

2015 Annual Report

Climate Stewards had a successful year in 2015, with income up 23% on 2014. We continued to support our projects in Ghana, developed new partnerships with projects in Kenya and Mexico, and carried out advocacy and education in the UK and Europe.

Ghana

In 2015, Climate Stewards continued to support our partner A Rocha Ghana to manage small-scale tree planting projects in central and northern Ghana. All trees are indigenous species, and include mahogany, kapok, dawadawa and ebony. Ten of the fifteen sites are at schools (and one university) within 50km of Kumasi in central Ghana. The majority of trees at these sites were planted in 2007 and 2008, with smaller numbers planted in subsequent years on most sites. Most of the sites have now reached the stage where the canopy has closed and weeding is not required.

In 2015, Climate Stewards funded the weeding of 10 hectares of indigenous trees at Nyahini and Nsutaman Secondary Schools near Kumasi, which had been planted in 2014. In addition, we continued to fund the ten Site Co-ordinators who play a crucial role in training and supporting farmers and school students in managing the trees.



Kumasi High School's plantation, 2015



Beekeeping training, Nyanahin Secondary School, 2015

During 2015, Climate Stewards continued to fund School Environment Clubs at six of the school sites. Students learnt to care for the young trees and used the sites as outdoor classrooms to learn about indigenous tree species and environmental sustainability.

Over the past three years, Climate Stewards has funded income-generating schemes at these schools, including beekeeping, fishponds and rearing small animals, as a reward for setting aside the land permanently for forestry and the effort of managing it. These schemes provide a sustainable source of income for the school, and the opportunity for students and staff to gain new skills. During 2015 the final school incentive scheme was completed (cages and breeding pairs of cane rats - known locally as grasscutters and extremely valuable for their meat - and rabbits) at Bompata High School.

Climate Stewards is especially proud of its team of site co-ordinators who offer support and advice to farmers on a day-to-day basis. In the south, the site co-ordinators are usually teachers, and are responsible for managing the trees and running school environment clubs. In the north, they are farmers from the community with some basic education. In November 2015, Climate Stewards funded a training workshop for school site co-ordinators. This provided an opportunity for shared learning as they discussed issues such as tree health and growth, weeding and management, fire prevention, and new resources and ideas for teaching and learning in school clubs. The workshop was also an opportunity for A Rocha Ghana to continue preparing co-ordinators for the hand-over of sites to schools in 2017.

Climate Stewards continued to fund the management of five sites around Larabanga and Damongo in northern Ghana. Because the climate is drier, trees have grown more slowly and are smaller than on the Kumasi sites, but in many places a canopy has begun to form and new species are arriving. Fire is one of the greatest risks to young trees, and can sweep through sites in minutes, destroying years of hard work. Fire belts of 5 - 10 metres wide were cleared around each site before the dry season, and no fire was reported in 2015. During 2015, 54 farmers who have been caring for Climate Stewards trees on their land were trained in beekeeping and provided with two beehives each, plus protective equipment.

Mexico and Kenya

As the Ghana sites are reaching maturity, and all carbon has been accounted for through payments up to the end of 2014, it was decided to buy accredited offsets from other organisations from January 2015. This means that Climate Stewards can guarantee that the correct tonnage of CO₂e has been purchased to cover all offset donations over the year, in addition to offering ongoing support to the Ghana project until handover in 2017.

Therefore, from January 2015, Climate Stewards bought retired carbon credits from two new partner organisations, Ambio (supporting afforestation, forest restoration and agroforestry with smallholders in Mexico) and Paradigm (working in Kenya and supplying fuel-efficient cookstoves, water filters and solar lights at subsidised prices). The amount of credits bought was equivalent to the number of tonnes of CO₂e offset through the carbon calculator and donations. Ambio supplied 2,756 tonnes of CO₂e, and Paradigm supplied 1,000 tonnes of CO₂e. These offsets are accredited with Plan Vivo and Gold Standard respectively.

UK and Europe



Caroline speaking at COP21, December 2015

During 2015, Climate Stewards took an active role in advocacy about climate change, focusing in particular on the run-up to the Paris COP in December 2015. In November, Climate Stewards Director Caroline Pomeroy cycled from Wells Cathedral in Somerset to Paris as part of the 'Pilgrimage to Paris' and took part in various talks and events around the COP. Not only was it important to add Climate Stewards' voice to the global concerns about climate change, but it provided a useful opportunity to promote Climate Stewards to a new international audience and develop relationships with other NGOs, particularly in the USA.

2015 also saw strengthening of our relationships with partner organisations in the Netherlands and Switzerland, and further development of our website and resources.

Plans for 2016

Climate Stewards will continue to support our existing sites in Ghana, clearing firebreaks, supporting the network of site co-ordinators and preparing them for the handover of responsibility for sites in 2017, as well as supporting school environment clubs.

We are currently investigating the feasibility of a 'Climate Stewards Seal of Approval' which would allow us to support small-scale carbon mitigation projects run by Christian partners in the developing world. Our intention is to start the first pilot project in early 2017, and begin up to three new partnerships by 2018. When the carbon sales from these projects come on stream, we will decrease our support for Ambio and Paradigm.

We will continue to advocate for climate justice, and provide resources and talks for churches, conferences, organisations and individuals about the causes of climate change, the biblical basis for creation care, and practical steps to cut carbon footprints, in line with our strapline of 'Reduce what you can; offset the rest.'