

The Green Belt Movement of Kenya: A Gender Analysis

BY

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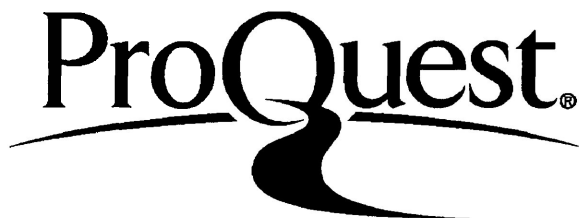
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ABSTRACT

The Green Belt Movement of Kenya is an environmental conservation movement that began in 1977 as a project of women planting trees. It has since grown into a popular movement in Kenya expanding its goals of environmental rehabilitation to include broader socio-political issues in the Kenyan context. To date the GBM has been the subject of studies, which have analysed various phases of its development. However, these studies have paid limited attention to the gendered aspects of the movement, despite the GBMs central focus on the mobilization of women. It is the gendered nature of the movement that this study has sought to explore in more depth.

This is a qualitative case study, which relies on documentary analysis of primary and secondary sources of information on the GBM. Ecofeminist and WED perspectives drawn from feminist theorizing and research which show the links between gender and the environment are used to explore how gender issues have influenced the evolution of the GBM. In particular, the social constructionist insights on the relationship between women and the environment highlighted by these theories are used to emphasize the broader context that has shaped women's engagement in environmental issues. The themes explored include how gender roles and gendered social organizations have influenced the structure of the GBM, as well as rights to resource access and management and gender politics in a broader Kenyan context.

The study concludes that women's involvement in the GBM is rooted in a complex ideological and material reality, which underlies existing social, economic and political structures in Kenya. I argue that women's initiatives within the GBM are related to both livelihood strategies, and to gender inequality and social justice issues in Kenya. Thus attention to gender is critical for any analysis of the GBM as a social, political and environmental movement.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

One of the key global concerns of the late 20th century is the ecological crisis. It is a resultant feature of past ecological and economic patterns and has become a challenge for the future. During the past decade the dimensions of this crisis have become painfully visible. The 1970s and the early 1980s witnessed a growing awareness of the dwindling of natural resources and general ecological degradation (Hausler, 1995). Communities and leaders world-wide became more aware of the need for drastic measures if the looming crisis was to be averted. Overall, national and international policies with regard to the environment were reviewed and some steps were taken to address critical environmental issues.

One of the effects of this concern was the growth of environmentalism as an international movement (Hausler, 1995). This was in part a result of the realization that environmental problems were not limited to national boundaries. Moreover, environmental degradation was linked to the growth of poverty and worsening living conditions in many parts of the world. According to Contreras (1996) environmentalism as a social movement bears a discourse that challenges current social arrangements such as the modes of production and consumption that have aggravated environmental destruction and concurrently pushed a large number of the world's population into poverty. He argues that

environmentalism cannot be analyzed as neutral terrain, its very nature as a way of calling attention to certain practices that needed to be changed has been inherently political.

Environmentalism goes beyond the fight to protect the environment and becomes a challenge to the relationships that exist in society and has often been used as a platform for political action (Contreras 1996; Rocheleau *et al*, 1997). This is because it has been realized that people's relationship to their environment is mediated by socio-political and economic organizations.

Therefore, if environmental problems are to be addressed, it is important to use a holistic approach that integrates social, political and economic factors in analysing environmental issues. Furthermore access to and control of environmental resources are inextricably linked to the position of people based on gender, class and even race or ethnicity (Rocheleau *et al*, 1997). Thus, issues pertaining to the environment are not politically neutral.

Social movements have been at the forefront of global organizing efforts to limit environmental degradation and the pursuit of more sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development became prominent after the World Commission on Environment Report published in 1987. In the now famous report *Our Common Future* (1987) the notion of attaining a balance between development and environmental sustainability became central hence the heightened significance of the concept of sustainable development. In this

report the concept was defined as " development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. ...[S]ustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life" (World Commission on the Environment and Development, 1987: 43-44).

A notable feature of environmentalism has been the involvement of women. Women's involvement in environmental movements has become a key factor in significantly altering development discourses. The convergence of issues of gender, environment and development is part of the emerging discourse on changing economies, ecologies and politics globally. The recognition of women's central roles as users and managers of the environment is not a new wave in the environmental movement. Throughout the world women play crucial roles in both productive and reproductive capacities although most of their contributions in these capacities have often been neglected in academic and mainstream discourses on the environment (World Resource Institute, 1994; Zein-Elabdin, 1996).

Current academic discourses on the links between gender, environment and development have emerged mainly from feminist and environmentalist critiques of economic development models. Women's impoverished conditions globally have primarily been attributed to ecological degradation and loss of political control over nature's sustenance base (Mathaai 1991; Shiva 1989;

World Resources Institute, 1994; Zein-Elabdin 1996). Although both men and women are affected by the negative impact of development processes, some analysts argue that women tend to be more heavily impacted. This negative impact of development has been referred to as mal-development (Mathaai 1991; Shiva 1989).

Studies have indicated that there are *real* not imagined gender differences of experiences, responsibilities and interest in environmental issues (Shiva, 1989, Rocheleau *et al*, 1997; Thomas-Slayter and Rocheleau, 1995). The pursuit of economic development, which has contributed to exacerbating environmental problems, has in particular neglected the special needs of women (Haider 1996; Shiva, 1989). It has been argued that the poverty crisis affects women most severely at a global scale, to such an extent that we now have the phenomenon of the "feminization of poverty" especially among women in the south. Among the growing numbers of the world's poor, are a disproportionate number of women. Analysts have estimated that women constitute 60 - 70 per cent of the world's poor (Haider 1996: 24).

Women's movements and groups in both the south and the north have been known to play a central role in the environmental movement and have been at the forefront of environmental activism. The issue of the environment as it relates to gender was brought to international attention by the outcome of the final 'Decade of Women' conference in Nairobi in 1985 (Muteshi, 1995). It is

noted that women's involvement in environmental issues is due to several reasons. It is women's labor that is made more arduous as a result of cash cropping or deforestation or displacement. It is women who are directly responsible for the health of their family members in the face of toxic waste or famine or related environmental problems. It is women's bodies that bear the brunt of developing biotechnologies and discourses around overpopulation (World Resources Institute, 1994). Thus, it is within this context that women have raised voices to condemn social and environmental injustices.

Faced with problems of increasingly severe environmental stress in their societies a growing number of women especially in the south have initiated projects aimed at improving their environmental conditions. Their initiatives span an array of issues including forestry, agroforestry, agriculture, energy conservation, water management and creating a general awareness of environmental issues. The Green Belt Movement of Kenya (GBM) which is the focus of this study is one such environmental movement. The GBM developed out of the need to address the problem of an encroaching desert in Kenya. It championed tree planting, land reclamation and rehabilitation, agroforestry and environmental education (Mathaai 1988). Over time the movement which started as an instrumental project by women planting trees has developed into a prominent national movement advancing its environmental campaign to levels of political advocacy. It has been noted for its active role in the growth of a civil

society in Kenya (Ndegwa 1996). The climax of this development came recently in 1997 when GBMs objectives and working philosophy were adopted as part of a political party manifesto for the newly formed Liberal Party of Kenya. In addition its co-ordinator, Wangari Maathai was proposed as the party's candidate who would run for national presidency (Opanga, 1997).

The evolution of the GBM from a single-issue project to its incorporation of a national political agenda raised various questions that have been analyzed in previous studies (Michaelson, 1994; Ndegwa, 1996; Wangunyu, 1994). Environmental issues have prominently featured in political rhetoric in Kenya. Environmental degradation seems to present a far more direct and serious threat to the daily life of people in Kenya because of its increasing magnitude. Thus, the central role of environmental concerns in the conflict between citizens and the state as exhibited through the GBM constitute a unique feature of the state of transition in contemporary Kenya (Ndegwa, 1996).

One of the conspicuous features of the GBM is the central involvement of women and it is this aspect of the movement that this thesis focuses on. In Kenya, as in many other parts of Africa, women are involved not only in resource management but they are also increasingly becoming more vocal politically and socially. As will be highlighted in this study, resource and gender issues have become central to the debates on transformation of current Kenyan society (Thomas-Slayter and Rocheleau, 1995). Using this backdrop the GBM

is explored here as a social movement heavily influenced by women and gender concerns.

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is an exploratory case study of the dynamics of change of the GBM from its inception to the present. My main argument is that by raising questions about its gendered focus other dimensions of the movement that have not been adequately addressed in previous studies can be explored. As Thomas-Slayter and Rocheleau (1995) have noted, both women and men are key resource managers. But giving attention to gender is particularly relevant because there is a correlation between the increasingly impoverished conditions of women and the deteriorating state of the world's ecology. Furthermore, women in Kenya have been key players in environmental conservation efforts and highlighting these efforts is crucial.

This study looks at how the GBM has evolved over time. It analyzes the movement's emergence, goals and objectives, organizational structures, strategies and outcomes. The theoretical frameworks of ecofeminism and WED that have been drawn to show the links between gender and the environment are used to understand and interpret the experiences of local women involved with the GBM. These approaches explicitly incorporate gender showing how it is a critical variable in shaping access to, and control of, resources. These approaches also explore how gender interacts with other variables such as

class, race, caste, culture and ethnicity which may have a great impact on ecological practices particularly on resource access and management (Agrawal, 1998; Rocheleau *et al*; 1997).

The complex context in which gender as a variable has been able to shape the conception, growth and transformation of the GBM is examined. Specifically I analyze the intersection of gender and environment through the lens of three themes: gender rights and roles (over both property and resource management processes); gendered organization; and gender and political activity. This gender analysis of the GBM highlights the important role women have played in the growth and shaping of the movement. It also adds to the literature on the gender environment nexus and an understanding of the role of women in the political and social development of Kenya in the 20th century.

1.2 PLAN OF THE THESIS

The thesis is divided into six chapters beginning with the introduction. Chapter Two reviews existing literature on the GBM and discusses the methods used in the study. The first section begins with a review of approaches used in previous studies of the GBM, and highlights the absence of attention to gender in these studies. The next section introduces theoretical frameworks, which show the links between gender and environment, providing a framework for my analysis of the GBM. In addition this chapter provides a conceptualization or definition of a women's organization which is essential for grounding my

argument for viewing the GBM as a women's movement. The final section of this chapter is a discussion of the methods of the study, including methods of data collection and analysis and some of the limitations encountered.

Chapter Three is mainly descriptive. It explores the historical background, the organizational structure and the operations of the GBM. This establishes a broader understanding of the GBM's significance in Kenya. This chapter also includes a historical and contextual analysis of the development and evolution of the GBM.

Chapter Four establishes an arena for exploring the issues related to gender and resource management and access. It is here that I analyze how gendered social structures and organization and gender roles have influenced the development of the GBM. Themes on how gender shapes and motivates participation in environmental concerns are explored. The concept of 'women's groups' is then highlighted as central to understanding women's involvement in environmental concerns in the Kenyan context.

Chapter Five looks at how gender and politics shape gender relations not only with regard to resource access but also in broader social terms. It is argued that gender relations in the Kenyan context also mediate the evolution of the GBM from being concerned mainly with conservation efforts to a movement concerned with broader socio-political issues. The involvement of men in leadership positions in a predominantly women's movement is briefly

explored in the last section of the chapter.

