

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

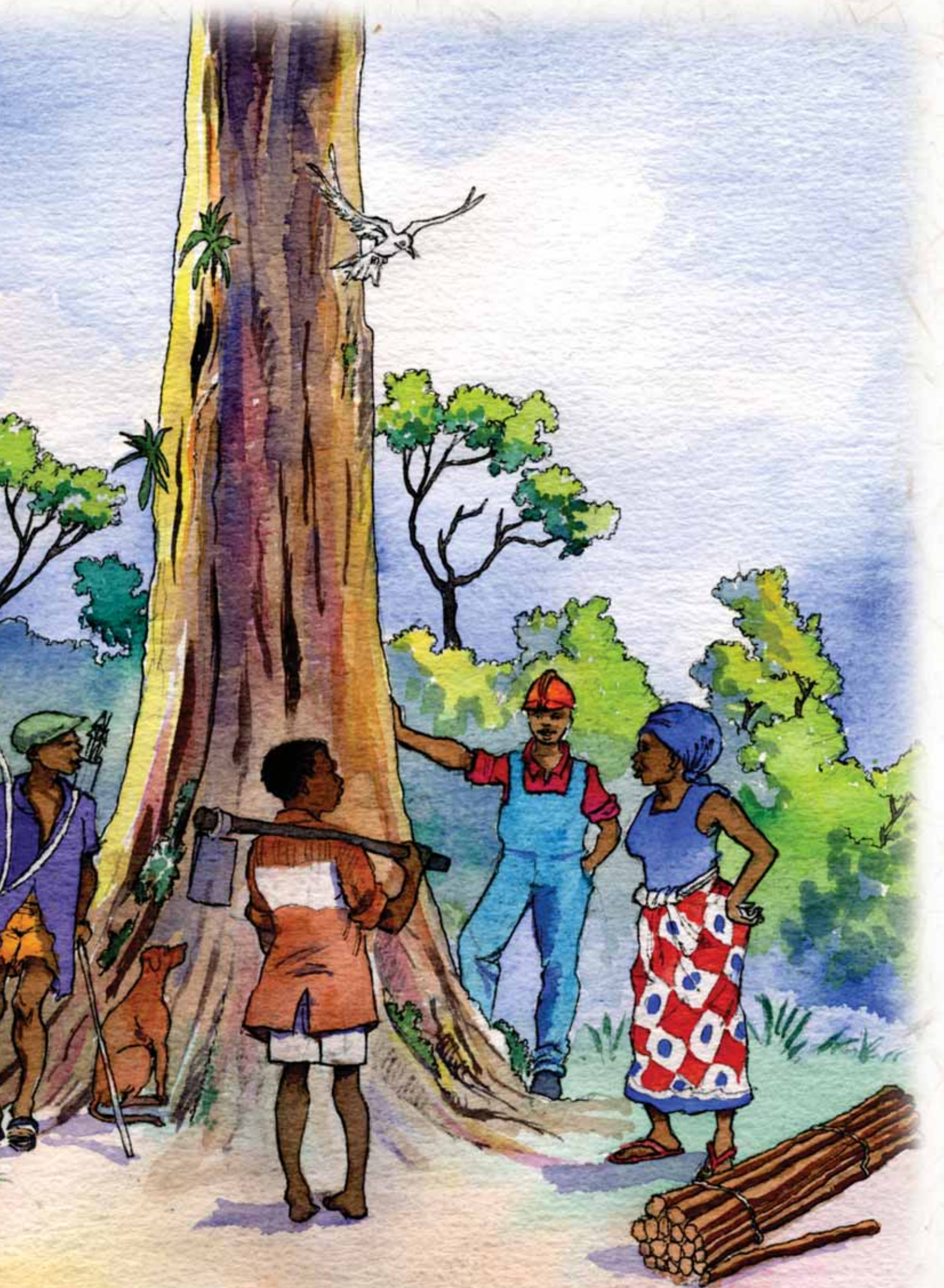
What can be done? The solutions are not simple. One important factor is co-operation. There is no point one group conserving the forest, while it is destroyed from the other side by another. All the people who rely on the forest, who need the forest to live, must come together and decide. If rights are shared fairly, different groups of forest users may be able to negotiate the uses of their forest for long-term sustainability, fuel wood, long term shade, long term soil production, long term fruit and building materials. Long term forest equals long term profit!

Of course people can only protect their forest resources if they have the right to use it, legally and communally. One project provides each household with 100 acres of forest. They have the rights to all assets in that forest, but 90 acres of the land must remain forested. This has led to incredible innovation in resource use. The 10 acres of cleared land allows the family to grow food plants and animals.

THE POLITICAL TREE

The colonisers and missionaries who came to Africa hundreds of years ago wrote that they could never get real authority in the lands they wished to dominate. Whenever a big local issue came up, they complained, everyone would gather to discuss it in a council, under a tree. Under the palaver tree, issues are freely debated and important decisions concerning the community are taken. People may speak for themselves, or they may choose to be represented by a griot (a poet, storyteller and traditional singer), or other spokesman. The elders try to reach a consensus. In some places, women actively take part in the decision-making. In others, they settle for advising their menfolk outside the assemblies. Nelson Mandela speaks of how he was influenced by these traditional systems of decision-making. In Mali, the palaver system has been worked into official government ways of doing things.





