

MAURITIUS/ MADAGASCAR

Seeds of hope
for poor
communities



Flora Marketing has partnerships with communities throughout Africa

Blooming Business: Flora Marketing Co.

Most conservation organizations have come round to the view that there is no future for tropical forests outside heavily protected areas, unless local people get a direct benefit from their utilization. Flora Marketing Co. was set up to ensure they get that benefit. The company encourages poor communities in the tropics to set up seed banks for traditional plant varieties. Some of these sustainably harvested seeds are sent to Flora Marketing's Mauritius headquarters for export to buyers in some 30 countries. The rest are used to reforest degraded land, helping to ensure a future income. The company's founder, Vinah Ganoo, was first inspired to help conserve the rainforest while on a visit with her father to Madagascar, where she discovered "a goldmine of palms, forest species, succulents and aquatic plants" – a goldmine that was fast being depleted. The company has since formed partnerships with communities in other African and South American countries. The income from seed sales now benefits some 2,500 employees around the world, many of them women with no alternative livelihood. Flora Marketing's policy is that for every dozen seeds harvested, at least four are replanted in the natural habitat. It claims by this means to have planted 20 million seeds since 1994.