the green belt movement

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NEWSLETTER

THE GREEN BELT MOVEMENT STANDS FIRM IN DEFENCE OF KENYA'S PUBLIC FORESTS



Nairobi National Park

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"To the young people I say, you are a gift to your communities and indeed the world. You are our hope and our future."

— Prof. Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 2004.



Approximately 89 acres of Nairobi National Park have been cleared for a proposed development that includes a parking facility designed to accommodate 1,300 vehicles.





Parts of the Eco-Hotel being constructed in Ngong Road Forest near the sanctuary block

1. GBM Stands Firm in Defence of Kenya's Public Forests, Water Towers and Urban Green Spaces

Kenya's gazetted public forests, critical water towers and urban green spaces continue to face mounting pressure from infrastructure projects, proposed land allocations and other developments. From Ngong Road Forest and Nairobi National Park to Imenti Forest and the Aberdare ecosystem, these cases pointed to a growing challenge: balancing development needs with the protection of ecosystems that are fundamental to Kenya's environmental security and future.

For The Green Belt Movement, this has called for sustained advocacy, public engagement and vigilance.

In Ngong Road Forest, GBM raised concerns over the cumulative impact of multiple developments within and around the forest, including the Talanta Sports City development, road infrastructure connecting Talanta Stadium to Bomas of Kenya, a contractor's camp, eco-lodge and other proposed projects. Beyond the acreage affected by each individual development, GBM has continued to highlight the larger risk of gradually fragmenting a gazetted public forest through multiple infrastructure projects.

At Nairobi National Park, proposals involving approximately 77 acres for infrastructure associated with a 1,300-vehicle parking facility drew significant public concern. GBM joined environmental defenders and members of the public in calling for greater accountability and the protection of one of the world's most unique urban national parks.

The proposed developments within Imenti Forest in Meru County include the construction of a State Lodge, an airstrip covering approximately 27 acres of forest land, a golf course and associated infrastructure and real estate developments. These proposals have raised serious environmental concerns, including potential forest excision, biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation and inadequate public participation. GBM, alongside JustAct and other petitioners, challenged the developments in court to safeguard the forest. On 30 July 2026, the Environment and Land Court in Meru issued conservatory orders temporarily halting the proposed developments pending the hearing and determination of the petitions, marking an important step towards protecting Imenti Forest from encroachment.

The Aberdare ecosystem, one of Kenya's most important water towers, also came under focus following developments surrounding a proposed 25-kilometre road through the Aberdare National Park and Forest Reserve. GBM raised concerns about the potential ecological consequences of the project and reiterated the importance of safeguarding the integrity of an ecosystem that supports biodiversity and provides critical water services to communities far beyond its boundaries.

> "The pressure was not limited to large forests and water towers. Urban green spaces, including City Park, Oloolua Forest and mature trees along State House Road, also faced development pressures, underscoring the increasing vulnerability of nature within rapidly growing urban areas.

From Concern to Action

Throughout the period, GBM responded through policy advocacy, public participation, media engagement, community mobilisation and legal interventions.

GBM appeared before the Senate Standing Committee on Land, Environment and Natural Resources to oppose amendments to Section 56(2) of the Forest Conservation and Management Act, warning that expanded provisions for easements within public forests could create greater opportunities for infrastructure development in protected areas. Although the amendment was ultimately passed into law, GBM continues to advocate for transparency, accountability and strict environmental safeguards in its implementation. The Movement also issued public statements, participated in public forums, engaged national media and worked alongside communities, civil society organisations and other environmental defenders to keep threats to Kenya's natural heritage firmly within the public conversation

2. Standing Up for Nairobi National Park



Nyaguthii Chege, Board Chair at The Green Belt Movement stands alongside FoNNaP, David Maraga, Irungu Houghtonand other activists in fighting for Nairobi National Parko-Hotel being constructed in Ngong Road Forest near the sanctuary block

