

Namikango Mission has long been recognized as a people who care for the Malawians. Outreach projects like the Maternity Clinic and Ntonda School show we care. When our teachers go among the people and share the Gospel, the people willingly and eagerly listen. This follows the example of Jesus doing good among the people; they listened when He spoke the Good News.

This month's newsletter centers on Namikango's agricultural

projects. We have three goals in having a farming program on the Mission.

- 1) The crops produce food for our students and visitors*
 - 2) The crops also provide funds to help finance other ministries and relieve some of the strain on the Mission budget.*
 - 3) Our farming sets an example for church leaders and villagers to help them become more efficient in their own fields.*
- Sidney Vaughn*

Conservation Agriculture by Ryan Hayes

The Namikango Mission is situated on the beautiful 90-acres in Thondwe, Malawi (Southern region).

Because of deforestation, ours is the only natural forest plot remaining in our area - as you can see on the Google Earth photo...(the area within the green trees line is our property)...

Our goal is to be effective and faithful with the land, using it for productive agriculture practices and training of rural Malawian farmers. Our efforts in agriculture provide income-generation and training of Malawian farmers . . . these generally overlap.

Income Generation:

- a. Coffee Farm & Roasting (10 acres)
- b. Soya Farm (15 acres)
- c. Cassava Farm (12 acres)

Training Local Farmers:

- a. Lead Farmers: 3-year training
(Conservation Agriculture & Agroforestry)
- b. Farming God's Way demo plot
- c. Permaculture site

Coffee Farm

The 10-acre coffee farm was begun in 2014 and has just experienced its first harvest in 2019. The total beans harvested were 1760 lbs. We dry and process the coffee beans then roast them with a beautiful fluid bed roaster and are prepared to launch coffee to the public later this year. We employ 11 local farmers with this project full time. A primary goal is to have a sustainable business with the capacity of income from this to fund other farming-related programs. The

projections are favorable to get this done, though this will be our first test.

Challenges: While we love the potential with coffee, it is labor intensive and will be difficult to maintain optimal producing conditions. We've already had some setbacks from pests and draught due to a failing water well.

Soya Farm

We have grown Soya for a long time; it is a primary cash crop in Malawi. This year, we did more than usual in hopes of landing a good profit to fund our Lead Farmers Training Program. We harvested roughly 7,490 lbs of Soya. If the predicted price is met, we will make a net profit of of \$4,000 on this lot, which will fund our Lead Farmers Program for 2020.

Cassava Farm

We planted Cassava because it is one of the heartiest crops there is. It grows almost like a weed requiring very little water and yet is very nutritious. We planted just over 12 acres last year. An extra benefit is to teach others that it is a low-cost food alternative to Maize. Most Malawians don't plant Cassava because they don't know much about it. This season the price of Maize went up 300% when the government announced that "Malawi government supply is out of Maize." This is unfortunate for many because Maize is the primary food source for most people. Because of this, people are now coming to us for information on Cassava and how to grow it.

Cassava is produced by planting a short stalk from a Cassava plant. The stalk quickly produces branches upward and roots and Cassava bulbs underground. ...it's quite a plant.



Lead Farmer Training

This is our most beneficial agricultural program. It is a training program stretched over three years. It began with 125 trainees from various locations. This program requires a lot of time and dedication. Because of our requirements, we are now down to 35 lead farmer trainees. If anyone did not complete the work assigned, they were dropped from the program. The ones that remained are very passionate about conservation agriculture and are doing an exemplary



job on their own plots at home. Most of them have doubled their yields! It is very gratifying to see that the program works this well. This year is the final phase of this program where we will probably graduate 25 and will set them up as the primary lead farmers in their churches and areas where they will be able to teach others.

Farming God's Way – Demo Plot

A one-acre demo plot on campus is set up for demonstration and training. It is done with conservation agriculture principles and is the size of a normal rural village farm. This plot when properly used should supply a family of four enough food and vegetables for a year.

We host a number of gatherings/viewings/trainings with this plot every year.

Permaculture Site

The newest program that is gearing up right now is a permaculture site on campus. The goal is to expand our teaching abilities to including training in forestry, fish keeping, and livestock. This can add value via fertilizer and meat, spices/herbs products. We are applying to be accepted as one of three approved permaculture sites in Malawi and will be an income-generating site, able to issue official permaculture certifications. We will also have site visits on campus.

