



Annual Report

2020

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Message from the Board Chair

Dear Friends,

The year 2020 was one of transformational change and unprecedented challenges for all of us. In some ways, this has been particularly true for organizations working in the environmental and community empowerment sectors, and certainly, GBM has been no exception.

The GBM team has more than risen to the challenge presented by COVID-19 and the changes the pandemic has required. We're proud of the work we've done and the milestones covered this year— but we know how much more there is to do.

Today, one year after the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, we have learned many important lessons on how to best cope with the crisis in the course of our work. For example, through the integration of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), we can now conduct our tree planting in strict adherence to the Ministry of Health's protocols on public gatherings by mapping the planting area and portioning it among the individuals involved to ensure adequate social distance is maintained. Furthermore, GIS is helping us monitor the progress of pre-planting activities, such as hole digging, and therefore limiting in-person interaction during the exercise. With the lessons learned, we are cautiously optimistic that 2021 will see the achievement of our goals and actions as outlined in our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

We are pleased to present this report that highlights some of our achievements in 2020. We will continue to focus on restoring degraded landscapes while maintaining our commitment to empowering communities and safeguarding the environment for future generations.

To our partners, friends, and all others who have let us share in their generosity, and on behalf of our dedicated and talented staff and Board, I offer my sincere gratitude. Thank you for inspiring us, invigorating our long-standing relationships, continuously fostering our common vision for a greener, cleaner world, and furthering the legacy of Prof. Wangari Maathai.

With gratitude,
Jane Gitau
Chair of the Board



Mainstream Advocacy

Wangari Maathai Day 2020

Since 2012, Africa Environment Day has been celebrated in conjunction with Wangari Maathai Day on March 3rd, to pay tribute to the late Nobel Laureate's green legacy. It is an opportunity to highlight the emerging environmental challenges in the continent.

This year's celebration was held at Freedom Corner, Uhuru Park, a place that symbolizes all Professor Maathai stood for. Environment Cabinet Secretary Keriako Tobiko, in a statement delivered by the Chief Conservator of Forests Julius Kamau, reiterated the government's commitment to working closely with the Green Belt Movement – a brainchild of Prof. Maathai. The statement acknowledged the role played by the Green Belt Movement and the civil society in the conservation of the environment, forests, and other natural resources.

Organizations represented at the event included the Kenya Defence Forces, Wangari Maathai Institute, Kenya Forest Service, World Resources Institute, Kenya National Chamber of Commerce, the European Union, and the University of Nairobi, among others.



Guests at the event plant a ceremonial tree

One conspicuous feature was the termination of a 20-day conservation walk from Kampala Uganda to Uhuru Park –Kenya by Ugandan environmental activist Gerima Mustapha to save the endangered Shea tree in East Africa.

The regional event was hosted by the African Union in Freetown, Sierra Leone, under the theme: “Our Resources, Our Future”. The event aimed at raising awareness of the pressing environmental challenges facing the world, including deforestation, climate change, pollution, etc.

GBM and partners up in arms over Nairobi expressway

A spirited campaign by the Daima Coalition, of which the Green Belt Movement is a founding member, continues to demand openness from the government as plans to construct the multi-billion-shilling expressway from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport to Westlands in Nairobi start afresh.

The KShs. 62 Billion development is being undertaken as a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with the China Road and Bridge Construction Corporation (Kenya) (CRBC) on a build-operate-transfer model. That is, CRBC will finance, build and operate the tolled road for 30 years during which it will recover its costs, with interest, before transferring its operation to the Kenyan National Highways Authority (KeNHA).

The project faced opposition due to reports that it would hive off 23 meters of Uhuru Park, which KeNHA considers part of the road reserve for Uhuru Highway. A spirited campaign led by Daima Coalition saw KeNHA rollback on this position, giving assurances that the design of the road has been amended to ensure it did not affect Uhuru Park. Despite this promise and heavy public censure, construction of the project has began even though the PPP entities have failed to share their new plans or heed the legal appeal to stop the project.

Through the NET appeal (NET/19/2020) by the Green Belt Movement, Natural Justice, Katiba Institute, and Wildlife Direct Vs the National Environment Management Authority of Kenya (NEMA), KENHA, and CRBC, we are opposing the irregular issuance of the EIA License by NEMA, the environmental impacts of the road construction and the inadequate public engagement.



Tree Planting and Water Harvesting

Greening Mt. Kenya in partnership with Mainichi Newspapers

The Green Belt Movement cherishes the long-term collaboration with the Mainichi Newspapers Limited and the people of Japan, a partnership spanning over a decade that supports communities through the Mt. Kenya Greening Project.

