

The Word Forest Organisation

Annual Report 2020-2021

This is the Annual Report and Accounts for The Word Forest Organisation, a charity registered in the United Kingdom by the Charity Commission
Charity No: 1172497

Registered Address and Contact Details

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Tipton St John
Devon
EX10 0AH

Tel: 01297 533 111

Email: team@WordForest.org

Website: WordForest.org

Our registered address changed on 1st December 2021

Trustees

Mr Simon West (Chair of Trustees)

Ms Rikey Austin

Ms Eva Dixon

Mr Philip Gamble

Mrs Helen Roberts

Mrs Izzy Robertson

During 2020-2021, Eva Dixon was appointed as a Trustee.

Chief Executive Officer

Mrs Tracey West

Managing Director

Mr Simon West

Our Constitutional Structure

The Word Forest Organisation was incorporated as a CIO on 7th April 2017.

Our constitution follows the model for a Charitable Incorporated Organisation as set out by the Charity Commission for England and Wales and was adopted on 7th April 2017 and revised on 1st February 2021.

Charitable Objects and Public Benefit

To promote sustainable development* for the benefit of the public in countries to be determined by the Trustees by:

- (a) the preservation, conservation and the protection of the environment and the prudent use of resources;
- (b) the relief of poverty and the improvement of the conditions of life in socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

*Sustainable development means “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

The Trustees have had regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission under section 4 of the Charities Act 2011 in planning our activities.

The positive social impact of our work is considered before we direct our tree-planting communities and outcomes are directly monitored. This enables the Trustees to be confident that the charity has, through its range of activities, achieved significant public benefit for the community in Kenya, and in countries as determined by the Trustees.

Financial Summary

Income

In 2019-2020 (year 3) we had a total income of **£41,466.92**.

In 2020-2021 (year 4) our income was **£76,146.94**, an increase of **84%**.

Income by Category

Category	2020-2021	%age of Total	2019-2020	Change
Events	£0.00	0.00%	£6,482.98	-100%
General	£0.00	0.00%	£761.19	-100%
Sales	£1,054.55	1.40%	£3,967.71	-73%
Membership	£4,129.09	5.40%	£2,920.36	+41%
GiftAid	£9,387.92	12.30%	£2,900.76	+224%
Grant	£11,975.00	15.70%	£0.00	+100%
Donations	£49,600.38	65.10%	£24,433.92	+103%
Total	£76,146.94	100.00%	£41,466.92	+84%

Outgoings

Our total outgoings were **£69,665.15**

£50,037.88 of this went directly to Kenya.

Thanks to an anonymous, ring-fenced monthly donation of £800 plus Gift Aid, we continued to pay our CEO a partial salary for the entire year at £10 per hour for 100 hours per month. This is far less than the actual hours she worked, estimated to be approximately 200 hours per month.

We have reaffirmed our commitment to being a Real Living Wage (livingwage.org.uk) employer and to ensure that when we employ people everyone will receive the same hourly rate for their country, regardless of gender, race or creed.

We ended the year with a balance of **£19,205.70** and an average monthly income of **£6,345.58**.

Outgoings by Category

Category	2020-2021	%age of Total	2019-2020	Change
Travel	£0.00	0.0%	£1,657.25	-100%
Merchandise	£0.00	0.0%	£1,851.36	-100%
Running Costs	£480.69	0.7%	£1,469.17	-67%
Office	£7,119.68	10.2%	£4,830.80	+47%
Personnel	£12,026.90	17.3%	£4,126.16	+191%

Kenya	£50,037.88	71.8%	£24,229.58	+107%
Total	£69,665.15	100.0%	£38,164.32	+83%



Simon West FRSA
Managing Director and Chair of Trustees

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of The Word Forest Organisation

I report to the Trustees on my examination of the accounts of The Word Forest Organisation, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), for the year ended 6th April 2021.

Responsibilities and Basis of Report

As the charity Trustees of the CIO you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the CIO's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent Examiner's Statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

My only concern is that financial control is largely in the hands of one individual and I would recommend that the Trustees reflect on how that reliance can be mitigated.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Philip Ryan FCA

Address: 19 Quadra House, Bessemer Road, Basingstoke, RG21 3NB.

Date: 4th February 2022

From our Team

Jo Smith: Volunteer Digital Strategist

Digital Strategy

During 2020-21, time was spent researching and beginning to use a new customer relationship manager system called Salesforce, a powerful system that is used by thousands of businesses worldwide. It is donated free to charities and the free version gives the basic functionality to allow for organisation of data.

With time and understanding of the basics, Word Forest started recording possible grant providers and importing all our donors' information, ensuring it is stored securely. Making use of furloughed volunteers, we set up a grant process which would be ready when bid writers became available to start approaching funding providers.

