

MICHAEL JACKSON ORCHARD JULY 2021 REPORT

The Michael Jackson Legacy Ngolowindo Orchard was established to help children at Glad Tidings Orphan Care (GTOC) to supplement nutritional needs for the children at the centre. Furthermore, it was established to help children at the neighbouring Ngolowindo Primary School as a platform to learn and see how things grow and the nutritional values that the fruits provide. Starfish employ a gardener to care for the orchard and welcome the children and staff. Some fruits in Malawi are seasonal and this makes it difficult for households to buy in the markets, which is reflected in the costs to purchase and they can become unaffordable for many.



In the orchard there are different trees that are growing well as they are native to the local community like mangoes, guavas and the granadilla vines. However, guavas and mangoes take a bit of time to bear fruit depending upon the climate and the type of trees planted.

In the last report, we anticipated that the guava trees would produce enough fruit for the children at Glad Tidings. We are glad to report that our guavas have now started bearing fruit. The orchard has a huge population of guavas, more than any other fruit trees we have. Guavas grow locally requiring minimum care for them to do well.

New guava fruits

CHALLENGES

Periodically, the perimeter has to be fixed as the bamboo fencing can rot and breakdown. This is particularly important as there are many goats roaming around that could eat the fruits. Furthermore, excess rain this year caused some of the granadilla vines to rot from the roots.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, there have not been educational activities, as all extra curricular activities were banned. Children at Ngolowindo Primary who usually use the orchard as their learning space when it comes to orchard management and observing how various fruit trees grow were no longer able to visit. Currently, now schools have re-opened, they are catching up with their core curriculum work so no visits have been planned.

QUOTE FROM TEACHER MCJOHNSON FOR ORCHARD REPORT

Since reopening schools from Covid 19 breaks, Ngolowindo School has not been at the orchard as there have been restrictions on many activities including extracurricular projects and clubs.

Mr McJohnson, a teacher says, 'We are planning to start visiting the Michael Jackson Orchard once the bans are lifted. However, our future plans are to help with planting of different fruit trees in the areas where there are gaps more especially where Moringa trees have failed to survive.'

Standards 6 and 7 will be the first classes to resume involvement with the orchard. Standards 4 to 8 have lessons that are related to the activities carried out in the orchard making it become a great learning resource field. Subjects like agriculture, primary science, life skills and expressive arts have specific areas that cover issues to do with rearing of crops, planting of fruit trees and constructing of the fence.



Granadilla Section

From the onset of the orchard, the main reason for its establishment is to continually provide a valuable food resource for the Glad Tidings centre. The granadilla section has been producing a good number of fruit that have been useful to children at the GTOC nursery school.

However, we have had heavy rain from the December 2020 to April 2021 season. This has caused some of the granadilla vines to die due to excess water. We are, therefore, developing new granadilla trees to increase the population.

We are now patiently waiting for our grafted mango trees to start flowering, hopefully this year. Grafting can take a few years to bear fruit in comparison to non-grafted trees. Overall, it remains a joy that the orchard is bearing more fruit in its seasons year by year.