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[Home](#) > [Counties](#) > 10,000 tree seedlings planted to save the Mukogodo forest

10,000 Tree Seedlings Planted To Save The Mukogodo Forest



Over 10,000 tree seedlings were planted at Mukogodo forest in Laikipia County, in an effort to conserve the indigenous ecosystem that is the mainstay of thousands of pastoral communities and wildlife in three neighbouring counties of Samburu, Laikipia and Isiolo.

The tree planting exercise that was organized by the Laikipia Conservancies Association (LCA) in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Kenya Forest Services (KFS), Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) and the Laikipia County Government attracted hundreds of conservation enthusiasts who first participated in a 10-kilometer walk dubbed, 'walk wild' inside the forest in a bid to raise its conservation awareness.

Mukogodo Community Forest Association (CFA) chairman Wilfred Mejooli said that the walk was meant to bring together stakeholders to sensitize them on the importance of a fragile dry land forest and what it means to communities that live around it.

The over 30,000 hectares forest lies along the border of Samburu and Isiolo counties and Laikipia is the mainstay of pastoralist communities in the three counties, but has lately been under threat owing to overgrazing occasioned by the prevailing dry weather situation in the area.

"We are mobilizing more stakeholders on board to participate in the protection and conservation of the forest, in order to create a functioning ecosystem that supports biodiversity," Mejooli said.

LCA Chairman Kip ole Polos noted that the forest was an integral water tower for the area and hence the need for all stakeholders and partners in conservation to work together in its restoration efforts.

"Mukogodo forest embodies the near perfect co-existence between wildlife, livestock and the communities surrounding it, hence the importance of protecting and preserving this important water tower which is a source of livelihood for local communities and wildlife," Ole Polos said.

One of the partners in conserving the forest, FAO with the local CFA has undertaken previous restorative interventions, particularly through its "Restoration of Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) of Kenya, under the Bio-enterprise Development and other Incentives" funded by the Global Environmental Facility under The Restoration Initiative(TRI).

"This activity is part of The Restoration Initiative that is being implemented in 10 counties in the country," FAO representative Meshack Muga said.

Regional forest conservator Andrew Soi said that KFS was keen on conserving the forest and protecting it from encroachers,' especially illegal herders from neighbouring counties and announced that the number of forest guards would be increased.

It is estimated that the total value of Mukogodo ecosystem is Sh9.1 billion, providing a whole range of services that anchor the local livelihoods and the wider economy, which is driven by honey production, livestock keeping, ecotourism, conservation, and sand collection. It is however under threat due to vegetation loss due to land degradation.

Laikipia North Deputy County Commissioner Albert Mwaringa who graced the function warned that illegal invaders of the forest would not be tolerated by the government.

"We are sounding a warning to all the illegal herders inside the forest that their time is up and security personnel deployed to flush them out," Mwaringa said.

