

**TREES OF HOPE** (*Changing lives-A case of Mr S. Banda of Dowa district in central Malawi*)



Sekanakoni Banda (58), a household head of eight (8) people in a rural district of Dowa in central Malawi has grown trusting rain-fed subsistence farming as a livelihood with the surrounding other natural resources particularly forest-based, providing his other basic needs. Over the



past decades, Banda progressively observed that this business as usual approach to life became unreliable as he often found himself wanting in the face of little, unreliable rainfall, declining soil fertility, increased soil erosion, new crop pests, all culminating in reduced crop yields seriously threatening his household's food security. On the other hand, forests had disappeared in his neighbourhood under pressure from demand for fuelwood, construction materials (poles and timber) and opening new gardens in effort to increase food supply by increasing land under cultivation. Access to tree-based and other forest products like mushrooms, honey, medicines, which used to be taken for granted over the years, progressively became issues to contend with daily. The once-trusted livelihood could no longer hold leaving Sekanakoni Banda fighting for survival and trying to come to terms with the turn of events.



Courtesy of Trees of Hope project, coordinated by the Clinton Foundation through its Clinton Development Initiative in Malawi to which Mr Banda has been a member since 2008, he now understands that



climate change is behind the loss of his livelihood. Through the project, Mr Banda is a proud owner of about five (5) hectares of woodlot from which he accesses poles and fuelwood for his household such that his ageing wife no longer covers long distances in search of firewood. He also sells some to community members to earn some income for his household and to support his grandchildren in school. The woodlot under the project has also enabled him to utilize land which would have otherwise been idle and the trees help reduce soil erosion and run off in his other fields downstream conserving soils in the process. Mr Banda has also accumulated about 800 tons of carbon credits which will potentially earn his household over USD 3000 when sold on the carbon market, the money he says will use to buy iron sheets and extra goats among other uses. Mr Banda is determined to continue with the project and is proud that his farm is among the shining legacy of Trees of Hope project in Dowa district.

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*Mr Banda in his field prior to planting (top left), same field 2 years later (top right) same field 3 years later (bottom left), Mr Banda, squatting with President Clinton during the President's visit to his farm*