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**Ecofeminism in Wangari Maathai's Environmental Activism**

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**Bhawani Shankar Adhikari Ph.D.**

[bhawanishankar.adhikari1@gmail.com](mailto:bhawanishankar.adhikari1@gmail.com)

Associate professor, Department of English,  
Nepal Sanskrit University, Dang, Nepal  
Balmiki Campus, Exhibition Road, Kathmandu,  
Orcid Number 0009-0001-7363-6048

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**Abstract**

The article aims to examine how ecofeminism has been portrayed in Wangari Maathai's various books, journals, reports, and the stories of the "Foresters without Diploma" as an example and her broader environmental activism. The participation of the women in the Green Belt Movement effectively has addressed local issues and has preserved Nairobi's natural beauty. Ecofeminism has not only resolved pressing women's issues but also sustained environmental aesthetics. Women's active involvement has demonstrated their capability for independence, skill development, and reshaping social structures, significantly enhancing their lifestyles in Kenya. Wangari Mathai's environmental activism has drawn global issues and the awareness to be concentrated and contemplated by the global citizens, including from the top levels of the presidents to the grassroots levels for the conservation of the ecology and the environment as well as to protect the Earth. The research has been carried out with a critical and analytical approach by applying the theory of ecofeminism propounded by various ecofeminist theorists like Shiva, Mies, King, and Adams as the lens of analyzing the environmental activism of Wangari Mathai. Wangari Mathai's various works, memoirs, and stories have been taken, and the story "Foresters without Diploma" has been adopted as a primary source apart from her other works, and related articles have been taken as secondary sources. And intersectionality of issues, environmental advocacy, legacy and inspiration, community development, and women's roles in eco-conservation in Kenya. The theory of ecofeminism has been found to be an analog in the analysis.

**Keywords:** Ecofeminism, exotified, Green Belt, empowerment, expectations

**Introduction**

Eco-conservation represents a promising future for humanity, embodying a proactive and necessary measure that must be taken in time, lest it surpass human consciousness and capability. Ecofeminism specifically highlights women's involvement in and leadership of environmental conservation efforts. It emphasizes women's roles in nurturing, planting, and caring for nurseries and plants to foster eco-friendly environments. This approach not only

leads to ecological benefits but also contributes to economic advancement. The significant and commendable impact of women's involvement in ecofeminism is exemplified in Wangari Maathai's "Foresters without Diploma." (Maathai, n.d.). Wangari Maathai has been working as a renowned environmentalist, activist, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate known for her significant contributions to environmental conservation and women's empowerment in Kenya. In this sense, "Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development" by Vandana Shiva explores the intersection of women's roles in sustainable development and environmental conservation. The first chapter typically sets the stage by discussing the historical and cultural contexts in which women have traditionally been stewards of natural resources and how this role has been marginalized in modern industrialized societies (Shiva 1-30). The middle chapters delve deeper into specific case studies, examples, and theoretical frameworks that connect women's traditional knowledge, ecological sustainability, and economic development (Shiva 1-40). In the same way, the final chapter synthesizes the key arguments and proposes solutions or actions for integrating women's perspectives into environmental and developmental policies (Shiva 1-40). Likewise, "Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development" explores the crucial role of women in sustainable development and environmental conservation. Vandana Shiva argues that women, particularly in traditional societies, have often been the primary stewards of natural resources and biodiversity. She examines how women's knowledge and practices can contribute to ecological sustainability and social justice, challenging dominant development paradigms that ignore or marginalize these contributions (Shiva 30-150). "Ecofeminism" by Vandana Shiva explores the intersection of feminism and ecology, highlighting how the exploitation of women and the environment are interconnected. Moreover, "Ecofeminism" argues that there are fundamental links between the domination of women and the exploitation of nature. Vandana Shiva examines how patriarchal structures contribute to environmental degradation and advocates for a feminist approach to environmental issues, emphasizing the importance of women's knowledge and leadership in sustainable development (Shiva 1-120). Moreover, "Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge" by Vandana Shiva explores the exploitation and commodification of biodiversity and indigenous knowledge by multinational corporations.