Nairobi National Park continues to face mounting threats from proposed developments, including the relocation and expansion of the Nairobi Animal Orphanage and the construction of a large parking facility and associated infrastructure within the protected area. These developments have raised serious concerns about habitat fragmentation, biodiversity loss and the gradual erosion of one of Kenya's most iconic ecosystems. In response, the Green Belt Movement (GBM) joined Friends of Nairobi National Park (FoNNaP), Amnesty International Kenya, environmental defenders and concerned citizens in peaceful demonstrations demanding transparency, accountability and the protection of the park. During the protests, nine environmental and civic activists, including former Chief Justice David Maraga, were arrested, raising further concerns about the protection of civic freedoms and citizens' constitutional right to participate in environmental governance



The campaign subsequently moved to the courts, with thousands of citizens supporting legal action challenging the proposed developments over concerns about environmental approvals, inadequate public participation and potential ecological damage. The court issued temporary orders halting construction and related activities pending further proceedings and directed an inspection of the contested area. However, reports of continued construction activities and vegetation clearance despite the legal challenges have heightened concerns about compliance with court directives and the protection of the park's ecological integrity.Recent reports have further intensified the controversy, with conservation organisations raising concerns about continued construction and tree clearing despite the ongoing petitions and court intervention. Reports have also highlighted concerns over the participation of petitioners in the court-ordered site inspection. While the Kenya Wildlife Service maintains that the relocation is lawful and intended to improve animal welfare, GBM continues to advocate for full compliance with court orders, meaningful public participation, transparency and the protection of the park's ecological integrity. Development must never come at the expense of protected ecosystems or the rights of citizens to defend them.

Growing the Next Generation of Environmental Stewards



Caroline Giathi - Communications and Advocacy Officer joined students at Drive Inn Primary School for Tree-Planting activities

The Green Belt Movement was honored to collaborate with Purpose and Green Dada at Drive Inn Primary School to commemorate the International Day of Plant Health, bringing environmental action and learning directly to young people in an urban school setting.

As part of the #JazaMiti campaign, GBM joined forces with the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI), ChildFund and other partners to engage 4K Club learners, teachers, parents and members of the school community in tree growing and conversations around plant health, environmental conservation and sustainability.

The activity went beyond planting seedlings. It provided an opportunity to nurture a deeper understanding among learners of the important relationship between healthy plants, healthy ecosystems and healthy communities.

For the 4K Club learners, the exercise offered a practical extension of what they learn in the classroom. By participating directly in planting and caring for trees, learners gained an opportunity to understand the importance of environmental responsibility, teamwork and long-term stewardship. Importantly, they were encouraged to see themselves not simply as participants in a one-day activity, but as young environmental champions responsible for nurturing the trees and sharing what they learn with their families and peers.

This engagement is particularly significant in an urban setting, where children often experience the effects of reduced green spaces, increasing development, air pollution and rising temperatures. Greening school environments can provide shade, improve the learning environment, support biodiversity and demonstrate how even small urban spaces can contribute to restoring nature.

The benefits also extend beyond the school gates. By involving teachers, parents and the surrounding community, the initiative reinforced the idea that environmental stewardship is a shared responsibility. Knowledge and practices introduced through the 4K Club can travel from the school into households and neighbourhoods, encouraging communities to grow and care for trees, protect existing vegetation and appreciate the value of urban green spaces.Protecting plant health is essential to food security, biodiversity, ecosystem restoration and climate resilience. By introducing these connections to children at an early age, we are helping build a generation that understands not only how to plant a tree, but why nurturing and protecting it matters.Through partnerships such as the #JazaMiti campaign, GBM continues to invest in environmental education and community-led action, ensuring that young people are at the heart of creating greener, healthier and more resilient communities.When children learn to care for nature, they carry that responsibility into their homes, communities and ultimately into the future.

3. Restoring Miheho: Communities at the Heart of Forest Restoration in North Nandi. 59,400 Indigenous Trees Planted



The Green Belt Movement in partnership with the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), has successfully planted 59,400 indigenous trees at the Mileho site in North Nandi, marking a significant milestone in ongoing efforts to restore degraded forest landscapes and strengthen the resilience of critical ecosystems.The achievement follows extensive land preparation undertaken together with local community members, who prepared 59,400 planting holes before taking part in the planting exercise. From preparing the land to putting seedlings into the ground, the community has remained at the heart of the restoration process.

Communities at the Heart of Restoration



Miheho Community in North Nandi working together during a tree planting exercise to restore Miheho Site.

