

Women Start to Preserve Mangrove

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By Philip Mwakio

Women groups in Pate and Faza in the Lamu archipelago have stepped up reforestation of the depleted mangrove forest cover. Amina Shalo, an islander from Faza where about 6,000 seedlings were planted, said the programme was initiated by the Kenya Forest Service, the Kenya Wildlife Service and the Northern Rangeland Trust. “We have lost substantial forest cover due to harvesting and it is time we heeded the Government's call to ensure forest cover is increased as the ban on logging is in place,” she said. She added that the three agencies had supplied women's groups with seedlings that they had planted in the depleted areas.

“It is only by conserving mangrove forests that our communities will be able to sustain their livelihoods that are dependent on fishing and mangroves,” she stated. Since the Government’s ban on tree cutting, islands such as Ndau, Faza and Pate have suffered as mangroves were their main source of livelihoods.

According to the Lamu East Women Group officials, unemployment was on the rise as residents had yet to find alternative sources of income despite a Parliamentary Select Committee on Environment and Environment Cabinet Secretary Keriako Tobiko promising to lift the ban on mangrove cutting.

Local leaders, and especially Lamu Woman Representative Ruweidha Obo, have been at the forefront of advocating less regulation on mangroves to enable the people to get access to the trees. The women's groups in Lamu East have taken the initiative to grow mangrove forests in deforested areas on Pate island to ensure sustainability of mangrove harvesting. Lamu County Kenya Forest Service Director Evans Maneno said mangrove forests were responsible for a lot of the marine life conserved by the Kenya Wildlife Service. Mangroves take four to five years to mature.