

## ***A word from Jean-Paul Deprins, CEO***

Dear reader,

In business, relationships can take many forms: clients, suppliers, service providers, winners, and sometimes even victims. But then there's partnership, a word that reflects shared vision, trust, commitment, and a long-term perspective.

In this newsletter, we recognize two of Better Globe Forestry's partners who embody these values, and their vision aligns with ours, blending seamlessly with what BGF stands for and strives to achieve.

## **Our Strong Partnership with Tree Partner Solutions: At Better Globe Forestry (BGF), we believe that great partnerships are the foundation of lasting impact.**

Today, we are proud to highlight our growing collaboration with Tree Partner Solutions (TPS), a partner that shares our vision of combining sustainable forestry with meaningful social and environmental benefits.

TPS has brought a refreshing, long-term perspective to our work. Together, we focus on developing dryland afforestation and agroforestry projects that improve the livelihoods of thousands of farmers.

TPS's deep commitment to high-integrity projects aligns perfectly with our values of responsible forestry and community development.



*TPS visiting partner farmers in Dokolo, Uganda (photos by TPS).*

What sets TPS apart is their holistic approach. They understand that real impact means creating value for people and ecosystems over the long term.

Their emphasis on social co-benefits, such as empowering farmers, supporting microfinance initiatives, and ensuring environmental restoration, has strengthened every project we've undertaken.

One of the key aspects of this partnership is the mutual transparency and trust. Through regular operational meetings and strategic reviews, both teams ensure alignment on project goals and implementation.

We appreciate TPS's collaborative nature and their openness to listen, learn, and adapt to local contexts, making them an ideal partner in the complex environments where we operate.

As TPS explores new regions and scales up its operations we are ready to support with our experience in dryland forestry, farmer engagement, and on-the-ground implementation.

Looking ahead, BGF is excited about the many opportunities this partnership holds.

The process of building this full partnership took three years, which may seem long, but it reflects the care both sides took to build trust, align values, and ensure a solid foundation. Together, we aim to create projects that leave a lasting legacy for the communities and landscapes where we work.

We look forward to welcoming the TPS team to Kenya at the end of April, where we will continue strengthening our collaboration and exploring new possibilities for impactful forestry projects.

This partnership also stands as a testament to the trust TPS places in BGF as their preferred implementing partner for forestry and agroforestry projects in Kenya and Uganda, a responsibility we proudly uphold.

We thank Tree Partner Solutions for their trust and dedication and look forward to growing this partnership even further, because together, we can achieve much more.



## Empowering Rural Livelihoods: How Village Banks Uplift Communities

As an afforestation company focused on long-term returns, up to 15–20 years in the case of *Melia volkensii*, Better Globe Forestry (BGF) recognized the need to address short-term income needs for its partner farmers. Subsistence farmers, in particular, cannot afford to wait over a decade to reap the benefits of their investments. That's why we invested in solutions that offer immediate benefits alongside our long-term forestry goals.

A powerful solution to this effect was the introduction of Village Banks, also known as Financial Services Associations (FSAs). These operate along the lines of microcredit institutions, enabling farmers to access financial services while awaiting returns from forestry.



*The launch of the Village Bank in Kamuwongo, held in the local marketplace (photos by BGF).*



BGF funded the establishment of two FSAs in northern Kitui County, specifically in Nguni and Kamuwongo, in collaboration with the Kenyan microcredit institution K-Rep Fedha Services Ltd (KFS). KFS was responsible for setting up the FSAs, offering start-up training, and providing ongoing management supervision. This type of FSA is unique in that they are fully owned by the shareholders, who are the farmers who opened an account in their bank. Each bank is governed by a board of directors, elected from among the shareholders during the Annual General Meetings.

The Village Banks were established a time back, in 2013 and 2017, in Nguni and Kamuwongo, respectively, and show an impressive track record.

### **Nguni Village Bank (est. 2013)**

- Shareholders (2024): 6,494
- Total Cashflow (2024): Ksh 5.1 million
- Savings Accounts: 7,911
- Average Savings Balance: Ksh 2,675
- Loans Issued (2024): 4,228
- Outstanding Loan Portfolio: Ksh 55.5 million (€396,000)
- Average Loan Size: Ksh 13,142 (€94)
- Repayment Rate: 100%

### **Kamuwongo Village Bank (est. 2017)**

- Shareholders (2024): 4,057
- Total Cashflow (2024): Ksh 1 million
- Savings Accounts: 4,509
- Loans Issued (2024): 2,448
- Outstanding Loan Portfolio: Ksh 25.9 million (€185,000)
- Average Loan Size: Ksh 10,568 (€75)
- Repayment Rate: 99%

These performances are remarkable considering the dry conditions and limited development prospects in the area. The FSAs offer a range of tailored loans towards the local economic circumstances. Business loans are popular, but also loans to pay school fees, or to cater for emergencies like funerals.

As both Village Banks are in remote areas where no other banking facilities exist, they have a considerable impact on people's lives, with over 10,000 households being served.

They stand as excellent examples of inclusive, sustainable development, and Better Globe Forestry is proud to have played a foundational role in making them a reality.

*The opening of the Village Bank in Nguni was celebrated with dancing, by the local community (photo by BGF).*

