

# Toyota funds tree planting near Mau

A Japanese organisation targets to plant over 500,000 trees in privately-owned land neighbouring Maasai Mau forest.

Speaking during assessment of various tree seedbeds funded by Toyota Japan, Community Road Empowerment (CORE) Project Manager Yuka Iwamura said the community should have its own trees in a bid to conserve the forest.

## Forest cover

"We realised that the forest cover in Maasai Mau forest had dwindled to 40 per cent. And this occurred because the community had invaded the forest to get trees for timber, poles and firewood," said Ms Iwamura.

She said in a bid to curb illegal logging in the forest, the organisation is funding the tree project for the community to own "forests" in homes where locals can get tree products for their daily use.

Iwamura, who was accompanied by CORE's Environment Coordinator Moses Kahuro, said they were also targeting to plant 40,000 seedlings through environmental education involving six primary schools in Olokurto and Oloropil Wards in Narok North Constituency. The education project is being undertaken by 1,960 pupils and 60 teachers.

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## Wildlife habitat

The organisation's representative said the project would go a long way in conserving wildlife habitat as well as water catchment areas.

The community, led by Joseph Masikonte and Tobiko Ntokoiwan, hailed the project.

Ntokoiwan praised the initiative as an 'eye-opener' to the local community that is used to natural forests.

"Within 10 years from now we will have our own trees and no one will destroy the forest for charcoal, timber, poles or firewood," said Mr Masikonte.

CORE is undertaking similar projects in Elgeyo/Marakwet, Trans Nzoia, Baringo and Nakuru counties. **[Robert Kiplagat]**