Chapter Six summarizes the research findings. I argue that ecofeminist and WED frameworks, particularly those emphasizing a constructivist approach are useful in understanding the gender-environment nexus of the GBM. However it is also crucial to closely examine the specific socio-historical context in which the GBM has developed. Looking at context allows you to see the multiple intersections of factors that have shaped women's participation in the GBM and its evolution from tree planting to a broader political movement. This chapter also suggests areas that could be explored in future research

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS.

In Kenya, women are increasingly involved not only in environmental activities but also in political and social action. Gender and resource issues are becoming central to debates in Kenyan society (Thomas-Slayter and Rocheleau, 1995). Gender is seen as central to the positioning of both men and women vis`a vis institutions that influence access to resources and to the wider economy and polity. The focus of this chapter is to locate the orientation of the study by reviewing literature and discussing the methods employed in the study.

2.1 PREVIOUS STUDIES OF THE GBM: A REVIEW

The GBM is an environmental movement that has mobilized people in general and women in particular to work toward socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development. This has been accomplished through its focus on facilitating the voice and collective action of the grassroots mainly in rural Kenya to work toward a better environment. The main focus of the movement has been tree planting thereby strengthening local Kenyan people's efforts to control environmental degradation.

Previous studies of the GBM have largely focussed on understanding the GBM from a social movement perspective. Social movements have been broadly defined as organizations, which have roles, positions and norms among

participants. Such organizations have purposeful intentions to reorganize society (Curtis and Zurcher, 1993). The previous studies have fitted the GBM within either consensus or conflict perspectives presenting it as an organized movement involved in mass mobilization and the raising of civil consciousness in Kenya (Ndegwa, 1996; Michaelson 1994; Wangunyu 1994).

Michaelson (1994) argued that the GBM could better be understood as a consensus movement. He characterized the GBM as a movement that intentionally remained outside traditional political spheres, employing consensus means to achieve its social change objectives. Michaelson used two social movement paradigms - Resource Mobilization- Political Process (RM-PP) and New Social Movement Identity Oriented (Michaelson, 1994:542) to analyze the GBM. Michaelson's argument was based on his characterization of the movement as a self-help grassroots movement. He notes that "self-help movements engage in collective action to improve conditions of the groups directly and in so doing alter social arenas. Self-help movements are more subtle, and on the surface are often politically benign" (Michaelson, 1994: 540). Thus he argues that it is this characteristic that defines the GBM as a consensus movement. He argued that officially the GBM has maintained a non-confrontational approach. As a social movement the GBM has sought changes through self-help activities and not direct political confrontation (Michaelson, 1994). However, this is one of the shortfalls of his study. Although Michaelson

noted that the co-ordinator of the movement, Wangari Maathai, has been involved in political activism he separates these actions of the GBM's leadership from what he vaguely refers to as "official goals". Another theme that Michaelson (1994) fails to address is the gendered nature of the movement. His analysis of the changing faces of the movement barely mentions the involvement of women.

By contrast Ndegwa (1996) explored the conflictual nature of the GBM. He approached the GBM from a civil society perspective noting that the movement has been a part of a growing civil society in Kenya. This study also underscored its self-help grassroots character showing how this type of organization has enabled the GBM to engage in community activities to improve the living conditions of its members and also engage in social and political activities. For instance he notes that the massive reforestation program of the GBM has improved soil fertility, increased firewood supplies and provided monetary gains to some of the members (Ndegwa, 1996:82).

In addition, Ndegwa (1996) analyzed the political involvement of the GBM. He contended that, as part of civil society in Kenya the GBM has adopted a more confrontational strategy and is best understood as a conflict movement. He argues contrary to Michaelson (1994) that apart from its environmental goals the movement is very much politically oriented noting that one cannot envisage the movement without looking at the leadership of Maathai especially

her political involvement (Ndegwa, 1996:81). This study directly challenges Michaelson's analysis which separates the political actions of Maathai from what he refers to as the official orientation of the movement thus allowing him to classifying the GBM as a consensus movement (Michaelson, 1994).

Although Ndegwa's study addresses some aspects of gender, this variable is not fully explored. Ndegwa (1996) describes the movement's focus on mobilizing women, but this dimension is overshadowed in his analysis, which presents civil society in Kenya primarily in gender neutral terms.

Ndegwa (1996:97) explores how the GBM stands out as a vocal environmental movement by paying attention to how the movement becomes involved in political campaigns in Kenya. What he fails to explore in his thesis is how, or whether, the gender makeup of the movement affects its operations. He also does not explore the effect of the incorporation of women into the growing civil society. In his analysis the civil society is generic and is a progressive means through which democratic values are to be pursued. It is this gender-neutral approach to the civil society that is problematic. Women who also make up a greater percentage of the GBM have for a long time been neglected as a political force in Kenya.

In this thesis it will be argued that the incorporation of women in the Kenyan political arena through such movements has changed the Kenyan political sphere and has also exposed some interesting dynamics of gender

relations in Kenya. Women's involvement in organizations such as the GBM have formed an important building block in development in Kenya and their contribution as an important and unique part of the body politic should not be overlooked.

Wangunyu (1994) analyzed the GBM using social movement theories, exploring how the GBM had evolved over time. She sets out to examine the development and growth of the GBM using frameworks that have attempted to explain the occurrence of collective behavior and social movements. Her analysis was grounded by the 'emergent norm theory' of collective behavior (Wangunyu, 1994). She argued that this theory adequately explained social movements such as the GBM noting that

"[t]he emergent norm theory identifies the elements that make up social movements. More than any other theory it elaborates on the interaction among the public, a given situation and the internal conflicts and motivations that together with external pulls and pushes encourage individuals either to participate or not participate in collective behavior"(Wangunyu, 1994:30).

Arguing that social movements do not remain stagnant Wangunyu notes how the GBM has changed over time redefining itself to the changing demands of its members and the larger Kenyan community. She attempts a limited analysis of gender and the GBM. She does not critically approach issues of gender and dismisses the idea of a women's movement as a western ideology. In looking at the social forces that have contributed to the development of the

movement she is cognizant of the fact that gender relations in the Kenyan context have played a role. However, the social movement perspectives used in her analysis do not provide adequate tools to look critically at the gender-environment nexus. In this sense, Wangunyū does not fully explore how gender relations have impacted on the development of the GBM.

This review of previous studies shows the gap that this study intends to fill. The importance of these analyses notwithstanding, I argue that gender is another prism through which important dimensions of the evolution of the GBM can be explored. Feminist perspectives that have looked at the relations between gender, development and environment will frame this study. In these perspectives gender is explicitly incorporated. These perspectives will also shed some light on the limitations of other approaches that have not taken account of gender in analyzing the GBM, by highlighting women's distinct contribution to the growth of the GBM as a social movement.

This study will therefore bring a new angle through which the evolution of the movement will be analyzed. It is argued that gender is an important factor that can enable us to understand the dynamics of the movement. Furthermore this study brings out specific historical, social and political contexts in which the GBM has evolved that are not addressed in previous studies. I argue that the organizational form and greater spread of the GBM as one of the most popular environmental movements in Kenya have been in a sense a cumulation of a

lengthy socio-historical process. I show in the analysis that the movement has developed various phases since its inception, which are marked by specific episodes in Kenyan history. Thus, placing the GBM in a Kenyan context enables us to better understand its dynamics.

2.2 THEORIZING GENDER AND ENVIRONMENT

Two main frameworks have dominated the analysis of gender and environment: Ecofeminism and Women, Environment and Development (WED). Analysts from each of these perspectives have used the GBM as an example of a women's environmental movement (Kettel, 1998; Merchant, 1992). This section reviews the main arguments of these frameworks. Although there are on going debates and critiques around these theories as they continue to be formulated this section will focus less on these emerging issues. Of central importance here is how these theories link gender and environment issues and how they can be applied to understanding the development of the GBM.

2.2.1 Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism analyses environmental problems by critiquing patriarchy and showing the relationship between patriarchal oppression and the destruction of nature. Ecofeminists have argued that there is a connection between ecological degradation and the oppression of women (Merchant, 1980, 1992; Shiva, 1989). Ecofeminists argue that ideologies that authorize gender, race and class subordination also sanction the exploitation and

degradation of the environment. A fundamental tenet of Ecofeminism is that if feminism is to adequately address issues specific to women's oppression then it must adequately pay attention to how that oppression is connected to the devaluation and exploitation of non-humans. As a body of thought Ecofeminism is still evolving but it carries a growing currency within feminism.

Ecofeminism has its roots in both feminism and environmentalism. As a theoretical perspective Ecofeminism was developed out of the consciousness within feminism of the connection between environmental degradation and women's subordinate positions in most societies. The term Ecofeminism was coined by the French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 who was calling for an ecological revolution led by women. For Eaubonne, women's input into ecological restoration was fundamental because of their direct concern at all levels with nature (Sandilands, 1998). Such a revolution was also intended to alter the gender relations between men and women and between nature and humans. Ecofeminism was further developed by other scholars in North America such as Ynestra King at the Institute of Social Ecology at Vermont who began to explicitly articulate abstract analyses of the connection between the oppression of women and destruction of nature. Ecofeminism was incorporated into a movement addressing practical politics around women and nature by about 1980 (Merchant, 1992, Sandilands, 1998).

Ecofeminism provides a conceptual framework with which to locate and

connect struggles by women over the degradation of the environment. The main arguments by ecofeminists are based on the assumption that women's close connection to nature is because of their engagement in the work of reproduction, nurturing, and the sustenance of life (Merchant, 1992; Mies and Shiva, 1993). Thus, women's insights into natural processes are seen as more enlightened in pointing a way out of a male-constructed environmental catastrophe. The connection between domination of women and domination of nature is seen as ideological, rooted in the systems of ideas and representations, values and beliefs that place women and nature hierarchically below men (Carlassare, 1996; Merchant, 1992; Mies and Shiva, 1993).

Ecofeminism embodies several discourses within it which reflect different positions within the feminist movement. As a growing body of thought there is no one epistemological position that all ecofeminists are said to share. But what stands out as their central argument is their desire to foster resistance against the domination of women and nature for the sake of human liberation and global environmental protection (Carlassare, 1996; Merchant, 1992).

Ecofeminist discourses illuminate some important conceptual links between the symbolic construction of women and nature and ways of acting upon them.

Ecofeminists argue that the nature-culture dichotomy is a false, patriarchal ideology, which is used to perpetuate and justify male dominance.

There are several arguments that are central to Ecofeminist thought.

Agrawal (1998:193) identifies these as follows:

- i) There is an important connection between the domination of women and nature, and the exploitation and domination of nature;
- ii) In patriarchal discourses, women are seen as closer to nature. Nature is seen as inferior hence the view that women are inferior;
- iii) Because of these paradoxes women have a stake in ending the domination of nature;
- iv) Feminists and environmental movements both stand for egalitarian, non-hierarchical systems. Therefore they have a lot in common and need to work together to evolve a common perspective and practice.

