

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### A WORD FROM JEAN-PAUL, MANAGING DIRECTOR

Greetings and welcome to the April 2024 edition of our newsletter. Forestry is not just about trees; it encompasses a holistic approach to addressing vital social and environmental issues, with a strong focus on early education, particularly among children. The Green Initiative Challenge (GIC) aims to foster a culture of tree planting in schools over a decade-long journey. GIC involves schools in selection, training, and tree planting, followed by comprehensive evaluation.

Phase IX of GIC kicked off with a robust capacity-building workshop, emphasizing the integration of new schools into the program and educating students and teachers on proper tree-planting techniques. The workshop garnered remarkable attendance,

setting a record as the most attended session in GIC's history, with stakeholders stressing the paramount importance of environmental conservation.

Meanwhile, forestry is evolving with technological advancements, notably the integration of tools such as artificial intelligence (AI). The recent AI Conference in Nairobi provided a platform for exploring the synergies between AI, Drone Technology and Data Analytics, showcasing their transformative potential across various sectors. For BGF, this conference underscored the importance of harnessing AI and drone technology to enhance operational efficiency, particularly in forestry.

At BGF, our commitment remains steadfast in shaping a sustainable future.

## THE GREEN INITIATIVE CHALLENGE (GIC)

Now in year nine

The first capacity building workshop for Phase IX took place between 20<sup>th</sup> -22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024. The workshop and award ceremony (for Phase VII) were combined on the same day, in Machakos County. The workshop basically targeted to induct new schools in the project. It also aimed at sensitizing the newly registered schools on the basic features of four GIC species and technical procedures of planting and growing them. These species are *Melia volkensii* (mukau), *Senna siamea*, *Terminalia brownii* and *Azadirachta indica*.

The participants were trained on project implementation process and design; project overview and status; proper planting and growing techniques per species; technical procedures of handling, storing, and planting seedlings followed by a planting demonstration.

### Capacity building

Among the attendance we had 2 employees from BGF, 6 from KenGen and the KenGen Foundation. We also had "Green Teachers", school heads and officials from Kenya Forest Service, the County Governments (the Environment department), the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC).

Date	Venue	Schools		Officials
		Present	Registered	
20 Mar	Siakago CDF Hall, Embu County	32	33	4
21 Mar	Nguni Boys Secondary, Kitui County	34	34	2
22 Mar	Katangi Boys Secondary, Machakos County	33	33	6

Only one school out of 100 failed to attend the capacity-building workshop. This made it the most attended workshop ever in the now nine-year-old history of GIC.

For Machakos County, the workshop was done in the morning hours whereas the Award Ceremony going concurrently with



Pupils of Musingini primary school together with their teachers receive a cheque of Ksh. 50,000 as cash prize for securing position one in GIC Phase VII at Katangi Boys secondary school (Machakos County, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024). Photo BGF

The GIC programme is a partnership between the KenGen Foundation and Better Globe Forestry (BGF), aiming to plant trees in schools. It has been designed to take 10 years, with 10 phases of each 2 years. During the first-year schools are being selected (they must have sufficient land among others) and trained and they plant the trees. During the second year, they are followed up and evaluated, resulting in a ranking for awards. The programme takes place in the Counties of Embu, Kitui and Machakos, in the so-called Seven Forks area where KenGen has its hydropower plants, and where BGF has its Kiambere plantation and Farmers Tree Planting Programme.





the launch for Phase IX started at 2 pm. In attendance for this ceremony were the best 6 schools in Phase VII and Phase IX teachers, project stakeholders and project sponsors. During the workshop, the support partners (the County Governments, KFS, TSC and Ministry of Education) welcomed the project in the new area, stressed on need to conserve the environment and also urged the schools to take the project seriously as it will yield multiple benefits for them.

The KFS Forester-Mwingi East, Mr. Otieno, highlighted that the project was well designed and aligned with the Government's 15 billion tree planting campaign, and commended the initiative as a good challenge to fight against climate change.

### Award Ceremony

Madame Lucy from TSC's Regional Office (Eastern Region), urged the teachers to fully support the project in the schools since they are agents of change, and that environmental conservation and afforestation is one of promotion factors for the teachers. Samuel Kariuki gave remarks on behalf of Better Globe Forestry. He highlighted the BGF operations in Kenya and commended the BGF mission and contribution to the conservation of indigenous species, especially mukau; the strong partnership with the KenGen Foundation and concluded with greetings from BGF's Senior Director- Forestry Jan Vandenabeele. The KenGen Foundation's Managing Trustee Antony Igecha congratulated the winners of GIC Phase VII and officially launched GIC Phase IX. He stressed the milestones achieved since the programme's inception in November 2013. He emphasized the impact achieved and recognized the partnership with BGF. Talking on behalf of the project sponsors he tasked the schools with the responsibility of receiving the seedlings, to plant and nurture them as one of the ways to better our environment.

In view of all this, the capacity building sessions and award ceremonies were a success.

## AN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CONFERENCE IN NAIROBI

### BGF doesn't want to be left out

A regional Artificial Intelligence (AI) conference was hosted in Nairobi from March 26<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Drone Space, a leading innovator in Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), convened the event.

It was a cutting-edge conference that brought together thought leaders, innovators, and enthusiasts in the fields of Artificial Intelligence, Drone Technology, and Data Analytics. The aim of the event was to explore the synergies between these rapidly evolving technologies, fostering collaboration, and inspiring the next wave of breakthroughs. The conference provided a platform for knowledge exchange, networking, and collaboration among stakeholders in AI and drone space to streamline their application and address existing gaps.



The Conference (photo BGF)

It came at a time when many sectors of the economy are increasingly adopting and integrating artificial intelligence and the use of drones in their operations to bolster efficiency and maximise their performance.

AI has already demonstrated the potential to transform sectors such as business operations, healthcare, education, agriculture, agroforestry, financial services, and e-commerce among others. At BGF, we have over the years managed to leverage continuous improvement into our working structures and systems. This achievement has been without the aid of the advancements in Artificial Intelligence and Drones. With huge data from our programmes accumulated over the years and in future, expansive tracts of land under plantations, strict customer requirements and our need to continuously be more efficient BGF must employ the advantages and versatility of AI and drones.

For the above reasons, it was important for us to be present in this enlightening conference.

Some of the key topics discussed that are useful or affect various BGF operations were:

- ~ How AI will transform the workplace.
- ~ Chatbots for Change: Using Conversational AI to transform rural communities in Kenya.
- ~ Leveraging on AI lawfully.
- ~ AI policy data protection and regulations.
- ~ Drone regulation and policy.
- ~ Drones in agriculture for early detection of pests and diseases.
- ~ Drone deployment in agriculture and the challenges in crop spraying and data collection.

In conclusion, based on the expert experiences at the conference, in order to keep up with market demands and competitors, the use of AI-integrated systems is inevitable. At BGF, AI shall eventually come in handy in the automation of repetitive tasks, analysis of massive data training and engagement of our huge number of farmers. A combination of AI data analytics and drones shall be useful for land use planning with maps and other GIS aspects. This combination will also be an important tool in monitoring the short and long-term impacts of BGF's Landscape restoration programs.