A key element of the Miheho restoration initiative has been the active participation of the local community throughout the tree-growing process.GBM believes that sustainable restoration cannot be achieved by planting trees alone. Communities living within and around restoration landscapes must be empowered to take ownership of the process, from land preparation and planting to nurturing, monitoring and protecting the trees as they grow.

Their participation also strengthens local knowledge and creates livelihood opportunities associated with restoration, demonstrating that protecting the environment and supporting community well being can go hand in hand.

With the trees now planted, attention shifts to the equally important task of ensuring their survival and growth.

GBM will continue working alongside communities to monitor the restoration site, nurture the young trees and support their development into a thriving indigenous forest.The successful planting at Miheho demonstrates the power of combining community-led action, ecological restoration and strong partnerships. Through the support of AFD and the commitment of local communities, degraded landscapes are being given an opportunity to regenerate and contribute once again to biodiversity, climate resilience and community wellbeing.59,400 indigenous trees now stand as 59,400 investments in the future of North Nandi, growing towards a healthier, greener and more resilient landscape

"For us, planting these trees is about more than restoring the forest. It is about protecting our water sources, improving our environment and securing a better future for our children. We have been part of this journey from preparing the land to planting the seedlings and we understand that our responsibility does not end here. We must continue nurturing and protecting these trees so that future generations can benefit from the forest we are restoring today." Margaret Chepkirui, Community Member, North Nandi

4. Restoring the Mau Forest Complex: Communities at the Heart of Conservation





Community members actively participate in site preparation, hole digging and tree planting activities in Dundori Forest under the AFD-supported Mau Restoration Project, demonstrating the power of collective action in restoring degraded forest landscapes and safeguarding critical water towers.

In May 2026, GBM intensified its restoration efforts in Dundori Forest under the Mau Restoration Project, supported by the French Development Agency (AFD). The initiative forms part of broader efforts to rehabilitate degraded sections of the Mau Forest Complex, with a focus on restoring critical watersheds and strengthening ecosystem resilience.

The Mau Forest Complex is one of Kenya's most important water towers, feeding into Lake Victoria and the Nile River and sustaining millions of people, livelihoods and diverse ecosystems across the region. Through a watershed-based approach, the project aims to restore 300 hectares of degraded forest while promoting sustainable land management, forest conservation, incentives for ecosystem services and alternative livelihoods through nature-based enterprises.

At the heart of these restoration efforts is community participation and ownership. Women, men and youth have actively contributed to site preparation, hole digging, clearing and tree planting activities, demonstrating their commitment to protecting and restoring this vital ecosystem.

Beyond planting trees, the initiative is strengthening community stewardship, creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and fostering collective responsibility for forest conservation. These efforts reaffirm GBM's commitment to empowering communities as custodians of their environment while safeguarding Kenya's critical water towers for present and future generations.





5. 8,000 More Indigenous Trees Planted as North Nandi Restoration Gains Momentum



Job Mwangi, Advocacy Manager at the Green Belt Movement together with Head of Public Service Hon. Felix Kosgey; Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry Deborah Barasa, Principal Secretary for Foresty Gitonga Mugambi, Nandi County Governor Stephen Sang and Chief Conservator of Forests Alex Lemarkoko.



Job Mwangi, Advocacy Manager and Harriet Maiyo, Project Officer at The Green Belt Movement during atree-planting exercise in North Nandi

The Green Belt Movement with support from the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), planted an additional 8,000 indigenous tree seedlings at Chepkieb in North Nandi Forest, building on years of community-led efforts to restore this important forest landscape.

The GBM team, led by Advocacy Manager Job Mwangi, joined the North Nandi Community Forest Association (CFA), local communities, national and county government leaders and other stakeholders for the tree planting exercise, demonstrating the collective action required to restore and safeguard Kenya's forests.

The exercise brought together key government leaders, including Head of Public Service Hon. Felix Kosgey; Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry Deborah Barasa; Principal Secretary for Forestry Gitonga Mugambi, Nandi County Governor Stephen Sang and Chief Conservator of Forests Alex Lemarkoko.

Their participation, alongside community members and conservation partners, reinforced an important principle at the heart of GBM's work: successful forest restoration requires strong partnerships, but communities must remain at the centre of protecting and nurturing their landscapes.