Ecofeminism is multidimensional covering a vast historical, ideological, geographical and conceptual range in its analyses. Although Ecofeminist arguments have consistently focussed on conceptualizing the connection between women's subordination and ecological degradation this connection is voiced within a multiple and vibrant set of political positions under the umbrella of ecofeminism. Ecofeminists have been categorized as liberal, cultural and social and socialist (Merchant, 1992). Liberal ecofeminists look at the need to reform environmentalism so as to alter human relations with nature from within existing structures of governance through the development of laws and regulations. For liberal ecofeminists environmental degradation is a product of

rapid development of natural resources and failure to regulate environmentally friendly legislature. They argue that women who are not different from men as rational agents are excluded from the education and economic opportunities to be scientists, natural resource managers and legislators. Thus women cannot contribute to the improvement of the environment and a general higher quality of human life because of this exclusion (Merchant, 1992; Sturgeon, 1997).

Liberal ecofeminists who are identified with liberal feminists focus on change through the legal reforms of existing political systems. Their main argument is that what is needed is provision of equal opportunity for achieving individual development for women. In the 18th century liberal feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft argued for the rights of women to education, economic independence and political representation as one of the ways in which women's subordination could be corrected (Green, 1994). This argument was predicated on the fact that men and women are equally rational, autonomous individuals capable of and indeed inevitably faced with moral choices. In the contemporary era such a focus on individual rights has been criticized because it can degenerate into encouraging women to join the ranks of those who dominate others rather than work to change unequal systems (Green, 1994).

Cultural ecofeminists analyse environmental problems by critiquing patriarchy as a system of power. They see a symbolic relationship between patriarchal oppression and the destruction of nature. Cultural ecofeminists have

looked at the historical and symbolic interconnections between the domination of women and the domination of nature (Merchant, 1992; Shiva, 1989). This approach is evident through the work of Merchant (1980) and Shiva (1989).

Merchant's book *The Death of Nature* (1980) developed the first historical argument for ecofeminism. She argues that the development of capitalist society and the rise of science were catalytic events that led to an attitude toward domination of women and nature. She notes that in Western society, women were looked upon with greater respect in the Middle Ages because production was still largely based in the home and as a result women were valued as indispensable economic partners. Their role as mothers was highly regarded and this respect was carried over to nature, which metaphorically was seen as mother (Green, 1994; Merchant, 1980:2). With the advent of capitalism the role of women changed as industries became the main spheres of production and nature began to be viewed as an object to be exploited. This transition marked the beginning of the domination of women and nature (Merchant, 1980:193).

Shiva (1989) looked at the symbolic connection between women and nature in the Hindu cultural context. She critiques the western model of development arguing that this, combined with the western model of science, are the primary causes of ecological destruction. This is because these paradigms are commercially driven and depend heavily on overexploitation and

unsustainable use of natural resources. She indicts western science and development practice imposed on third world countries as a continuation of colonization and as an extension of modern western patriarchy's exploitation or exclusion of women and the exploitation and destruction of other cultures (Shiva, 1989:2). She notes how economic and scientific paradigms of development, are Eurocentric in design and cannot be universally applied to all societies. This Shiva argues, is one of the main reasons for the worsening conditions of the environment in the third world countries. Shiva analyses Hindu cosmology and women's work in food production, water management and silviculture. She argues for a return to an ecological science that correlates with the practices of Hindu women whose care for nature was supported by cultural and religious notions of *Shakti* (as dynamic energy) and *Prakriti* (the feminine principle). Her conception of Ecofeminism is one that is culturally relevant. She argues that Eurocentric science combined with technology, politics and economics have exploited nature and marginalized women. For Shiva, ecological sustainability can only be possible through a culturally sensitive ecology that will ensure harmonious biodiversity between women, men and nature (Shiva, 1989:223).

Social and socialist ecofeminists both emphasize a more constructivist approach to women and environment. They differ in the sense that social ecofeminists emphasize only the category of production as central to

understanding the connection between the domination of the environment and that of women. On the other hand socialist ecofeminists integrate reproduction and production as central in their arguments for sustainable development (Merchant, 1992; Salleh, 1995; Shiva, 1989). Women's social roles in many societies, but especially in the third world, have always placed them closer to the natural environment thus enabling women to have a very significant interaction with the environment. Through gathering foods, firewood and medicinal herbs, women in these communities have come to have an intimate knowledge of nature and they have learned to use resources in a sustainable manner because of their reliance on them. With the advent of capitalism men became dominant in the production and exchange commodities while women's roles were seen as primarily reproductive and consequently devalued (Shiva, 1989).

Social and socialist ecofeminists examine the connection between women and ecology by critiquing capitalism as a patriarchal system, which ascribes low value to women and nature (Salleh, 1995; Shiva, 1989). Because capitalism is based on economic growth and competition in which nature is seen as a commodity to be exploited, sustainability becomes secondary (Shiva, 1989, Salleh, 1995). Social and socialist ecofeminists draw on a Marxist approach to provide an economic analysis of women and nature. This Marxist orientation to Ecofeminism shows the economic reality of women especially in

the third world where women's work which is directly connected to nature continues to be subordinated especially in economic analysis. Environmental degradation has created new strains on women as economic growth has proceeded with little regard for environmental protection and resource conservation. For many women environmental degradation has doubled their workload and this has implications for women's health and economic well being.

Socialist Ecofeminism also provides an analysis of the ways in which the capitalist male sphere of production is materially contingent on nature and women (Salleh, 1995). This framework argues that it is women's work of caring and nurturing in the home that has enabled capitalism to expand because it is this work which sustains human capital which is crucial for capitalist growth (Walby, 1986; Salleh, 1995). This positioning of women between men and nature is a fundamental contradiction of capitalism. It is the subordination of women and nature that has been an impetus for women to forge a resistance against environmental degradation. This has cumulated to a new politics that is evident in women's organization around environmental issues. Socialist Ecofeminism provides a more thorough analysis of the link between women and environmental issues because it shows the dual problems of sexism and the domination of nature by capitalism as crucial factors for understanding environmental degradation. This is important because the approach focuses on

the material reality of women in understanding the impetus for women's involvement in environmental conservation in most communities.

2.2.2 Women, Environment and Development (WED)

The Women, Environment and Development (WED) perspective grew out of a progressivist discourse on development. As an analytical framework WED has a long history which began with a feminist critique of development models. Starting with a Women in Development (WID) perspective, feminist analysts began to critique development policy arguing that women had been left out of the models and processes which paradoxically had profound effects on economic, social and environmental issues particularly for women (Kettel, 1998; Zein-Elabdin, 1996). WID as a perspective advocated an additive approach to women's issues into development models. This perspective put an emphasis on providing women with opportunities to participate in male-defined, and male dominated social and economic structures (Rathgeber, 1996). The argument was that women, especially from the third world, were left out of development practices and therefore there was a need to redefine these practices so as to accommodate women. It was recognized that women had not shared in the gains of development, which were measured largely in economic terms. This quest for incorporating women into development emerged out of the overlap between two global dilemmas: the world-wide feminization of poverty and increasing global environmental degradation (Kettel, 1992:16). The

argument was that integration of women in economic development would be one means of achieving sustainable development.

WID discourses however were grounded in a liberal approach that emphasized the need to integrate women into the development and modernization process. During the first few development decades, the 1950s and 1960s development theory and practice paid limited attention to third world women. Development specialists did not take into account the economic role of women in underdeveloped countries. This representation of women as non-actors in the economic sphere largely an ethnocentric one based on a western model legitimized leaving women out of development policies and plans (Beneri`a and Sen, 1997; Parpart, 1996). Thus women's contribution to and pivotal role in the economies of their countries was unaccounted for in economic discourses. With the advent of WID discourses marked by the publication of Esther Boserup's *Women's Role in Economic Development* in 1970 (Beneri`a and Sen 1997; Zein-Elabdin, 1996) women began to draw attention from the progressive development agencies. However, despite its good intentions the WID perspective rarely questioned the broader priorities of male defined development goals. These discourses also legitimized the need for development aid to third world countries especially technical aid by defining women's problems in the third world as technical problems hence reifying the idea of the need for a development expert (Parpart, 1996). It is because of such

flaws that many third world women analysts critiqued WID perspectives. This critique subsequently gave rise to Women, Environment and Development (WED) perspective.

WED grew out of the need to incorporate gender and environmental issues in the development agenda. WED critiqued development policy for not only leaving women out of the development process but also for unsustainable use of the environment in pursuit of development. The development model was critiqued for being inherently flawed and devoid of justice and equity (social, environmental and economic) and in particular was viewed as inequitable with regard to relationships between humans and nature (Kettel, 1998; Ofosu-Amaah, 1994). The underlying assumption about incorporating both gender and environment in WED was that this would ensure that development projects would be more effective because these two very crucial variables had previously been left out of the development process.

The attempts to integrate gender and environment had two objectives: equity which emphasized integrating women into the whole development process; and sustainability that emphasized development that does not erode the ecological base (Ofosu-Amaah, 1994). It is the sustainability aspect of WED that set it apart from WID. WED was particularly prominent with third world women specifically Southern NGOs and women's research organizations. The GBM has been involved with WED Networks and has within its campaigns

educated participants on the linkages between development policies and environmental degradation (Kettel, 1998; Maathai, 1995). A research organization known as Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) has in particular been involved in drawing up an alternative development model (Ofosu-Amaah, 1994). The focus of DAWN is a critique of the mainstream model and advocating for a development model that ensures environmental and economic sustainability with a special emphasis on a people-centred approach (Kettel, 1998; Parpart, 1996; Ofosu-Amaah, 1994).

This emphasis on sustainability revealed another facet of equity. It highlighted the fact that although women have considerable knowledge and experience and have been active in combating serious environmental problems they have largely been ignored at policy and decision making levels. Thus WED aimed at showing how this potential of women has been untapped and unrecognized in the quest for sustainable development. The highlight of WED was in June 1992 when the International Community adopted Agenda 21 as a blue print for policy and action into the 21st Century. In this blueprint one of the chapters was entitled "Global action for women toward equitable and sustainable development" (Kettel, 1998:222; Ofosu-Amaah, 1994:63). This was a big step forward in the integration of women's needs and concerns into the international agenda and even more so a positive step in integrating women into the world's decision making venues where for a considerable length of time

they had not been adequately represented.

WED as a perspective provides a cross-sectoral approach to integrating women in sustainable development. WED's definition of development is broad-based and focused on issues ranging from quality of life, to access to health services, education and equal opportunities for all members of society (Ofosu-Amaah, 1994). The emphasis of WED analysts has been that women should be integrated into all sectors of society. Thus WED promotes an alternative notion of development that is both economically and ecologically sustainable. This approach has been more applicable in developing countries where women have largely been characterized as managers of natural resources. This has been differentiated from Ecofeminism which was coined largely in a Western context (Ofosu-Amaah, 1994). WED analysis does not suggest that women are better resource managers, but it does recognize that women have been socialized to work closely with the environment and thus have gained valuable experience from this perspective. The argument therefore is that there should be validation and recognition of the significant role that women have played in addressing environmental issues. Although Ecofeminism and WED perspectives have been viewed as independent perspectives their arguments can be seen to be mutually reinforcing.

These theoretical perspectives provide this study with a framework for analysing the participation of women in the GBM. The next section provides a

conceptual framework for defining a women's movement. The characteristics of what entail a women's movement or organization¹ are articulated and considered in facilitating my analysis of the GBM.

