

PROPOSAL: CONSERVING AND PROTECTING THE MAU INDIGENOUS FOREST FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

ORGANIZATION: *Friends of Mau Watershed (FOMAWA)*

PROJECT NAME: ***GROWING TREES WITH COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS AND FARMS AROUND MAU***

Introduction

The Mau Forest is a critical ecological treasure, playing a central role in biodiversity preservation, water catchment, and climate stabilization in Kenya. However, it has faced decades of degradation due to deforestation, illegal logging, and unsustainable exploitation.

The degradation of the Mau Forest has had catastrophic environmental, economic, and social consequences:

- **Water Scarcity:** *Significant depletion of water levels in rivers such as the Ndarugu, crucial for agriculture and community livelihoods.*
- **Climate Instability:** *Unpredictable rainfall patterns and increased vulnerability to climate change.*
- **Biodiversity Loss:** *Encroachment and logging have devastated wildlife habitats, endangering species and ecosystems.*
- **Community Struggles:** *Local populations dependent on forest resources face diminishing opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.*

FOMAWA's Two Decades of Action

FOMAWA has emerged as a key player in mitigating these challenges. By implementing community-driven, sustainable forestry initiatives, the organization has made remarkable strides:

1. School-Based Tree Planting Programs:

- Over 184 schools engaged, resulting in Over 85,654 trees planted.
- Reached approximately 20,000 parents and students, fostering a new generation of environmental stewards.

2. Community Outreach and Capacity Building:

- Conducted over 300 workshops, averaging 70 participants per session.
- Trained over 10,000 households and over 5,000 farmers in sustainable forestry practices. Through these initiative, the tree population has increased in the region.

Notable Evidence

Increased Water Levels: The Ndarugu River in Njoro, which had faced critical depletion in the early 2000s, has shown a marked increase in water levels. This significant recovery underscores the positive impact of conservation efforts in the Mau Forest.

Stabilized Rainfall Patterns: Regional rainfall patterns have become more predictable, indicating tangible progress in mitigating the effects of climate change through sustained conservation initiatives.

Reduction in Illegal Resource Extraction: The number of motorbikes and bicycles transporting charcoal and timber from the forest has significantly decreased. This reflects a shift in community behaviors and the success of advocacy and education programs aimed at reducing illegal forest exploitation.

Policy Impact – Logging Ban: In 2018, following strong advocacy by FOMAWA and other conservation organizations, the Kenyan government implemented a logging ban to curb the overharvesting of trees and tackle corruption within forest management. This decisive action has dramatically reduced deforestation rates and safeguarded indigenous forest resources.

Increased Forest Cover: Recent studies reveal a significant increase in forest cover within Nakuru County, now nearing 8%. This achievement highlights the effectiveness of community-driven reforestation campaigns and sustainable forestry practices championed by FOMAWA.

Industry Transition to Sustainable Practices: Prominent industries, including Menengai, Comply, Prime Ply, Timsales, KTDA, and various private tea factories, have shifted from relying on government forests to sourcing raw materials from local farmers cultivating woodlots. This transformation exemplifies the success of FOMAWA's *"Growing Trees with Communities in Schools and on Farms around Mau"* program. By empowering farmers to establish woodlots, this initiative has alleviated pressure on government forests, contributed to forest protection and preservation, and bolstered community livelihoods.

Call to Action

While these achievements are commendable, much work remains. FOMAWA cannot achieve its mission alone. We invite donors, partners, and well-wishers to join hands in scaling up our efforts. Your contributions will support:

- 1. Expanding Tree Planting Initiatives:** Enabling schools and communities to plant thousands of trees annually.
- 2. Community Training Programs:** Equipping local populations with skills for high-yield, sustainable forestry, resulting in improving their livelihoods.
- 3. Monitoring and Maintenance:** Ensuring long-term survival and growth of tree plantations.
- 4. Educational Outreach:** Cultivating a deeper appreciation for environmental conservation. This initiative will transform the mindset of local communities and inspire a deep commitment to environmental conservation.

Conclusion

Protecting the Mau Forest is not just about safeguarding the environment; it is about securing the livelihoods of communities and ensuring the survival of future generations. By partnering with FOMAWA, you are investing in a sustainable future. Every tree planted is a step toward restoring ecological balance, mitigating climate change, and improving lives.

Let us work together to preserve this irreplaceable natural resource. Join FOMAWA today in conserving the Mau Forest and contributing to a greener, healthier world.

For inquiries and contributions, please contact:

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Together, we can make a difference.

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