

January 26, 2012

Dear Friends,

We hope you enjoy this week's edition of the Newsflash!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

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(Call for Applications) Firelight Foundation is Now Accepting Letters of Inquiry for Lesotho, Malawi, and Tanzania!

(Call for Abstracts) The Children and HIV: Closing the Gap - Ending Vertical Transmission through Community Action international symposium

(Call for Proposals) Foundation Ensemble seeks proposals for water and sanitation, sustainable development, animal biodiversity

(Article) The Constant Gardeners by Jocelyn C. Zuckerman

(Article) Malawi: Farmers Ease Climate Woes With Fertiliser Trees

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(Call for Applications) Firelight Foundation is Now Accepting Letters of Inquiry for Lesotho, Malawi, and Tanzania!

#### LETTER OF INQUIRY TEMPLATE

If your organization is a charitable organization working with orphans and vulnerable children based in the Northern Region of Malawi, Lesotho, or Tanzania we invite you to send a "letter of inquiry" and provide us with basic information about your organization. Please ensure we have complete contact information for your organization.

We accept any kind of written submission. We currently accept applications in English, Chichewa, French, Kinyarwanda, Sesotho, and Swahili. Please limit your letter to three pages.

Deadline for Submission: February 15, 2012.

For more go to: <http://www.firelightfoundation.org/application-information.php>

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(Call for Abstracts) The Children and HIV: Closing the Gap - Ending Vertical Transmission through Community Action international symposium

The Children and HIV: Closing the Gap - Ending Vertical Transmission through Community Action international symposium will be held at the Georgetown University Hotel and Conference Centre in Washington, D.C. on July 20th and 21st, 2012. This two-day symposium, jointly hosted by The Teresa Group, the Coalition on Children Affected by AIDS (CCABA), and the Global Fund for Children, will once again bring together hundreds of service providers, researchers, donors, advocates, and policy leaders from around the world, presenting on the topic of ending vertical transmission through community-based efforts.

Please explore this website to find out more about the symposium, including overview, registration, scholarship applications, visa information, the conference venue and more.

Abstract Guidelines

The Children and HIV: Closing the Gap - Ending Vertical Transmission through Community Action symposium welcomes abstract applications that cover all issues related to vertical transmission. Abstract submissions are grouped under the following themes:

- Making community and clinic-based PMTCT services more accessible
- Reproductive health and prevention programs aimed at children and families
- Testing and treatment involving communities and families
- Integrating PMTCT programming into other child support programming - successes and challenges
- Not just mothers - engaging other caregivers in ending vertical transmission
- Post-natal care in community-based and family settings
- Innovative partnerships with community organizations to end vertical transmission

#### Presenting Author Registration Information

All attendees, including presenters and co-presenters, must register for the symposium [here](#). Registration for the symposium is free.

#### Presenter Scholarship Information

Scholarships are based on financial need and are not related to abstract acceptance. For information on applying for a scholarship or to apply, please [click here](#).

#### Abstract Submission Guidelines

Abstracts may be no more than 300 words in length, with a 100-word plain language summary used in the conference program for introductory purposes. Word limits are restricted on the abstract submission page and will be truncated at 300 words if they run longer.

Deadline for Submissions: Sunday, March 18, 2012 (11:59 pm, E.S.T.).

Decisions about acceptances are expected to be sent out on April 30, 2012. The submitting author will be notified by e-mail.

For more go to: <http://www.teresagroup.ca/washington/abstracts.html>

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(Call for Proposals) Foundation Ensemble seeks proposals for water and sanitation, sustainable development, animal biodiversity

Selected examples of activities and themes financed by the Foundation:

Water and sanitation: Water supply, rainwater harvesting, groundwater protection, integrated water resources management, sustainable irrigation, low-cost technologies, ecological sanitation, wastewater management, etc.

Sustainable development: Renewable energies, sustainable agriculture, alternative waste management, biodiversity, etc.

Animal biodiversity: Protection of threatened and endangered animal species, etc.

In 2012, the Foundation Ensemble will focus on funding projects that will have multiple

benefits.