2.3 CONCEPTUALIZING A WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

This study looks at the GBM as a women's movement. It is problematic in certain contexts to qualify certain social movements as exclusively women's movements. Circumstances around the formation of the GBM indicate that it was begun as a women's project although its concerns and issues go beyond what are often termed "women's issues". What constitutes women's issues have also been problematized by non-western women and this underscores one of the difficulties of conceiving a socio-political category of women at the global and even local levels (Oyewumi, 1997).

Using western feminist perspectives to define women's issues in a third world context has often been challenged on the grounds of cultural imperialism and of a short-sightedness based on the experiences of middle-class white western women (Mohanty, 1993; Oyewumi, 1997). But it is important to recognize that women in Africa have long been engaged in struggles over gender issues although they have not necessarily applied the language of feminism to these efforts. Thus in the context of this study using feminist

¹ These two concepts have been used in the same context. For example Michaelson (1994) defines the GBM as a social movement organization because it is a movement that seeks social change through a network of various groups. It is within a similar framework that I use the concepts interchangeably.

perspectives does not necessarily imply an importation of a western framework to define Kenyan women's activities. These frameworks provide important analytical tools for understanding the gendered aspect of the GBM, and are used here to explore gender relations within a Kenyan context.

Mohanty (1993: 4-5) has noted that lumping women in developing countries together as the amorphous 'third world woman' is based on the idea of an imagined community. This imagined community is not an essentialist categorization of women. Rather it is a political category that can be used to construct the ground for struggle and resistance by women. It is this premise that is used for this study. Therefore referring to the GBM as a women's movement does not imply a false homogeneous category of Kenyan women. It is acknowledged that there is diversity not only among women involved in the GBM but other members as well based, for example, on ethnicity and class. In this study gender is foregrounded for the purpose of exploring the gendered dimensions of the GBM.

It is also important to note that the concept of women organizing is not foreign to Kenya. Women's solidarity was traditionally characterized by age-based organizations in various ethnic communities where women supported each other socially and materially (Abwunza, 1995; Robertson, 1996; Thomas-Slayter, 1992; Wanyande, 1987). Today, women in Kenya, in particular, and Africa in general have been forming groups to improve their local, national and

even global economic status. Through group networks women in Kenya have undertaken both income and non-income generating projects. These include farming, tree planting, poultry keeping and contributing of cash to members through revolving funds (Wanyande, 1987).

Women's self-help groups in Kenya are part of a large network that has been established for many decades (Abwunza, 1995; Kabira in Harrison, 1997). Thus women in Kenya have actively engaged in interpreting and reinterpreting their needs and concerns with a conscious sense of their own agency in group contexts. These groups have operated with an awareness of different gender interests and the sense that through organizing as women they can address gender power imbalances in a wider Kenyan context.

To concretely conceptualize a women's organization for the purpose of my analysis Kusterer's (1990) defining characteristics of a third world women's NGO will be adopted. According to Kusterer there are three major characteristics that identify a woman's organization. These include:

- 1) The organization benefits from the decisive influence of women. This is evident in the membership and leadership although its activities could be bi-gendered. This characteristic also means that it is women who have shaped the leadership style, organizational structure and group subculture.

- 2) Women NGOs serve three functions. To mobilize people especially women at the community level to solve their immediate problems on a voluntary

basis. They also serve as a mutual support group for their members. The third function involves making political demands and interventions that are relatively focussed and specific because they result from direct involvement with the problem that needs to be addressed. These functions set apart women's organizations world-wide.

3) Women's organizations are usually grassroots, built up from local bases of activity. Most women's NGOs do not consider themselves class based they have a grass-root base in local action. This sets them apart from most organizations that are involved in traditionally progressivist work (1990:185).

2.4 METHODS

As previous studies indicate, there has been little exploration of the GBM from a gendered angle. Although the presence of women as central to the movement is acknowledged, its importance is glossed over. To date more emphasis has been placed on looking at the GBM as a social movement and as part of the growing civil society in Kenya (Michaelson 1994; Ndegwa 1996; Wangunyu, 1994).

In contrast I argue that the evolution of the GBM analysed in gendered terms opens up other arenas of analysis, which were not adequately addressed in previous studies. The theoretical frameworks that are used in this study provide a different perspective from those applied in earlier studies by emphasising gender, thus enabling us to critically understand how gender as a

variable has influenced the development of the GBM. More importantly this study places a greater emphasis on understanding the context in which the movement has evolved and continues to operate. This is because as Zein-Elabdin (1996) has noted a discussion of gender must be informed by an institutional understanding of the socio-economic and I would add, political processes in which the discussion is based. Thus reading gender in the GBM in a Kenyan context enables this study to explore the intersection of multiple factors that have shaped the development of the GBM.

2.4.1 Data Collection.

This thesis is based on a case study of the GBM. Case studies are thought of as exploratory forays in areas that are seen as understudied (Hamel et al, 1993). It is a qualitative study that relies mainly on documentary analysis.

The documents that were used for this analysis include a wide range of written materials. Primary sources used included documents directly generated by the movement such as records, reports, books and information pamphlets. Other primary documents include recorded interviews of the GBM leadership in magazines. Important primary data were taped recordings of meetings, seminar proceedings and some interviews with members of the GBM which were obtained from Dr. S. M. Ndegwa who carried out research on the movement between 1992 and 1993 (see Ndegwa, 1996). The tapes were recorded mainly in Swahili and Kikuyu. I transcribed the Swahili tapes but because I do not

speak Kikuyu, which is one of the languages spoken in Kenya, I had to find a speaker of the dialect to transcribe the Kikuyu tapes. A total of 18 tapes (approximately 22 hours) were used. A complete listing of the tapes is provided in Appendix B.

Secondary sources included writings about the movement not directly generated by the movement itself. These were documents such as previous studies of the movement (Michaelson, 1994; Ndegwa, 1996; Wangunyu, 1994) and journalistic reports. The journalistic reports were mainly from Kenyan newspapers and magazines including the "Daily Nation", "The Sunday Nation," "The Standard," "Kenya Times," "The Weekly Review" and "True Love". These newspapers have reported on the GBM over time. A total of 43 editorials and feature stories were collected from newspapers that were written between 1984 and 1997. Out of these only 20 articles provided relevant material for the study. Samples of some of the articles used are provided in Appendix C.

2.4.2 Analysis and Limitations of the study

As a case study this research was guided by questions that specifically focussed on gender themes. As Stake (1995) has noted, when doing qualitative studies research questions generally orient the cases or phenomenon seeking patterns of unanticipated as well as expected relationships. The questions

drawn which guided the study were:

- How has the GBM evolved over time? Who are its members and how has this changed over time?

What kind of activities does the GBM engage in and what are the strategies employed to achieve these goals? What role do the members play?

How are gender issues articulated within the stated goals and aims of the GBM?

How has gender specifically influenced the evolution of the movement?

How have gender relations in a wider Kenyan context influenced the trajectory that the GBM has followed?

My interpretation was also influenced by my position as the researcher hence the need for me to situate myself. As a Kenyan woman doing a feminist analysis of the GBM I was continually aware of my position in the research process. My analysis was guided not only by feminist theoretical orientations but also by my experiences as a Kenyan woman. As Maynard and Purvis (1994) have noted interpretation as a process is a politically contested and unstable activity. Because the study was intended to be a gender analysis and because of the methodological orientation of the study I acknowledge that there could be silences and absences that have not been addressed in this study. This is especially because I could not personally conduct fieldwork due to

financial constraints. I discuss some limitations for the study later on.

The research was both descriptive and analytical. The analysis was done through direct interpretation² (Stake, 1995) which involved a content analysis of the documents. The content analysis was done to delineate the gender themes within the data. Through this I was able to make sense of the complexities of the gender factor in the GBM in its various contexts. At the descriptive level what was examined was the GBM's history and growth, its organizational activities and its operations. Historically, the GBM development was analysed by looking at it in a Kenyan social and political context.

Specifically, the earlier history of the movement was explored in the context of the self-help movement that emerged in Kenya after independence in response to the *Harambee* motto of Jomo Kenyatta who was Kenya's first president. The later phase of the movement is explored in the context of the development of a civil society in Kenya.

Apart from understanding this historical dimension of the movement the study analyzed the gender dimension of the movement. The findings of the analysis are presented as themes and issues relating to gender. It is argued that gender, as a variable should not be underestimated since it is a significant factor that has shaped the development of the movement. The analysis is on

² Stake describes direct interpretation as a method of qualitative analysis in which the researcher finds meaning based on individual instances rather than through an aggregation of instances.

gender specific issues including the division of labour, access to and control over resources, decision making and how these are linked to environmental issues and other socio-economic issues. A gender analysis of the GBM also involves seeing women in relation to men and understanding how gender roles as socially and materially grounded have continually been reformulated in a wider Kenyan context.

Another theme presented is how gendered organizations, specifically the women's groups, have shaped the participation and organization of environmental action. It is argued that women's involvement in environmental conservation and in wider socio-political action is motivated not only by the need to diminish environmental degradation but it is also a means for women to create new opportunities for themselves and their families.

Limitations

Although it would have been ideal to conduct interviews with those involved in the movement using my own research questions, financial and time constraints did not allow this. Due to the political engagements of the GBM it was also difficult to obtain as much information directly from their main office in Nairobi. For political reasons, the GBM has become more cautious about giving out its information especially since the government has tried to interfere in its operations.

Furthermore as previously noted some of the recorded tapes obtained

from Dr. Ndegwa were in Kikuyu, and I had to rely on someone else to transcribe these tapes. This factor did not allow me to listen to these tapes repeatedly as I did with those in Swahili. I found that being able to listen to some of the tapes repeatedly enabled me to obtain more information that I had previously missed out.

The use of secondary documents for analysis can be problematic in certain instances. In using these secondary documents I was aware that I was relying on someone else's description and interpretations rather than what would be referred to as raw data. This has limitations for the study since such documents may be falsified deliberately and are subject to incorrect interpretation. With these theoretical and methodological considerations in mind I will now turn to the next chapter which is a description of the GBM.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ORIGINS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE GBM

3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND GROWTH OF THE GBM

The GBM, which is fundamentally a national, indigenous women's grassroots environmental organization, was started in 1977. The founder-coordinator Ms. Wangari Maathai had thought of the idea of planting trees in communities a few years earlier (Maathai, 1988:6). She set up a project called "Envirocare", which aimed at involving people in Nairobi's Langata community to engage in improving the environment around them. The purpose of Envirocare was not only to involve people in these communities in keeping a clean environment but also to help provide jobs for some of the poor people in these communities (Topouizis, 1990). While this project was not completely successful and was eventually dropped Dr. Maathaistayed with the idea of planting trees.