In "Biopiracy," Vandana Shiva argues against the appropriation of biological resources and traditional knowledge from indigenous communities by powerful entities for commercial gain. She critiques the concept of biopiracy, where patents and intellectual property rights are used to privatize and control genetic resources and traditional medicines, often without benefiting the communities that developed them (Shiva 1-120). Similarly, "Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace" by Vandana Shiva explores the concept of "earth democracy," advocating for a worldview that integrates sustainability, social justice, and peace. Further, in "Earth Democracy," Vandana Shiva argues for a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive and sustainable society based on principles of biodiversity, ecological integrity, and social equity. She critiques globalization and corporate control over resources, advocating for decentralized, community-based systems that respect the rights of nature and empower local communities (Shiva 1-120). Other ecofeminists, too, have pleaded for the role of women in the act of preservation of ecology and the environment.

"Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor" by Maria Mies examines the relationship between patriarchy, capitalism, and the exploitation of women's labor within the global economic system. Maria Mies argues that capitalism and patriarchy are interconnected systems that exploit women's labor on a global scale. She explores how women's unpaid and underpaid work within households and communities supports capitalist accumulation and perpetuates gender inequalities. Mies critiques the division of labor that places women in marginalized and precarious positions, often in low-wage and informal sectors of the economy (Mies 1-150). It introduces the theoretical framework linking patriarchy, capitalism, and the international division of labor. It has a detailed examination of case studies and examples from different regions, illustrating how women's labor contributes to global economic processes and the perpetuation of patriarchal structures. It has discussed policy implications, critiques of mainstream development models, and proposals for alternative economic and social systems that prioritize gender equality and sustainability.

"The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology" by Ynestra King explores the interconnections between feminist theory and ecological principles.

Ynestra King examines how feminist perspectives can inform and enrich ecological discourse and vice versa. She argues that both feminism and ecology share common ground in challenging hierarchical and exploitative relationships, whether those are between genders or between humans and the environment. King explores the potential for a reciprocal relationship where feminist insights can contribute to environmental sustainability, and ecological awareness can enhance feminist struggles for social justice (King, 1-20). "The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory" by Carol J. Adams explores the intersection of feminism, vegetarianism, and animal rights.

Carol J. Adams examines how the consumption of meat and the treatment of animals are intertwined with the oppression of women within patriarchal societies. She argues that both women and animals are objectified and exploited through similar mechanisms of domination and violence perpetuated by cultural norms and practices. Adams critiques the normalization of meat-eating as a symbol of power and control over nature and explores how vegetarianism and veganism can be seen as feminist choices that challenge these oppressive structures (Adams 1–100). Adams made a theory of ecofeminism as the lens through which to see and interpret the work of art.

According to Scott (299), Wangari Maathai's autobiographical essay "Foresters without Diploma" not only recounts her personal journey but also serves as a poignant reflection of the plight of women in Kenya. It portrays the genuine contributions of Kenyan women through the Green Belt Movement, inspiring women globally as a model to emulate. This narrative has served as a powerful motivator, particularly for marginalized women in impoverished areas, demonstrating how local issues can be effectively addressed at the grassroots level by women themselves. Maathai's actions have had a profound positive impact on her community, influencing friends, neighbors, and families alike. She stands out

as a rare activist whose courage and initiatives have brought about transformative changes on a global scale.

According to Rakoczy (75), Wangari Maathai's impact transcends borders through her simple yet profound act of tree planting, which has facilitated sustainable development and job creation for rural women not only in Kenya but worldwide. Maathai asserts, "When we plant trees, we plant seeds of peace and seeds of hope" (Scott 199), emphasizing her belief in the transformative power of environmental stewardship. Her contributions extend to global citizens, illustrating that positive initiatives can originate from any individual, benefiting both humanity and the planet's biodiversity. Influenced by her African cultural heritage and Christian faith, Maathai has cultivated an ecological spirituality that guides her environmental advocacy.

According to Brooks (14), Wangari Maathai emerged as a pioneer and advocate for climate justice, recognizing the urgency of conserving Earth's climate for future generations, as humanity has only one home, the planet Earth. Maathai's grassroots environmental activism focused on achieving social justice by empowering rural women in Kenya to improve their lifestyles through tree-planting initiatives. Her vision for sustainable development was rooted in the simplicity of planting trees, yet she confronted the harsh reality of gender discrimination within society. Maathai reflected on her experiences, stating, "I had never anticipated that I would be discriminated against on the basis of gender as often as I was. . . I found myself challenging the idea that a woman could not be as good as or better than a man" (Maathai, 2007, pp. 117).