GOOD WOOD

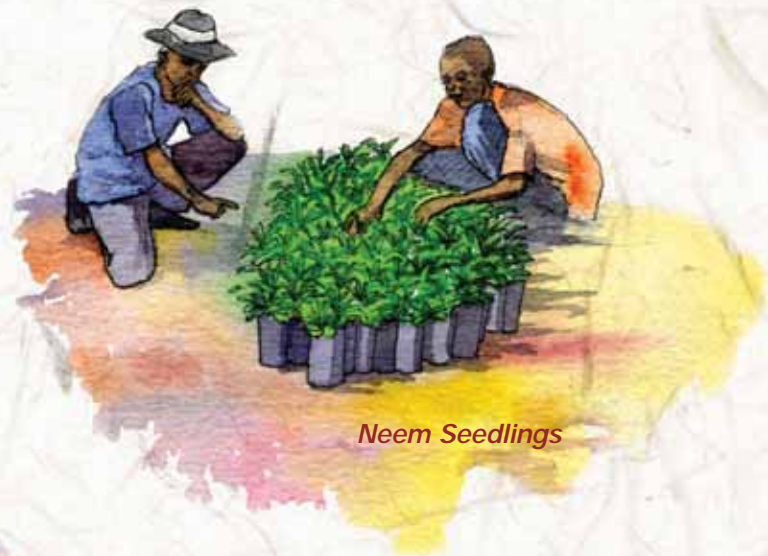


Throughout Africa, brilliant craftsmen and women and artists carve gorgeous ornaments, household utensils, drums, masks, and weapons. When sold, carving makes wood into money, and therefore food, medicine, warmth and all the other things money can buy. Wood carving is a very important industry. In Kenya, 60,000 people carve, producing products

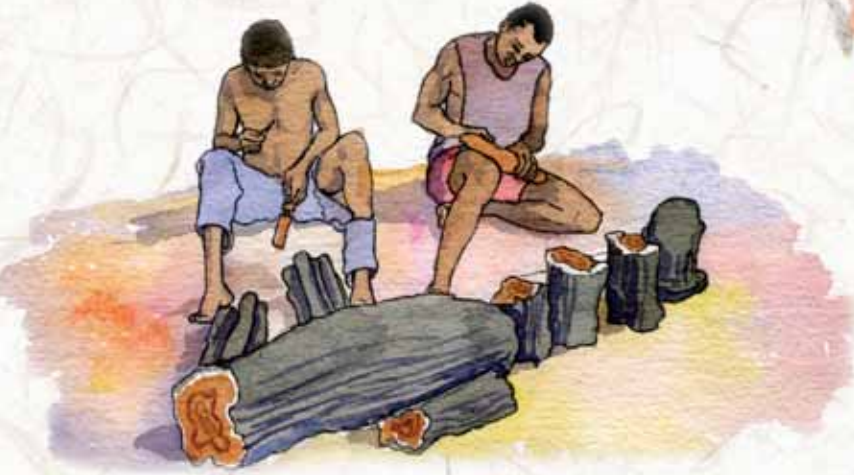
which bring in an income of US \$20 million each year. To increase the value of wood, nothing is better than carving, but to be sure of on-going success, carvers need to protect the resource upon which they depend.



The Good Woods project in Kenya has changed a situation in which the forest was being lost. Wild hardwoods like Ebony and Mahogany (*muhuhu*) growing in the coastal forests of East Africa, were starting to suffer from over-exploitation for carving to sell to tourists. However, many tourists who travel to see Africa's wildlife and animals feel strongly about the environment. They would not wish to buy carvings that might be partly responsible for the destruction of a natural forest. Now, they have a choice, because some carvers have switched to carving wood from fast-growing trees that can be grown on farms. The trees provide farmers with useful resources and shelter and protect their soil.



Neem Seedlings



If you grow trees on farms, instead of harvesting them from the wild, you can be sure of a sustainable supply. Now, carvings made of mango, neem and jacaranda are becoming more popular, and because of an advertising campaign on the aeroplanes, more and more tourists coming to Kenya know that it is better to buy carvings from farm-grown trees. By buying carvings with a Forest Stewardship Council certificate, which traces the wood from the farm to carving workshop to the stall where it is sold, they can be sure that their new carving is forest-friendly. They may even pay more for that knowledge! Many other forest products, like charcoal and commercial timber, are now being certified in this way, as buyers take responsibility for the impacts of their purchases.

Another important way to look after forests is to reduce the amount of wood needed for cooking by using efficient stoves and alternative cooking methods. These are described in the Energy chapter.

i ACTION SHEETS - 47: MANAGING FOREST RESOURCES, 48: FOREST PRODUCT CERTIFICATION, 51: NEEM, 35: AGROFORESTRY