



Until we are all equal

Women in Kenya are planting mangroves (top) and seaweed farms (bottom) as part of a goal to protect and restore vital ecosystems.



# The Green Front Line

Women in Kenya are ushering their communities into a future that is climate-change-ready.



The Conservation and Sustainable Management of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems (COSME) project

Mwanamvua, a member of a seaweed group in Kwale Country, carries her harvest to the group's storage facility before it goes to market.



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COSME participants have **planted 80,000 mangrove seedlings and 19,500 indigenous trees** to restore vital coastal and forest areas.

## THE FACTS

**WHO:** The Conservation and Sustainable Management of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems (COSME) project works with 3,000 women to restore vital ecosystems, grow their earning opportunities, and take a leadership role in climate solutions. By creating sustainable ways to rehabilitate and conserve the natural environment, COSME is equipping 49,000 people – including 26,000 women and girls – across 110 coastal communities in Kenya and Tanzania to better prepare for, cope with, and recover from the climate-related challenges they face.

The project is funded by Global Affairs Canada and individual Canadian donors and delivered in partnership with the Jane Goodall Institute of Canada and Cascadia Seaweed Corporation.

**WHAT:** The COSME project creates economic opportunities through environmental conservation. Plan International provides practical training and support for women in coastal Kenya to develop sustainable livelihoods while protecting the environment.

**WHERE:** Kwale and Kilifi counties along Kenya's coast. Project activities led by the Jane Goodall Institute are taking place in the Tanga and Pwani regions of Tanzania. These areas face significant economic pressures due to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, stronger storms, and damaged marine ecosystems that families depend on for food and income.

**WHEN:** March 2023–March 2027

**WHY:** The COSME project has three goals:

- 1 | Women can better adapt to the effects of climate change, thanks to ecological restoration and sustainable nature-based businesses.
- 2 | Local organizations, like women's-rights groups and youth groups, are equipped to bring their voices to regional and national forums, where they can demand inclusion in climate response plans and policies.
- 3 | Women can exercise more agency in household and community decision making.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

# Coastal Kenya's Triple Challenge

In Kenya's coastal communities, the ocean and forests aren't just part of the landscape – they're how families earn a living, cook their meals, and care for their children. Kadide farms seaweed to support her household (you'll meet her on page 5), while Caroline (at right) gathers firewood and fruit from the forest. But as climate change disrupts these natural resources, it threatens the stability of daily life.

"If we destroy the forest, we don't have rain," says Caroline, who leads a forest-conservation group in Kwale County. "Without rain, we won't have food. And if there is no food for me to sell to earn the school fees, the children won't go to school."

Today, a triple environmental threat is affecting communities like Caroline's and Kadide's:

- 1 | Climate change** is warming coastal waters and bringing more extreme weather, disrupting the marine life they rely on for food and income.
- 2 | Ecosystems are breaking down.** Indigenous plants and animals are disappearing, making it harder for families to find food and earn a living.
- 3 | Natural resources are being depleted** through overfishing, trees being cut down for charcoal, and land being cleared, which damage the ecosystems that protect these communities.

It's women who feel these changes most. As forests thin and fish stocks shrink, they're having to walk farther and work harder to meet their family's basic needs.



Caroline leads a conservation group that is planting native species.



See how Caroline is protecting the forests that she has known since she was a child.

But women are also leading the solutions: Through the COSME project, 3,000 women are helping their communities adapt to climate change. They're restoring damaged coastlines, protecting forests, and finding new ways to earn an income – so they can better recover from unexpected shocks without putting more pressure on the environment.

With hands-on training and practical tools, COSME participants are:

- ▶ Restoring the mangrove forests that protect their communities from storms and rising sea levels.
- ▶ Farming seaweed more sustainably, which reduces coastal erosion and creates fish habitats. The seaweed they harvest can be turned into commercial products such as soaps and fertilizers.
- ▶ Replanting forests and learning more sustainable practices, like mushroom foraging and planting native species, so families can continue to grow and gather their own food.