Maathai identified gender discrimination in society and recognized the opportunity to address women's issues through tree-planting initiatives. Just as Maathai's authentic grassroots leadership emphasizes the importance of building trust with followers, being passionate about one's work, maintaining self-discipline, consistency, and goal orientation, so too must school leaders exhibit passion for their work (Fullan, 2003), behavior that reflects their values (Starratt, 2012), the ability to foster relationships (Eacott, 2015), and the necessary self-discipline and consistency to guide others toward achievable goals (English, 2015).

Likewise, the conservation of the ecology and environment has been critically analyzed by creating fear in the minds of global citizens and joining them in the act of conserving the planet Earth (Adhikar et al. 1-185). Similarly, saving the planet Earth and the environment, as well as ecology, has become essential by generating fear in the psyches of global citizens (Adhikari 1-161). Furthermore, it has been argued that the planet Earth cannot be conserved without the joint work of global citizens for the protection of the ecology and environment, like the saving of the YARSHAGUMBAISM herbal (Adhikari et al. 1-149). In the same way, ecofeminism has been discussed only in a story of Wangari Mathai's "Foresters without Diploma" (Adhikari, 2022. DOI: 10.3693/RJOE. 2022.72017), but he has analyzed Wangari Mathai's in all works as an ecofeminist activism. These scholars have approached their research from various perspectives, but ecofeminism in detail remains an

area that has not been adequately addressed. Therefore, this research has filled a critical gap by addressing this topic for the first time.

All the aforementioned theorists have pleaded for the conservation of the ecology and environment, but the contribution of Wangari Mathai as environmental activism at a wider level has not been explored yet. The critics have analyzed only Wangari Mathai's story of "Foresters' without a Diploma," but they have left to analyze Wangari Mathai's entire contribution to environmental activism. Hence, the research has filled the gaps by answering the following research questions or presenting the problems.

### **Statement of Problem**

The statement of problem has been concerned with the role of women in the problem of ecology and environment by ignoring the male's role. The research is guided by the following research questions:

- A) How effective has Wangari Mathai's role played in conserving the ecology and environment in Kenya and in the world?
- B) What impact has eco-conservation had on the lives of women who address day-to-day problems through Wangari Mathai's environmental activism in Kenya?

### **Objective of the Study**

The purpose of the research has become to address the burning issues of eco-crisis and to solve the daily problems of life caused by the degrading condition of the ecology and the environment. It has aimed at:

- A) To investigate how effective Wangari Mathai's role has been in conserving the ecology and environment in Kenya and in the world.
- B) To trace out what impact eco-conservation has on the lives of women to address day-to-day problems through Wangari Mathai's environmental activism in Kenya.

### **Methodology of the Research**

The research has been carried out on the various movements of ecofeminism that Wangari Mathai has performed in her life and her various works mainly her story entitled "Foresters without Diploma". It was conducted with descriptive and critical analysis by adopting various critical journals written on the works of Wangari Mathai by experts and researchers as secondary data. The theory of ecofeminism of Carol J. Adams, Ynestra King, Maria Mies, and Vandana Shiva has been applied as the lens of interpretation of Wangari Mathai's works of art as primary data.

### **Significance of the Research**

The significance of the study is to explore the real role and dedication of women in the process of eco-conservation. Women's roles would be an encouraging and ideal example for global women to follow the steps of Kenyan women in solving burning issues by participating in their own activities. The ecofeminist concept would be a more effective and pragmatic one. Women are to be motivated and encouraged to participate in the act of eco-conservation directly or indirectly so that minor issues in life can be solved automatically.

### **Delimitation**

This research is entirely based on the analysis of the various green belt movements and other contributions of Wangari Mathai, her reports, and stories like "Foresters without

Diploma.” It has attempted to reveal the women's dedication and effort to save the forest and to form the Green Belt in Kenya as the women of Kenya have played for the eco-friendly conditions and the women's role has brought change even in the economic activities and the lifestyle of women in Kenya and the similar activities have become possible to carry out even in other parts of the world for the conservation of the ecology and environment for the protection of the planet earth.

### **Eco-Condition**

"The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience" by Wangari Maathai, details the founding principles and practices of the Green Belt Movement.