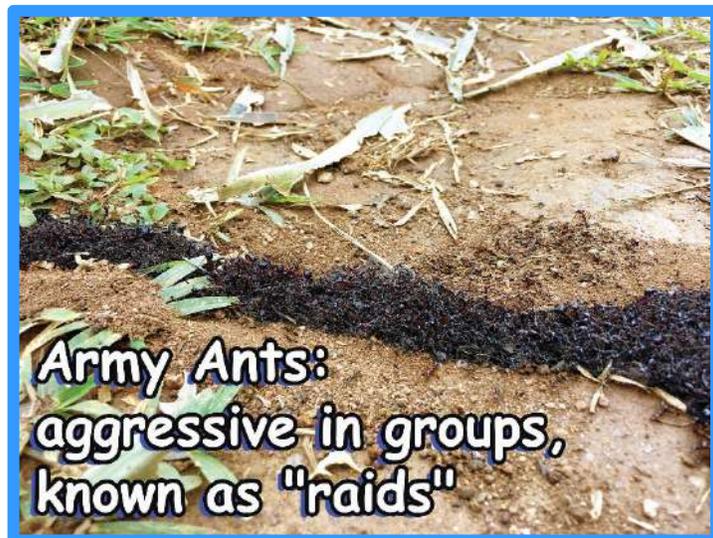
Soldiers by Ben Hayes

Along with the rains come the army ants. They trample and swarm through an area for a period and then - keep moving on. One mostly just needs to get out of the way when they come through your yard or area and . . . let them pass. On both sides of a string of worker ants is a line of "commander ants." These guys prevent the working ants from getting out of the line or from escaping. They maintain order as the ants pass through on their journey.

The army ant's bite is not poisonous, but their pinchers are strong enough that in some places in Africa, the army ant has been used to bite over a laceration to hold the surgery in place. Their bite is so strong the pinchers and head remain in place even when the body is discarded.

This becomes a natural means for stitches. Inventive.

Do you need your cut taken care of?



The Crop Outlook in Malawi by Symon Katete

The rainy season in Malawi is from October to March, and since the first rains generally start on October 1st, people start planting their crops then.

Farming on the Mission also depends on the rains. When the rains are good, we plant a variety of food and cash crops. In most parts of Malawi people plant Maize (Corn) as a staple food crop and survival depends on it.

If the rains continue to fall steadily, people will plant other crops such as soya, sweet potatoes, beans, peas, and ground nuts. People's survival is dependent on the rains for what they eat every day. When there is too much rain - it floods, washing away the crops that are planted. With too little rain - it leads to a drought, causing crops to fail. In both, it causes suffering.

The months of January and February are very difficult times because of food shortages. By then, last year's reserves are all gone. People often go without food because they don't have any Corn. This is true for many parts of Malawi.

Everyone looks forward with great hope to harvest-time in March and April. When harvest does come, if there is any extra it will be sold or traded to buy clothes for the children and even pay their school fees.

This year's Maize crop, although promising, has been attacked by army worms in most parts of Malawi, but we are still hopeful that we will have a good harvest. We pray that the swarms of locusts they are having in Kenya and Tanzania will not affect crops in Malawi. Pray for good rains.



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Namikango Mission - On the Map!

I was surprised to find that the Mission has grown in national recognition. You can now pull it up with a "Google Earth" search as "Namikango Mission." I located it without referring to Malawi or Africa.

This satellite photo shows the 90 acres of Namikango Mission. I have added some markers which Ryan has identified for us.

I found this interesting.

Sidney



1. This large rectangular area is the coffee and macadamia nut growing area (10 acres).
2. Large field where Maize has been grown; now is used for Cassava and the new permaculture site.
3. This area is used to grow Blue Gum trees and Soya (down to the Namikango river boundary).
4. The new football/soccer field - near the highway. This will become a popular national attraction.
5. This hedge (which isn't there anymore) is between the Mission house and the new Admin Bldg (*Dark Blue*) and classroom block (*Light Blue*). Behind the Mission house are old offices and the small dorm houses.
6. This is the Outpatient Bldg by the Maternity Clinic.
7. There are staff houses located in this area.
8. This is a cleared field in the Blue Gum forest.
9. The new Coffee Factory Bldg is located here near the drying lot.
10. This is the Thondwe Church of Christ bldg near the entrance.
11. The Blue Gum (Eucalyptus) forest.



Evan Simmons

Evan Simmons became the newest member of the Namikango Mission Board of Directors at our annual meeting last month. He and his family live in Clyde, Texas.

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-Missionary Travel Updates

Ben, Ryan, and Eric were planning on leaving for their scheduled furloughs on a staggered schedule.

Ben and his family recently arrived in the States and are feeling okay. However, because of the overcrowded airline travel amongst coughing passengers, they are maintaining a voluntary family quarantine for the time being while they are at Ben's parents' home in Houston.

Ryan tried to re-schedule his family's airline travel and faced shut-down or very limited international connections, a massive stampede of families trying to get back home, and the anticipated

chaos of five or more hours of screening time in the States. Realizing these were not ideal conditions for a family with little children, they have decided to wait for some of the panic to subside and will remain in Malawi to wait and see what things look like a month from now.

Eric changed his travel plans and was able to make his flight scheduled for March 18.

Thankfully, Malawi has had no cases of the Coronavirus-19 at the time of this printing. Please join me in praying for our missionaries and their families.

Sidney