



Which is the most important tree of all?

Notes to broadcaster

Following are three short programs that are adapted from an episode of 'Mwana Alirenji', a weekly farmer-to-farmer radio magazine produced by Gladson Makowa of 'The Story Workshop' in Malawi. The programs are based on actual interviews with people living in Mnyong'a 1 and 2 villages, in Traditional Authority Masamba Nkhunda in Lilingwe District of Malawi.

Program #1

All trees are very important. But many times I ask people this question. Which is the most important tree of all?

This is a very important question.

The most important tree is the one whose use you do not know. Many times people argue that they cut down trees because they don't know its uses.

But who knows? Those trees may have bark or leaves or seeds that are the cure for HIV/AIDS or other diseases.

Even if we don't know the use of a tree—others may know its use.

What we need to do is to ask other people about the use of those other trees. We may realize that we have been damaging very important trees.

Before you cut a tree think about all the potential uses it might have.

Program #2

Reporter: Today we are talking about natural resource management and conservation. We are talking with people living in Mnyong'a 1 and 2 villages, in traditional Authority Masamba Nkhunda in Lilingwe District of Malawi.

Friends, why is it that in your tradition you do not cut down trees in the graveyard?

Man 1: We want the dead to live under the shade of the trees.

Man 2: We respect the graveyard because it's where the spirits live.

Man 1: We do collect fuelwood at the graveyard for the funeral services. But we only cut the trees that are already dead. We cut only those that are dry.



Reporter: You only cut those that are dry. But in other parts of the village I see that many of the natural trees are cut down.

Man 1: You are right that we don't respect those natural trees. That's because if one respects it and leaves it, another one comes to cut it down. That is why we have very few natural trees out here. It is different with these planted trees. They belong to people who planted them. So no one cuts an exotic tree without permission. Natural trees are for everybody and belong to nobody.

Reporter: What would need to happen for people to start respecting any natural tree - in the same way you do with the trees at the graveyard?

Man 1: It just takes agreement that we should follow this and not that. I think our eyes are more open now. I believe from now onwards we will stop clearing natural trees when we are planting exotic trees. We will be leaving the natural trees to grow too. We want our children to see and know the natural, indigenous trees.

Reporter: Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. Finally, please remind the listeners - who are you?

Man 2: We are people from Mnyong'a 1 and 2 villages, in traditional Authority Masamba Nkhunda in Lilingwe District, Malawi.

Program #3

SOUND OF WATER FLOWING IN A RIVER.

Reporter: Recently we have been hearing much about flooding and land slides in our country. Why is it like this? In your lifetime have you ever seen crops being washed away? Juliet Nyamponera of Phoka in Rumphi District laments over her extraordinary experience.

SOUND OF WATER FLOWING. FADE AND HOLD UNDER DIALOGUE.

Juliet: We have very little food this year because the food that we were optimistic about is the same food that has been washed away by this river. There were many crops in that garden; sugar canes, bananas, maize, beans, tomatoes and many others. That garden was of great help to us. There was always some harvest still available in the granary.

Reporter: You have said that you were depending on this garden all your lifetime. What do you think caused these floods this year?

Juliet: I think this is a flash flood. The cause is the wanton cutting down of trees on the hill-sides for making of mortars and pestles. Some people are opening their gardens on those hill's steep slopes.



MUSICAL JINGLE:

In the upper areas,
If you are cutting down trees carelessly,
When the rains come,
Water just goes down running,
In the end we see flooding,
Think about your friends who stay in flood plains.

Narrator: Let's think about our farming practices. Know that trees were not put in place by accident. Trees are not meant to beautify the country only. They have a purpose. Remember that trees have an important purpose.

SOUND OF WATER FLOWING TO END PROGRAM

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