Growing the North Nandi Forest

The 8,000 indigenous seedlings planted at Chepkieb add to the 59,400 indigenous trees already planted and being nurtured in North Nandi Forest this year, further expanding GBM's restoration footprint within the landscape.

The progress is part of a much longer restoration journey. Over the last four years, GBM's partnership with AFD and communities in North Nandi has delivered significant results:



252,012

Indigenous Tree Seedlings Planted And Thriving



1,470

Bamboo Seedlings Established



220.17

Hectares Of North Nandi Forest Restored

These numbers represent more than trees and hectares. They represent landscapes being regenerated, habitats being restored and communities actively participating in the recovery and long-term protection of an ecosystem they depend upon.

Restoring a Critical Water Tower

North Nandi Forest forms part of Kenya's important forest and water catchment landscapes. Restoring degraded areas therefore has benefits that extend far beyond increasing tree cover.Indigenous trees contribute to the recovery of biodiversity, protection of water sources, improved soil health and increased carbon sequestration.

Healthy forest ecosystems also strengthen resilience against the growing impacts of climate change while supporting the livelihoods and wellbeing of surrounding communities.GBM's approach goes beyond planting. Working closely with Community Forest Associations and local communities helps ensure that planted trees are nurtured, monitored and protected to maturity, transforming tree planting exercises into meaningful and lasting ecosystem restoration.

The progress being witnessed in North Nandi demonstrates what is possible when communities, government institutions and development partners unite around a shared vision for conservation.

As the young trees at Chepkieb and across North Nandi continue to grow, GBM remains committed to working alongside communities and partners to restore degraded forest landscapes, strengthen Kenya's water towers and secure healthier, more resilient ecosystems for generations to come.

Every tree that survives and grows brings us one step closer to restoring the forest and securing the future it supports.





Community members in Chepkieb working together in a tree-planting activity in restoring North Nandi Forest.

6. GBM and Conservation Partners Call for Urgent Action to Protect Kenya's Forests and Green Spaces





Job Mwangi - Advocacy Manager at The Green Belt Movement standing alongside Friends of Nairobi's Forests and Green Spaces, Nairobi Community Forest Associations and other conservation partners during a Press Conference at KFEET.

The Green Belt Movement together with Friends of Nairobi's Forests and Green Spaces, Nairobi's Community Forest Associations (CFAs) and other conservation partners, convened a press conference to raise alarm over the growing threats facing Kenya's gazetted forests, national parks and public green spaces.

The press conference provided a collective platform for environmental organisations, community representatives and conservation advocates to highlight increasing development pressures affecting some of the country's most important ecosystems, including Ngong Road Forest, Nairobi National Park, Imenti Forest, Uhuru Park and City Park.

At the centre of the discussions was a growing concern that infrastructure development, proposed allocations and activities within protected areas are placing increasing pressure on ecosystems that provide critical environmental and social benefits. The conservation partners emphasised that development must not come at the expense of Kenya’s natural heritage and called for greater transparency, accountability and meaningful public participation in decisions affecting public forests and green spaces.

The press conference also highlighted the importance of respecting the legal and institutional frameworks established to protect these ecosystems. GBM and its partners called upon all duty bearers to uphold the Constitution, respect the rule of law, comply with court orders and ensure that decisions affecting protected areas adhere to Kenya’s environmental laws and safeguards.

As Kenya continues to pursue ambitious tree-growing and landscape restoration targets, GBM reiterated that protecting the forests and green spaces we already have is just as important as planting new trees. Restoration efforts cannot achieve their intended impact if established forests, biodiversity-rich ecosystems and urban green spaces continue to face degradation and encroachment.

GBM remains committed to working alongside communities, conservation organisations and other partners to amplify environmental concerns, demand accountability and advocate for development approaches that safeguard nature for present and future generations. Our forests and green spaces are public assets held in trust for generations to come. Protecting them is a shared responsibility and one that requires urgent and sustained action.

7. Building on 25 Years of Partnership: GBM and JICA Explore New Opportunities for Collaboration



The GBM team, led by former Executive Director Dorothy Aseyo, during a meeting with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Kenya team, led by Ose Tae, Project Formulation Advisor at the JICA Kenya Office.