Wangari Maathai's book outlines the philosophy and achievements of the Green Belt Movement, emphasizing the importance of grassroots environmental conservation and community empowerment. The movement encourages women in Kenya to plant trees to combat deforestation, improve soil health, and provide economic opportunities through sustainable resource management. Maathai underscores the link between environmental sustainability, poverty alleviation, and gender equality, advocating for a holistic approach to development that prioritizes local empowerment and ecological stewardship and introduces the origins of the Green Belt Movement, including Maathai's motivations and the environmental challenges faced in Kenya. Details the methodology and impact of tree planting initiatives, discussing ecological benefits such as reforestation, watershed protection, and biodiversity conservation. Explores the role of women in environmental conservation and community-building, highlighting stories of empowerment and economic independence through sustainable practices (Maathai 1-100). "The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience" serves as both a memoir and a manifesto for environmental activism and community empowerment. It underscores the importance of grassroots initiatives in achieving sustainable development and advocates for a holistic approach to environmental conservation that considers social, economic, and cultural factors, as Adhikari (2024) has unlocked the process of saving the planet Earth by protecting the trees and other fruit-bearing plants for the generation of the economy.

**The Green Belt Movement:** Sharing the Approach and the Experience has outlined Wangari Maathai's vision and the founding principles of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. It emphasizes the importance of grassroots environmental conservation, particularly through tree-planting initiatives led by rural women. Maathai discusses how these efforts address issues such as deforestation, soil erosion, and economic empowerment for women (Maathai 1-150). Overall, it offers insights into Wangari Maathai's visionary leadership, her dedication to environmental stewardship, and the transformative impact of the Green Belt Movement on Kenya's landscape and society. It continues to inspire environmentalists and activists worldwide to engage in similar efforts to protect the planet and promote sustainable development, as Adhikari et al. (2020) have explored the method of conserving ecology and the environment for the protection of the earth and the life of humanity.

**In Unbowed: A Memoir,** Wangari Maathai recounts her personal journey as an environmental activist, feminist, and political leader in Kenya. She shares her experiences growing up, her education, and the challenges she faced while advocating for environmental conservation and social justice. Maathai also reflects on the founding and growth of the Green Belt Movement, its impact on women's empowerment, and the broader implications

for sustainable development. "Unbowed" provides a comprehensive account of Maathai's life and work, spanning her childhood, academic achievements, activism, and political career. The book delves into her struggles against political oppression, her achievements in environmental advocacy, and her efforts to promote democracy and human rights in Kenya. It typically ranges from around 300 to 400 pages, depending on the edition (Mathai 1-400).

### **The Green Belt Movement**

Wangari Maathai has explained the various forms of the thematic order in her Green Belt Movement, which have been presented in different subtitles.

**Environmental Conservation:** Wangari Maathai discusses the importance of environmental conservation, particularly through tree planting, to combat deforestation, soil erosion, and desertification in Kenya.

**Women's Empowerment:** The book highlights how the Green Belt Movement empowers women in rural communities by involving them in tree planting initiatives, providing them with skills and income opportunities, and enhancing their socio-economic status as Adhikari (DOI: 10.3693/RJOE.2022.72017) also has highlighted the similar concept about the connection of the eco-conservation and economy.

**Community Development:** Maathai emphasizes the role of grassroots activism and community participation in sustainable development, advocating for local solutions to environmental challenges as Adhikari (2024) has pointed out the similar concept of the women's participation in plantation of the trees and conserving the ecology and environment.

**Holistic Approach:** The book promotes a holistic approach to environmental and social issues, integrating ecological sustainability with economic empowerment and social justice as Adhikari (DOI: 10.3693/RJOE.2022.72017) has explored the process of conserving the ecology and environment.

**Legacy and Inspiration:** It reflects on the enduring legacy of the Green Belt Movement and Wangari Maathai's contributions to environmental activism. It serves as a testament to her vision of empowering individuals and communities to become agents of positive change for the planet. These main ideas encapsulate Wangari Maathai's vision and the impact of the Green Belt Movement as presented in her book, highlighting the interconnectedness of environmental conservation, community empowerment, and sustainable development as Adhikari et al. (2020) have drawn the similar process of conserving the ecology and environment in the world.

### **In Unbowed: A Memoir**

Wangari Maathai has pointed out different points in the process of conservation of the ecology and the environment, and they have been presented one by one, which she has advocated in her Memoir.

**Personal Journey:** Wangari Maathai narrates her personal story, from her childhood in rural Kenya to becoming a prominent environmental activist and political figure.

