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Kamatira Community Forest Restoration by Women in West Pokot, Kenya

About Kamatira

- The 34,380-hectare Kamatira forest is part of the Cherangani forest ecosystem and is a major biodiversity hotspot in West Pokot, home to several critically endangered species like the African crowned eagle, red-chested owlet.
- It serves as a vital water catchment and source of medicine, directly supporting the livelihoods of the indigenous Pokot agropastoralists.
- The forest faces severe and accelerating deforestation due to large-scale logging, which degrades its essential ecosystem services like climate regulation and pollination.
- The Pokot community is patriarchal, and despite women's critical reliance on and contributions to the forest, their work in resource management and governance is largely unrecognised.
- Losing the forest directly harms essential ecosystem services vital for the community's well-being, like seed dispersal, climate regulation, and human health.



Reasons for Restoration: *The Pokot community's connection to Kamatira*

- **Livelihoods:** Forest provides water, food, fuel, and herbal medicine.
- **Food Security:** Source of wild fruits, vegetables, and pollination services.
- **Traditional Knowledge:** Women hold generational knowledge of herbs, weaving, and agroforestry.
- **Cultural Values:** Forest is sacred, central to Pokot identity.



Threats and Challenges

- The loss of traditional knowledge due to urbanisation and prioritisation of Western ideals, along with climate change, threatens indigenous crops and traditional farming practices.
- Land degradation and deforestation directly impact biodiversity and traditional agroforestry systems.
- Market forces promote monocultures over indigenous crops, while gender inequality continues to exclude women from conservation decision-making despite their traditional knowledge.



During Restoration: *Self-strengthening and determination*

- Restoration activities were led by Pastoral Communities Empowerment Programme (PACEP).
- 25 women's groups were mobilised to plant indigenous tree seedlings in Kamatira across 5 acres.
- Nurseries were established with both indigenous and exotic tree species, along with medicinal herbs, beekeeping, and poultry to support eco-tourism and food security.
- A seed bank was created to preserve vital indigenous plants, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) was shared through 44 training sessions.
- Women developed and adopted energy-saving stoves (Jikos and Chepkube), reducing firewood use and improving health.
- Over 3,300 saplings were planted, transforming the community into active stewards of their biodiversity and encouraging long-term sustainable practices.
- Training sessions enhanced women's leadership, enabling them to successfully advocate for gender-responsive climate policies, such as the West Pokot Climate Change Regulation and Action Plan.

Sustaining Restoration: *Strengthening women and youth leadership*

- Strengthening women's leadership and decision-making in community-led governance structures like Community Forest Associations (CFAs).
- Conduct intergenerational dialogues to transfer TEK to the youth to engage them and to ensure TEK on biodiversity, sustainable land use and conservation practices are preserved.
- Adoption of traditional innovations like *mandalas* to collect water and planting drought resistance traditional food systems like millet.
- Using subsidies and recognition programs to encourage community-wide participation and positive behaviour change.



Recommendations

- Acceptance and assimilation of traditional knowledge systems and blending Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) with modern science.
- Strengthen Community Forest Associations (CFAs) structures and capacities to enhance women's leadership in decision-making.
- Support equitable and long-term gender-responsive conservation and restoration policies.
- Provide long-term funding and capacity building.
- Encourage knowledge exchange visits and youth engagement.



Read the full story by Pastoral Communities Empowerment Programme (PACEP)

For further information:

Rubina Pradhan, Coordinator,
Restore Her Rights Initiative.
rubina.pradhan@women4biodiversity.org

More information available at:
www.women4biodiversity.org

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