

# Wangari Maathai Institute For Peace & Environmental Studies

## University of Copenhagen Hosts WMI PhD Students



University of Nairobi

## NEWSLETTER

### 2012: A Year in Review



*"One aspect of a love of nature that we need to foster is experiential. Nature – and in particular, the wild – feeds our spirit and a direct encounter with it is vital in helping us appreciate and care for it. For unless we see it, smell it, or touch it, we tend to forget it, and our souls wither." - Professor Wangari Maathai, Replenishing the Earth*

*By Muthee, Mutune, Kweyu and Kamau, WMI PhD Students*

In 2012, we visited the University of Copenhagen (UC) in Denmark for a 3 month study visit. It was a very unique and enlightening experience that involved interactive sessions and experiential learning.

Although the average class was about six hours long, it was punctuated by regular short breaks after every hour.

Our supervisors and lecturers were down to earth, friendly, humble and treated us more like colleagues; they were readily available for advice and consultation. University learning materials and academic resources were easily available and accessible through the University libraries, including the e-learning system known as "absolon".

We had a chance to visit the homes of all our Professors. This experience gave us an opportunity to sample a variety of Danish cuisine and experience the Danish home and family settings; this social interaction relaxed the student-teacher relationship.

We also had an opportunity to prepare the Danish team a traditional home cooked Kenyan meal of ugali,

kachumbari, mbuzi-fry, kuku choma and pumpkin soup. We visited a park where we saw a tree (*Prunus serrulata amaogawa*) that had been planted in honour of the late Professor Wangari Muta Maathai.

During the period of our stay, we resided in the Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC). It was excellent as there were activities and social events lined up every weekend such as trips and cooking clubs. Most importantly at the DFC we were able to interact with students from all over the world giving us an opportunity to experience and learn their cultures and build on each other academically.

We observed that many Danish people are conscious about their environment; many use bicycles to move about as opposed to vehicles; many preferred to use the stairs as opposed to the elevator. Further, through a lexicographic study we conducted, we found that this environmental consciousness cuts across from the young to the elderly; for instance, a majority of the Danes are conscious about sorting and recycling of household waste and other environmental conservation techniques. Additionally there exist several incentives for recycling certain materials thus encouraging the population to practice even more environmentally friendly practices.







*His Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya Hon. Mwai Kibaki and the daughter of Prof Wangari Maathai (Wanjira Maathai) after planting a tree at the new AU complex in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

## *African Heads of State Endorse WMI*

During the 2012 AU Heads of State summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia it was resolved to recognize the life and work of Wangari Muta Maathai, the founder Distinguished Chair of Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies.

Among the decisions made was that the Summit encourages the AU Commission, within the framework of the "Make Peace Happen Campaign" (MPHC), as well as member States,

the private sector, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and other related international organizations and foundations, in cooperation with the Green Belt Movement (GBM), to take all the necessary

measures to mobilize resources in support of **"Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies (WMI)" as an African Centre of Excellence, to encourage research on environmental governance and its linkages with peace, human rights and democracy in Africa.** The AU also acknowledged Wangari Maathai's vision of protecting and promoting human well-being, through her pioneering Green Belt Movement (GBM) and grassroots activism, inspiring people to promote sustainable development.

During the same occasion, the President of Kenya, His Excellency President Mwai Kibaki, and Wanjira Maathai planted a tree at the New AU headquarters in Memory of Prof Wangari Maathai. Further in recognizing Prof Wangari Muta Maathai's numerous achievements, the AU decided to designate 3<sup>rd</sup> March as Wangari Maathai Day to be observed in conjunction with Africa Environmental day, each year beginning 2012. Prof Kiama Gitahi and Wanjira Maathai were in attendance.

The full text of the Decisions, Resolutions and Declarations of the AU Summit may be read at AU website

**"The AU Assembly recognizes the role and contributions of Prof. Wangari Maathai in the fields of environment sustainable development and women's empowerment"**

**AU Summit 2012**



## *"Learning By Doing" at WMI*

WMI in Collaboration with the University of Copenhagen and Green Belt Movement conducted an experiential learning course at Solio Ranch from 1<sup>st</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2012. The course,

entitled "Sustainable Land Use and Natural Resource Management (SLUSE): From Theory to Practice through field based training" was focused on learning by doing. The course was attended by 25 international students (Danish

14, Romania 1, German 1, British 1, USA 1, Nepali 1, Myanmar 1, Poland 1, Ethiopia 1, Bangladesh 1, Italian 1, and Norwegian 1) and 15 local Kenyan students.