In 2020, we mobilized local communities to rehabilitate 20 hectares of degraded forest land through the planting of 20,000 indigenous tree seedlings in Hombe forest in the Mt. Kenya Forest Ecosystem.

During the same period, communities in Mathira continued to receive conservation and livelihood benefits from previous interventions. These included reduced soil erosion on the farms, increased access to water for household use through water harvesting, and increased farm yields from sustainable land use management which led to an increase in household income. As the Covid-19 pandemic hit local economies, these benefits created a recovery system in the community.

This project is hinged on the Mottainai concept of 3Rs (Reduction of environmental pollution, Reuse of natural resources, and Recycling). The concept raises awareness that resources are limited and should therefore be managed with respect and gratitude and without wasting, which is part of the conservation activities. Through the incorporation of Mottainai concept, the project has sustained the local communities' impetus towards landscape restoration activities, good agricultural practices and improved livelihoods initiatives that are ecologically viable.



Sampling exercise in one of the planted sites in Hombe Forest to determine the survival rate



A previously restored site within Mt. Kenya Forest

Catalyzing Landscape Restoration for Effective Watershed Management and Community Empowerment in Kenya's Water Towers

The Mt. Elgon and Mau Complex are among the five main water towers in Kenya. Despite their critical role, these water towers have been seriously degraded and continue to be impacted by several activities, including irregular and ill-planned settlements, overgrazing, uncontrolled and illegal forest resource extraction, and the conversion of forest land to agriculture.

Since 2018, GBM has been working in partnership with ECOSIA GmbH from Germany to restore degraded forest watersheds in the Mau Complex, Mt. Elgon, and Cherangany water towers. During Phase 2 (2019-2020) in Mt. Elgon and the Mau Complex, GBM planted 800,000 trees to help reestablish a sustainable water supply through the protection of water catchments within the water towers. In the long term, these trees will also restore habitat for wildlife, stabilize steep slopes prone to landslides, and secure livelihoods.

We are thankful to the Kenya Defence Forces for their continued partnership across our tree planting projects.



Community tree nursery group members in Makutano Forest prepare holes ahead of the planting exercise



All the tree seedlings are sourced from GBM-accredited community tree nurseries



KDF officers join GBM tree nursery members during a seedling transportation exercise in Nakuru County



Livelihoods and Gender

Rewarding conservation champions



Distributing beehives and high-value fruit trees to farmers in Nyeri County

Economic incentive measures play a crucial role in nature conservation at all levels of society – local through to global. At the community level, though, it is particularly important to have appropriate incentive measures for nature conservation as natural resource use is so closely linked with livelihood issues at this level.

In the context of nature conservation, economic incentives make it more worthwhile in financial and livelihood terms for communities to maintain, rather than to degrade, natural resources in the course of their economic activity. GBM developed and adopted a reward scheme for the conservation of forests, biodiversity, soil, and water in Gura and Sagana watersheds in Nyeri County. Over the years, the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme has given specific rewards commensurate to individual and group conservation efforts.

Under this scheme, conservation champions in Upper Tana received multipurpose jikos, beehives, high-value fruit trees, and dairy goats. In 2020, we collected data on the livelihood and conservation impacts of the reward schemes.

In both micro-catchments, 31 dairy goats were issued to different farmers who are now benefiting from the sale and consumption of milk and manure for farming as well. Additionally, 80 farmers received 10 meter long polythene sheets for arrowroot farming. Since issuance, they have harvested twice yielding an average of 40kgs per harvest.

In the long term, PES can positively affect poverty reduction through improved resilience of communities and increased land productivity while substantially improving community-level forest conservation. Economic incentives present a valuable tool for both nature conservation and sustainable livelihood development.

Community entrepreneurship through sustainable waste management

The Green Belt Movement rolled out an awareness creation program using different media modes and focusing on specific groups of the population in the counties. GBM has been promoting waste entrepreneurship opportunities in recycling and composting and the 3Rs of waste as an alternative to the dumpsite economy. GBM has established 'waste to wealth networks and registered over 30 groups who are engaged in 3Rs activities (waste recycling and composting) in Kisumu, Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nakuru and also aims at reaching out to other counties.

This is achieved through enhanced pricing of recyclables, collection schemes with the Kenya Association of Manufacturers, promotion of composting, and linking the recycling groups to domestic industries.

GBM minimizes the releases of UPOPs from open burning through training initiatives involving: the health effects of open burning, composting, simple recycling techniques, and working with the waste collectors to ensure waste segregation at the household level.

Assessing community groups for organic compost certification

GBM conducted assessment visits to various community groups producing organic fertilizer in Nakuru County. The exercise entailed visiting the groups' composting sites, and holding discussions with group members. Additionally, we inspected the composting process including the source of materials, transportation, labeling, and made recommendations on the process and products in line with the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) certification.

