume a lot of water, such as eucalyptus, and encouraging new groups to plant more indigenous trees. Our groups are planning to plant many more trees in the coming long rains.



A poem from Kamithagana Best Small Group, Chugu Office

PRAISE BE TO GOD

*1. How nice is it? To be blessed like this?
To have a nice country, with favorable climate
To have big shambas with fertile soil
Praise be to God*

*2. Let's bring fresh air in the world
We are all capable of doing it
Without forgetting it's a gift from God
Praise be to God*

*3. I call upon every person
To hurry up with a panga*

*Together we plant trees
Praise be to God*

*4. We have already planted trees
You lazy person come & witness
How nice it is to receive money from trees
Praise be to God*



New TIST Staff

We welcome two new TIST staff to the team.

Cynthia Muthomi has joined us as our finance and administration coordinator.



Cynthia has worked for Lay Volunteers International Association, Catholic Diocese of Meru as an Accounts clerk for four years and formerly worked with the University of Nairobi, Community Health Department, strengthening STD/HIV Control Project as an Administrative /Accounts assistant. One of her main jobs is to serve the TIST offices by giving accounting training and follow-up.



Solomon Waiganjo has joined us as our training and development coordinator. After gaining his degree Solomon has had four years experience in the accounting and auditing field. He will particularly be helping to strengthen the training side of the program.

Solomon and Cynthia will be working hand-in-hand with Allan and Joshua full-time in Kenya. Do welcome them to the TIST family and use them to help you in your work.

Help us serve you better!

The Mazingira Bora newsletters are designed to be written by the small groups, for the small groups. Please write articles that you think would help other small groups – maybe best practices you have learnt, training advice, your ideas about the program. Please submit articles to your field office by the third week of every month.

Final words

Trainers are advising small groups to be preparing their nurseries this month. Please attend your local training events to hear their teaching on how best to do this. For those groups who are harvesting this month, remember not to burn your crop residues. Either use them for composting, or leave them as a protective layer on top of your fields.

With thanks for the continued work.