For more than 25 years, The Green Belt Movement and the Mainichi Newspaper have shared a relationship rooted in environmental conservation, community empowerment and sustainable development.

This longstanding engagement reflects the important role that sustained partnerships play in advancing solutions that benefit both people and the planet.

Building on this history, #TeamGBM recently met with representatives from the JICA Volunteer Programme to explore potential areas of collaboration and identify new opportunities to strengthen environmental conservation and community-led action.

The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange ideas on how GBM and JICA can build upon their longstanding relationship to respond to emerging environmental challenges. Discussions explored potential pathways for collaboration that draw on the strengths of both organisations, particularly in supporting communities, strengthening environmental stewardship and advancing sustainable development.

For GBM, partnerships such as these are particularly important because meaningful environmental action requires more than short-term interventions. It requires long-term investment in communities, knowledge exchange, capacity building and relationships that evolve as environmental and social challenges change.

A Friendship Rooted in Shared Values



The Green Belt Movement team led by the former Executive Director, Dorothy Aseyo welcomes the JICA team Ose Tae and Masaki Kashiwagi

GBM's relationship with Japan extends beyond JICA. The Movement also recognises the remarkable support of The Mainichi Newspapers, whose relationship with GBM spans more than two decades. This longstanding support has contributed to GBM's work and reflects a shared commitment to environmental stewardship, community resilience and the legacy of the Movement's founder, Professor Wangari Maathai.

These relationships demonstrate the power of international solidarity in advancing locally led environmental action. While the environmental challenges facing communities continue to evolve, the values underpinning these partnerships remain constant: empowering people, protecting ecosystems and creating opportunities for future generations.

As GBM looks towards the future, the recent engagement with JICA represents an opportunity to build upon more than 25 years of partnership while exploring new approaches to conservation, community empowerment and sustainable development.

Through continued collaboration, knowledge exchange and collective action, GBM looks forward to strengthening these longstanding relationships and creating even greater impact for communities and ecosystems.

8. Empowering Communities with Data and Technology for Effective Landscape Restoration





The Green Belt Movement Team led by the Program Manager Kevin Majuek capacity building enumerators in Baringo and Makueni County - Bezos Earth Fund Project

The Green Belt Movement (GBM) strengthened community capacity for landscape restoration through a series of technical training sessions for community enumerators in Makueni, Baringo and Nyandarua Counties, undertaken as part of the World Resources Institute (WRI) PPC Project, with support from the Bezos Earth Fund.

The trainings equipped community enumerators with practical digital skills to map farmers and restoration sites, collect accurate field data and support the monitoring of restoration interventions within their communities.

Participants received hands-on training in electronic data collection using KoboCollect, GPS data collection and polygon mapping, field mapping and verification, data quality control and correction, and effective communication of results.

The sessions also strengthened their understanding of the objectives and approach of GBM-supported landscape restoration initiatives..

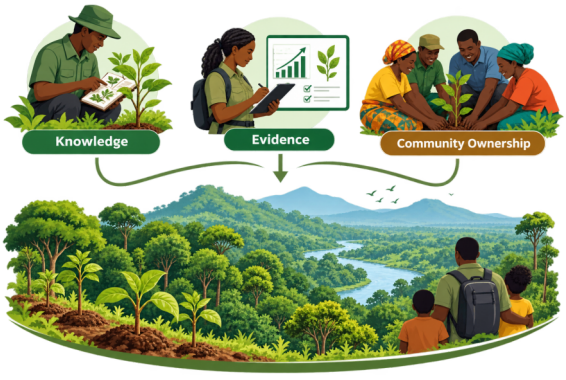
"Before this training, collecting information about our farmers and restoration sites was challenging and time-consuming. With Kobo Collect, we can now capture accurate information,map farms using GPS and easily track restoration activities within our communities. The application has made our work faster, more organised and reliable. We also feel empowered because we now have the digital skills to contribute directly to monitoring and protecting our environment. Joseph Nzioki, Community Enumerator - Makueni County

Combining Community Knowledge and Technology

The training demonstrates how technology and local knowledge can work together to strengthen ecosystem restoration. Digital tools provide greater accuracy and consistency in monitoring, while community enumerators bring invaluable knowledge of local landscapes, farmers and environmental conditions.