For better understanding of the certification process, GBM visited the KEBS Rift Valley Regional Office in Nakuru, and conducted preliminary discussions with the Regional Manager and the Principal Quality Assurance Officer who were thrilled with the community's initiative. They provided a comprehensive procedure on the certification process and emphasized the need to maintain controls of all factors in all stages of production. The KEBS certification issued is valid for one year and new applications are done yearly.

For better access to the local, national and regional market, there is a need to certify the quality of organically produced fertilizers. Organic Certification will give a written assurance that production and processing methods employed conform to organic standards and the certified products will be allowed to use the KEBS diamond mark of certification.



Organic fertilizer on sale in Nakuru County



A team from GBM and KEBS inspect one of the composting structures

Consultative forum on waste to energy

Through the Sound Chemicals Management Mainstreaming and UPOPs Reduction project, we trained representatives of CBOs in Kisumu, Mombasa, and Nakuru Counties. These CBOs represent communities involved in recycling, waste collection, and composting. The respective county governments were also represented.

This training has empowered the CBOs and as a result, they have increased the quantities of waste they handle, and more people in these counties are now aware of the 3Rs of waste management – reuse, reduce and recycle. However, there is a need to link these groups with companies that deal with waste recyclers including recovery of energy from waste.

It was noted that there is a need to foster collaborations and partnerships to realize the full potential of the waste recycling sector as well as the many opportunities presented. Kenya, being party to the Stockholm convention and other multilateral environmental agreements, is obligated to follow the guidelines set in ensuring that waste is managed sustainably to safeguard human and environmental health.



Participants at the forum held in Nakuru County



Climate Change

Community- Based Measurement, Reporting and Verification System on Carbon Emission

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today and Kenya is no exception. Climate change and climate variability pose major threats not only to the environment but to economic growth and sustainable development. Over the years, the increased intensity and magnitude of weather-related disasters in Kenya has aggravated natural resources and contributes to insecurity. The country is working to reduce its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by transitioning to a low carbon development pathway that delivers benefits including reduced GHG emissions, sustainable development, green growth, and resource efficiency.

With support from the International Climate Initiative through Earth Innovation Institute, the Green Belt Movement has been implementing a project on transitioning to low carbon rural development in Nandi and Nakuru counties. One of the project milestones was the development of a county climate change Measurement, Reporting, and Verification system (MRV) to assess and quantify the county’s emissions at the household level.

Previously, there has been no data documenting the impact of these initiatives and strategies at the local level. GBM’s MRV system will close this gap by providing measurable and verifiable data to support the transition to low emission rural development at the county level. The system is designed and developed to respond directly to local climate data needs.

We intend to expand the platform beyond the two pilot counties to all other areas where we have ongoing climate change mitigation and adaptation programs. The data is hosted in a dedicated server and will be accessible upon request to county governments, GBM’s partners, and other development agencies, allowing various stakeholders to utilize it in their programs and monitoring activities.

Ultimately, the MRV system will demonstrate the efficacy of certain interventions and influence climate change mitigation and adaptation policies in support of low emissions rural development.

Implementing Strategies for Regional Transitions to Low-Emissions Rural Development in Kenya

A community-based MRV platform for monitoring carbon emissions

A partnership between the Green Belt Movement and International Climate Initiative through the Earth Innovation Institute



Corporate Partnerships

Celebrating 50 years of Earth Day

While COVID-19 forced us to keep our distance, it did not keep our voices and actions to heal Mother Earth down. We held a joint tree planting session with Kenya Forest Service at the Wangari Maathai Corner in Karura Forest to mark this auspicious day on April 22, 2020.

The theme for Earth Day 2020 was 'Climate Action'. The enormous challenge – but also the vast opportunities – of action on climate change have distinguished the issue as the most pressing topic for the 50th anniversary. GBM and the Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) Julius Kamau planted 50 indigenous trees, symbolic of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day.

Speaking at the event, the GBM Chair urged the participants to further the message of tree planting to replenish the earth and heal her wounds, and in Professor Maathai's words, our own.

The CCF noted the fact that the tree planting exercise is a welcome relief at a time when the world needs to heal from the ongoing corona pandemic.

The planting activity was planned to strictly adhere to guidelines against the spread of COVID 19 as outlined by the National Emergency Response Committee on the Corona pandemic. Across the country, our community tree planting groups also took part in various activities to mark Earth Day 2020 as a bold action against climate change.

Urban Tree Planting and School Greening Initiative

The Green Belt Movement champions tree planting in schools by building sustainable relationships with institutions. The aim is to increase environmental awareness and to foster schools' and students' engagement in improving their environment, by actively participating in the process and having their voices heard.