## *“Experience is the best teacher” - My week in Solio Village 3*

*“Learning through experience is not always easy, but it is the most rewarding”*

We have an expression in my country - “experience is the best teacher”, and I believe these are wise words. Earlier this year, I was lucky enough to take part in a course in Kenya organised by the Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies and Copenhagen University. The course is called *Sustainable Land Use and Natural Resource Management*, and it brings together students from Denmark and Kenya so that we can learn how to conduct research in the field. We spent 11 days living in a rural community in Solio, near Naro Moru, and our project focused on the importance of agriculture to livelihoods.

A typical day for us in the village... we would wake

up at 7, with the cockerels crowing and the sunlight rising from behind Mount Kenya – a beautiful sight! After breakfast our group of 10 students would break into small teams, and we visited the village homesteads.

We asked the farmers about the crops they grow and the challenges they face, and took some soil samples. In the evening everyone would gather again back at our camp for a tasty dinner of ugali and beans. Finally, we would discuss our results and plan the following day’s activities.

Through our interviews we learnt that the people in Solio were resettled there 3 years ago by the Government of Kenya, after living for many years by road sides or in the slums of nearby towns. Each family was given a smallholding, and although many of the farmers have good farming knowledge, so far the crop yields have been low. Maize, for instance, has

failed every year due to frost or a lack of rainfall. The farmers do not have the money to invest in water harvesting structures, but they have started growing trees, which offer both wind protection and soil moisture retention. They have also diversified their livelihood activities to provide more security.

On reflection, I would say this is the kind of learning you cannot get from reading books –you meet people face to face, and develop an understanding of their aspirations, their hardships, and their perspectives on life. You also learn how to work effectively in a group, and how to implement your research plan. Learning through experience is not always easy, but it is the most rewarding.

**Mark Wilson,**  
*Student at Copenhagen University (MSc Agricultural Development)*



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*“This is also why I believe it’s so essential to have environmental education in schools that includes experiential learning, so children can touch the soil and see the worms, or tend a garden and harvest and eat what they grow”*  
*From*  
*Replenishing the Earth, by Wangari Maathai*





## *WMI Celebrates World Environment Day*

The Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA), the Green Belt Movement, Loreto Girls, Limuru, Mutamaiyo Women Group and the Nairobi Academy commemorated the World Environmental Day at Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies by planting 200 indigenous trees at the WMI site in Kabete. KEWOPA was represented by Hon Martha Karua, the MP for Gichugu and Hon Rachel Shebesh, ODM nominated MP.

The World Environment Day, which is commemorated every year on 5 June, is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action.

The aim of the day is to:

- Give a human face to environmental issues;
- Empower people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development;
- Promote an understanding that communities are pivotal to changing attitudes towards environmental issues;
- Advocate partnership which will ensure all nations and peoples enjoy a safer and more prosperous future.

The late Prof Wangari Maathai and Founder Distinguished Chair of Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies served as a member of parliament for Tetu Constituency. Thus it was opportune for KEWOPA to celebrate the World Environmental day at WMI whose mission is “to cultivate positive ethics, values and practices towards the environment by training stewards who foster peace, holistic



## *Nepalese Activist wins first Wangari Maathai Award*

Narayan Kaji Shrestha, a Nepalese activist won the inaugural Wangari Maathai Award which was presented in Rome on September 27th 2012. Mr Shrestha was recognized for his work with women and low-caste villagers for more than three decades. "Narayan Kaji Shrestha's work captures the spirit of Wangari Maathai" said FAO Assistant Director-General for forestry Eduardo Rojas-Briales. The Wangari Maathai Award was established by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), to recognise efforts to improve and sustain forests and to honour the memory of the global icon.

Prof. Kiama Gitahi, the Acting Director of Wangari Maathai was invited to participate in the award Ceremony. Addressing the distinguished guest during this meeting, he said "I am aware of the high requirements that were set to identify the winner of such a prestigious award, as well as the immense expectations placed on whoever wins an award such as this one.

In her book *Replenishing the Earth* she states the following about awards ---*The church partly invented the concept of sainthood to express gratitude to often wealthy or noble people who had served the poor and the sick. The designation of sainthood indicated to other faithful that these men and*

*women were heroes and heroines to be thanked, respected, and emulated. ....I have been fortunate to have my work recognized. Such acknowledgment, through award, citation or even a kind word, can be extremely encouraging. It helps to provide the courage to continue one's work in difficult or even threatening circumstances"*

Thus I believe the beneficiary of Wangari Maathai Award today is being told loudly: "We have observed your walks and your work and you have contributed to healing the earth. We appreciate and are grateful for what you have done and we would like you to continue. We from Wangari Maathai Institute, University of Nairobi are honored to celebrate this award with you today".