With the intervention of the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK) the idea of tree planting was revamped. The NCWK is an umbrella organization, which represents scores of grassroots women's groups in both rural and urban Kenya (GBM (Monitors Training), 1992³; Maathai 1988:7). Dr. Maathai was part of the NCWK's Executive Committee. The NCWK organized a

³In these taped recordings some members of the GBM explain their understanding of the movement (See Appendix B for a list of the recorded material).

project which was known as "Save the Land *Harambee*" (*Harambee* is a Swahili word which literally means "let's pull together") whose mandate was tree planting. The first tree planting ceremony took place in Nairobi on World Environment Day in June 1977 (Maathai, 1988; Maathai 1991). Although only two of seven trees planted on that day have survived (Maathai, 1991), this initiative would mark the beginning of one of the most successful environmental projects in Kenya. In the same year, 1977, the NCWK used the U.N Conference on Desertification held in Kenya as a platform for its campaign on the need to start reforesting Kenya. With corporate support from Mobil Oil of Kenya the NCWK planted a strip of trees or what was referred to as a "green belt" on a co-operative farm run by rural women in Naivasha. It is from here that the organization's environmental campaign took off and spread into various communities. The NCWK started holding demonstrations of its "Save the Land *Harambee*" project encouraging the involvement of all people in the community in practical activities such as planting food crops and trees at the same time. Their emphasis was on agroforestry (Maathai, 1988).

This initiative by the NCWK was well received in many communities. Due to this positive response the organization approached the Department of Forestry within the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources requesting supplies of tree seedlings. The department agreed but was only able to do so for a short period. This was because there was a greater demand for seedlings

than they anticipated and they could not meet the supply. The result was that the forestry department started charging a minimal fee for each seedling they supplied (GBMa, n.d.; Maathai, 1988).

By the 1980's the Save the Land *Harambee* project developed into what is now known as the GBM (Ndegwa, 1996:85). The term 'green belt' was adopted to reflect the demonstration woodland plots that had been set up in various communities. These woodlands constituted strips of about 1000 trees planted on public land that acted as windbreaks and contributed to the aesthetics of the environment. During the establishment of these green belts extra seedlings were supplied to the people who attended the demonstration so that they could take the concept and apply it in their own private plots. The whole idea was to take the project to the grassroots and involve local people in developing agroforestry (Maathai, 1988:8).

The GBM has since grown into a popular grassroots environmental NGO that has primarily focussed on mobilizing rural women in environmental management (Ndegwa, 1996). It has a very extensive network of affiliated groups. It has not only helped curb environmental problems such as the encroaching desertification in Kenya but it has also helped provide additional income and employment to the mainly rural women involved in its tree nurseries (Maathai, 1991; Ndegwa, 1996). In Kenya 78% of the land surface is threatened by desertification. Degraded and bare arid lands caused by a

combination of overgrazing, ill adopted land use practices and growing populations characterize this threat. The consequences are made clear by recurrent droughts and famines that strike the most marginalized areas (Sibenaler, 1996). Coupled with its primary goal of involving communities and particularly women, in environmental initiatives, the GBM has other broader goals such as educating the communities on issues of national social, economic and political concerns (Ndegwa, 1996:82, Topouzis, 1990).

The evolution of the GBM from a tree planting project to one concerned with broader issues than the environment became more apparent in the late 1980s (Michaelson, 1994). The first 10 years of the movement were marked by resounding successes. By 1988, the GBM had established over 600 tree nurseries in communities throughout Kenya and had planted about 7 million trees (Maathai, 1988:25). In 1984 the GBM was internationally recognized and the founder co-ordinator was presented with the Right Livelihood Award in Stockholm, Sweden for her pioneering reforestation project (Kenya Times, 1984). The GBM still maintained a working relation with the Forestry department within the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources which was supplying the tree seedlings for a small fee. The Government also provided the organization with office space (Michaelson, 1994; Ndegwa, 1996).

The second phase of the movement began in 1989. This phase saw the movement becoming more political and embroiled in heated exchanges with

the government. A good indication of the new look of the movement was the actions of its founder and co-ordinator Wangari Maathai. Maathai had become politically vocal and overtly adversarial (Ndegwa, 1996). Maathai's political move was first prompted by the Kenyan government's proposal to build an approximately \$200 million, 60 storey complex with a 30 foot statue of President Moi at Uhuru park, one of the few recreational open spaces in Nairobi City (Maathai, 1991; Ndegwa, 1996, Michaelson, 1994). This was a project for the Kenya Times Media Trust which was a trust for KANU (Kenya African National Union) which is the ruling political party (Maathai, 1991).

The project not only had environmental implications but also was to be one of the "white elephant" projects which was not a development priority for Kenyans at the time. Environmentally the project was not safe. According to an environmental impact assessment report, Nairobi was an earthquake prone zone, which meant it was risky to put up a skyscraper in such a location. An independent group of Architects and engineers also reported that the proposed site was marshy and not solid enough to hold the building. Economically the project was not viable, its estimated cost was almost double the country's international debt (Maathai, 1991; Wallace, 1993). Although those in favour argued that the complex was going to create jobs and provide a twenty four hour television channel for Nairobi residents, Maathai questioned whether this was a priority for Kenyans considering only a very small percentage owned

television sets (Maathai, 1991).

Dr. Maathaiput up a spirited almost lone battle against the building of this complex and filed an injunction seeking permanent stoppage of its construction on 24th November 1989 (Daily Nation, 1989; Weekly Review, 1989a). Although this project was halted after some reviews and some of the foreign funders backed out, this defiance of the government cost the GBM its offices and marked the beginning of a strained relation between the movement and the government (Weekly Review, 1989b). The Movement has since become more politically oriented but has maintained its rigorous tree planting campaign. The climax of this political phase came in 1997 when the GBM's objectives and working philosophy were proposed as the manifesto for the newly formed Liberal party of Kenya (Opanga, 1997). It is also at this point that the leader Wangari Maathai made open her political aspirations by proposing to vie for the presidential seat.

Like many environmental movements in third world countries the GBM has combined struggles against the environment with resistance against what those involved see as oppressive social structures (Guha, 1998).

Environmental issues have often been linked to social justice. The GBM translates environmental problems facing Kenya to be closely related to issues of political, social and economic injustice. Maathai emphasizes that rehabilitating the environment will take more than planting trees. She notes that

environmental concerns are part of basic democratic issues (Topouzis, 1990). Despite the problems the GBM has continued to encounter with Kenyan authorities, its success in the tree planting campaign has inspired similar projects in various countries especially around Africa. This has been carried out through the formation of the Green Belt International and the Pan-African Green Belt Movement (PAGBM) which try to replicate similar projects in other countries (Maathai, 1988; Ndegwa, 1996:85; GBM (PAGBM) seminar, 1993).

The next section looks at the organizational structure, objectives and activities of the movement. I examine the strategies the movement has employed, some of its achievements and some of the problems the GBM has encountered.

3.2 ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE.

The GBM which principally operates as an indigenous NGO with tree planting as its basic activity has started over 5,000 tree planting groups in 26 administrative districts in Kenya (GBMa, n.d). More than 50 000 Kenyans, mostly women, have been and are still actively involved as members of the movement (Ndegwa, 1996:81; Maathai, 1991). The challenge of desertification that the GBM was responding to at its inception was a growing environmental problem facing Kenya. The tree planting campaign was an effort to rehabilitate and protect the environment that forms the livelihood base for many Kenyans.

Kenya, like most African countries, has an agriculturally-based economy.

What attracted most of European settlers to Kenya during colonization in the late 1800s was the fertile highland agricultural region which the settlers later named the "white highlands". Colonization impacted and completely transformed the politics, economy, society and the geography of the agricultural regions in Kenya (Leo, 1984). This impact will be discussed further in the next chapter. After independence some areas in Kenya were still fertile and had generous vegetation cover. Rainfall was well distributed during the two wet seasons each year i.e. long rains in April, May and June; and short rains in October, November and December. Food production was ample and there was enough land for people to cultivate. But by the 1970s less than twenty years after independence there was a gradual shortage of arable land and cultivated areas. These were being eroded due to continued loss of vegetation and excessive cultivation (Leo, 1984; GBM, 1996). Thus the GBM was established initially in response to this growing environmental problem. This problem was manifested through a diminishing supply of firewood, malnutrition, lack of food and adequate water and soil erosion (Maathai, 1991:74).

The GBMs organizational concept is that of a community organization. GBM activities are organized through local community groups, specifically through a grassroots network of women's groups most of which are located in rural Kenya (Maathai, 1988). The movement prides itself on being a project 'of the people for the people' which deliberately does not involve professionals or

experts but one which is run by self taught "foresters without diplomas" (Maathai, 1991) most of whom are women. These groups maintain 1,000 active nurseries that raise seedlings and supply them to local people, schools, hospitals and churches (GBMa n.d.; Ndegwa, 1996). The GBM supports these groups by supplying basic equipment, and most importantly, paying these women's groups for every surviving tree they raise and issue to the public (Maathai, 1991).

The GBM uses a bottom-up approach in its operations. This structure is evident during its annual general meetings (AGM). At these meetings representatives of affiliated groups from all over the country converge to share and exchange ideas about issues pertaining to the GBM. Every effort is made to give everyone a chance to air their views on any matter connected to the movement. All the members' inputs and recommendations regarding GBM's various operations are given serious consideration. Dr. Maathai and other leaders make efforts to address all the questions that are asked. It is also in these meetings that the members show support and solidarity for the movement's involvement in broader social and political issues (GBM (AGM), 1992; Ndegwa, 1996).

Although the GBM maintains a grassroots based orientation, it still has a centralized organization that is run by a national secretariat operating in Nairobi where the movement has its headquarters. It also has an executive board with

six office bearers who include a chairperson (co-ordinator), assistant chairperson, secretary, assistant secretary, treasure and assistant treasurer (Ndegwa, 1996; Weekly Review, 1989b). In addition to this, the movement has at least twenty members of staff at the head office and 800 field workers including nursery attendants, area advisors and district representatives who monitor field activities (Ndegwa, 1996).

The GBM is principally funded by foreign donors who include the Danish Voluntary Fund, the Norwegian Agency for International Development, U.S organizations such as the Windstar Foundation and the African Development Foundation as well as the United Nations Voluntary Fund for the Decade of the Women (Wallace, 1993:6; Maathai, 1991). Apart from this international support the GBM has been able to operate because of the practical support of those individuals and institutions that have become involved as members.

Membership includes not only those who are directly involved as "green beltters" but also those who have become members by sponsoring trees.

3.2.1 Membership

According to the GBM its membership is categorized as follows:

- **Full Membership** ("*Mwanamsitu*" i.e. one who lives within the forest).

This applies to:

- Individuals over 18 years of age who are willing to sponsor at least 100 trees.
- Interested farmers who maintain a successful green belt of more than 1000

trees.

-An organization, group or school who maintain a green belt and are interested in the movement.

-Organizations which are willing to sponsor 1000 trees.

Associate Member ("*Mwanapor*" i.e. one who lives in the savannah).

This includes:

-Interested individuals under 18 years of age who are engaged in activities that are aimed at improving the environment.

-Interested individuals who maintain a mini green belt of between 1-100 trees.

-A non-resident of Kenya who is over 18 years old and is interested in sponsoring 100 trees.

• **Honorary Member** (*Mwana wa Heshima*). These include:

-The NCWK under whose auspices the GBM was formed in 1977.

-National and international organizations, which support the GBM projects.

Desert Membership (*Mwana Jangwa*): This is reserved for those

interested in joining the GBM but do not meet any of the above

requirements.

(Source: Green Belt Movement: information pamphlet (n.d) see Appendix A).