Going forward into 2021-22, time will need to be spent enabling realisation of the full functionality of Salesforce. The beauty of obtaining this now, while we are small, means we can trial and learn, in preparation for scaling up. In the future, the system will be able to track donors, grants and manage our ongoing relationships. It will also be able to keep track of our projects, enabling us to record and report back more easily on the impact we are making on the ground in Kenya and the UK.

It offers many possibilities but also lots to learn, so this is a project that will be ongoing over the next few years – watch this space for more updates.

Izzy Robertson: Literacy Trustee

The Stories and the Writers

The importance of stories can't be overstated. We, as human beings, are instinctive, natural storytellers, all of us. It's in our nature.

"Surely not," I hear you cry. "I can't tell a story and I certainly couldn't write one!"

I'm not so sure about that so let me ask you some questions. Didn't you tell your partner all the details of that horrendous day at work you had on Thursday? Wasn't it you having a good laugh with your neighbour about the ridiculous mix up with the parcels, or regaling your colleagues with the details of that amazing series you just started watching? How about when you met up with your friend for a walk and you both set the world to rights?

Thought so. We can't help it – it's part of the way we connect, sharing those day to day incidents, from the biggest events such as COVID-19, to the little things, like how missing the bus last Tuesday actually turned out to be the best thing that could have transpired. Stories can be as real or as fanciful as we like. They all help us to communicate and learn from each other and they come in a myriad of shapes and forms.

So allow me to spin you a story now; it's about an organisation trying to make a difference, a challenging set of circumstances, some very tricky times and the extraordinary goodness of people.

April 2020 – the beginning of the financial year saw us 11 days into the first UK COVID-19 lockdown, with restrictions also in force in Kenya. As our CEO and MD eruditely describe in their reports, we found ourselves having to rethink the way we did almost everything, pivoting rapidly to an entirely digital way of working – not so easy when you're a tech dinosaur like me – while continuing to support our colleagues in the tree planting communities in Kenya through the COVID storm.

Despite the optimism we all tried to foster, things did look bleak and, being such a small team, we all wondered at times how we were going to manage... or perhaps even if we, as an organisation, would survive.

Then, a ray of light. In fact, *many* rays of light, as suddenly, a whole host of kind and generous hearted souls appeared, as if out of nowhere. These wonderful people, finding themselves at home with more time on their hands, offered us their spare hours and their energy in a multitude of ways.

It was transformational. Within a month we had gone from a team of 10 (give or take) to a team of 42 (yes, you read that right, a whopping, glorious FORTY TWO!) Although we were paddling madly like ducks for a while getting things in place to process and facilitate all the volunteers, it meant that suddenly we were able to approach many things in new ways. They really did carry us through. These marvellous people were offering help with everything from admin, design and marketing to social media and fundraising. And writing.

We've always tried to keep the website updated with interesting titbits but, honestly, it was difficult when there were so few of us. We had long wanted to increase the number of articles we published and suddenly we had a plethora of talented writers positively bubbling over with good ideas for informative and interesting pieces. They spend hours researching and stitching together articles on topics ranging from personal reflections to science led essays, book reviews to ideas for positive change. This year we have had articles virtually coming out of our ears! I will admit to being up to my eyeballs in it on a number of occasions which, while being an absolute delight in one way, made me extremely grateful for the help of our volunteer editors, without whom I would never have kept up!

Covering subjects as diverse as the value of trees, the impact of plastic in the ocean, the ethics of fashion, the effects of charcoal burning and a vast amount in between, our writers and editors have taken on projects willingly and worked endlessly to help us reach our goals. They've kept the newsfeed on the website vibrant and fresh, offered something of interest to just about everybody and been extraordinary in helping us to spread the word about what we do and why we do it.

Thank you just isn't a big enough term to express how grateful we are to all of the volunteers in all their roles. It is an honour to work with them - each and every one has been magnificent.

Now I bring you full circle. Stories are important – they connect us, help us to learn and view things with new eyes, open doors on worlds we've never seen and offer

fresh nuggets of information that allow us to decide which paths to follow in our daily lives.

There is always something happening, always news to share and things to learn: discoveries, revelations and all sorts of intriguing and fascinating tales from all corners of the planet and the human mind.

Our wonderful team will continue to bring you those stories and we really hope that you continue to enjoy them.

Simon West: Managing Director

The start of our financial year 2020-21 saw us in the grip of lockdown, with a very uncertain future. Planning at that time seemed almost impossible and we had just started sending emergency food aid to Kenya to help our tree-planting friends simply survive.

