

WMI launches STAKE project

In a colourful ceremony held on July 2, 2013, at the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences (CAVS), the Wangari Maathai Institute (WMI) launched the STAKE Project.

The STAKE project (Stabilizing Kenya through Resolving Forest Related Conflicts) was officially launched by the Cabinet Secretary for Ministry of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, Prof. Judy Wakhungu.

To mark the auspicious occasions, nine ceremonial tree species were planted by the project stakeholders at WMI site to celebrate the walks and works of the late Prof. Wangari Maathai who was the chair of the STAKE Project steering committee.

The STAKE project is an exciting new partnership between WMI, Green Belt Movement (GBM), Kenya Forest Research Institute KEFRI) and the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. It is expected to contribute to stability in Kenya by understanding and targeting the underlying factors that lead to conflicts over forest related resources. The 3-year project funded by the Danish Development Agency (DANIDA) will also contribute to Kenya's long-term development by mentoring and training the next generation of talented, young academics through provision of scholarships for Masters and PhD training.

While welcoming the guests to the University, Prof. Agnes Mwangombi, Principal, [CAVS](#), said that the STAKE project was well in line with the University of Nairobi's strategic plan that calls for partnerships with other institutions. According to Prof. Mwangombi, the STAKE Project seeks to keep Nobel Laureate Prof. Wangari Maathai's flame alive by celebrating her life, her walks and works. She said that there was need to sensitize the younger generation on environmental issues. She noted that various outreach initiatives in the communities living near the MAU complex have been carried out.

On her part, Cabinet Secretary Prof. Wakhungu congratulated WMI and its partners on the historic milestone. She commended the initiative terming it as a solution to some of the problems Kenya is facing in dealing with environmental issues. Prof. Wakhungu noted that in search of stability and prosperity, the government of Kenya in 2005 enacted a Forest Act aimed at improving natural resources management by decentralizing responsibilities and rights of forest management to civil society bodies called Community Forestry Associations (CFA).

To date, through the STAKE Project, scholarships have been awarded to four PhD students registered at WMI and seven research scholarships to Masters of Science (MSc) students registered in various departments in the University. WMI has also received support in the development of PhD syllabus on Environmental Governance and Management as well as the development of MSc syllabus on Environmental Governance. In addition, five Professors from the University of Copenhagen have been appointed as visiting Professors of the University of Nairobi. The Project has also seen the purchase of equipment to support teaching and research work.

Others who spoke during the event Prof. Kiama Gitahi, Director, [WMI](#), Dr. B.N. Chikamai, Director, KEFRI, Pauline Kamau, Director, GBM and Prof. Vibeke Vindelov, University of Copenhagen.