Thank you all.



Narayan Kaji Shrestha holding the Wangari Maathai Award which was presented by Eduardo Rojas-Briales, FAO Assistant Director-General for Forestry.

On the right: Prof. Kiama addressing the meeting in Rome



## *Curriculum Development Advances at the Institute*

The WMI's curriculum development process has been ongoing bringing together Kenyan experts and others from different disciplines from around the world. Largely inspired by Prof. Maathai's life's work with women's groups their communities at the Green Belt Movement, the process is anchored in the principles of experiential learning where students and community members are empowered with the skills and knowledge needed to transform their communities.

The premise of WMI's curriculum is that there is a knowledge-practice gap where students from institutions of higher learning often lack the skills on how to practice their knowledge in addressing community needs. The Institute envisions that this gap can be closed by influencing values, ethics & attitudes of the knowledge holders, giving them skills & tools that will make it possible for them to reach out and transform communities, and perhaps most importantly providing ample opportunities for them to practice what they have learnt as part of their training program (experiential learning).

In Dec 2 & 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011 the WMI board hosted a curriculum development workshop which was attended by Prof Priyanka Kochar, TERI University, New Delhi, India; Lars Carlson the University of Copenhagen and one of the world's leading experts on experiential learning, Prof. Sri Nadarajah, Professor of Environmental Communication from the Swedish University of Agricultural Science (Uppsala, Sweden).

On 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2012, another workshop was held to develop community education programme leading to an international certificate that would be offered as a skills enhancement program. WMI invited Prof. Heila Lotz Sisitka of Rhodes University in South Africa as well as various participants from the University of Nairobi, UNEP and experts from various disciplines. Prof. Heila presented her experience in the development of the Environmental Learning Research Centre at Rhodes University where participants develop skills and tools to address challenges they face in their communities.

*"It is therefore my most fervent hope that the Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies at the University of Nairobi will become an international model campus for the transfer of knowledge through informative, practical, and inherently democratizing connections between the university students and faculty and the communities they serve."*

**Prof. Wangari Maathai, 2010**



**Prof. Sri Nadarajah, Swedish University of Agricultural Science (Uppsala, Sweden) facilitating the curriculum development workshop**

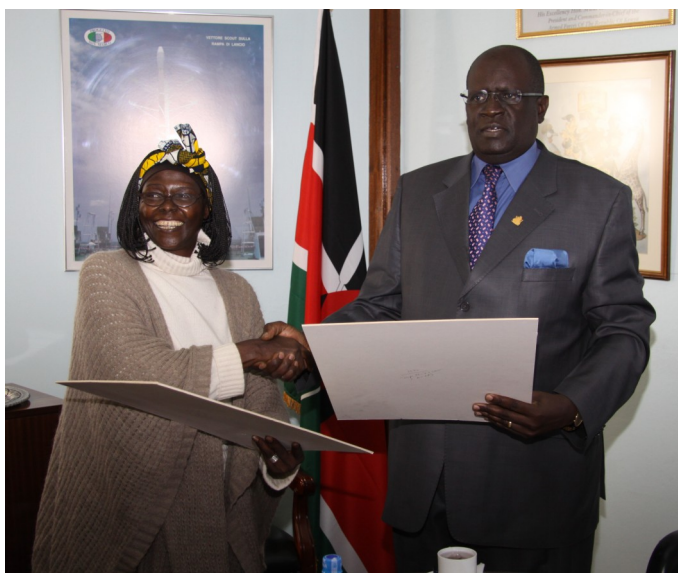
## *WMI Forges local & International Partnerships*

Without key partners WMI cannot fulfill its ambitious vision. In a networked society, partnerships are increasingly important to create a critical mass, synergies and stretch scarce resources. Thus, to achieve planned results and targets and to leverage resources, WMI has forged strategic alliances with the public, private and international partners in implementing its mandate. As part of the program development process, WMI has established formal partnerships with the University of Copenhagen, The Energy Research Institute (TERI) in India, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Green Belt Movement. These partnerships will continue to grow as part of WMI's global outreach.