As the year unfolded, we sent just over £4,000 a month, distributed from 4 centres to over 1,600 people. It was clearly not enough to feed them well, but we know that it staved off starvation for a large number of people. Four of our colleagues in Kenya bought food in bulk to get the best deal with massively inflated prices and then it was distributed to those most in need.

This continued throughout the year, but by the beginning of 2021, as curfew and lockdown restrictions on Kenyans were relaxed a little, we were able to stop this aid, having sent more than £48,000 in total. We received a very large number of unsolicited promises to plant trees from the aid recipients, as soon as the rains returned. In 2021, we were able to restart our core programmes, for example the Mothers of the Forest income-generating mat making course and the Charcoal Burners Rehabilitation Workshops, amongst others.

Our building work in Kenya started again with the construction of a house for Mluo, another member of the community in extreme need. It continued with the construction of a set of toilets and a teacher's dwelling at Ufanisi School, both essential requirements for the school to remain open.

Lockdown forced us to close the door on our newly acquired office in Lyme Regis. As the year progressed, we were able to open it again and we welcomed the ability to have some of our volunteers attend regularly. Jo Smith had her own desk and by adhering to strict hygiene and social distancing protocols, we were able to make good use of our dedicated work space.

As 2021 unfolded, Government rules on working from home and an uncertain future made it clear to us that it would not be sensible to continue to pay for the office. Tracey (our CEO) and I were able to dedicate a room in our house for the charity's use, so we took the decision to close down the office at the end of our agreed lease on 31st December 2021.

As we enter 2022, we are optimistic that we will be able to raise enough funds to scale up our Kenyan building program through grants and corporate donations.

Eva Jefa: International Development Kenya

The first COVID-19 case in Kenya was confirmed on the 12th March 2020. By April 2020 the number of confirmed cases had risen to 363 people, of whom 14 never made it. After that the numbers kept rising. Schools were closed indefinitely and there was a nationwide lockdown and curfew too.

Being a community already struggling with the effects of climate change, the pandemic made an already bad situation, worse. We witnessed an unimaginable hike in the prices of everyday necessities too.

The meetings that we were having twice every month had to cease. These meetings played a big role for the Mothers of the Forest, as it was not only a space for learning new skills to assist them on their journey to empowerment, but also their safe space.

The Word Forest Organisation came up with a food aid program for the Mothers and many other people in Boré Singwaya, Garashi, Nairobi and Rusinga Island. Over 1,600 people benefited from the food aid for a whole year.

In the midst of the pandemic chaos, Word Forest created 1,000 jobs, in a tree-planting exercise that began on 19th May and ran until 29th May, 2020. In this project, 63,700 saplings were planted across the Boré area. This was a big boost for the community during this trying time and enabled them to work together whilst still observing the Kenyan government's COVID-19 guidelines.

In November 2020, I attended an advanced permaculture course. The additional knowledge that I acquired from that course is helping me to educate the Mothers and the wider community on the best practices of organic farming. This is going to take us a step closer to resilience and sustainability so we can better cope with climate related risks and at the same time create improved food and water security.

The following month, the Mothers of The Forest each received a strong wheelbarrow as their end of year gift. This has improved the lives of the Mothers in a big way. A normal day for a Kenyan woman begins with her making several trips to fetch enough water for her family. Walking several miles with a 20 litre container on your head is not easy. With a wheelbarrow, the distance is still the same but at least the Mothers can now carry 3 containers, weighing 60 kilograms, in one trip, saving a lot of time. The wheelbarrows also help in carrying firewood and other stuff.

The food aid continued up to March 2021 and all the beneficiaries are forever grateful to Word Forest's kind-hearted supporters for seeing them through this trying period.

Esther Kombe: Assistant Facilitator

Mental Health Matters In Kenya Too

I hope this note will find you in good health. My job at The Word Forest Organisation is assisting Eva Jefa as we both do what we can to support the Mothers of the Forest and our local communities in many different ways.

In the last 2 years, Eva and I have attended many different training courses and we thank you very much for making that happen. We have learned so much. Our focus has been learning about environmental, permaculture matters and other things. We now teach what we've learned to our communities. To say the truth, all the Mothers are happy for the education and the money they get through planting trees. It has let them start small businesses from that income and this has helped support their families by paying for food, school fees and a few items like books and pens. It is helping their mental health a lot.

In 2021, we created and started teaching a Charcoal Burners Rehabilitation Workshop. We showed men and women why we all need to keep the trees living, not cut them down to make charcoal. It was a success and the people were very happy to be welcomed and not judged while they learned more about the trees. We have been showing them and the Mothers new ways to do things to make a living. Nothing like this has ever been done before in Kenya. We are proud of what everyone learned over the six sessions.

