

## **SEGERGER WOMEN CONSERVATION GROUP**

### **TOPIC: A JOURNEY OF CULTURE, RENEWAL, AND EMPOWERMENT OF SENGWER WOMEN**



*Segeberger women preparing their tree nursery (photo credit; Naomi Kuto)*

The Segeberger Women's Conservation Group, rooted in the Sengwer indigenous community carries forward a long-standing tradition of living in harmony with nature. The Sengwer, who reside along the Cherangani Hills and Kapolet Forest, are historically hunters and gatherers. Conservation has always been a way of life for our people, as we rely on the forest for essential resources such as honey and wild meat. This deep connection to nature is central to our identity and cultural practices.

However, in recent years, government regulations aimed at protecting forests have restricted our access to these ancestral lands. While these laws are designed to preserve the environment, they often overlook the indigenous communities like ours, who have conserved these lands for generations and

whose traditional ways of life has contributed immensely to the conservation of our forests and our land.

These restrictions, which limit our ability to enter the forest, have only strengthened our resolve to protect and maintain our natural resources. We understand that conservation is not just an activity—it is a duty to safeguard our land and heritage, especially in the face of policies that threaten our access to it.



*The women holding a catch up after work (photo credit; Naomi Kuto)*

The Segerger Women Conservation Group base their work on this cultural and environmental background. Initially part of a mixed-gender self-help group, the women focused on conservation projects, including the cultivation and sale of indigenous tree seedlings. However, conflicts within the group, particularly the silencing of women's voices, led to a split. The men often made decisions without consulting the women, leaving the women to feel marginalized in matters that deeply impacted their work and the community.

Determined to reclaim our agency, the women formed a separate group, creating a space where their voices and ideas could flourish. In a recent discussion, the women expressed their desire for a second trial, this time with proper support and leadership. “

With the backing of Dare to Trust, and the guidance of partners, we began rebuilding the project from the ground up, determined to avoid the missteps of the past” said one of the women.



*The women working on tubes before arranging them in nursery beds (photo credit;Naomi kuto)*

Today, the women conservation work is thriving. The first bunch of trees in the nursery are indigenous species, which the women are now planting on their family parcels of land. This is just the beginning, as the project continues to expand with plans for more indigenous trees and fruit-bearing plants that not only restore the land but also contribute to indigenous food security. The group's progress is visible in the fields, where women are taking ownership of their environmental future.



*An indigenous seedling that bears wild fruits and holds water at our community water springs (photo credit; Naomi Kuto)*



*Eucalyptus seedling that women agreed to plant due to its use to building and fencing their cattle fields- this is an alternative as indigenous seedling are not to be cut down (photo credit; Naomi Kuto)*

“Beginning in November, we will also launch storytelling sessions to share our experiences. These sessions will allow us to present our side of the story—why we embarked on this journey, how we are making it happen, and what it means for the future of our community. Storytelling will be a powerful tool to highlight the challenges we face, the cultural importance of conservation, and the vital role that women are playing in this endeavour. In the future, we hope to expand this initiative to focus on storytelling of our indigenous ways of life with the aim to passing the knowledge on to the young ones in our community”, the leader of Segerger women group.

“As we continue to grow, the Segerger Women’s Conservation Group remains committed to both environmental sustainability and the empowerment of women in our community. Our work is about more than planting trees; it is about preserving our culture, our land, and ensuring that the next generation has a voice in the stewardship of our natural resources. We look forward to fostering more productive projects that blend conservation with women’s empowerment, as we work to safeguard our ancestral lands from external pressures,” said one of the women.