

An aerial photograph of a vast, dense green forest stretching to the horizon under a clear sky. The text is centered over the forest.

Restore
OUR FORESTS
For
OUR FUTURE

Acknowledgement

Illustrations by Fred Odhiambo



**Masai
Mau Forest
Council
of Elders**



USAID | KENYA
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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Introduction



Our environment keeps us alive. We depend on it for food, water and the weather cycles that support economic activities. Without these, we simply would not be.

While it is a fact that development and simply staying alive means utilising natural resources, we must remember that these resources are not easily renewable. At times, they are not renewable at all.

The good news is that if we respect our environment, if we utilise it for socio-economic development in a sustainable manner, then it too will continue to sustain us.

Quite simply: if we kill our environment, we too will meet a hungry and thirsty end; but, if we feed it, it will feed us.

I HAVE TO CUT DOWN
MORE TREES FOR CHARCOAL
AND MAKE WAY FOR FARMS...

IS THIS SUSTAINABLE?
NO, IT IS NOT AND WE CAN ALREADY
SEE WHY!!



Degradation




In Kenya today, we are experiencing the results of destroying our environment.

The biggest issue affecting us is the alarming depletion of our forest cover, most notably in the Mau complex.

Hundreds of thousands of trees have been cut down for charcoal and to make way for farms. People need charcoal for cooking and heat. They also need to grow food to eat and sell to cater for other requirements. However, we must ask ourselves; is this sustainable?

No, it is not and we can already see why.



I HOPE AND PRAY
THAT WE SHALL HAVE
ENOUGH RAINFALL....

WE HAD LESS RAINFALL
AND OUR CROPS HAVE
FAILED!



If we cut down trees, there is less rainfall in the whole country and this affects all of us.

Areas that usually experience high rainfall receive less and this leads to problems such as:

- Reduced crop harvests
- Increased temperatures, which lead to more cases of diseases such as malaria since mosquitoes can now survive in the higher temperatures.

Areas that usually experience low rainfall receive little or none and this leads to problems such as:

- Severe drought and no crop harvests,
- Malnutrition, hunger and death,
- Reduced enrolment in schools,
- Communities without the energy to be productive.



Water that feeds rivers is inadequate, which in turn means rivers dry up or have inadequate water to:

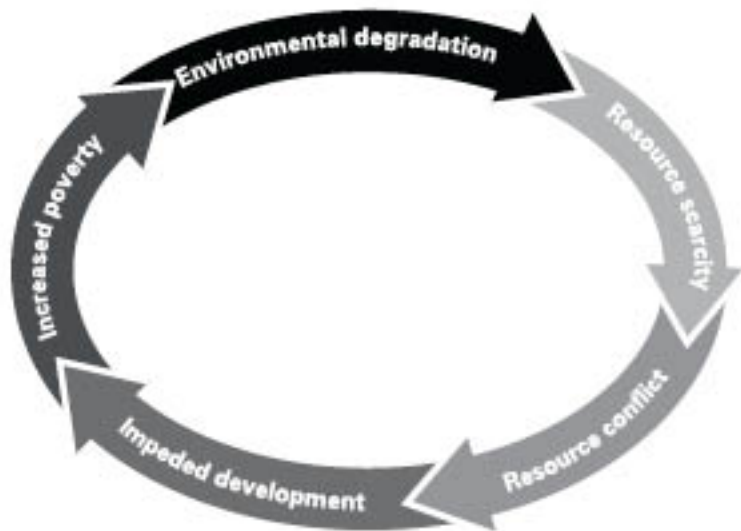
- Cater for the needs of people and livestock and this leads to:
 - Misplaced inter-ethnic hatred,
 - Inter-ethnic conflict,
 - Destroyed infrastructure,
 - Increased poverty.
- Feed lakes, which results in lakes drying up, therefore:
 - There is not enough water for the towns they support,
 - People no longer have fish for food or for sale,
 - Wild animals and birds die or migrate so revenue from tourism is lost (This also applies to rivers).

- Feed dams, which results in low water levels, therefore:
 - There is not enough water for domestic and industrial use,
 - There is not enough water for hydro-electric power generation,
 - The cost of electricity goes up,
 - The cost of goods and services go up,
 - The cost of living goes up,
 - Water rationing disrupts people's lives,
 - Power rationing disrupts people's lives.



When all these things happen, in one way or another, we all end up with higher household bills, less money, fewer opportunities and more frustration.

In short, we all lose.



We must understand this, just as we must understand that it is not too late.



Conservation



Conserving the environment while still utilising the resources it provides is actually not difficult to do. Especially once we realise it is truly a matter of life and death.

There are various ways to and reasons why we must incorporate environmental conservation in our interaction with nature.

Just as it took a while for us to experience the consequences of destruction, it will take some time to witness some of the benefits of conservation. This must not stop or discourage us because we are not only embracing conservation for what is left of our lives, but for our children, their children and future generations to come.