I want to take this chance to thank all of our supporters across the World for what you did for the Mothers in the last 2 years. The food aid was a blessing. Now lockdown and curfew has stopped, we are back having two meetings a month again with a good meal and everyone is happy for this. The Mothers are so happy to you for giving them a good balanced diet.

The drought carries on here and it makes growing food and everyday living very hard but we know we have you thinking about us and we feel calmer and steadier in our minds. God bless you all for that peace inside us.

The Mothers are also thankful for their strong wheelbarrows from the 2020 Christmas and for the materials you bought so we can make beautiful mats to sell.

We feel your support every day and I have to thank you from everybody here, God bless you all.

From Clare Nasir: Our Patron

Ongoing Drought in East Africa

I'm delighted to write a piece for this report, unfortunately, it's not in my usual upbeat tone. The facts are stark, the message is deadly serious: anthropogenic climate change and global warming are here.

The people of Kenya are living on the frontline paying the price with their lives. I hope the work of the dedicated Team at Word Forest inspires you to help them make our world well by becoming a valued member: visit [WordForest.org/join](https://www.wordforest.org/join). And please, rethink what more you can do to reduce your carbon footprint and step a little lighter on our planet – thank you.

Background

Droughts have extensive impacts on human beings, environment, water resources and agriculture. Across Africa various drought incidents have caused devastation and crop failures, livestock deaths and human losses too.

The 1984–85 drought in Ethiopia and Sudan resulted in 450,000 deaths. There were over 325,000 deaths during the 1974–75 drought in the Sahel and 100,000 in Mozambique.

The impacts of drought tend to be aggravated by deforestation, land degradation, growing water demand and climate change. In the last 2 decades, East Africa has been marked by a number of prevailing, dire drought events. Although droughts are frequent, they are hard to forecast due to natural variations and anthropogenic factors, along with insufficient forecasting capacities.

Drought frequency in East Africa has doubled from once every 6 years to once every 3 years since 2005. From 2003–19, East Africa was struck by 8 boreal spring droughts. In 2008–10, the Horn of Africa drought caused a wide range of dire situations. It was one of the main reasons for socio-economic instabilities. A lack of food, results in human migration, malnutrition, epidemics, famine and death.

Drought is therefore considered a strategic enemy of East Africa with acute mitigation measures required. At times, droughts and other climate extremes have occurred in the same year. The 2006–07, 2009 and 2010 droughts preceded unprecedented flash floods.

The region is known to be the most drought prone in Africa, if not the world. East Africa tends to have two rainy seasons: the East Africa Long Rains (Deyr) from March to May, and the Short Rains (Gu) from October to December. The 2020 and 2021 Deyr seasons were both substantially drier than normal and in 2021, Gu was short as well.

In recent years, Deyr has been subject to an abrupt decline due to climatic variations. As a result, overall precipitation and total water storage are decreasing across East Africa, with significant impact upon humans and wildlife.

Latest and Forecast News

The worst drought in decades is currently gripping East Africa. Landscapes are parched, thousands of livestock are dying and the humanitarian crisis heightens. Driven by climate change, it's also leading to civil strife as communities battle for scarce resources.

After 3 failed rainy seasons, more than 20 million people in East Africa face some of the worst food security risks in 35 years. Kenya and Somalia have declared emergencies.

All eyes are on the forecast for March to May 2022, as another below-average rainy season would lead to an unprecedented sequence of 4 seasons which have fallen below normal. Even if the March to April rains are normal, the region will experience lingering long-term rainfall deficits.

However, satellite imagery from late 2021 indicates that conditions are similar to the disastrous drought of the 2010 season. Forecast models suggest that March to May 2022 may be similar to the equivalent 2011 season.

Note on La Niña

Climate change and ongoing La Niña conditions across the Pacific Ocean have contributed to the persistent dry weather.

The cooling of the eastern tropical Pacific and the warming of the western Pacific disrupts weather patterns around the world. While rainfall increases substantially around Indonesia, the effect in East Africa is suppressed rainfall. La Niña is expected to persist through the first few months of 2022.

Successive rain shortfalls over East Africa have had a cumulative effect; smaller crop harvests, shortages of forage, depleted water supplies and weakened livestock herds.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization reported at least 60,000 animals have been lost to starvation. Additionally, milk production is 80% below average. Production of cereals during 2021 Deyr was reduced by 50% to 70%, while maize and sorghum production were down 15% to 25% in 2020, and 50% in 2021.

