

Empowering women economically through environmental activities

From HECKTON CHUWA
in Moshi

WOMEN play a critical role in managing natural resources and are predominantly responsible for the conservation of resources for their families and community levels.

They spend vast amounts of time collecting and storing water, securing sources of fuel, food and fodder and managing land be it forest or agricultural terrain.

Statistics show that women produce between 60 and 80 per cent of food in developing countries — and yet they officially own only 2 per cent of land worldwide.

It is from this backdrop that a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that deals with environ-

mental and bees related activities, the Tanzanian Bees and Trees, has embarked on a programme aimed at empowering women economically through environmental activities.

This was revealed by the Tanzanian Bees and Trees Tanzania Country Coordinator Mr Jonathan Lyimo during the planting of trees as part of the organization's activities while marking this year's International Earth Day.

International Earth Day is observed every year, to spread awareness about issues including pollution, deforestation and global warming.

Mr Jonathan said that the plan would be about launching a project that would uplift women economically through beekeeping, whereby he said the organization had started the programme "by planting trees in areas where the

projects would be implemented.

"To start with, we are planting trees that are friendly to beekeeping and other economic activities, at the same time the women who are expected to benefit from this project will be trained on beekeeping activities in general, before allocating beehives for implementing the project," he said.

He added that the implementation of the project goes hand in hand with the provision of environmental education, the importance of planting trees annually and the importance of caring for the environment for students from the primary school level to create a generation that would be motivated to plant trees and protect the environment for many years to come.

"During the implementation of the programme, we have pro-

jected to plant at least 500 trees every year in various areas including in school areas and various institutions," he said.

Speaking at the event, the Moshi District Council's Development Consultant through the Tanzania Bees and Trees organization Ms Heike Weise urged residents to make tree planting and conservation part of their lives.

"The trees that they will plant should be indigenous and those that will be used for beekeeping and other economic projects; this will make the planted trees to be available for many years due to their importance in environmental protection and also commercially through beekeeping," she said.

She added, "It is true that people plant a lot of trees but the biggest challenge here is that the trees themselves are the ones that are used later on, either com-

mercially or for other unavoidable uses, this trend should be avoided to save the environment"

For his part the Tanzanian Bees and Trees Environment Advisor, Mr Saul Samwel, said to ensure that the trees planted were maintained and sustainable, the organization had established a computerized Tree Registry Programme.

"This programme will contain information on the tree from the time it is planted, the area that has been planted, the type of tree and the person or persons who will be responsible for maintaining it; this programme will be used to monitor the information of the trees planted every after three months to ensure they are sustainable for many years to come," he said.

In her thanking remarks, the Chairperson of the Uru Shimbwe Ward based Mapendo Women

Group in Moshi, which is one of the beneficiaries of the programme Ms Kandida Tesha, said the programme was the saviour of women of the group of whom she said more than 80 per cent were widows.

"Most of the members of our group are widows who had given up on life, others are so sick that they cannot work and support their families, so this programme will be a great saviour for us", she said.

She added, "This project will also help us in serving more than 200 children who are orphans that our group has been serving for so many years in terms of access to education, health care and also providing them with the parental care they would have received from their deceased parents if they (deceased parents) would be alive".