

Women Leading Reforestation and Climate Action in Kenya



Figure 1: NETFUND supported fruit tree nursery establishment at Chebara ATC

Across Kenya, landscapes are feeling the strain of years of forest loss, changing weather patterns, and pressure from growing communities. When forests thin out, streams dry, soils lose strength, and farms produce less. In most rural homes, the people who feel this first are women because they depend heavily on the environment to keep families running.

Before organised restoration efforts began, many women were spending long hours searching for firewood and water. Yields from their small farms were unpredictable. With rising costs of school fees, food, and healthcare, most households were stretched thin. Opportunities to earn money close to home were limited, and women rarely had platforms where their voices could influence how natural resources were managed.

Community initiatives supported by NETFUND stepped into this picture, not as charity, but as practical help. Women's groups received training on raising tree seedlings, restoring degraded areas, and running small green enterprises. They also got information on climate-smart ways of farming and using natural resources so that the land could recover. What changed was not just knowledge women started organising themselves better, forming stronger groups, and gaining confidence to take part in community decisions.

Linda Kipchumba, from a Mau-adjacent village, says the forest decline once affected everything from farm yields to her household expenses. After joining a community nursery group trained under these interventions, she now earns income from selling seedlings. It is not a miracle solution, but it has made school fees and basic needs more manageable. She explains simply: "At least now I have something I can depend on."

In Kakamega, boundary protection activities created opportunities for women like Mary. She used to rely on casual labour, which came and went depending on the season. Joining restoration work gave her more stable earnings and allowed her to participate in community meetings where women had previously remained quiet. For her, the biggest change is having a voice: "I can speak because I also contribute."

Salome, from a community facing soil erosion, started producing indigenous seedlings and simple eco-friendly products after receiving training. She now earns a small but steady income and has even taught two younger women how to run similar enterprises.

These stories are not about big profits or instant transformation they show what happens when local people, especially women, get practical tools and information. As more seedlings are planted and degraded areas recovered, water sources become more reliable, soil improves, and farms respond better to rain. These environmental changes, though gradual, make everyday life easier for households.

Women's involvement in restoration has also strengthened community cooperation. When they work together in groups, they gain leadership experience, support each other economically, and reduce the pressure that pushes many into unsafe or unsustainable practices.

The link is simple: when the environment is cared for, livelihoods become more stable. And when women have the chance to participate fully, families and communities gain.

Kenya's bigger picture shows that local actions seedling by seedling, acre by acre can make a difference when people on the ground lead the way. The women contributing to these efforts are not doing it for recognition; they are doing it because healthier land means a more secure future for their children.

This story, at its heart, is about everyday people responding to environmental challenges with practical solutions. It is about women who are restoring both the land and their ability to provide for their families one step at a time.

And while these efforts are driven by the communities themselves, NETFUND's involvement remains an important part of the progress being made. Through practical training, support to local groups, and guidance on climate-smart practices, the Fund has helped women access knowledge and opportunities that strengthen both their livelihoods and their landscapes. It's not about big promises just steady, consistent support that makes it easier for communities to keep going. As restoration work continues in places like Mau, Kakamega, and other affected areas, NETFUND's commitment to working alongside women and supporting community-led solutions remains a key piece of ensuring these gains last into the future.



Figure 2: Women involvement in forest restoration initiatives in Mtelo, West Pokot County