As GBM continues working with communities to restore degraded landscapes across Kenya, investments in local skills, reliable data and technology will remain an important part of ensuring that restoration delivers measurable and sustainable results

Because successful restoration is not only about how many trees are planted, but about having the knowledge,evidence and community ownership needed to ensure that restored landscapes thrive for generations to come.



9. Protecting Oloolua Forest: GBM Calls for Due Process and Meaningful Public Participation



The GBM Team led by Job Mwangi, Advocacy Manager, participate at the public participation forum on the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for the proposed solar electric fencing project in the Oloolua Forest Block, Kajiado County.

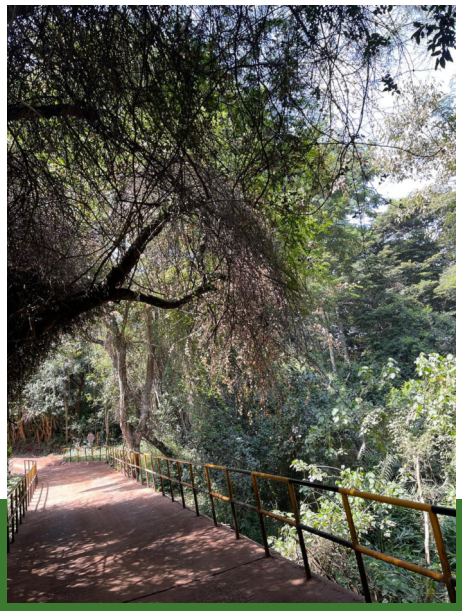
#TeamGBM participated in a public participation forum on the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for the proposed solar electric fencing project within the Oloolua Forest Block in Kajiado County.

The forum provided an important opportunity for communities, conservation organisations, government institutions and other stakeholders to engage on the proposed project and its potential implications for the forest and the people who depend on and enjoy it.

GBM expressed its support for appropriate measures aimed at securing and protecting Oloolua Forest from encroachment and degradation, including fencing where it is demonstrated to be environmentally appropriate. However, the Movement emphasised that conservation interventions must themselves comply with Kenya's environmental and legal requirements.

Central to GBM's submission was the need for a credible and independent Environmental and Social Impact Assessment, supported by meaningful public participation. Communities and other stakeholders must have access to adequate information, sufficient opportunities to raise concerns and a clear understanding of how their views have informed final decisions.





Parts of Oloolua Forest

10. A Legacy Comes Full Circle

The Green Belt Movement was honoured to host representatives from the University of Pittsburgh, alongside the Wangari Maathai Foundation and the Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies at the University of Nairobi, for a meaningful conversation on the future of environmental leadership, research and innovation.
The gathering carried special significance, reconnecting institutions that share an important place in the life, work and enduring legacy of Professor Wangari Maathai.

More than six decades ago, Professor Maathai pursued her Master's degree in Biological Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh. During her time there, she witnessed a city undergoing a remarkable transformation from the effects of industrial pollution. The experience contributed to her growing understanding of the interconnectedness of healthy ecosystems, human wellbeing and sustainable development, principles that would later become central to the Green Belt Movement and her lifelong pursuit of environmental justice.

Today, that connection continues to grow.The engagement provided an opportunity to explore how institutions connected to Professor Maathai's journey can work together to carry her vision forward.
Discussions highlighted opportunities for collaborative research, knowledge exchange, youth leadership, ecological restoration, climate resilience and community-driven environmental solutions.

As environmental challenges become increasingly complex, partnerships that connect research and science with community knowledge and lived experience are more important than ever. Such collaborations can help translate academic research into practical solutions while ensuring that communities remain active participants in shaping responses to the environmental challenges affecting them.

For GBM, strengthening these relationships is also about ensuring that Professor Maathai's legacy remains a living and evolving force for action, one that inspires new generations of researchers, environmental leaders, young people and communities to develop solutions for a changing world.

Professor Wangari Maathai often reminded us that "it's the little things citizens do that will make the difference." Through partnerships that bridge institutions, communities and continents, those individual actions can grow into collective solutions capable of shaping a greener, more equitable and sustainable future.





