

# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## A WORD FROM JEAN-PAUL, MANAGING DIRECTOR

Dear readers,

In this edition, we focus on Optimal Forestry Staff Recruitment, recognizing the challenges of dryland forestry that demand a specialized workforce.

We explore the many considerations shaping our staffing approach, emphasizing the crucial role of agroforestry agents in the success of our projects. We start with insights into our recruitment process, addressing educational gaps, fostering adaptability, and building

partnerships with institutions like the University of Eldoret. Then we highlight a recent visit from Tree Partner Solutions (TPS) and BDO to our Dokolo operation, a truly pivotal moment in our two-decade journey.

We share our strategic vision for growth, profitability, and operational efficiency, driven by collaborations and industry dynamics.

Amid changing afforestation laws and customer demands, we uphold transparency, professionalism, and a commitment to continuous improvement, celebrating two decades of BGF in sustainable forestry. Stay tuned for more updates on our evolving path.

## OPTIMAL FORESTRY STAFF RECRUITMENT



Agroforestry agents undergoing field training. Photo BGF

opportunities to select candidates with the right skills. Furthermore, adaptability and resilience are crucial qualities.

Educational gaps pose a challenge, as forestry and agroforestry courses in higher institutes often do not cover the requirements of the dryland forestry market. Additionally, social forestry requires not only knowledge about trees and planting but also interpersonal skills for human interaction.

BGF has implemented comprehensive steps in its recruitment and staff management processes. During recruitment, job vacancies are promoted through BGF social media platforms, and networks with local universities and partners are utilized to reach potential candidates. The selection process involves assessments of candidates' suitability for dryland environments, considering criteria such as educational qualifications, relevant experience, and a genuine interest in BGF's mission and vision.

Successful candidates undergo an induction program

Dryland forestry presents an array of challenges, spanning expertise, financial considerations, logistical hurdles, and technological aspects. These challenges stem from adverse climatic conditions affecting the availability of resources for program execution, including both materials and personnel. Understanding the local environment, especially the needs of farmers, is crucial. Therefore, our focus is on acquiring and training specialists, referred to as agroforestry agents, who play a pivotal role in the success of agroforestry projects, addressing various issues and acting as the eyes and ears of BGF. While funding is crucial, it alone cannot guarantee the availability of skilled individuals. Recognizing the specialized nature of the work, BGF acknowledges key considerations for recruiting and retaining personnel.

Firstly, in terms of expertise, the implementation of dryland forestry demands personnel with specialized knowledge in arid and semi-arid land forestry and agroforestry. Unfortunately, individuals with such expertise are not readily available in the job market. However, BGF's strong relationships with major universities, particularly the University of Eldoret, provide ample



Agroforestry agent giving training to farmers in a Self-Help Group. Photo BGF



to familiarize them with BGF's operations and the demands of dryland forestry work. BGF's departments engage inductees, providing essential documents, policies, work instructions, manuals, and procedures. Upon completing induction, the staff undergoes a probationary period ranging from 3 to 6 months, collaborating closely with supervisors and colleagues for performance monitoring and adaptability assessment. The first prerequisite for a new staff member, even more than technical skills, is the capability for honest and timely communication.

Continuous training programs, encompassing both theoretical and practical components, equip staff with the necessary skills and knowledge. Training is administered internally and externally, with a focus on individual and organizational needs. Through these measures, BGF overcomes challenges in dryland forestry, ensuring a competent workforce capable of meeting demands from clients, commercial partners, and others invested in tree planting in dry areas. This aligns with both BGF's business model and its role in corporate social responsibility, contributing to a larger goal within the community. BGF is able to work in drylands through its technical knowledge, strategic recruitment, thorough selection, comprehensive induction, effective field deployment, and continuous training initiatives, ultimately fostering a workforce capable of addressing the demands of the field. As we extend our work in the East African Drylands, we anticipate the need for a large number of staff.

## BGF RECEIVES PROMINENT VISITORS IN UGANDA

For BGF, the year commenced with a visit from the management of Tree Partner Solutions (TPS) from Sweden and a representative from BDO<sup>1</sup> to our Dokolo operation in Uganda. Their purpose was to assess the trees they own at the farm level, visit the nursery, and engage with the staff and BGF Management. While the results were largely positive, the visit, combined with our own on-the-ground experiences and the ongoing changes within BGF, prompted the realization that it is time for introspection. It's essential to take stock of what is working, what isn't, and to re-engineer our approach towards growth and profit. This profit will, in turn, be utilized to invest in necessary equipment and, of course, tree planting. This year marks a milestone for BGF, as it has been in existence for two decades. This milestone carries various changes, including the emergence of new partners, who bring a strong future-oriented drive. Their inputs, questions, and critical inquiries are pushing us towards new heights, and we are grateful for this collaboration.

Audits serve the purpose of assessing and providing insights for corrective and preventive actions. They act as an eye-opener, revealing what works well and where adjustments are needed. BGF welcomes audits as stepping stones towards improvement. For BGF, business goes beyond seedling production and establishment; the main challenge lies in maintenance and tree

1. BDO is a public accounting, tax and advisory firm with global presence

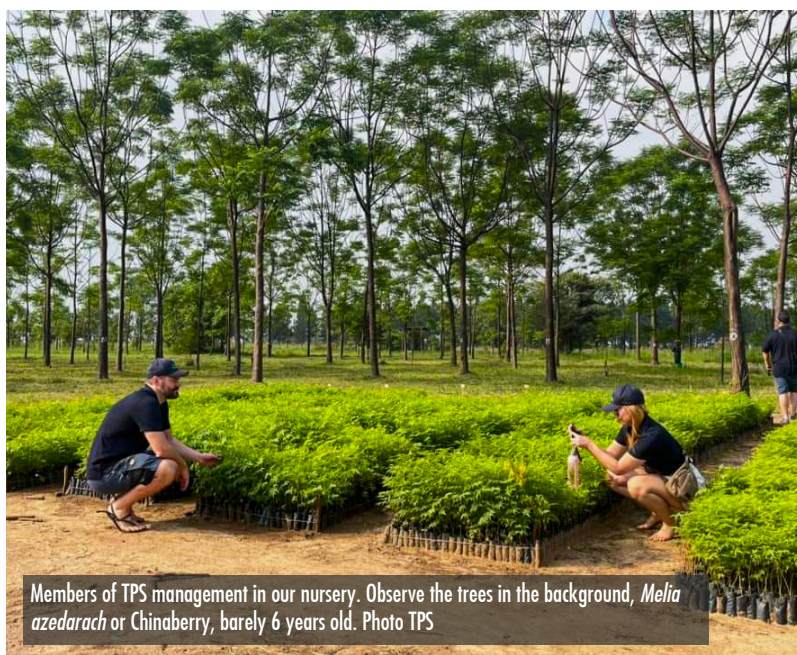


The visitors from Sweden and Kenya being welcomed in our nursery in Dokolo. Photo TPS

survival. This is a formidable task, particularly when planting in ASAL with farmers—a contest that many shy away from. However, BGF embraces this challenge.

Times are changing, and new and improved laws related to afforestation are being crafted by governments and larger entities like the EU. We extend our gratitude to our existing and prospective customers who keep us on our toes, demanding professionalism and pushing us to deepen our knowledge of emerging markets, such as the one related to carbon.

From a practical standpoint, the visit of TPS was critical. It addressed future-related issues and outlined expectations from BGF to comply with upcoming changes. These aspects are currently being addressed with utmost diligence.



Members of TPS management in our nursery. Observe the trees in the background, *Melia azedarach* or Chinaberry, barely 6 years old. Photo TPS