**Founding of the Green Belt Movement:** Maathai recounts the origins and growth of the Green Belt Movement, detailing its impact on environmental policy, community empowerment, and women's rights as Adhikari et al. (2020) have drawn the similar idea of conserving the ecology and environment.

**Environmental Advocacy:** The memoir explores Maathai's advocacy for environmental conservation, sustainable development, and biodiversity protection in Kenya and beyond, as Adhikari (2020) has pleaded for the conservation of the ecology and environment in the world.

**Intersectionality of Issues:** Maathai reflects on the interconnectedness of environmental issues with broader social, economic, and political challenges, advocating for integrated approaches to sustainable development. Overall, Wangari Maathai's environmental activism exemplifies ecofeminist principles through her emphasis on women's leadership, holistic approaches to environmental and social issues, advocacy for sustainable development, and global impact in promoting environmental conservation and justice (Maathai 1-150). Maathai explores the spiritual and ethical dimensions of environmental conservation, advocating for a deeper connection between humanity and nature, as Adhikari et al. (2020) have explained about the role of conservation of ecology and environment in preserving the earth.

**"Replenishing the Earth: Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World"** by Wangari Maathai explores the intersection of environmental sustainability with spiritual and ethical values. It has been classified into various categories in thematic order.

**Spiritual Ecology:** Wangari Maathai discusses the importance of spiritual values in environmental conservation and sustainable development. She emphasizes that caring for the Earth is not only a practical necessity but also a spiritual duty rooted in compassion, respect for life, and interconnectedness with nature as Adhikari (2024) has discussed the role of spirituality in conserving the natural beauty for the entire humanity.

**Healing and Renewal:** The book advocates for healing both ourselves and the world through environmental stewardship. Maathai argues that by restoring and protecting the natural environment, we can also heal social injustices, strengthen communities, and promote peace and well-being globally and such ideas have been generated even by Adhikari et al (2020).

**Ethical Responsibility:** Maathai challenges individuals and societies to recognize their ethical responsibility towards the Earth and future generations. She calls for ethical leadership, accountability, and collective action to address environmental challenges such as climate change, deforestation, and pollution and in this respect Adhikari et al (2020) have drawn the similar challenges of the ecology and environment of the world.

**Interconnectedness:** Building on her ecofeminist perspective, Maathai highlights the interconnectedness of ecological health with human well-being and social justice. She underscores the need for integrated approaches that consider environmental, economic, and social dimensions to achieve sustainable development as Adhikari et al (2020) have discussed about building the sound ecology and environment.

**Global Perspective:** Drawing from her experiences with the Green Belt Movement and international advocacy, Maathai offers insights into global environmental issues and the role of local communities, governments, and international organizations in fostering sustainability and environmental justice as Adhikari (2024) has figured out the similar concept.

"Replenishing the Earth" reflects Wangari Maathai's holistic worldview, blending spiritual values with practical environmentalism, and advocating for a harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world. The book inspires readers to embrace a deeper



connection with nature and take meaningful actions towards healing and sustaining the Earth as Adhikari et al (2020) have presented the methods of protecting the earth.

Wangari Maathai did not publish a specific book titled "Academic Articles and Speeches." However, her academic articles and speeches are typically published in various academic journals, conference proceedings, and occasionally compiled in anthologies or collected works related to environmental conservation, sustainable development, and social justice. Maathai authored numerous articles and delivered speeches on environmental sustainability, women's empowerment, and social justice issues. These include her contributions to academic journals and international conferences.

Based on the title and typical themes in Wangari Maathai's work, the main idea of the article "Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Development in Kenya" likely focuses on the intersection of environmental conservation efforts with sustainable development practices, specifically within the context of Kenya. The following are the main ideas that have typically been explored:

**Environmental Conservation:** Maathai would discuss the importance of conserving natural resources, biodiversity, and ecosystems in Kenya. This includes strategies for protecting forests, rivers, wildlife habitats, and promoting sustainable agriculture practices as Adhikari (DOI: 10.3693/RJOE.2022.72017) has revealed about the role the women in the process of planting trees in Kenya.

**Sustainable Development:** The article would likely emphasize the need for development practices that meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This includes discussions on economic development, social equity, and environmental sustainability as Adhikari (DOI: 10.3693/RJOE.2022.72017) has shown the facts of conserving the trees in Kenya.