To Put this in Perspective

Since December 2021, at least 100 giraffes have died in Kenya's northeastern Wajir province. Villages in that region have lost up to 70% of their livestock. Since September 2021, much of Kenya's north has received less than 30% of its normal rainfall. In Kenya alone, since 1999, droughts have doubled in frequency and now there is drought every 2–3 years. The UN has stated that more than 26 million people are struggling to find food across East Africa. In Northern Kenya, half a million children are acutely malnourished.

The drought across the country is intensifying ethnic conflict and cattle raiding is prevalent. It is estimated that just 1 degree of global warming increases the likelihood of conflict by a minimum of 17%. Since the 1970's, violence as a cause of death in men has risen from 22% to 35%.

Corporate Partners

We count ourselves fortunate indeed to work with several corporate partners of differing sizes. They support us in a variety of ways, both financially and organisationally. They understand the gravity of our climate crisis and are excited to be part of the solution to mitigate it.

Of exceptional note are:

The Phat Pasty Company whose unwavering support and encouragement has been nothing short of amazing.

Phat founders, Paul and Laura Clark, sent the following message:

We started our Phat business 16 years ago with the principles of sustainability at the fore. We love having a corporate partnership with The Word Forest

Organisation. This charity just ticks all the boxes of what we and our business are about.

In our business activities and decisions, we do what we can to look after our amazing planet. The combination of planting trees and supporting communities is a perfect fit to our business ethos. Both professionally and personally, our collaboration helps us try, in some small way, to make a difference.

With the launch of a plant-based range some 5 years ago, we saw a great fit to link the vegan-friendly products we sell with The Word Forest Organisation.

Oaklin Consulting who have supported us in many ways, including providing London office space for our geographically dispersed team to come together once a month. We work closely with their sustainability team who really have gone the extra mile to help our charity be the best it can be.

Together, we are working on 2 substantial projects which we hope will bear some rather exciting fruit towards the end of 2022.

Bunaken Oasis who have been supporters of the aims of this charity since before it was founded.

It is a fact that without the help and wide-ranging support from all of our corporate partners, the past 2 years would have been considerably more challenging. Our team has drawn great strength from their belief in our mission.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to all of our partners.

Is Kenya a Lost Cause for Reforestation?

No, far from it! Kenya is perfectly placed for tree planting, forest restoration and protection. In fact, trees there grow up to 10 times faster than anywhere else on the planet, therefore in terms of mitigating global climate chaos, they are beasts!

The element that is frequently not costed into plans to get saplings in the ground is the physical human effort required to nurture them after they've been planted. Taking care of the people who take care of the trees sits at the top of our list of priorities.

Part of the problem stems from a blend of Big Corp and individuals in the 'Developed North' who (a) refuse to take full responsibility for their own carbon emissions and (b) have no idea of Kenya's incredible ability to improve the health and wellbeing of our entire planet through tree planting. In the coming year, we're going to tackle those problems head on with the launch of our Educational Learning Platform and our Environmental Citizen for Life Award.

Climate Change: Africa

In a report by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2019 was among the 3 warmest years on record for the continent and the trend is expected to continue. The latest predictions for the five-year period from 2020–24 show further warming and decreased rainfall, especially over North and Southern Africa. NASA reported in December 2021 that following three consecutive failed rainy seasons, more than 20 million people across eastern Africa now face some of the worst food security risks in 35 years.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in drought-prone sub-Saharan African countries like Kenya, numbers of undernourished people have increased by 45.6% since 2012.

Agriculture continues to be the backbone of Africa's economy, yet this incredibly vulnerable continent is a hot spot for climate variability. Add business as usual Big Corp deforestation to the mix and you have a perfect storm for catastrophe, unless rapid human intervention occurs to:

- unify governments across the world to support a multi-disciplined energy transition from fossil fuels to renewables
- make global Net Zero a reality
- increase levels of government and media support for reforestation and environmental charities, thus elevating them to the Critical for Human Survival status they deserve
- increase public awareness and, inevitably, funding of vital projects

According to Global Forest Watch, in 2010, Kenya had 3.18 million hectares of natural forest, extending over 5.7% of its land area. By 2020, it had lost 17.2 thousand hectares of natural forest, equivalent to 7.68 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions. Kenya still has less than 10% canopy cover, so we're certainly not going

to run out of space to plant more trees. As an interesting comparison, the UK has around 16%.

Trustees' Statement

For our 4th year, our Trustees continue to support and advise the charity and oversee its operations. Every major decision was taken in full consultation with the Trustees and they take a very active role in determining the best course of action for the charity. Our board has been enhanced by the addition of Eva Dixon as our International Development Trustee, who also brings specialist knowledge of Third Sector finance.

The Trustees are also responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards.


The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles of the Charities SORP
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity and enable them to ascertain to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 1993, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the constitution.