Despite the Covid 19 pandemic that resulted in the shutting down of schools countrywide, we planted a total of 6,500 indigenous and high-value fruit trees in Lenana School, Athi Primary School, and St. Georges Athi Secondary School.

The project also draws support from communities living around the schools. These community members are involved in the planting process and also monitoring the planted trees.



Ongoing planting at Lenana High School, Nairobi County



Other updates

Announcing our new Chair of the Board and Executive Director



Jane Gitau, Chair of the Board

We are delighted to announce the election of Jane Gitau as our new Chair of the Board effective November 14, 2020. Ms. Gitau, currently the Head of Communication at Kenya Seed Company Ltd, has over 20 years of experience in strategic leadership in both corporate and international communications.

She is the President Emeritus & Fellow of the Public Relations Society of Kenya (F. PRSK and the Founder Chair of the Chevening Kenya Alumni Association (ChevKenya). She is also a Fellow & Secretary-General of the African Public Relations Association (F.A.P.R.A). Previously, she has served as a board member to other reputable organizations such as Global Alliance for PR & Communication Management (Portugal) and Trans World Radio.

The Organization is also pleased to declare the appointment of Nyaguthii Chege as the organization's next Executive Director. Ms. Chege brings to the position extensive experience and a wealth of knowledge in sustainable development, public sector governance, and human resource development in the nonprofit and higher education sectors, and international financial institutions.

Ms. Chege is returning to GBM, where she first worked with its founder, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Prof. Wangari Maathai, as the organization's Internal Liaison Officer. Most recently, she served as Director of Human Rights and International Law careers and Lecturer-in-Law at Columbia University School of Law in New York. Previously, she worked at Peking University School of Transnational Law in Shenzhen, China, as a staff attorney at the International Program of the Natural Resources Defense Council, as a consultant at the World Bank in Washington DC, and as a Legal Associate with Simpson, Thacher and Bartlett, a Wall Street law firm.



Nyaguthii Chege, Executive Director

Wangari Maathai celebrated as UON marks 50th anniversary

Pomp and color characterized the University of Nairobi's (UON) 50th anniversary on December 10, 2020. As part of the UON at 50 celebrations, the Wangari Maathai Institute hosted a webinar "My Reflections on Prof. Wangari Maathai: Wangari Maathai Institute" to celebrate the life of Prof. Maathai.

Prof. Stephen Kiama, the UON Vice-Chancellor, gave a detailed presentation of the various works of the late Prof. Maathai noting her unique approach to involve everyone in the community in various conservation activities and the passion she had to ensure all her activities had a long-lasting impact. He highlighted the thinking behind the formation of the Wangari Maathai Institute including the various community-driven interventions in peace and environmental conservation. Prof. Maathai had envisioned that the institute would take the lead in research, policy influencing, experiential learning, community outreach, and global networking.

GBM named a Global Alliance Partner of The Earthshot Prize

THE EARTHSHOT PRIZE

GLOBAL ALLIANCE PARTNER

October 8, 2020, marked the launch of The Earthshot Prize, the most prestigious global environment prize in history, incentivizing worldwide change with a decade of action to repair our planet.

The Green Belt Movement is proud to be a Global Alliance Partner and to have worked closely with The Royal Foundation on the development of The Earthshot Prize. This project will support the global effort to protect and restore the environment while also turning the current pessimism surrounding environmental issues into optimism, highlighting the ability of human ingenuity to bring about change.

The Earthshots*

Together, the five Earthshots, – ‘Protect and restore nature’, ‘Clean our air’, ‘Revive our oceans’, ‘Build a waste-free world’ and ‘Fix our climate’, aim to generate new ways of thinking, as well as new technologies, systems, policies and solutions. By bringing these five critical issues together, The Earthshot Prize recognizes the interconnectivity between environmental challenges and the urgent need to tackle them together.

Taking inspiration from President John F. Kennedy’s Moonshot which united millions of people around an organising goal to put man on the moon and catalysed the development of new technology in the 1960s, The Earthshot Prize is centred around five ‘Earthshots’ – simple but ambitious goals for our planet which, if achieved by 2030, will improve life for us all, for generations to come.

Finding the solutions*

Five, one million-pound prizes will be awarded each year for the next ten years, providing at least 50 solutions to the world’s greatest environmental problems by 2030.

The Earthshot Prize is about much more than awarding achievement – it is a decade of action to convene the environmental world with funders, businesses and individuals to maximise impact and take solutions to scale, to celebrate the people and places driving change; and to inspire people all over the world to work together to repair the planet.

*Information extracted from the Earthshot Prize website

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