**Local and Global Perspectives:** Maathai might highlight both local initiatives in Kenya and their implications within the global context of environmental challenges and solutions. She discusses how local communities are involved in conservation efforts and the broader impacts on global environmental policy, as Adhikari et al. (2022) have discussed in addressing the global eco-condition.

**Challenges and Solutions:** The article addresses challenges facing environmental conservation and sustainable development in Kenya, such as deforestation, land degradation, climate change impacts, and inadequate policy frameworks. It might also propose solutions or recommendations for addressing these challenges effectively as Adhikari et al (2020) have pointed out the global challenges of the ecology and environment.

**Community Involvement:** Given Maathai's advocacy for community-led initiatives, the article might emphasize the importance of local community participation, empowerment, and ownership in environmental conservation and sustainable development efforts. These main ideas collectively underscore Wangari Maathai's commitment to promoting environmental sustainability, social justice, and community empowerment through her academic and scholarly contributions, as Adhikari (2024) has shown about the conservation of the ecology and the environment of the globe.

The main idea of the Green Belt Movement's Annual Report for 2005 has typically revolve around documenting and evaluating the organization's activities, achievements,

challenges, and impacts throughout that year. It has covered the various ideas of the conservation of the environment and ecology as Adhikari et al (2020) have given the alternative solution of the degrading condition of the ecology and environment of the world.

**Overview of Activities:** The report will provide a comprehensive overview of the projects and initiatives undertaken by the Green Belt Movement during 2005. This includes details on tree planting campaigns, environmental conservation efforts, community development projects, and advocacy activities, as Adhikari et al. (2020) have unhooked the facts of the global eco-condition.

**Achievements and Impacts:** It would highlight the achievements and impacts of the organization's work throughout the year. This could encompass statistics on the number of trees planted, areas restored, communities engaged, and improvements in environmental conditions as Adhikari et al (2022) have pointed out regarding the ecological condition of the world.

**Financial and Organizational Updates:** Annual reports typically include financial statements, budgets, and expenditures to provide transparency and accountability to stakeholders. It also covers organizational updates such as changes in leadership, partnerships formed, and strategic planning for future initiatives as Adhikari (2024) has figured out regarding the leadership and leading the world in a proper way.

**Challenges and Lessons Learned:** The report would likely address challenges encountered by the organization during 2005, such as funding constraints, logistical hurdles, or environmental threats. It may also reflect on lessons learned and strategies developed to overcome these challenges, as Adhikari (2020) has clarified regarding the global challenges of conserving the ecology and environment.

**Community Engagement and Empowerment:** Given the Green Belt Movement's focus on community involvement, the report would emphasize the participation and empowerment of local communities in environmental conservation and sustainable development efforts, as Adhikari et al. (2020) have shown the facts of the environment of the world.

**Future Outlook:** Finally, the report might outline the organization's vision and goals for the future, including plans for expanding initiatives, strengthening partnerships, and addressing emerging environmental issues as Adhikari (2024) has pointed out the eco-condition of the globe.

These elements collectively provide stakeholders, donors, and the public with a comprehensive understanding of the Green Belt Movement's activities and contributions to environmental sustainability and community empowerment during the year 2005.

### **Women's Roles for Eco-Conservation in Kenya**

Women's roles in the conservation of ecology and environment in Kenya have been analyzed in detail in her story entitled "Foresters without Diploma". In Kenya, "Foresters without Diploma" has painted a vivid portrayal of women who have become exemplars for women globally. Led by Wangari Maathai, who pursued education in the United States before returning to Kenya to serve her nation, these women have taken charge of transforming their pressing life challenges through their own efforts. Maathai, having married a politician and gained insight into women's issues during election campaigns, initially struggled to implement effective solutions until she acquired sufficient expertise.

Her journey of exploration began in earnest. Upon joining the National Council of Women of Kenya, Maathai encountered firsthand the myriad challenges faced by women (Maathai 62). According to Maathai (62), she has identified a range of pressing issues, including the scarcity of firewood, malnutrition, inadequate access to food and water, unemployment, and soil erosion. Recognizing these as primarily women's issues, Maathai has realized that women needed to be empowered and mobilized to address these challenges themselves. She has expressed her concern, stating, "I was in a women's organization. Women are the ones most affected by these problems. Women are concerned about children, about the future" (Maathai 62-63). She has pointed out the problem of the women in Kenya.