3.3 OBJECTIVES AND OPERATIONS OF THE GBM

One of the main objectives of the GBM has been to empower the local

people. The movement endeavours to meet the needs of the communities by harnessing local capabilities, expertise and resources and by engaging the community to be the main driving force for projects initiated (Maathai 1988:9). The GBM's emphasis on community development is based on the assertion that a strong viable community organization can form a foundation for effective resource management, increased agricultural output and better livelihoods for all people.

The GBM operations are focussed on the practical task of meeting the needs of its members and also on long-term goals of implementing social change and empowering the people involved in its organization. Through the network of affiliated grassroots women's groups the GBM has planted over 10 million trees (Maathai, 1991; Ndegwa, 1996:89). Through the tree planting campaign the GBM is helping rural people in general, and women in particular, to overcome problems such as lack of firewood, building and fencing material, protection of the watershed and slowing down soil erosion.

In Kenya, as in many other developing countries there is an acute fuel crisis (Haider, 1996). Up to 90% of the rural population in Kenya uses firewood or cowdung as their main source of fuel (Maathai 1988:90). Women in Kenya and other developing countries continue to have the primary responsibility for meeting the basic needs of food, water and fuel. Thus the burden of environmental degradation such as decreased firewood and water sources falls

disproportionately on women. Women in these countries are now trekking longer distances and spending more time and energy in search of water and firewood (Haider, 1996; Thomas-Slayter & Rocheleau, 1995). Tables I and 2 below indicate the amount of time spent by women in some selected developing countries in fetching water and firewood.

Table 1:- Time Spent Gathering Fuel, Early 1980s

Country	Average Hours per Day	Explanation of Work
Southern India (6 villages)	1.7	Women contribute 0.7 hours; children contribute 0.5
Gujarat, India	3.0	In family of 5, 1 member often spends all her/his time on it
Nepal	1-5	Often 1 adult and 1-2 children do fuelwood Collection
Tanzania	8.0	Traditional women's work
Senegal	4-5	Often is carried about 45 km
Niger	4-6	Women sometimes walk 25 km
Kenya	3.5	Women do 75 percent of fuel gathering
Ghana	3.5-4	1 full day's search provides wood for 3 days
Peru	2.5	Women gather and cut wood

Source: Sheila Lewenhak, The Revaluation of Women's Work. In *World Resources Institute* (1994), p. 47.

Table 2:- Hours Women Spend Drawing and Carrying Water, 1975-82

Region	Hours per week
Africa	
Botswana, (rural areas)	5.5
Burkina Faso, Zimtenga region	4.4
Cote d'Ivoire, (rural farmers)	4.4
Ghana, (northern farms)	4.5
Mozambique, (villages)	
Dry season	15.3
Wet season	2.9
Senegal, (farming village)	17.5
Asia	
India, Baroda region	7.0
Nepal, (villages)	
Ages 5-9 years	1.5
Ages 10-14 years	4.9
Ages 15+ years	4.7
Pakistan, (village survey)	3.5

Source: United Nations (U.N), World's Women, 1970-90, Trends and Statistics. In *World Resources Institute* (1994), p. 47.

These indicators show how women's work in developing countries is very much related to the environment. Therefore it can be seen how the gendered division of labour rather than merely a natural inclination to conserve the environment contributes to women's interest in environmental issues. This is because, as

can be deduced from the tables, women especially in the developing countries are directly affected when the environment is degraded.

The movement also provides income to women involved in the tree nurseries. These benefits from the movement's activities have boosted members' interests and continued participation (Maathai, 1988). The GBM also specifically promotes the growth of indigenous trees, shrubs and other fauna (GBMa, n.d.) Maathai (1988) notes that indigenous trees have immense value in the area of food, medicine, water balance and maintenance of the natural ecological balance in contrast to the imported species such as Eucalyptus that are promoted purely for reasons of rapid economic return. She argues this return is ultimately short-term because imported species deplete the nutritional content of the soils over the long run.

The GBM has over twenty short-term and long-term objectives (see Appendix A). Interwoven within these objectives is the need to raise the consciousness of the people to a level that moves them to do the right thing to the environment by being stewards rather than plunderers (GBMa n.d.). The empowerment agenda goes beyond environmental concerns. The GBM has more recently been involved in grassroots political mobilization. The movement has held numerous seminars to educate members on national social, economic and political issues (GBM Free and Fair seminars, 1992). As Ndegwa (1996) noted during his extensive fieldwork on the movement, the members, most of

whom are located in the rural areas, have not been directly involved with confrontations with the government. But their identification and solidarity with the GBM's political engagement is exhibited during the annual general meetings which bring together various countrywide representatives who express support for its political activism.

The movement's operations have not been smooth entirely, it has encountered several problems. One of these has been the problem of running a system that would allow efficient operations between the headquarters and the grassroots (GBMb, n.d.). The GBM has gradually decentralized its activities and administration so as to improve its record keeping and to reduce its operational costs. In its political mobilization the GBM has experienced much opposition from the state. Some of the local administration have not given enough support to the grassroots groups, at times harassing the members making it difficult for them to engage in their educational campaigns on the importance of tree planting.(GBM AGM, 1992).

3.4 THE GREEN BELT MOVEMENT EVOLUTION: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

The evolution of the GBM and its rapid popularity can be understood better in the historical context of socio-economic development of Kenya. From the literature used to analyse the movement it can be argued that various historical junctures influenced the formation and subsequent development of

the GBM. As previously noted the GBM developed from the NCWK project called "Save the Land *Harambee*" (Maathai, 1988). The concept of "*Harambee*" was a motto that was articulated by Jomo Kenyatta at the eve of Kenya's independence in 1963. The GBM developed at a time when the concept of *Harambee* had gained popularity and there was substantial community effort and cooperation as people attempted to collectively meet their felt needs.

Harambee was one of the benchmarks of an independent Kenya. In June 1963 at the Prime Minister's swearing-in ceremony when Kenya attained self-governance, Kenyatta voiced for the first time the national motto of "*Harambee*". He urged Kenyans to work hard together for the common good (Kenyatta, 1963:7) Enshrined in this motto were the concepts of self-help, good neighbourliness and communal assistance which were values grounded in traditional Kenyan societies. After independence in 1963, Jomo Kenyatta reiterated that the new nation would prosper only if all people "pull together" to co-operate in constructive ways. The "*Harambee*" slogan was adopted to inspire co-operative and self-help efforts. In one of his many speeches Kenyatta stressed the need for concerted effort in the country. He noted that "in the long-term, the prosperity of Kenya will depend on the efforts of the people. We must work hard and constantly toward the greatest possible degree of self-reliance... Kenya must develop her own strength" (Kenyatta, 1964:5).

Thus, this synopsis of the potential significance of *Harambee* places the

budding of the GBM in context. The idea of self-help that is central to GBM has continued to be the basis for community development through which, people especially in the rural areas of Kenya, have directly benefited. Self-help projects have the advantage of allowing local people to be main actors in the project where they are involved in both identifying the need and in trying to find means of meeting that need (Maathai, 1988). Thus the GBM became popular because of its strategies which were designed to promote greater local citizen control. The mid 1980s when the GBM was gaining popularity in the local and international circles, was marked with a general growth of grassroots projects especially in the third world countries which were responding to the failure of professional and conventional approaches to address local problems (Ngau, 1987). Around this time the "Nyayo" (a Swahili word meaning footsteps) philosophy was also gaining popularity, propagated by Daniel Moi the new President of Kenya⁴ at that time. This philosophy enshrined similar principles as *Harambee* of sharing and working together (Abwunza, 1990). Thus the GBM was a movement that was evolving with the times.

From the late 1980s on, the GBM took a more overtly political direction in its approach. This coincides with what became popularly known as the "wave of democracy" (Ndegwa, 1996) that was blowing through Africa in general. This was marked by the resurgence of a more vibrant civil society. This phase

⁴ Daniel Moi took over as President of Kenya following the death of Jomo Kenyatta in 1978.

begins when the GBM is engaged in confrontations with the government. Although the movement was still actively engaging in environmental activities especially tree planting, it became more involved in political issues which were closely related to ecological issues. This historical juncture was marked with an upsurge in civil society organization, from NGOs to combined NGO alliances with international donor/democratic organizations which were pushing for political reforms in many African countries, Kenya among them (Ndegwa, 1996). In this respect, politicization of the GBM was thus a response to a growing civil society and was not in itself an instigating force to political liberalization in Kenya.

The next chapter introduces a gender analysis of the movement. It examines how gender has been a factor in the development of the movement, specifically through highlighting the role of the women who, as is noted in the foregoing chapter, are the major players in the GBM.

CHAPTER FOUR: GENDER AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

This chapter explores how gender has specifically influenced the development of the GBM. The main argument here is that a gender perspective increases our understanding of the multiple factors that have contributed to the evolution of the movement. Furthermore as Thomas-Slayter and Rocheleau (1995) have argued, a gender analysis also sheds light on the capacity and motivation of communities to organize around environmental and resource management issues. The theoretical perspectives of ecofeminism and WED that have been reviewed in chapter Two are used to analyze the gender-environment nexus with respect to women in the GBM.

In order to create an appropriate backdrop for looking at the gendered aspect of the GBM, a brief look at the literature on land tenure and gender in Kenya is important. This literature shows how historically land tenure issues not only affected gender relations but also held repercussions for the environment. I will discuss land tenure issues in three historical phases in Kenya - pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial.

4.1 LAND, ENVIRONMENT AND GENDER: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Gender is very central in understanding the role of the GBM as an environmental movement aimed at promoting sustainable development in Kenya. Most sustainable or conservation efforts in third world countries such as

Kenya are derived from gendered organizations (Rocheleau *et al*, 1997). In many communities in these countries women are responsible for the work of reproduction and production of daily subsistence and the maintenance of complex ecosystems, which involve agricultural, livestock and forest production. This means that women are affected more than men are by environmental problems by virtue of their prescribed roles. Changing land tenure systems following colonial and postcolonial experiences of these communities heightened this because women were left with fewer rights and control over resources.

In pre-colonial Kenya land tenure systems varied among communities, but a common feature was the tendency to allow an almost universal access to land (Leo, 1984:30) Thus relations to the environment were dictated by social organization. Most agricultural communities⁵ in Kenya combined farming along with animal husbandry. Land was communally owned although there was some landholding fragmentation in which families had rights over portions of land for both farming and grazing. The land was allocated along patrilineal lines and was passed on from one generation to the next. This ownership was not absolute. Women occupied a significant structural position within this land tenure system and they were guaranteed usufruct rights to land (Mackenzie,

⁵ The literature used here mainly refers to the Kikuyu community in Kenya, but their social structures are similar to most agricultural communities in Kenya (Hinga, 1996; Leo, 1984; Sorrenson, 1967).

1986; Sorrenson, 1967). The division of labor was clearly delineated. Men cleared the bush and broke new soils while women planted crops, tended gardens and did the harvesting. Further there was mutuality between the sexes where both the men and women played significant roles in the political, economic and social arenas (Hinga, 1996; Leo, 1984; Sorrenson, 1967). Thus no member of the community was marginalized and every member had some responsibility as a caretaker of the environment.