The GBM team hosts Center for African Studies at the University of Pittsburgh alongside the Wangari Maathai Foundation and the Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies - University of Nairobi, for a meaningful conversation on the future of environmental leadership, research and innovation.

11. Empowering Youth for the Future of Ngong Road Forest



Youth for Ngong Road Forest (YNRF) Participants in a group work session discussing on the challenges facing Ngong Road Forest.

In August, The Green Belt Movement partnered with Youth for Ngong Road Forest (YNRF) to strengthen the capacity of young people to actively participate in the protection and sustainable management of one of Nairobi's most important urban forests.Ngong Road Forest provides vital ecosystem services, including biodiversity conservation, climate regulation, carbon sequestration, recreation, environmental education and support for community livelihoods. Yet, the forest continues to face growing pressure from infrastructure development, urban expansion and other human activities.

Recognising that young people have an important role to play in safeguarding this ecosystem, the training equipped participants with knowledge and practical skills to become more informed and effective environmental stewards.

Equipping Young People to Protect Their Forest

The training brought together 25 committed young people from communities around Ngong Road Forest and provided an interactive space for learning, exchanging experiences and strengthening their understanding of environmental conservation and advocacy

.

GBM facilitated sessions on environmental advocacy and storytelling and introductory GIS concepts and the use of technology in conservation.

Through these sessions, participants explored how they could effectively communicate environmental issues, mobilise their communities and use information and technology to strengthen efforts to protect the forest.

The engagement built on YNRF's broader goal of developing a knowledgeable and capable youth network that could contribute to sustainable forest management, strengthen community awareness and advocate for the conservation of Ngong Road Forest.

Importantly, the training recognised young people not simply as future environmental leaders, but as active conservation actors with an important role to play today.



Caroline Giathi (Communications and Advocacy Officer) and Anold Murithi (GIS Officer) at The Green Belt Movement building capacity of the Youth for Ngong Road Forest.

By strengthening their knowledge and confidence, the initiative helped equip participants to engage more meaningfully with communities, conservation organisations, government institutions and other stakeholders on issues affecting their forest.

12. From Inspiration to Action: Young Leadership Inspired by Wangari Maathai



The GBM Team, led by Job Mwangi (Advocacy Manager) meets Catherine Macharia and her family.

The Green Belt Movement was delighted to welcome Catherine Macharia, the 16-year-old founder of Kicks for Kenya and an 11th-grade student at Thayer Academy, for a conversation on youth leadership, sport and environmental action.

Inspired by the life and work of Professor Wangari Maathai, Catherine has transformed her passion into an initiative that uses sport as a platform to bring young people together, create opportunities and inspire positive change.

Through Kicks for Kenya, Catherine is demonstrating that young people do not have to wait until adulthood to make a difference. Her initiative reflects the power of identifying an opportunity, mobilising others and using one's interests and talents to contr ibute to a greater purpose.

Connecting Sport, Youth and Environmental Action

In August, The Green Belt Movement partnered with Youth for Ngong Road Forest (YNRF) to strengthen the capacity of young people to actively participate in the protection and sustainable management of one of Nairobi's most important urban forests.Ngong Road Forest provides vital ecosystem services, including biodiversity conservation, climate regulation, carbon sequestration, recreation, environmental education and support for community livelihoods. Yet, the forest continues to face growing pressure from infrastructure development, urban expansion and other human activities.

Recognising that young people have an important role to play in safeguarding this ecosystem, the training equipped participants with knowledge and practical skills to become more informed and effective environmental stewards.During the meeting, GBM and Catherine explored opportunities to establish a long-term partnership between Kicks for Kenya and The Green Belt Movement, including engagement around an upcoming tournament at Thayer Academy in Boston, USA.

The potential partnership presents an exciting opportunity to bring together sport, youth leadership and environmental stewardship, using spaces that already engage and inspire young people to introduce conversations and actions around sustainability.

For GBM, engaging young people is central to ensuring that Professor Maathai's legacy continues to inspire new generations of changemakers. Her work demonstrated that transformative change often begins with individuals recognising a challenge within their communities and deciding to do something about it.

