



NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

**Kenya's Report to the UNCCD on Activities carried out to
mark the Desertification and Drought Day
in Kenya**

**12th - 17th June
2023**

**Venue: St. Pauls Waita Secondary School, Mwingi Central
Sub-County, Kitui County, Kenya**

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Introduction

The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) has been mandated by the Government of Kenya to spearhead the commemoration of the World Desertification and Drought Day (DDD) in Kenya. NEMA is a semi –autonomous government body that domiciled in the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry (MECCF). It is tasked with the responsibility to coordinate and supervise all matters related to the environment. Its core mandate is to ensure that the environment and its inherent resources, including land, are exploited sustainably.

The following are the activities held to mark World Desertification and Drought Day in Kenya.

A. BUILD-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Research survey on status of land ownership by women in Kitui County

A research survey was conducted by the National Environment Management Authority(NEMA). The survey aimed at establishing the status of land ownership by women in Kitui County and its impact on their participation in sustainable land management activities. Findings show that over 71% of women have no secure land ownership (title deeds) in their name. Majority of the remaining 29% of women with the title deeds in their name have either obtained it through inheritance after the death of their spouses(husband) or are single parent households. On joint property ownership, only 35% of the respondents indicated that their spouses have included their names on the land title deeds.



Plate 1: Research Assistants interviewing women respondents at Kisasi, Kitui County

Awareness creation on drivers and effects Desertification

Human activity is to blame for the expansion of area under deserts. The unsustainable extraction of environmental resources such as tree felling for various reasons coupled with incompatible land use practices are the major drivers of deforestation in Kitui. There is urgent need to review and harmonise all policies that relate to environmental protection and align them to focus on participatory environmental action. Enforcement of relevant legislation must be stepped up. This is the message that was passed to residents of Kitui County and the various stakeholders that partnered with NEMA to mark the WDDD.



Plate 2: Raising awareness of awareness on the need to plant an appropriate tree species in ASAL areas. Mellia volkensii has been identified as one of the most appropriate tree species for the lower Eastern parts of Kenya.

Science and technology

Recognizing the role of Science and uptake of appropriate technologies in the fight against desertification, some appropriate water harvesting technologies applicable to ASAL areas were implemented prior to the marking of the day. The Government of Kenya through the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) received support from the European Union to establish Mwanja Sand Dam in Mwingi Central SubCounty, Kitui County at a cost of Ksh. 15million. Once complete, the dam will support over 1400 household with water for domestic use; and over 4000 heads of livestock. Other areas being considered for future scaling up include roof catchment and rock catchments.

Other livelihood diversification projects promoted in Kitui County were the fast growing drought tolerant grafted mango trees and the distribution of improved high milk yielding goat varieties with efficient food conversion.



Plate 3: Launching the construction of Mwanja Sand dam in Mwingi subcounty, Kitui

Promotion of *Mellia volkensii*

Mellia volkensii is a fast-growing tree suited for ASAL areas and that attains a height of 6 – 20m depending on the prevailing ecological conditions. It does excellently well at the altitudes of 350-1700m above sea level and where rainfall ranges between 300 and 800mm. It is best suited in well drained sandy loamy soils. It is ready for harvesting between 10 and 15 years for various uses such as Timber, Furniture, Fuelwood, and fodder. With proper spacing, the tree can co-exist with other crops such as legumes and fodder for hay under agro-forestry.



Plate 4: Mellia volkensii seedlings. A Kefri Research scientist trains participants on tree growing skills

Community engagement/dialogue

In line with these year's WDDD, the National Environment Management Authority in collaboration with various stakeholders raised awareness to residents of Kitui County on the disproportionate impact of desertification, land degradation and drought on women and girls and the barriers they face in decision-making on land issues.



Plate 5: Community dialogues as build-up activities to marking WDDD in Kitui County.

The dialogues focused on empowering women to acquire secure land tenure rights to land to enhance their capacity to manage and conserve land resources. There was a strong call for the National Government and County Governments of Kenya to promote laws, policies and practices that end discrimination and secure women's rights to land and resources.

B. Commemoration of National WDDD in Kitui County, Kenya

The climax of the marking of these year's WDDD was by holding a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, community led and community focused celebrations at St. Pauls Waita Secondary School, Mwingi Sub-County, Kitui County. The celebrations which were led by the Cabinet Secretary in Charge of the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry was well attended and brought together various players from government and non-government actors. Land reclamation, regeneration, restoration messages and call for women participation in the push to Land Degradation Neutrality were packaged in form of songs and dances, skits and poems.

Various exhibitions, presentations and speeches, all geared towards fighting desertification and drought were used to mark the day. NEMA's Director General gave a commitment to rally various stakeholders to have a structured approach to tackle desertification problem in the lower Eastern part of Kenya and to all parts of Kenya. The CS Hon Soipan Tuya likewise reiterated on the Ministry's commitment push for policy reforms to promote synergies among existing legislations to enhance the sustainable utilisation of the ASAL resources.



Plate 6: congregants following the proceedings at the St. Pauls Waita Secondary School



Plate 7: Director General of NEMA Kenya receives beehives from M/s Charlene Ruto to enhance livelihood diversification in the Kitui County



Plate 8: Prisoners and Prisons staff from Waita GK Prisons entertain guests

Conclusion

A lot was achieved in this year's WDDD and there is need to sustain the effort and interventions. A monitoring and reporting of the progress of interventions need to be done. The lead agencies should be empowered to carry out this MRV to inform future interventions.