They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included on the charity's website.

This report and accounts was approved by the trustees on 15th January 2022 and signed on their behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon West". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Simon West FRSA
Managing Director and Chair of Trustees

CEO's Report

Tracey West: CEO and Fundraiser

Introduction

It is frequently said that every cloud has a silver lining.

I'm not entirely sure the calamitous events that have rained down on Kenya since my last report, could be categorised as a simple cloud. That said, it is joyful to note that continued support from our loyal membership and corporate partners has enabled our team to harness that silver and turn some of the starless darkness into light.

Africa accounts for 2–3% of global CO2 emissions, mainly from energy and industrial sources. The 1 billion people who live in sub-Saharan Africa are responsible for just 0.55% of global emissions.

Kenya: a Layer Cake of Challenges

This section makes for very uncomfortable reading, however, the gravity of our climate crisis is such that I cannot dress the details any other way.

Without significant and swift change to human activities, projections suggest that Kenya's mean annual temperature is expected to increase by 1.0°C to 2.8°C by 2060 (World Bank Group). This will increase the risk of additional wildfires. Rainfall will continue to become more intense and the rainy seasons less predictable. Sea levels are set to rise regardless of any immediate action. They are likely to bring flash flooding, resulting in land degradation, soil erosion and critical loss of biodiversity. Further crop and livestock losses will undoubtedly lead to extended famine, which is likely to result in human and creature displacement on unprecedented levels. Incidentally, if you'd like to see granular current and historical detail on wildfires, the climate, biodiversity, commodities and water, visit [GlobalForestWatch.org](https://www.globalforestwatch.org).

The pandemic continues to have a significant impact on the everyday lives of Kenyans, in spite of the fact that income and employment levels are showing signs of recovery. Kenya's second lockdown, combined with pre-existing challenges from ongoing periods of drought, have resulted in a surge in food and water insecurity. Around 2.1 million Kenyans are now thought to be at risk of starvation as a result of the drought alone.

Production of the Kenyan staple crop maize is under threat. Projections are for it to decline by 50% in significantly drought affected regions, partly due to low acreage of cultivation – why plant it when you know it's probably doomed to fail? Some areas are so dry they're expected to have another year of total crop failure.

More than 17 million children were impacted by school closures across Kenya and the inability to access education or resources during 2020. When the restrictions were relaxed, new Government stipulations made it almost impossible for countless schools to actually reopen.

Requirements for hand sanitising, temperature monitoring of students and regular hand washing which, of course, requires sinks and water storage, were impossible to meet as many rural schools had no facilities of this kind. No immediate Government funding was made available to improve sanitation in schools.

Drought - Insecurity - Floods - Displacement - COVID-19 - Locusts - Famine

7 words sum up what millions of Kenyans have endured since April 2020.

They need no visual embellishment and it's an horrific, naked truth
but you might as well add:

Rinse - Repeat

because it looks like they're an inevitability.

Aside from furnishing you with a few essential details about the 7 words, I've no intention of labouring these savage points extensively, because this year's report is filled with uplift and optimism and I don't know about you, but I think we could all benefit from a liberal sprinkling of that right now.

Heads Above The Water

COVID-19 continues to press its unrelenting boot-print upon us, and 170,000 other UK registered charities. Many NGOs worldwide are in complete disarray from increased demand for help from their beneficiaries and at the same time, they're enfeebled and exhausted from running up the challenge-laden hill in an attempt to seek and secure new funding streams.

Remarkably, The Word Forest Organisation has managed to carve a safe route through the financial scarcity that resulted from the pandemic. With incredibly stretched but talented and determined human resources, our phenomenal team digitally strategised a way out of the quagmire.

Whilst it's fair to say we weren't able to undertake as many major projects as we'd have liked during this tumultuous period, our financial report says it all: we survived, we increased our income by 84% and we're preparing to scale up our operations.

Humanitarian Support: frequently the missing piece

Once lockdowns were imposed in the UK, Kenya and across the globe, we knew our projects were going to be temporarily paralysed. The closing paragraphs of my last report stated that in March 2020, we made an initial payment to provide critical food aid to help the people in the tree planting communities we were working with.

The full extent of our support translated into over £4,000 per month being sent to our team across Kenya, who turned it into bulk purchases of critical food aid which they distributed to those who needed it most. With your good grace and kindness, we were able to do that for 12 full months. Thank you for helping us keep that lifeline open and for sharing our belief that the tree planters are critical to mitigating climate chaos.

Tree planting projects are only as good as the follow up human care that is built into them. People are needed to nurture saplings into mature trees. As Cyprian Ogoti says in our documentary #TreesAreTheKey, you wouldn't leave a baby to look after itself - saplings need care, water and intervention.