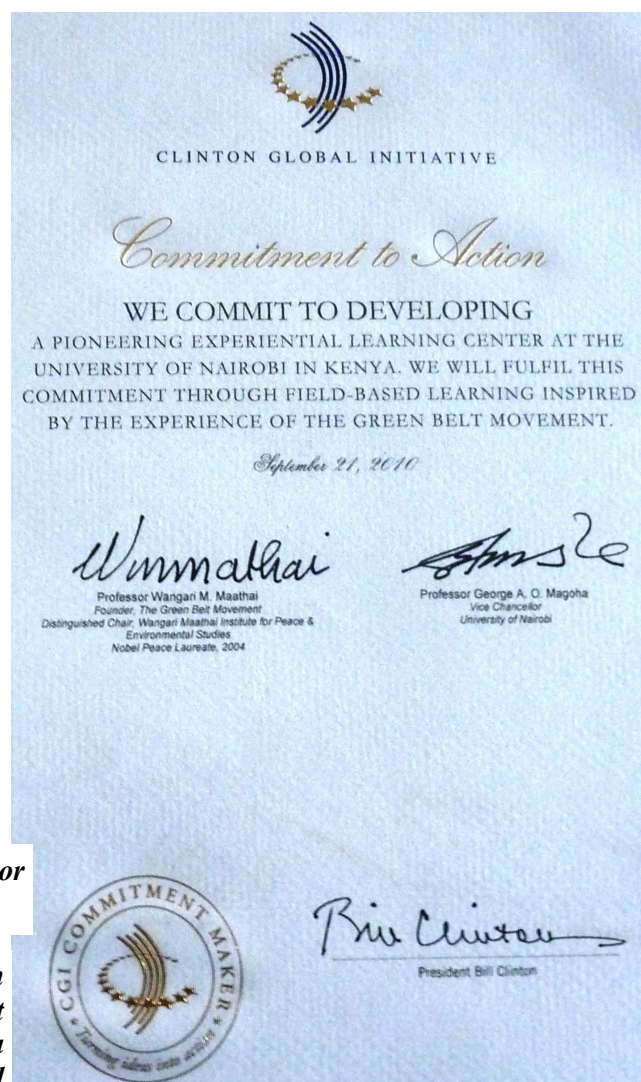
***Prof Kiama Gitahi and Dr Rajendra Pachauri***

***Director General, The Energy Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi, India & Chair of Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change when he visited Nairobi in 2010 after signing the MOU***



***The Late Prof Wangari Maathai and the Vice Chancellor University of Nairobi***

***Photo on the Right: Certificate of Commitment to Action on the Development of the Institute signed by President Bill Clinton, the Vice Chancellor Prof George Magoha and the Founder Distinguished Chair and 2004 Nobel Peace Laureate Prof. Wangari Maathai***







**The Founder  
Distinguished  
Chair of Wangari  
Maathai Institute,  
the late Prof  
Wangari Maathai  
Receiving the  
2004 Nobel Peace  
Prize**

## *WMI Shares \$1.5 Million Research Grant Support from Danish Fellowship*

Wangari Maathai Institute in collaboration with the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, Green Belt Movement and Kenya Forestry Research Institute secured a research grant of USD 1.5 Million from Danida Fellowship to carry out a project entitled "Stabilizing Kenya by Solving Forest Related Conflicts".

The overall goal of the project is to contribute towards stability in Kenya with a specific study on the ongoing attempt to democratize the governance of the forest resources in the Mau Forest Complex. The program has provided scholarships to four (4) PhD students and will also provide research funds to 15 Masters Students. In addition, the project is aimed at building capacity for WMI and is coordinated by Dr Thenya Thuita from University of Nairobi on behalf of WMI and Prof. Vibeke Vindelov on behalf of University of Copenhagen. It will run for four (4) years.

<http://wmi.uonbi.ac.ke/>



**Prof. Kiama Gitahi  
Ag. Director, Wangari  
Maathai Institute**



**M/S Lilian Kongang'i  
Administrative Assistant,**

## *African Development Fund to finance WMI Learning Centre*

WMI has received \$7.5 Million from ADF for the learning centre, which is part of the larger development (\$40 Million) of the WMI.

This has been made possible through the support of the Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology through a project dubbed "Support to Enhancement of Quality and Relevance in Higher Education Science and Technology in Selected Universities in Kenya Project".

This is aimed at Improving the quality of applied knowledge and skills in environmental/natural

resources management. The funding will support the WMI through construction of the first phase of a teaching, learning and experiential centre to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills on using natural resources sustainably from the faculty to grassroots communities.

The institute will also provide a community education program that will support and strengthen the capacity of professionals to serve their communities thus bridging the knowledge practice gap.

### **Our Vision:**

***Excellence in experiential learning, transformational com-***

### **Our Mission:**

***To cultivate positive ethics, values and practices towards the environment by training stewards who foster peace, holistic sustainable development and link theory with practice***