With colonization land became central to the whole colonial project in Kenya. The colonial expansion revolved around European settlement in the Kenyan highlands. European occupation of these lands was a result of the completion of the Uganda railway in 1902 (Sorrenson, 1967). This transportation system opened up the interior of Kenya with its vast and fertile lands that the settlers claimed were unoccupied. While most of the land at that time was either sparsely populated or unoccupied, it was not ownerless. For instance, the Kikuyu system of tenancy required the existence of an open frontier, which would be occupied when other areas became overcrowded (Leo, 1984; Sorrenson, 1967). Settlers began laying claim to some of this land and this marked the beginning of new land ownership and use rights in many communities in Kenya.

As a strategy to take over the land the colonial government drafted legislation such as the Crown Land Ordinance of 1902 (Leo, 1984; Mackenzie,

1995; Sorrenson, 1967). This legislation was used to lay claim over unoccupied land, which the native people had no official title to. Through the legislation an area of land totalling about three million hectares was reserved for European settlers (Leo, 1984:32). This in effect resulted in the displacement and alienation of many Kenyans from their own land. The natives were pushed into "reserves" marking the beginning of a new phenomenon for the African people: that of landlessness and the squatter system. This not only distorted how Africans used their land but also severely affected their indigenous social and political structures (Hinga, 1997; Leo, 1984).

In 1954 the colonial state introduced land tenure reform as part of what it termed "agrarian reform" which was just one of the many ways the colonial government extended its political control (Leo, 1984; Mackenzie, 1995). This strategy interfered with the settlement patterns of many communities in Kenya. Under this reform the initial adjudication of land and subsequent measurement of lands was to be done under the Native Lands Registration Ordinance which was basically aimed at encouraging freehold and individualization of landholding under what was called the Swynnerton Plan. Under this plan private consolidation of land with title deeds led to a reduction in common lands which reduced access to land for most people (Leo, 1984; Wangari *et al*, 1997). This marked the beginning of a new kind of social stratification based on class and gender differences. It is from this new policy that men's allocative rights

were solidified while women's right to land and other various tenancy practices were rendered almost obsolete. Most women lost their previously recognized rights to land use and access, which increased women's dependence on men. (Mackenzie, 1995:17; Leo, 1984:47-49 Wangari *et al*, 1997).

Privatization of landholding has continued in post-colonial Kenya where government policy has emphasized private landholding. These changes in land rights have continued to affect men and women differentially. The colonial presence and ideology led to a radical patriarchalization that has continued to disenfranchise women in most spheres of life in modern Kenya (Hinga, 1996:179). Women have continued to lack secure rights to land. Although in principle the Registered Land Act in modern Kenya does not overtly discriminate against women, the way in which it has been implemented excluded women. (Mackenzie, 1995; Wangari *et al* 1997). This is reflected in the fact that only 5 percent of women in Kenya own land (Wangari *et al* 1997).

Against this backdrop the next section looks at how gendered social organization, gender roles and rights have influenced women's participation in environmental campaigns and more specifically in the GBM. The main argument is that land tenure systems have contributed to women's involvement in issues concerning the environment. I also argue that gender roles and rights shape participation in environmental campaigns within movements such as the GBM.

4.2 GENDER RIGHTS AND ROLES AND WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTALISM.

The genesis and growth of a movement such as the GBM has in part been influenced by several developments in Kenyan history, specifically land tenure and land use practices. One of the factors that has influenced land use is private ownership which was made popular by the colonial administration (Leo, 1984; Rocheleau *et al* 1997). Most of the activities of the GBM are carried out in farming communities in Kenya (Maathai, 1988). In Kenya most of the small-scale farmers own their land, but it is mainly the men who are legally entitled to land (Maathai, 1988:39. 1991:74). Private ownership allows people the freedom to do anything on their land because rules and regulations that previously governed communal ownership no longer govern them. This has resulted in the unsustainable use of land resources such as indiscriminate cutting of trees because people are not answerable for such uses.

Most significantly for the purpose of this study it is important to note that most women did not own land and they had very little say on its management (Maathai, 1988:39). As a result practices such as indiscriminate cutting of trees practised by men in many communities had a greater effect on women than on men. This I argue is because of the gender rights to land tenure that favoured men. On the other hand socially prescribed gender roles placed women in closer connection with the environment. Studies have indicated that women in many African communities produce as much as 80 per cent of the food supply

although they have less access to land and other vital resources (Rocheleau *et al*, 1997, Thomas-Slayter, 1992; Thomas-Slayter and Rocheleau, 1995.). It is these same women who also have to respond to environmental degradation as degraded environments threaten their production roles.

Women involved in the GBM experience similar problems. Maathai (1988:39) notes that "although women work on the land and even accept the responsibility to do so they do not own it". These women are expected to fulfil their roles as the primary producers for their families, although they cannot make major decisions on resource allocation. Thus gender rights over land allocation and use is a factor that cannot be overlooked in analysing environmental issues in Kenya. As noted in the previous section, the introduction of new land tenure reform laws and policies by the colonial government in Kenya affected the social organization of most communities. This is one of the issues that the GBM has had to tackle in its activities.

Maathai (1988:39) notes

"Since the introduction of land consolidation and registration, land ownership shifted so that instead of a piece of land being a family estate, it now belongs to the man who is issued with the title deed...[W]omen realise that new law (based on the English law) recognises their husband as the sole land owners. But the majority of the rural women work on the land and produce food without being bothered by the inherent injustice imposed on them by the new law."

This issue of men having control and being decision-makers over land use and

management is highlighted in the GBM's monitors' training workshops (GBM, 1993). It is noted that during their tree planting campaigns in most communities GBM monitors found that it was the men who decided whether or not trees could be planted in private plots (GBM Field Monitors report, 1993).

The GBM therefore sees the need to empower women around land access issues. But it is important to note here that the GBM recognizes that land reform practices not only affected women but also affected poor men. This shows that gender also interacts with issues of class. Maathai notes that within the GBM there are "a few men who are ... extremely poor, so poor that they don't mind working with women in the movement" (Maathai, 1991:74). Women and poor men are more likely to work in the most marginal lands, or to be users of land resources that in most cases are owned by other wealthier men. This explains why it is mainly this category of people who are involved in environmental conservation efforts in rural Kenya. This I argue is because of their socio-economic position and productive roles that requires that they engage with the environment on a daily basis for survival because land is their main means of subsistence.

Women's position at the forefront of environmental conservation efforts in rural Kenya has been driven by the need to address issues of control over resources. Through their involvement with the GBM, women's collectives have, to a certain extent, been able to negotiate access to public land where they

have established tree nurseries (Maathai, 1988). It is through these tree nurseries that women have raised tree seedlings to be supplied to the public. Looking at this critically I would suggest that through such environmental initiatives, women's groups in Kenya can indirectly lay claim to land resources which they use to improve the environment at the same time benefiting economically from the payment they get for supplying tree seedlings. Salleh (1995) has reiterated this by noting that the actions of women in environmental politics is grounded materially in the understanding that comes from their everyday work and position to meet life's needs. As WED theorists have noted women's involvement in initiatives such as the GBM is tied to issues of equity. Women's subordinate position in many Kenyan communities has disadvantaged them not only from ownership but also from having enough control to influence decisions over resources.

Women's engagement in environmental actions is also dictated by their socially defined roles. Women in many communities in Kenya and Africa in general have been the target for environmental activism because gender roles ascribed to them assign them duties that involve close connection with the environment on a daily basis. Many women in rural Kenya have two primary responsibilities- provision of food and care of the family. Food production involves cultivating, planting, weeding, harvesting and storage of the food. Other responsibilities include fetching water and firewood (Thomas-Slayter,

1992, Wangari *et al* 1997). Maathai notes in an interview that in Kenya environmental problems such as deforestation and desertification affect women directly, as they now have to walk longer distances looking for firewood and water. (Topouzis, 1990).

Maathai (1988:9) notes that the fuelwood crisis was a major consideration in mobilizing communities, especially women, to plant trees. Apart from making the task of collecting firewood more arduous, the diminishing supply of trees placed more demands on women. Women are now spending more time looking for fuel and since they are the primary caretakers this has affected other duties that these women are supposed to fulfil. Maathai (1988) also notes how the lack of firewood resulted in changing diets, which required less energy to cook. These were mainly starchy foods, the repercussions of which are malnutrition and poor health. This again affects women differentially because they are the ones who shoulder the burden of taking care of sick members of the family. Thus the spillover effect of environmental degradation falls heavily on women.

Environmental management practices by women can therefore be explained in terms of their rational long or short-term interests as has been argued in WED and social ecofeminist perspectives. Understanding women's involvement in environmental activities should not be simplified by making implicit assumptions that women are caring, nurturing and selfless beings who

are committed to conserving the environment for its own sake. This has been one of the weaknesses of some ecofeminist arguments, which portray women as having a special and natural relationship with the environment. As other analysts (Agrawal, 1998; Jackson, 1993; Muteshi, 1995), have noted women's dependence on the natural resource base has motivated them to engage in environmental conservation efforts to enable them to fulfil their productive and reproductive roles.

4.3 GENDERED ORGANIZATIONS: PLATFORMS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

The GBM as an environmental movement is predominantly composed of women (Maathai, 1988; 1995). In this section this fact will be highlighted in two ways. One will be through fitting the GBM into characteristics used by Kusterer (1990) in defining women's organizations. Secondly, is by analyzing the 'women's groups' phenomenon in Kenya, arguing that this phenomenon set a platform on which the GBM could easily launch its activities.

From the colonial era women were mobilized for conservation efforts by the colonial state. From as early as 1930 environmental degradation was a problem in Kenya and was a preoccupation for the colonial administration (Mackenzie, 1998). It was women who were called in by the colonial administration to take part in environmental action, which involved 'communal labour' such as terrace building. Thus women have for a long time been

mobilized for environmental conservation efforts. A key factor that made it easy to mobilize women was that they had traditionally been involved in collective efforts forming groups such as the *ngwatio* in the Kikuyu community or the *mwethya* in the Kamba community (Mackenzie, 1998; Thomas-Slayter, 1992). It is this point that guides my argument on the importance of gendered organizing in the development of the GBM.

4.3.1: The GBM as a women's movement.

In this section I expand the characteristics that have been delineated by Kusterer (1990) to show why I refer to the GBM as a women's organization. First the GBM membership is mainly female although the wider community is involved in its activities. The organization mobilizes local people, both men and children to participate in its activities although it was conceived by and is directed by women (Maathai, 1988). Maathai (1988:25) emphasizes that although the movement is women-driven the ultimate goal is to mobilize the whole community. This is because of the realization that addressing such a crucial problem, as environmental degradation will require concerted efforts by all its members. In addition GBM is identified as a women's organization since women have shaped its leadership. Wangari Maathai who is its founder and co-ordinator has won international acclaim for her environmental activities. Ndegwa (1996) notes that it is difficult to envisage or separate the GBM from the dynamic leadership provided by Maathai.

Secondly, the GBM serves three functions as defined in Kusterer's characteristics: First, local needs and problems inspire the objectives of the GBM. The GBM endeavours to meet the needs of the local communities by harnessing local capacities, expertise and resources and engaging the community to be actively involved (GBM AGM, 1992; Maathai, 1988:9). Tree planting is central to the activities of the GBM. This is because of the realization of the rapid diminishing of fuel wood supplies, which is a major source of energy in Kenya. Women are the largest users of fuel wood because of the gendered division of labour in which women are involved in searching for fuel wood for cooking. The GBM therefore aims at mobilizing the people to meet such needs.