We will continue to prioritise the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the incredibly resilient Kenyan people we have the privilege of working with. They have the ability to create sustainable communities and spread the word far and wide about resilience. To the best of our ability we will do all we can to enable them to learn skills like permaculture which will allow them to thrive. It will also give the fast-growing trees in the tropics that our planet desperately needs, the best chance they have of drawing down and locking in CO₂.

According to the World Health Organization, Kenya ranks fourth in Africa for the highest number of poor mental health cases, with 1.9 million people, 4.4% of the population, suffering from depression. In June 2020, the Government declared a mental health emergency after a recommendation by a task force.

Key Objectives for the Year Ahead

It's clear that we have turned a corner - a good corner. By virtue of the fact that we've recently taken on an apprentice, 2 part-time members of staff and we have very clear plans for expansion over the next 3 years, it's evident The Word Forest Organisation is here to stay.

Our plans include:

In the UK:

- Increase our permanent and part-time staff to 6 members
- Ensure all key contributing volunteers and staff have the digital equipment and resources they need
- Prepare for the launch of our Educational Learning Platform
- Increase corporate partner stewardship to help them strengthen their CSR pillars
- Increase the reach and environmental education benefits of our annual awareness campaign, Trees Are The Key Awareness Week

In Kenya:

- Build a permaculture and education centre and nursery in Coast Province
- Educate and equip our beneficiaries so they can adjust to a changing climate
- Support and grow our existing teams across Kenya, adding specialist knowledge on tree growing and permaculture
- Increase the ability of people to cope with drought, food and water insecurity through environmental and climate education, and permaculture

- Resume school building projects, ensuring 1 acre (minimum) permaculture food forests are costed in too: they're as critical as the classrooms
- Commence tree planting projects that additionally combine animal conservation benefits and/or a reduction in human wildlife conflict
- Tackle deforestation at its heart by increasing our Charcoal Burners Rehabilitation Workshops
- Increase women's empowerment through workshops and education, focusing on ways they can adapt to the changing landscape and generate income from the natural harvests and commodities of living trees
- Improve people's ability to survive during floods by increasing education on emergency water purification

Two Examples of Staying One Step Ahead

We endeavour to analyse the problems which are thrown at Kenya, then uncover solutions to mitigate their potential reoccurrence in the future. By working closely with Kenyan communities to identify the hierarchy of problems they face, we try to stay one step ahead so they don't bite them again.

After our Monitoring and Evaluation visit back in 2018, Simon and I briefly experienced the commencement of an extreme weather event as the long rains arrived in Coast Province a whole month early, then turned into countrywide flooding. This went on to displace 20,000 people in the area we were working in at the time. One of the most devastating problems everyone faced was locating clean, safe drinking water.

We returned the following year with an expert in survival situations who spent a month teaching teachers and community leaders how to purify water by upcycling a 5 litre water bottle and filling it with items found on Mother Nature's floor to create vital layers of filtration.

More recently, you may remember our news reports talking about desert locust infestations. Some were 60 km x 40 km and contained countless millions of plant-munching critters who destroyed crucial crops grown to feed the Kenyan people. The locusts were as thick and long as your index finger. The conditions for the birthing of these gargantuan plagues that ate their way across Kenya and 27 other countries, have been strongly linked to climate change.

There's a high likelihood they'll be back, so we're planning to keep them out of our permaculture food forests by using robust nets. These nets will also conserve water and create optimum conditions for growing a diverse range of organic fruits and vegetables. The nets do increase our project costs, however, they have the ability to improve crop production and in the event of another infestation, they'll keep people fed.

Oxford Undergraduates Create a Winning Team

In March 2020, we turned to Reach Volunteering to increase our volunteer network. We boosted our number of volunteers by over 400%. This amazing human resource enabled us to set up departments for social media, marketing,

design and more besides. We kept a strong focus on communication via daily video meetings.

I must say, it gave us a wonderful taster of how effective our charity could be if we had people fulfilling these roles on a full or even part-time basis. Volunteers are amazing, but there are frequent continuity issues that put spanners in the works of great plans.

We have also participated in various Oxford Undergraduate Internship Schemes. The remit being we set a 'real life work situation and high bar challenge' to an eager set of interns for a short period of time and they produce top notch results. We're about to embark on our fourth iteration of interns and we're very excited to see what they bring to our party in terms of solutions for our climate crisis.

Scale Up: On... Paused... and Back On Again!

We had been positioning ourselves and preparing to scale up since just before the pandemic struck. In January 2020, we moved into office premises at St Michael's Business Centre in Lyme Regis - unfortunately, in March we were hit by the first lockdown.

