

Since 1993, Global GreenGrants Fund has been one of the leading organizations in the world supporting grassroots-led efforts to protect the planet and the rights of people. Together with our diverse community of people on the frontlines and our supporters, we've impacted the lives of millions of people. We have a specific program on Women's Environmental Action and direct almost 70 percent of our budget to women working on solutions to environmental challenges. Below you will find three stories directly related to the Gender Action Plan -- the stories of heroic women restoring forests and "kitchen gardens," fighting climate change, and using rainwater harvesting to bring clean water to their communities.

**1) Reforestation and the Power of Exchange in Kenya's Rift Valley. Authors: Lucy Mullenkei, Executive Director, Indigenous Information Network**



The Mau Forest in the Kenyan Rift Valley is the largest water catchment area in the country and the largest indigenous montane forest in East Africa. Approximately 10 million people, several wildlife species, and livestock depend on the rivers fed by the forest complex. However, human activity, including agriculture, logging, and tree clearing for settlements, has reduced the Mau Forest to a quarter of what it once was. This degradation has disrupted the forest's role in storing and distributing water, leading to water shortages, competition for water between household and livestock use, and loss of local livelihoods. The Enkutuk Entim community forest association in Narok County, which is made up of 24 forest-user groups primarily comprised of indigenous women, is one organization that is playing a critical role in restoring the Mau Forest, protecting biodiversity, and mitigating the water shortage. With support from the Indigenous Information Network (IIN) and the Kenya Forest Working Group (KFWG), local women are preparing tree nurseries and "kitchen gardens" using traditional seeds and growing practices. They are selling these tree seedlings to local farmers and the Kenyan government as part of the reforestation efforts. To date, almost every woman has sold enough seedlings to restore over 10,000 hectares of the Mau Forest. This work has improved food security, provided a critical source of income for women and their families, increased the number of children attending school because families can now cover related expenses, improved the health of family members, and strengthened women's confidence to engage in decision making in their communities.

To further strengthen the capacity of local indigenous women, IIN has facilitated exchanges between women from West Pokot and women from Narok County, who have lost their livelihoods as pastoralists due to unpredictable weather patterns and loss of land to large-scale agriculture. The goal is for these women to share options for alternative livelihoods. For instance, the women have shared how they plant kitchen gardens using traditional seeds, as well as collect wild fruits and medicinal herbs from the forest and replant them to ensure they are not lost as the forest is destroyed. They have also exchanged lessons about how to adapt to climate change using both traditional and modern technology. As many women in these communities are not able to read or write, sharing knowledge in person is the most effective means to deepen and expand their knowledge about environmental protection.

**2) Pari Women's Development Association: Protecting Communities and Addressing Climate Change through Mangrove Restoration Author: Julie Dugdale, freelance journalist**



Mangroves are an invaluable part of Papua New Guinea's coastal communities and marine ecosystems. The carefully evolved root system of a mangrove forest provides a habitat for fish and wildlife that support local livelihoods, like those in Papua New Guinea's Pari village. Mangroves also play a critical role in protecting communities from the harmful effects of climate change, like flooding from rising sea levels, which threaten both the balanced ecosystem and traditional ways of life in coastal villages. The problem? These forests, so essential in mitigating and adapting to the havoc wreaked by climate change, are being over-harvested and depleted for firewood and construction. The consequences of this decimation are dire not only for the health of the local economy and survival of coastal villages as fish disappear from the ravaged mangrove areas, but also for the bigger picture: Mangroves store two to four times more carbon than tropical rainforests; thus, when they are cut down, they release dangerous amounts of greenhouse gases. It's a daunting statistic—but reversible thanks to the efforts of groups like the Pari Women's Development Association (PWDA).

This coalition of women—the only women's group that belongs to Papua New Guinea's Eco-Forestry Forum— was formed in 2003 to pursue social and environmental justice in

Pari village through rehabilitation efforts that include community training, education, forest protection, and mangrove reforestation. With funding from Global Greengrants, PWDA mobilized hundreds of women, men, and children to restore an area of mangrove forest along the coast and launch an awareness campaign about the importance of mangroves in protecting the community and ecosystem from dangerously high sea levels due to climate change. The two grants allowed the women to purchase over 500 mangrove seedlings, receive training on which species of mangroves thrive in different zones, and establish a monitoring system to ensure the health and sustainability of the mangrove plantations. PWDA's efforts have earned the women local and regional recognition as environmental leaders. Climate change is jeopardizing an entire way of life, and the women of PWDA have identified the mangrove as a natural resource critical to preserving their homes and livelihoods. "Women are standing up for the mangroves we have neglected for so long," said Konio Henao, former acting president of PWDA. "We want to transform our environment, protect ourselves from climate change, and develop our livelihoods for a better, beautiful future."

### 3)Uganda Women's Water Initiative – Video: 60 seconds -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xamEBQSnY58>



Around the world, 700 million people live without access to something none of us can live without – water. The [Uganda Women's Water Initiative located in Gomba, Uganda](#) has not only improved access to water for their community, but helped keep their kids in school, and aided women to launch sustainable businesses.

Here's how: In Gomba there is one source of water for the community: a borehole located three miles away, filled with contaminated water. Each day, women and children spend hours walking to the borehole, filling their buckets with water that leads to disease. These diseases keep kids out of school and families overwhelmed by hospital bills – and stuck in the cycle of poverty. Knowing that something had to be done, Godliver Businge and Comfort Harja, founders of the Uganda Women's Water Initiative, stepped up to help their community access clean water and prevent disease. Godliver earned her degree in civil engineering, (and was the only woman in her class) and educated women in the community on how to construct biosand filters by layering sand, gravel, and stones of various textures inside containers. When water is poured into the filter, it trickles down through the layers of gravel, sand, and rock, removing 99 percent of bacteria.

The result? School children in Gomba are healthier and are not as susceptible to diarrhea or typhoid, and school absenteeism has reduced by nearly two-thirds. The money that schools used to spend on water and treating children for water-related diseases is now used to buy textbooks and other school supplies. Over 300 women in Gomba have been trained to construct Biosand filters and rainwater harvesting tanks . The women are now using a recent grant from Global Greengrants Fund to build even more Biosand filters and train local women on small business trades, such as soapmaking and biointensive farming.