WE NOW HAVE ENOUGH
WATER AND FOOD

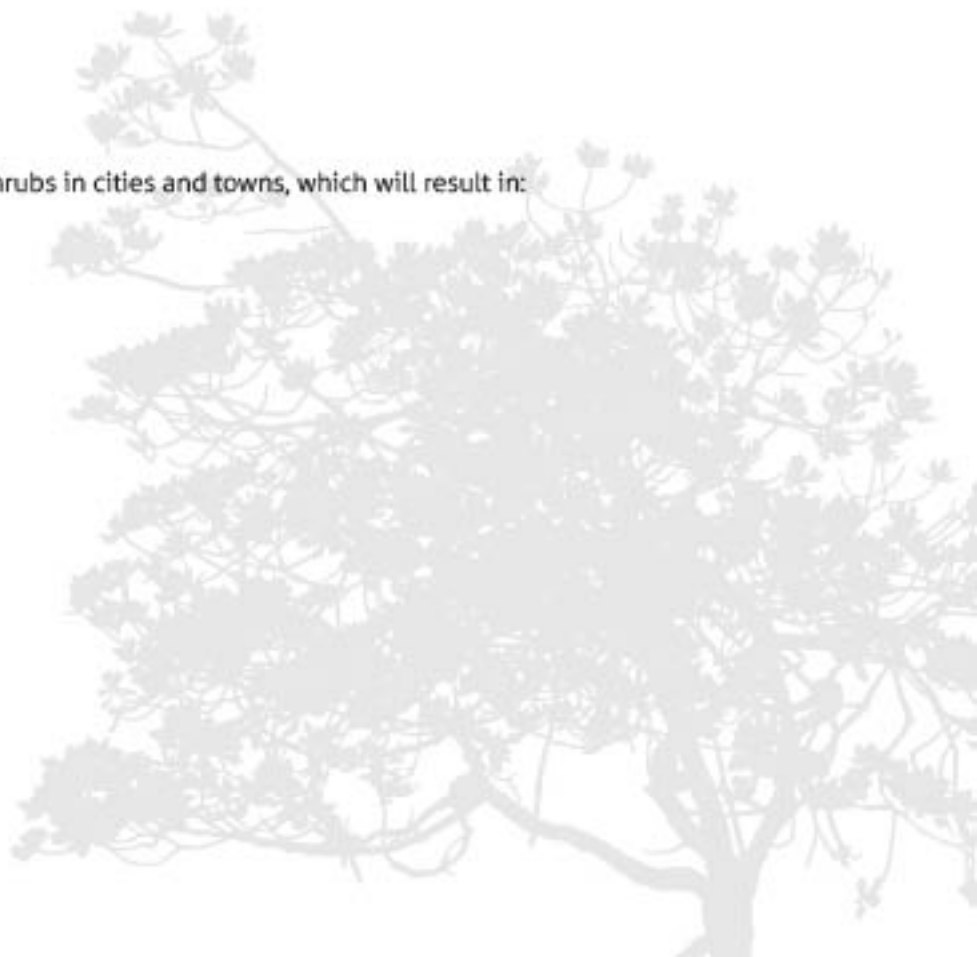
To conserve the environment we can plant indigenous trees in forest areas where they have been cut down on a large scale. This will result in:

- More rainfall,
- More food and water,
- Higher levels of hydro-electricity production,
- Lower costs of living,
- Revenue from tourism for development projects,
- Well defined weather seasons for better planning,
- Less scorching heat,
- General well-being.



We can also plant suitable trees and shrubs in cities and towns, which will result in:

- More filtered (cleaner) air,
- Less dust,
- Fewer cases of chest problems,
- Greener and more beautiful cities,
- General well-being.





We can protect and conserve forests, springs and wetlands, which will result in:

- More birds, butterflies and other insects, which help pollinate plants so they can bear fruit,
- More species of birds and wild animals, which both local and foreign tourists can pay to see. This money can directly benefit communities,
- Beautiful scenery that residents can relax and enjoy,
- Rediscovery and discovery of herbs, leaves and bark with medicinal value. These can even be sold to pharmaceutical companies, with proceeds going to community projects.



There are several other ways we can conserve our environment. What ways can you think of?

Conclusion



Let us all make the decision to conserve.

Let us make the choice to live.

Let us understand that the environment will treat us exactly how we treat it.

If we use, abuse and strip it bare, it will slowly turn to desert and pay us back with nothing but dust and emptiness.

On the other hand, if we embrace sustainable development and utilise natural resources wisely, the environment will be replenished and continue to provide us with what we require to stay alive.

Take a stand today.

Let Kenya Live!

LET US ALL MAKE THE DECISION TO
CONSERVE. LET US MAKE THE CHOICE TO LIVE.
LET US UNDERSTAND THAT THE ENVIRONMENT WILL
TREAT US EXACTLY HOW WE TREAT IT.



Self-assessment section

In your own words, frankly answer these questions:

Do you think it is important to leave forest areas and replant trees? _____

Why? _____

Do you think people moving out of forest areas will suffer? _____

How? _____

How can we all help people who have moved out of forest areas start new lives?

Do you know how your community can utilise natural resources in your area in a sustainable manner?

Do you choose to leave a healthy environment for future generations? _____

What is your personal promise? _____

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