Like the rest of the world, we quickly got up to speed with how to work from home and I must admit, we had no choice but to embrace the limitations placed upon us as we welcomed video meetings and changed our dynamic.

The lease at St Michael's finished as 2021 drew to a close and we've moved across the border to Devon. We've realised that we *can* work perfectly well from home for the most part, however, there's a spark that burns bright when our team shares the same socially-distanced space.

That was evident when 9 of us came together in Glasgow to report on COP26. If you haven't seen the amazing work everybody did over that crazy fortnight, do visit [WordForest.org/COP26](https://www.wordforest.org/COP26). The newsfeed is jam-packed full of articles and videos that give you a taste of what went on. It tackles some of the topics the mainstream media omitted to give airtime or column inches to.

Any scale up worth its salt requires the gainful employment of staff!

In October 2021, with assistance from a kind-hearted donor of ringfenced funds, we were able to employ an Apprentice Business Analyst from a training scheme forged specifically to help a mum returning to work. Jo Smith has really sunk her teeth into this role already. Jo knew the ropes as she had been volunteering with us for close to two years. We're all excited to watch her develop her skills as she lays a solid pathway for our charity to tread.

We took on another employee in mid-August 2021, when we brought in Jed Robertson via the Government's Kickstart Scheme. He came onboard as a Video and Digital Media Creator and Composer (he is a supremely talented musician incidentally). The position ran for the full Kickstart duration of 6 months.

Whilst I'm sad to report that Friday just gone was Jed's last day, conversely, I'm thrilled to report that Monday coming will be his first day in part time employment with The Word Forest Organisation! Regretfully, we only have the

funds to cover him for one full day a week; we have a compelling case that demonstrates our requirement of his services for the other 4 days.

Finally, joining Jed on his first day next week will be one of our most dedicated volunteers, an amazingly talented and environmentally motivated soul who has kindly given us devoted service for 2½ years. They also start on one paid day a week from Monday, taking care of a variety of tasks, and we couldn't be more thrilled.

And then there were four!

Corporate Partners: bless them all

Back in March 2020, we were set to commence a raft of corporate partner stewardship activities. They were designed to help our partners strengthen their pillars of Corporate Social Responsibility by helping them lay paths towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Lockdown put paid to that idea.

We're immensely grateful to all of our corporate partners and we'd like to thank them one and all for their patience, kindness and continued support of the critical work we do.

Without their belief in our mission to plant trees, build schools, facilitate environmental education and support women's empowerment across Kenya, we wouldn't be here today.

Even during the most challenging times, we've managed to nurture an exciting handful of new corporate relationships. We're looking forward to turning our plans into tangible, life changing realities for the people of Kenya and for our planet too.

An Awareness Week for the Mind, Body and Planet

In March 2021, we launched the inaugural Trees Are The Key Awareness Week.

Over 7 days, we explored how trees in our neighbourhoods could help to boost our mental and physical health and wellbeing. It was an amazing, if somewhat exhausting week! We released new written and video content each day and had a favourite tree photo contest too, which attracted international interest.

We're currently preparing our second awareness week and whilst I don't want to give too much away at this stage, the focus is education, enlightenment and fun. Bookmark WordForest.org/week to keep an eye on what we're up to, or, to ensure you don't miss out on any of our news, visit WordForest.org/subscribe and be the first to know.

Recognition Through Awards

It's nice to end on a couple of high notes.

In 2020, The Word Forest Organisation was runner up in the Social Change Awards category of Everybody Benefits from the Directory of Social Change. The winners and runners up were announced at a ceremony in the Houses of Parliament and it was a fabulous high point that recognised just how focused our team are on our mission.

We won a rather splendid bespoke, hand-drawn cartoon by Grizelda (featured at the beginning of this report) which showed many of our projects in action. We also won 6 months access to a database of potential funding sources.

...and finally, in October 2021, I won a People Environment Achievement Award for being an inspirational vegan! I must say, I was absolutely thrilled to receive it. My husband Simon and I are just approaching our 6th anniversary of being plant-based.

It'll come as no surprise to learn that the very foundations of The Word Forest Organisation are as environmentally friendly as they can be. Our apparel and bags are 100% organic cotton and vegan friendly; see WordForest.org/shop to buy something lovely.

In the office and at fundraising events, we only serve plant-based food and refreshments, shown to leave the lightest possible touch on our world.

We've also got a good handful of corporate partners, including the Green Gazelles, the world's first vegan rugby team, who share our love of a delicious whole food plant based diet.

Onwards and upwards we go into 2022!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracey West', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tracey West FRSA
CEO and Fundraiser