Small Grants Fund

There is no priority countries for this fund. You may submit the Animal Biodiversity 3 pages form, by email at : [species@fondationensemble.org](mailto:species@fondationensemble.org)

You may submit the other Small Grants (Water and Sanitation and Sustainable Development) 3 pages form, by email at : [small@fondationensemble.org](mailto:small@fondationensemble.org)

The next deadline for submitting the 3 pages form is March 11, 2012.

For more go to: <http://www.fondationensemble.org/projeta.php>

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(Article) The Constant Gardeners by Jocelyn C. Zuckerman

Some 15 million Africans abandon the countryside every year in pursuit of better lives in the city. Climate change and further desertification will only exacerbate the trend. How will these ballooning urban populations survive? OnEarth articles editor Jocelyn C. Zuckerman and photographer Antonio Bolfo traveled to Kenya and Ghana, where they found that the best strategy is sowing seeds right in the heart of cities, where the people live. See Bolfo's photos and hear Zuckerman tell journalist Jaime Bedrin about their trip in this audio slideshow, then read "The Constant Gardeners" in OnEarth's Winter 2012 issue.

Three years ago, for the first time in human history, **the number of people living in cities worldwide outnumbered those living in rural areas**, and the United Nations projects that **by 2050, up to 65 percent of the global population will be urbanized**. The rate of urban migration is particularly high **in sub-Saharan Africa, where 15 million people abandon the countryside every year to move to the cities**.

Climate change will exacerbate the trend, as extreme events -- like the drought currently devastating the Horn of Africa -- become more frequent and more intense. Climate models predict that in the years to come, sub-Saharan Africa's arid and semiarid areas will increase by up to 350,000 square miles, an area equal to the size of the country of Nigeria.

Longer, hotter dry periods and unpredictable rainfall already are making it harder for farmers to know when to sow and harvest their crops, and in this part of the world, where high-tech irrigation is all but unheard of, the challenge is especially acute. **Less arable land -- and fewer farmers -- also means less food: the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has estimated that yields from rain-fed agriculture here could be cut in half by 2020**, and the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute predicts that, as a result of climate change, output of staple crops like cassava and wheat could plunge by as much as 22 percent by 2050.

Hungry people and crowded cities, of course, make a combustible mix. Think of Paris in 1789, or St. Petersburg in 1917. As recently as 2008, the skyrocketing cost of staple foods, fueled in part by speculation in agricultural commodities markets, led to riots in no fewer than 36 countries, 21 of them in Africa.

The good news is that urban gardens like Wangui's are making a difference. And, as I realized when I rounded a corner and crashed into 34 of the things, scrunched in tight between a concrete wall and a row of connected shanties, this isn't just some boutique trend. In Kibera --

which the Kenyan government designated a "temporary residence" for Nubian (Sudanese) soldiers after World War I and which since has drawn hundreds of thousands of squatters from other ethnic groups -- some 5,000 households currently are growing vertical gardens. (The average farming household maintains five or six of the sacks.)

**And in cities across the developing world similar efforts are under way, with the poor making use of everything from used grain sacks to old tires for planting and cultivating micro-farms.** The United Nations Development Program recently reported that an astonishing **800 million people worldwide are now engaged in urban agriculture, producing from 15 percent to 20 percent of the world's food.** (Many of those people are in Asia, which has a long tradition of urban farming.) Under power lines, alongside highways, down the banks of rivers -- wherever there's unclaimed dirt to be found -- landless city dwellers are grabbing shovels and digging in.

**In sub-Saharan Africa alone, participation in urban farming has increased from 20 percent of the population two decades ago to nearly 70 percent today. By the year 2020, some 40 million Africans will be depending exclusively on food grown in cities.**

Africa's cities haven't always welcomed farmers. A few days before meeting up with Njenga, Antonio and I spent an afternoon with a 56-year-old named Francis Wachira, who told us that a decade ago, when he said he wanted to grow food in the city, people looked at him as if he were crazy. Having moved to Nairobi to find work while in his twenties, Wachira spent 20 miserable years picking up the odd construction job and reselling fruit that he would buy from the central market. Finally, in 2002, though he owned no land of his own, he found an empty patch of dirt and started to plant. "Why are you farming in Nairobi?" the neighbors mocked. "Go back to the rural area."