## Thank you for your support.

You're helping women lead the way in building climate resilience, restore the environments they depend on, and create new, sustainable ways to earn a living. You're also helping shift attitudes so that women have more say in decisions – at home, in their communities, and in how they respond to climate challenges.

BY THE NUMBERS

## Year 2 Project Highlights



“I hope to see women with vibrant enterprises that are in harmony with the natural environment, so they get what they need to support their families and the environment can still thrive.”

—Beryl Oduor, COSME senior project manager

**4,641** students in Kenya (2,675 girls) joined school environmental clubs. They're learning about climate change and conservation practices like farming and tree planting. [TARGET\*: 3,900 students, 2,311 girls]

**20** women-led groups (with 360 members) were trained in seaweed production, including how to grow and harvest seaweed and create marketable products like soaps and fertilizers. [TARGET: 20 groups, 600 members]

**3,552** women received eco-friendly solar-powered Solvatten water-purification kits, which cuts down the hours they must spend fetching firewood to heat water. And 65 schools received 3,120 solar-powered water kits as well as 71 tanks to catch and store rainwater. [TARGETS: 3,000 women, 65 schools]

\*The target numbers are the goals for the entirety of the four-year project.

**137** women's savings groups, comprising 3,241 members, were launched or supported. These groups help women access loans for their businesses and for other costs. [TARGET: 130]

**1,699** people (1,115 women) were trained in forest management and community-based conservation. [TARGET: 1,800]

**39** groups (with 1,151 members) were formed and began training to nurture mangroves, which improve biodiversity and prevent erosion and flooding. [TARGET: 40 groups]



COSME participant Madame Sholo fills one of the 3,552 Solvatten water-purification kits distributed thanks to your support.



Mikaeli braves rough seas on this boat to catch fish – his main source of income.

## A STORY OF CHANGE

# A Borrowed Start

How one small loan made a very big difference.

**M**ikaeli earns his living from the ocean – in the dark of night.

Like many other men in coastal Kwale County, Mikaeli fishes to feed his family and make his income. He and three of his friends share the cost to hire a boat, and they head out at night when the catch is best.

But when storms roll in, Mikaeli faces a hard choice: Risk his life or lose his income. And the seaweed farm that helps support his family is also vulnerable to storm surges and cyclones, which are happening more frequently due to climate change.

"When Cyclone Hidaya hit Kenya's coast in 2024, we couldn't fish," Mikaeli says. "The storms made the ocean too angry. And all our seaweed farms were swept away." The storm passed, but the financial hit lingered. Mikaeli and his wife, Kadide, couldn't afford to pay school fees, so their children had to drop out.

Then the COSME project introduced them to a savings group. With a small

loan of Ksh 6,000 (C\$64), they were able to pay their children's overdue school fees and buy gas for a big fishing expedition, where Mikaeli caught 600 kilograms of fish to sell. "The loans really helped us as a family," he says.

Kadide has also participated in additional trainings that COSME offers: She has learned to make and sell snacks, soaps, and bleaching detergent from their seaweed to bring in more income. Together, she and Mikaeli also started a mangrove-seedling nursery. They've already planted 10,000 seedlings that they can sell for further income when the rainy season begins.



Mikaeli tends to the mangrove nursery bed that he and Kadide planted together.



People thought I had cast a spell on my husband [when they saw us working together as equals]. But now they want to replicate what we are doing that has worked so well."

—Kadide, a seaweed farmer in Kwale County and a Gender Justice Journey facilitator for her seaweed group



A meeting of the village savings and loan association that Mikaeli and Kadide joined. The group has given them the boost they needed to recover their finances.

## THANK YOU

**Y**our investment in the COSME project is helping equip women to thrive in the face of a rapidly changing environment. It's setting up them up to be leaders in climate response in their communities, to restore the environment they depend on today, and to protect it for future generations. Thank you for your generosity and dedication to this important work.



### About Plan International Canada

Plan International Canada is a member of a global organization dedicated to advancing children's rights and equality for girls. Plan International has been building powerful partnerships with and for children for over 85 years and is now active in more than 80 countries. We stand with children, especially girls, wherever they are oppressed, exploited, left behind or not equally valued. We're determined optimists, and we will continue to persevere until we are all equal.

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