Maathai subsequently engaged with women directly, proposing initiatives such as tree planting to alleviate the shortage of firewood and provide fencing materials, as well as to combat soil erosion and safeguard water systems. Although the women were receptive to Maathai's proposals, they lacked the knowledge and means to implement them effectively. Mathai initiated the process of teaching women how to plant trees, a crucial step in addressing their community's challenges. When foresters were brought in to assist, their approach, governed by formal diplomas and complex methods, proved cumbersome. In contrast, the women applied practical, common-sense approaches to great success. They have sourced seeds locally and learned to identify and nurture seedlings naturally as they sprouted. Mathai observed that these women, lacking formal forestry credentials, excelled in their roles, dubbing them "foresters without diplomas" (Mathai 63). This has highlighted the significance of practical training over theoretical knowledge.

The initiative began on June 5, 1977, and was celebrated as World Environment Day, with the planting of the first seven trees. By 1988, based on reports from participating women, Mathai's efforts had resulted in 10 million thriving trees, many of which had reached maturity and were benefiting the women (Mathai 63). Women have successfully addressed their own needs for firewood and fencing materials, achieving self-reliance and recognition in the process. According to Mathai, the most significant outcome was the empowerment and independence gained by women through acquiring knowledge and technical skills. They took the initiative to teach each other, starting with a single tree nursery behind the National Council of Women's office. Today, this initiative has expanded to encompass over 15,000 tree nurseries, with 99 percent managed by women (Mathai 63). She has displayed how she started her works of conservation of the ecology and the environment and how it has become today.

### **Solution of Women's Issues**

The success of the tree-planting project not only solved women's immediate challenges but also empowered them economically and socially. Women demonstrated remarkable responsibility, dedication, and capability in managing the project, learning essential techniques of tree planting and nursery management. This initiative under the Green Belt Movement in Kenya has not only transformed women's lifestyles but has also had a positive impact on the lives of the impoverished. It has enabled women to achieve economic benefits and independence, reducing their dependency on men and enhancing their overall quality of life (Mathai 63). Women have significantly enhanced their role in ecosystem

conservation through practical knowledge gained in nursery management, fostering self-reliance in economic activities. Their pivotal contribution to maintaining the Green Belt Movement is crucial; without their involvement in nursery care and tree conservation, the initiative risks desertification, given that women are predominantly engaged in fuel gathering and farming across Kenya and much of Africa. As highlighted by Mathai (64), approximately 80 percent of farmers and fuel gatherers in these regions are women who also tend to livestock.

The current green areas are under threat of desertification if not properly maintained, underscoring the importance of ongoing care. Mathai advocates for the establishment of a Green Belt Centre in Nairobi, promoting community-driven development and region-specific solutions. This approach ensures sustainable development with local input and decision-making, vital for preserving and expanding green areas in the face of environmental challenges (Mathai 64). The government of Kenya aimed to construct a building within Nairobi Public Park, contrasting with the women's movement's goal of establishing a Green Belt Centre, exemplifying community-oriented development in the region as Adhikari ([www.ijtell.com](http://www.ijtell.com).) has shown the similar concept of maintaining a good environment for the life of all living beings.

According to Mathai (64), the women's movement faced challenges in securing financial support from the Kenyan government. Despite initially being provided with an office, it was withdrawn when criticisms were voiced. Instead, the movement relied heavily on contributions from women worldwide, who sent small donations. Significant support also came from international sources such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women, which provided a substantial boost with \$100,000 in 1981. Additional assistance was received from the Danish Voluntary Fund and the Norwegian Agency for International Development.

The Kenyan government did not support the women in their endeavor to establish the Green Belt, but instead, the women received crucial financial backing from international entities such as the United Nations and other development agencies. When they were evicted from their office, the project headquarters relocated to Wangari Maathai's residence, where the women successfully managed their initiative.

### **Women's Achievement**

Reflecting on their achievements, Maathai (65) noted, "But all over the world, we women do this sort of thing." The women find fulfillment in their work, having transformed the entire landscape. Maathai's greatest satisfaction lies in observing the profound impact they have made: "My greatest satisfaction is to look back and see how far we have come. Something so simple but meaning so much, something nobody can take away from the people, something that is changing the face of the landscapes" (Mathai 65). Women find deep satisfaction in their ability to transform landscapes and establish the Green Belt. They attribute their leadership to a strong desire to work and practical wisdom, which are more valuable than following others. The impact of women's efforts in reshaping lifestyles has proven effective in addressing everyday challenges faced by Kenyan women.

