

Ukambani is moving from brown to green

Pupils in Kitui County are growing trees in their schools to fight drought in a programme supported by Kengen foundation

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On a Thursday afternoon as the hot sun descends upon the vast fields, we make our way to Muthuani Primary School in Kitui County. Brown bare fields covered by a willowing cloud of fine dust, greet us.

Venturing further into the school compound one gets a glimpse of a young woodlot dotted with green semi-tall



ABOUT GIC PROJECT

- The Green Initiative Challenge is in its second phase. The first phase benefited 81 schools in Machakos and Embu counties. An additional 120 schools from the three counties are benefiting from the phase two of the programme.
- Schools that record high survival rates for the trees and exhibit innovativeness in maintaining the trees are awarded with school trips, water tanks and cash to motivate them.

trees. The young green trees resilience is evident, especially under the prevailing circumstances.

Water here is a scarce commodity and students fetch it from the nearby Kiambere dam to water the trees. It is such determination and dedication that is changing the topography of their school from brown to green, albeit slowly.

Seeing the contrast of the woodlot and the rest of the school compound in the past six months has brought hope that it is possible to transform the environment.

Joyce Mutuku, a class seven pupil beams with pride as she stands next to a tree she has been tending to since March this year. Her tree is the tallest in the school woodlot.

Her secret she says has been mulching and watering it at least twice a week. The lessons she acquired from the green club in school have inspired her to plant three more trees at home. "I have planted *muringa* and *aloevera* at home after

acquiring the seedlings from my neighbour. I love caring for the trees because they give us timber, shelter, beautify the environment and act as windbreakers," says Joyce.

At Katuuni Mixed Day Secondary School, William Muisyo tends to trees in the school woodlot with keen attention. William, chair of the environmental club in his school, enjoys caring for the environment. So deep is his love for environment that he has introduced a school garden where he, alongside members of the environmental club, have planted bananas, cassava and *sukumawiki*. The large green blossoming *sukumawiki* and banana plants offer a sharp contrast to the rest of the school compound.

To ensure the trees the environmental club planted in March do not dry up, William, who lives a few kilometres from the school, rented a house in a nearby market so that he could water them daily. William and Joyce are among many other students in schools in the arid and semi-arid areas of Kitui, Embu and Machakos that are planting trees to transform the outlook of the areas.

Under Green Initiative Challenge, a corporate social responsibility programme of Kengen foundation, the culture of environmental conservation through afforestation is being inculcated among the school children. In partnership with Bamburi Cement and Better globe Forestry, the GIC programme offers schools seedlings and technical support to grow woodlots.

"We give *Melia Volkensii* and *Casia siamea* seedlings to the participating schools as well as fruit seedlings," says Anthony Igecha, Senior Programmes Officer at KenGen Foundation.

The two species of trees are fast growing and resistant to drought with various benefits.

Schools can for instance cut firewood from *Cassia siamea* without necessarily felling it. *Melia Volkensii* on the other hand is medicinal and produces hardwood timber when mature, thus can be sold to generate an income.

DIY: CASH IN TRASH WITH Faith Chebet @chebetkorir



Recycling cutlery

Stacks of cutlery just keep piling up in drawers. Although we might on occasion appreciate antique cutlery, most of us stick to our everyday sets, leaving inherited sets all packed up. Here are a few ideas to recycle cutlery and make a few coins as well.

Reuse them around the garden

Forks are useful when transplanting seedlings – use them to lift the plant's tender new roots out of their starter tray. They can also be used to temporarily pin thin runners in place if you want, for example, strawberries, to spread in a certain direction. Knives and spoons also make fun row markers or plant labels in pots.

Coat hooks and cupboard handles

Sturdy cutlery can be bent into fun coat hooks or key hooks. They can also be used to make fun kitchen cupboard handles – attached to the door either through the bowl of the spoon or fork or through the handle. And if you're doing that, why not make a couple more standalone hooks for fun curtain tiebacks?

Jewellery

There is loads of gorgeous jewellery made from old knives, forks and spoons. At a most basic level, all you need is an old fork, some pliers and if jewellery isn't your thing, they can be used for other accessories too.

Frame them as art

Best way to work with old cutlery as art is to paint them either with matte or white spray. A splash of neon makes them brighter. Just stick them with glue on specific areas in the house.

News brief

The Clean Energy Ministerial's Global Lighting and Energy Access Partnership (Global LEAP) competition to find off-grid refrigerators is now accepting nominations.

The competition will offer three innovative prizes to spur innovations in solar refrigeration technology while

also recognising best-in-class commercially available off-grid refrigerators.

The total award purse has increased to Sh60 million (US\$600,000) after DFID's Impact Programme (I21) became the latest partner to join Global LEAP, the US Agency for International

Development (USAID) through Scaling Off-Grid Energy: A Grand Challenge for Development, and the US Government's Power Africa Initiative.

With contributions from both USAID and DFID, each of the three innovation prizes in the competition are expected to be worth Sh20 million (US\$200,000.)

Commercially available winners and finalists will also be eligible for participation in a new programme designed to scale up clean energy access markets by incentivising bulk procurement of outstanding off-grid appliances.

"Off-grid refrigeration is one of the demand drivers for solar home systems

and microgrids, and it holds unique potential to unlock economic and social progress for the 600 million people living off the grid in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the over one billion lacking electricity globally," said USAID Power Africa Initiative Coordinator Andrew Herscowitz. - MILLIAM MURIGI

If you can make a solar fridge, here is your chance