



# MALAWI YOUTH FOREST RESTORATION PROGRAMME

## IMPORTANCE OF FOREST LANDSCAPES

Forests sustain life on earth. They directly support the livelihoods of 1.6 billion people, and indirectly support billions more through valuable ecosystem services. In Malawi forests provide fuelwood, food and building materials for the country's young, growing population and represent 1.8% of GDP.

But several pressures have threatened the health of Malawi's forest landscapes. Forest cover has declined from 45% of the land area in 1972 to about 28% currently. Recognizing that land degradation and deforestation threaten economic growth and the livelihoods of rural communities, the Government has created the Malawi Youth Forest Restoration Programme.

## RESTORING MALAWI'S LAND

In 2016 the Government of Malawi made an ambitious pledge to restore 4.5 million hectares of degraded land, or 38% of its total landmass, as part of the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100) and Bonn Challenge. AFR100 is a country-led initiative that aims to bring 100 million hectares of land into restoration by 2030. Restoration has many benefits: It can increase agricultural productivity and water security, improve resilience to climate change and severe weather, limit erosion, and spur sustainable economic growth.

Malawi is a young country with an entrepreneurial and ambitious youth. Despite their enormous potential, many of the 64% of Malawians that are under the age of 24 are unemployed. The current government of President Peter Mutharika has prioritized tackling both youth unemployment and improving the productivity of the land. Now, it wants to do both at once.



President Peter Mutharika plants a royal palm tree.  
Photo: Abel Ikiloni, Mana/Nyasa Times



Youth tree planting campaigns in Malawi. Photo: courtesy of National Youth Council of Malawi

## YOUTH LEADING THE WAY

The Malawi Youth Forest Restoration Programme (MYFRP) is a new, ambitious programme that will provide young people with training and jobs, protect the environment, and foster environmental stewardship throughout the country. The MYFRP is a major initiative of President Peter Mutharika, and was launched by Malawi's Department of Forestry, along with the Ministry of Labour, Youth, Sports and Manpower Development.

This K1.43 billion (\$2 million) programme is entirely funded through Malawi's domestic budget, making the country one of the first in the world to use its tax money to fund forest landscape restoration. The youth will plant fruit trees and bamboo and learn how to manage their local forests.

Priority areas for restoration will be identified using the country's National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy. This is a key step toward realizing Malawi's AFR100 pledge.

Young participants from both rural and urban areas will receive a daily wage of K900 (\$1.25) to plant trees, maintain firebreaks, and practice sustainable land management techniques. The Government will also implement a bonus scheme tied to tree survival rates and improved forest management, and local District Councils will take the lead in forming youth groups and implementing restoration on the ground.

The programme aims to spread awareness of the importance of maintaining Malawi's ecosystems and how young people can benefit from sustainable land management. It will help build a resilient nation, with livelihoods and local economies supported by healthy ecosystems. By putting young people at the center of this effort, the Government has demonstrated its commitment to the long-term success of Malawi's restoration movement.

### FAST FACTS

- 4.5-million-hectare AFR100 pledge
- K1.43 billion (US\$2 million) investment, with goals of:
- 50,000 hectares restored
- Thousands of young people employed
- K900 (\$1.25) daily wage