According to Mathai (65), limitations imposed by individuals and society often hinder potential. While human potential knows no bounds, political systems frequently fail to foster an environment conducive to such endeavors. Nevertheless, maintaining positive thoughts and hopes is crucial for effecting societal change. Mathai emphasizes the importance of perseverance and seizing opportunities: "But we must never lose hope. When any of us feels she has an idea or an opportunity, she should go ahead and do it. I never knew what I was doing in my backyard would one day become a whole movement. One person can make a difference" (Mathai 65). This passage underscores the transformative power of hope in shaping the world. Initially planting seven trees in her backyard without fully realizing its future impact, Wangari Maathai unwittingly initiated what would become the expansive Green Belt Movement of Kenyan women. Her pivotal role significantly altered the lifestyles of Kenyan women, particularly those in rural areas who had long endured hardship and struggle. The fear of managing the economic condition is just like the fear Adhikari (DOI: <http://doi.org/10.25058/179400x.1709>) has drawn in the process of converting one religion from one to another.

Maathai's concept of ecofeminism, as supported by Hunt (235), has emphasized the intersection of environmental and gender issues. The Green Belt Movement emerged in response to environmental degradation in post-colonial Kenya, operating on multiple fronts. It aimed to resist both environmental and political injustices while empowering rural women to engage politically and demand environmental justice. This approach reflects ecofeminist principles, where power is derived through initiatives like the Green Belt Movement.

Maathai's leadership in this context can be likened to that of a hummingbird, symbolizing determination and courage in the face of adversity. Through tree planting and economic empowerment, she brought tangible improvements to the lives of jobless rural women in Kenya, addressing their economic and everyday challenges (Hunt 235). The life of the women in Kenya has been solved by the plantation of trees by the women.

### **Conclusion**

Ecofeminism has been found practical expression through Wangari Maathai's leadership in the tree-planting movement in Kenya, sparking profound and transformative changes in women's lifestyles. This initiative has been marked as a pivotal moment for women in Kenya, demonstrating a powerful model for women globally: addressing local issues with local resources by local women themselves. The Green Belt Movement has been found to have illustrated how individual actions, such as Maathai's, have been identified to have a significant impact on the daily lives of women, empowering and uplifting those in rural Kenya from their difficult circumstances.

Women's contribution to eco-conservation in Kenya has been both effective and commendable, significantly impacting the lives of women across the country. They have been found to have acquired essential skills, knowledge, and daily necessities such as firewood, water resources, and fencing materials through their involvement in tree planting initiatives. Economically, they have known to have gained independence, and their role in conserving forests through these efforts has had a profound effect on ecology and the environment conservation.

Rural women have been found to have learned how to nurture nurseries effectively, supported not by the Kenyan government but by international organizations like the United Nations and other development agencies. Their dedication, commitment, and active participation in leadership roles have been explored to have successfully brought about social change and improved the lifestyles of rural women in Kenya beyond what was initially expected. The proverb "Women care for plants as they care for their own babies" rings true in the way Kenyan women have approached their tree-planting tasks, highlighting the invaluable role of women in transforming rural society.

Driven by the urgent need for daily necessities and fencing materials, as well as firewood, women have been found to have mobilized under Maathai's leadership at grassroots levels, harnessing their untapped energy for personal benefits and lifestyle changes. Ecofeminism, exemplified in these efforts, serves as a global example, demonstrating that mobilizing women has been found to be a key to solving societal challenges. Disregarding women's contributions means overlooking potential solutions to pressing issues. The success of Kenyan women in forest conservation showcases them as role models for the world.

Moreover, Wangari Mathai's various works, memoirs, and stories have been found to have contributed under different fields of categories like environmental Conservation, future outlook, community engagement and empowerment, challenges and lessons learned, financial and organizational updates, achievements and impacts, overview of activities, community involvement, challenges and solutions, local and global perspectives, sustainable development, ethical responsibility, healing and renewal, spiritual ecology, holistic approach, community empowerment, intersectionality of issues, environmental advocacy, legacy and inspiration, community development, and women's roles for eco-conservation in Kenya. Because of these various fields' contribution to the conservation of ecology and environment and transforming the lives of poor women in Kenya, have been identified as one of the environmental activists in the world. The theory of ecofeminism has been found to be an analog in the analysis.

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