

## PROJECT PROFILE

### Linking Billion Trees Campaign to Funyula Community

The Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship (CABE), a Kenyan-based international knowledge sharing Non-Governmental organisation (NGO), is furthering 'the global campaign to plant one billion trees worldwide' by acting locally in Funyula division, in Busia district of western Kenya.

CABE recently joined the UNEP Plant for the Planet – *Billion Trees Campaign*. In so doing, the organisation has pledged (*via* the website [www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign](http://www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign)) to plant 50,000 tree seedlings in 2007 to increase forest cover and arrest environmental deterioration in areas bordering the Lake Victoria and River Sio basin.

The ecological degradation in this region was caused by the campaign during the 1960s in an effort to clear trees in the area for the eradication of tsetse fly infestation. Since then, few steps have been taken to restore the destroyed forest cover. CABE and its partners aim to arrest environmental deterioration through an integrated approach of linking tree farming with smallholder and youth entrepreneurship in areas bordering the Lake Victoria and river Sio basin – in order to reduce pressure on tree resources.

At the national level, CABE as an active member of the network of NGOs, public and private institutions that have recently formed the Kenya chapter of Plant for the Planet - *Billion Tree Campaign* (hereafter BTC-K Chapter), will help to create awareness and campaign for tree planting and caring in Kenya. UNEP has also endorsed fund-raising, promotional and networking activities of CABE towards the campaign.

This tree planting initiative and involvement of women and youth is borne out of the fact that multiple agricultural, livestock, fishing activities and petty trade in Busia district of Western Province in Kenya, and especially in Funyula division, has increasingly come into conflict. This has raised environmental concerns, which include:

- Decline in biodiversity and disappearance of vital species, including medicinal plants;
- Poor land use practices leading to soil erosion and soil infertility, and poor crop yields;
- Deterioration of water quality in water pans and in Lake Victoria due to increased silt load from bare farmland;
- Destruction of wetlands by small-scale farmers encroaching into the areas; and
- Deforestation of existing forests, especially along the Samia Hills.



To address these negative effects on the environment, CAFE and its partners — Buyukha community and the local scouts — has set up a multi-purpose tree nursery at Busijo site (which is 3 km from Sio Port trading centre) with an initial production capacity of 50,000 seedlings. This will supply indigenous and exotic trees to private individuals and 15 local public institutions. Ten primary schools, a technical college, 2 secondary schools, a police station, and a Health centre have been identified for the 2007 **Phase I** tree-planting agenda. **Phase II** will cover the entire division. CAFE and its local partners is organizing tree planting and knowledge sharing week in the community from **May 14, with a climax on Saturday, May 19 2007**. CAFE has also invited members of BTC-K Chapter to take the global tree planting campaign to the local environment of Funyula division and hold their second meeting there.

### **Innovative aspects of the initiative**

This initiative is innovative in the sense that it entails a shift from the tradition. In the past, agro-forestry activities targeted adult men and women with special attention to women because of the central roles they played in farming and home care. However, the prevailing land tenure system in the project area associates tree planting with land claims by male land owners. This in turn discourages women from planting trees, especially the slow-maturing tree species.

Over the years, lessons have been learnt on choice of land and tree species to be planted by female and male farmers for their differentiated benefits. This knowledge can lead to a negotiated innovation process among different users. Also, past focus on women made it difficult for them to plant and maintain the tree orchards, mainly due to high demand on their labour. Left out of the equation was the role of youth, who could play an important role in the management of water and tree resources in the schools and communities. There are many benefits to be derived by the youth, schools and the community at large. The youth will enhance their skills in the management of water and tree resources. They will also derive income from the tree seedlings and products from orchards established in their homes.

The schools will look beautiful from the well-kept lawns and live fences. They will also derive income from the sale of tree seedlings and products from the school orchards. Other benefits include selling of timber, and making school desks and other furniture from the same timber. The community will benefit from the trees provided by schools to community members on the basis of cash or in-kind contribution, as well as in the form of trees established in their homes by their school going children. The latter will contribute to the community-wide reforestation.

We are seeking your support to this initiative and participation to recognise and mentor the youth in planting and caring of tree resources. For further information, please contact:

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### **Route to Sio Port Trading Centre:**

*Sio Port (or Bujwang'a) Trading Centre is located in Funyula Division, Busia District. To reach there, please take the Kisumu-Busia road --and alight at Bumala Market. From Bumala market take the Sio Port – Port Victoria Road Matatu. Sio Port Trading Centre is located 15Km from Bumala Market. At Sio Port Trading Centre, ask for **Bujwang'a School** which is the site for the **19<sup>th</sup> May Tree Planting event**.*