At just 16 years old, Catherine's journey embodies this spirit of action. By creating Kicks for Kenya, she is showing what can happen when young people are given the confidence and opportunity to lead. GBM looks forward to strengthening its engagement with Catherine and Kicks for Kenya, creating opportunities to inspire more young people to connect their passions with environmental and community action. Professor Wangari Maathai's legacy continues to grow through a new generation of young people who are choosing not only to be inspired by her story, but to turn that inspiration into action.



"To the young people I say, you are a gift to your communities and indeed the world. You are our hope and our future."
Prof. Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 2004.

13. In Defence of Nature: GBM on the Legal Frontline



The Green Belt Movement, led by our Advocacy Manager Job Mwangi, appeared before the Senate Standing Committee on Land, Environment and Natural Resources to strongly oppose the proposed amendments under the Forest Conservation and Management (Amendment) Bill, 2025. The session was chaired by Senator Mohamed Faki Mwinyihaji.

The Green Belt Movement has continued to intensify its advocacy and legal interventions to protect Kenya's forests, national parks and public green spaces from increasing threats of encroachment, infrastructure development and weakening environmental safeguards. Through press statements, public interest litigation, parliamentary engagement, strategic partnerships and citizen mobilisation, GBM continued to champion environmental justice, accountability and the constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment.

Defending Forest Protection Laws:

In June, GBM raised concerns over reported plans to excise portions of Uhuru Park and Central Park for the expansion of Uhuru Highway. The Movement demanded transparency regarding environmental assessments, approvals and public consultations, while also questioning continued restrictions on public access to Central Park despite court orders. These interventions reaffirmed GBM's commitment to safeguarding Nairobi's remaining public green spaces.

Taking Forest Protection to Court:

GBM, alongside JustAct, challenged proposed developments within Imenti Forest, including an airstrip, State Lodge and golf course. In July, the Environment and Land Court suspended the developments pending determination of consolidated petitions, marking an important interim victory for environmental protection. During the same month, GBM publicly expressed disappointment over the High Court decision allowing the Mau Mau Road through the Aberdare Forest ecosystem, reiterating that infrastructure development must respect ecological safeguards and the constitutional principles of sustainable development.

Standing Against Encroachment and Strengthening Civic Action:

GBM continued challenging threats to Ngong Road Forest, including proposed road construction, while welcoming interim court intervention halting the contested works. In September, the Movement also amplified public discussions on threats facing Nairobi National Park and other protected ecosystems, including participation in a public town hall convened by Africa Uncensored. These efforts strengthened public awareness, citizen engagement and collective demands for environmental accountability.

Across these interventions, GBM has remained steadfast in its conviction that environmental protection and sustainable development must go hand in hand. Building on Professor Wangari Maathai's legacy, the Movement continues to use the law, public advocacy and community voices to defend Kenya's natural heritage for present and future generations.

GBM In the News!

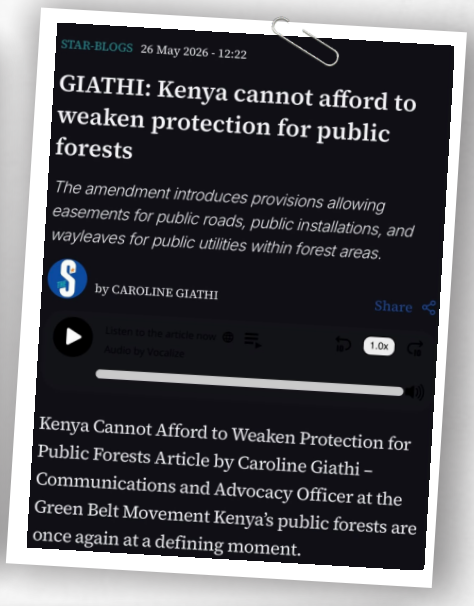
















Save Our Forests!

Your Support Can Make a Difference!

Kenya's forests are under increasing threat from encroachment, deforestation and unsustainable development. The Green Belt Movement invites you to stand with us in protecting these vital ecosystems through our **SAVE OUR FORESTS FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN.** Your contribution will support our efforts to advocate for forest protection, mobilise communities, amplify environmental voices and safeguard our natural heritage for future generations. Every contribution, big or small, strengthens the collective movementto defend Kenya's forests. Be part of the change.

Donate today and help us keep our forests standing!

DONATE HERE

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