There was prejudice at work here -- people who take up farming in the city must be poor and uneducated, the thinking went -- but there was also a perception that food produced in the polluted environment of a city was inherently unhealthy. (Given the water used for most urban crops, that perception wasn't entirely unfounded.) And because people like Wachira were farming on public land, without any permitting involved, it galled the authorities to no end.

Wachira ignored the mockery, and today the lanky father of three actually giggled as he led us through the neat rows of kale, eggplant, spinach, and other vegetables bursting from the 6,000-square-foot plot of land in the scruffy Makadara district, across town from Kibera.

For more including the full article, pictures, and video go here: <http://www.onearth.org/article/the-constant-gardeners?page=1>

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(Article) Malawi: Farmers Ease Climate Woes With Fertiliser Trees

Karen Sanje

12 January 2012

Lilongwe — Smallholder farmers struggling with climate change in this **southeast African nation are turning to trees to help their crops grow.**

**Many are intercropping trees with maize to provide moisture-preserving shade for the growing corn, while others bury tree leaves in the ground to make the soil more fertile**

**and help retain moisture at planting time.**

**Research has found that such "fertiliser tree systems" can as much as double yields of maize, a staple crop here.**

"These trees have the potential not only to enrich the soils but also to help keep moisture in my field even if the rains rarely come," said Killar Kawelama, a farmer in Balaka in southern Malawi.

He learned the technique from an agricultural field officer working for a climate change adaptation programme sponsored by the aid agency Oxfam UK.

## PRESERVING MOISTURE

Kawelama digs planting holes in his field between April and June each year and buries fresh or dry leaves in them from *Gliricidia sepium* trees that grow close to his house. The fast-growing trees, native to Mexico and Central America, grow well in a large range of conditions.

When the rains come around September and October, he opens part of each hole and plants his seeds.

The leaves decompose in the ground, and the resulting compost boosts the soil's fertility and traps moisture around the maize plants like a sponge, enabling the crop to grow more vigorously.

"Plants growing in such an environment are more likely to give a farmer a better yield as they don't wither easily because of (lack of) moisture," said Kufasi Shela, chief land resource conservation officer in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development.

Unlike Kawelama, Bettie Lungu of Mzimba in northern Malawi uses *Tephrosia vogelii* trees, which she plants in rows 1.5 metres (about five feet) apart.

The trees, which increase fertilising nitrogen in the soil, do not grow taller than the maize crop, so they do not stifle the growth of the maize, according to Mahara Nyirenda, an agriculture coordinator for the Development Fund of Norway.

"The leaves falling from the trees cover the ground. When it rains, this layer traps the raindrops, preventing them from accumulating into runoff. They also aid percolation into the soil," Nyirenda said.

When it is sunny, the tree canopies shade the ground and the fallen leaves help keep the moisture in the soil, he added

A recent paper by researchers from the World Agroforestry Centre reported that nearly 150,000 smallholder farmers in Malawi are using fertiliser tree systems. Several species of tree are used, though the most popular is *Gliricidia sepium*

## FALLING COSTS

Killar Kawelama is very happy with the results.

"Things have changed a lot since we started using the practice of burying leaves from these trees," he said.

When Kawelama used chemical fertilisers, he would harvest 20 sacks of maize, each weighing 50 kg (110 lbs). Since switching to tree fertilisers his crop has declined slightly, to 18 sacks.

**"But I am better off now because I am saving over 24,000 Malawian Kwacha (about \$150) which I used to spend on chemical fertilisers," he explained.**

Read more go here: <http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/malawi-farmers-ease-climate-woes-with-fertiliser-trees>

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As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website: <http://www.firelightfoundation.org/newsflash.php>.

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at [newsletter@firelightfoundation.org](mailto:newsletter@firelightfoundation.org).