Second, the operations of the GBM are group based. It is within groups that members receive mutual support. Among the most important benefits of the groups is the emphasis on the need to make tree planting an income generating activity for women. The women therefore not only help produce and maintain their source of energy but also get financial gains from the seedlings they produce which gives them extra income and improves their living standards (Maathai, 1988).

The final of the three functions that women's organizations characteristically serve that identifies the GBM, as a women's organization is that it serves as a forum from which the members make political demands and

interventions. This is one of the long-term objectives of the GBM. In its later phase the GBM has become more politically vocal because Maathai feels that "when you start working with the environment seriously, the whole arena comes... human's right, environmental rights, children's rights...everybody's rights" (in Ndegwa, 1996:94). Thus as part of its working philosophy the GBM also critiques the marginal position of the masses in Kenya.

The third characteristic as defined by Kusterer (1990) that makes the GBM a women's movement is the fact that it is grassroots based with most of its members coming together at local levels in its activities. Most of the activities of the GBM are carried out at the most basic administrative unit in Kenya, which is at the sub-location (Field Monitors report, 1993; District reports, 1992).

4.3.2 Dynamics of women's groups and environmental action

Women's groups in Kenya have emerged as important organizations for grassroots development. Although their significance as institutions of popular participation are now receiving attention from academic discourses their existence predates the pre-independence period (Mackenzie, 1998; Wanyange 1987). Kenyan women in particular and African women in general, have usually responded to problems and needs by forming self-help groups, which have continued to arise in modern Kenya although they are modified to meet current conditions. These groups have benefited not only the women, but also their communities at large.

As noted previously, women in rural Kenya carry the responsibility of ensuring the family's food supply. For this reason women have joined together in groups so as to strengthen their capacities to meet these responsibilities (Thomas-Slayter, 1992, Wanyande, 1987). These groups not only enable the women to share their labour during peak agricultural seasons but also on a regular basis to prevent the deterioration of the resource base on which they are dependent. Women have been involved in conservation activities such as building terraces, checking dams to prevent soil erosion and in reforestation activities.

It is within such a context that I argue that the GBM has been able to mobilize women in environmental activities. From the recorded fieldwork and seminar reports it is evident that those involved in GBM activities were rural women working in groups. For instance the field monitors continually noted that "most people working in the field are women. Old hardworking women working in their groups" (GBM Field Monitors report 1993). One of the first tree planting ceremonies of the GBM was done on a piece of land owned by rural women in Naivasha (Maathai, 1988:7). Thus the operations of the GBM are carried out through a network of affiliated women's groups. About 50,000 women are involved in its nursery sites (GBMa n.d).

Women's groups in Kenya have been seen as vehicles of transformation through whose activities the majority of women achieve positive sociocultural

and economic change (Abwunza, 1995; Wanyande, 1987). One of the GBM's main objectives has been to make tree planting an income generating activity for women. Through group efforts, women run nurseries where they produce tree seedlings that are subsequently supplied to farmers and public institutions like schools and churches (Maathai, 1988:13, Maathai, 1994). Thus involvement of women's groups in activities such as the GBM is not just out of a concern for the environment because of their caring nature, but because they see such efforts as avenues for generating extra income. Ndegwa (1996) shows that through group nurseries women involved have benefited financially by growing trees for the public. Ndegwa's (1996) table of tree nursery earnings is presented below. It shows calculations based on figures from one district showing that on average members of active tree nurseries can earn up to Ksh 800 (Kenya shillings) (approx. US \$12) a year.

Table 3: Approximate earnings per GBM tree nursery

Number of surviving trees paid for	Ksh 243, 921
Number of tree nurseries (TN)	75
Average number of surviving tree per TN	3252
Average expected payment per TN	Ksh 6,504
Estimated average number of TN members.	8
Estimated average income per member	Ksh 813 (US \$12)

(Source: Stephen Ndegwa. The two faces of a civil society: NGOs and politics in Africa 1996 p.91)

Considering the average annual income in rural Kenya is less than US \$400 an additional income through such activities is an important motivating factor. In organizing themselves women in rural Kenya have taken advantage of one of their significant assets-their labour power. It is important to note that the majority of women involved in GBM are poor, a condition which is heightened by their lack of legal rights over the land on which they work. Land still remains the main means of production for the majority of rural Kenyans. As the need for cash to meet basic needs becomes imperative in the capitalist system that is deeply entrenched in Kenya, women's involvement in group activities is one of the limited avenues they have to better themselves

(Abwunza, 1995; Mackenzie, 1986). The GBM is well aware of this and continues to prioritize the income generation in its activities. Thus the interaction of gender and class are a pertinent consideration when looking at resource management in a Kenyan context.

Gender roles and expectations are an important factor in understanding participation in movements such as the GBM. As Thomas- Slayter (1992) has noted gender power relations affect negotiations around access to resources and their effective management. Thus women's groups have formed positive and constructive spaces for articulating and responding to various issues affecting women in Kenya. From this we can see that gender and environment issues cannot be understood as a dualistic construct but rather as a complex interconnected maze of ecological, economic and sociocultural dimensions.

CHAPTER FIVE: WOMEN, POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP: LESSONS FROM THE GBM

Although environmental conservation is at the centre of GBM actions, it also incorporates within it a broader development ideology and political action (Ndegwa, 1996). The GBM has evolved into a forceful political agitator in the Kenyan political scene. It is this aspect of the movement that we seek to analyze in this chapter. Ndegwa (1996) in his study of the movement did a detailed analysis of this 'political phase' arguing that it has been a major contributor to the civil society in Kenya. What he failed to address, however, was whether the gendered nature of the movement had any impact on its politics. It will be argued here that bringing out the gender aspect of the movement illuminates themes that were not made visible in other previous studies.

For the purpose of this analysis, I will illuminate the activities surrounding the GBM leader, Professor Wangari Maathai who has played a vital role in steering the movement into the political arena (Michaelson, 1994; Ndegwa, 1996, Wangunyu, 1994). An analysis of the GBM cannot be removed from the person of Ms. Maathai, as she is an embodiment of what the movement stands for. I argue that Ms. Maathai's encounter with state apparatuses and political leaders in her cause to advance GBM's goals and objectives highlights

interesting political issues along gender lines.

In the final section, I briefly look at issues of leadership at the local level of the movement. This was prompted by what seemed to be a women's leadership gap in the operation of the movement at the grassroots level. This was especially noted in the recorded sessions of seminars and meetings of the GBM where there was a noticeable presence of men as spokespersons for the women's groups although the movement has continually aimed at empowering women. I will attempt to explain this phenomenon in the context of an intertwining of a traditional and contemporary patriarchal system in Kenya, which carries a certain accepted pattern of gender relations.

5.1 WOMEN, THE STATE AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

The GBM as a grassroots environmental movement has grown from one that only pursued environmental conservation to a political pressure group and eventually to becoming part of a fully fledged opposition party (Ndegwa, 1996; Opanga, 1997). In 1997 the GBM working philosophies and objectives were adopted as part of the manifesto for the Liberal Party of Kenya, a party which also nominated Dr. Maathai as its presidential candidate for the National Elections held in the same year (Opanga, 1997). The political development of the movement has been credited to its vocal founder and leader (Michaelson, 1994; Ndegwa, 1996). As Ndegwa notes (1996:81) "it is difficult to envisage GBM's work-especially its political work without the dynamic leadership

provided by Maathai". The highlight of the GBM'S involvement in Kenyan politics has been its challenge to government on specific environmental issues and its grassroots political mobilization of women in particular and the public in general.

In this section I look at events surrounding Dr. Maathai and other GBM activists during political encounters with the state showing how these can be understood in terms of a gendered political analysis. Of particular interest is how the male dominated state and other male legislators translate the GBM's advocacy for environmental protection and accountability. I see interesting gender dynamics arising out of this. I argue that the actions of the GBM championed by Dr. Maathai were viewed not only as a challenge to the political *status quo* but were also a challenge to prescribed or expected gender roles in the Kenyan context.

Ms. Wangari Maathai has established herself as a scholar and environmental activist of international repute. Professionally she earned a Ph.D. in veterinary medicine in 1971 distinguishing herself by being the first Kenyan woman to do so (Ndegwa, 1996; True Love, 1987). As an environmentalist Maathai has earned respect in many circles. Having first received the Right Livelihood Award in 1984 (Kenya Times, 1984) for her pioneering work in reforestation, she has gone on to receive numerous international awards for her work in the GBM (Opanga, 1993).

It was during the course of her environmental efforts that Maathai almost inevitably crossed into politics. Dr. Maathai(1995:245) notes "we in the Green Belt Movement have never decided to become political, to fight for a more open and democratic civil society, or to become human rights activists. We just found ourselves confronting injustices against ourselves, our members and the environment". The political activities carried out by GBM activists started as protests against development projects that were seen as unsustainable both ecologically and economically. The GBM's struggle against such projects is best exemplified by the their efforts to save Uhuru (Freedom) Park. This particular episode launched the GBM into the political spotlight in Kenya.

As discussed in chapter Three, the government had proposed to construct what was to be the tallest building in Kenya at Uhuru Park, one of the remaining open spaces in Nairobi (Ndegwa, 1996, Wallace, 1993). Although members of the GBM played a part in this 'political showdown', Dr Maathai was at the forefront in fighting the government over the proposed project. Dr. Maathai sought a court injunction restraining the construction of the complex (Weekly Review, 1989a). Although this was not successful, eventually the project was halted due to internal and external pressures, which resulted in withdrawal, by the primary funders (Daily Nation, 1989; Wallace, 1993). Thus the GBMs intervention helped avert what would have been an environmental and economic disaster for Kenyans.

What is of particular interest is the kind of reaction this seemingly justified course elicited from the state and male legislators. Ms Maathai and fellow activists were branded subversive (Kenya Times, 1989). Mr Nabwera, a minister in the Office of the President, "wondered how a single person could take on the entire government without support from some "queer corners" , adding, " this woman cannot be acting alone she must be acting on behalf of some unknown masters but we will soon find the source of her money" (Kenya Times, 1989). Other legislators dismissed the GBM as a bunch of divorcees. One of them was quoted as saying "I don't see any sense at all in a bunch of divorcees coming to criticize such a complex" (Opanga, 1993). President Moi reacted by saying Maathai and her fellow activists had insects in their heads, a euphemism for people who are mentally unstable. (Wallace, 1993). Following this incident the GBM was evicted from the government offices it had long occupied (Weekly Review, 1989b). Then President Moi called on other women to ostracize Maathai for being wayward. Women who were loyal to the government because of their involvement with the *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* (a Swahili phrase meaning women's development) which was affiliated to the ruling party KANU staged demonstrations against Maathai (Weekly Review, 1989b).

These reactions illuminate ways in which that the Kenyan political arena is premised on a gendered social structure entrenched in patriarchal ideologies.

Opanga (1993:4) wrote that Maathai's actions were seen as "taking on the menfolk in the political arena which they have for a long time dominated and in fact for a long time been seen as their preserve". Maathai and other activists were "abused and ridiculed and reminded as African women [they] ought to have known that when men speak women should be agreeably silent" (Maathai, 1995:246). Such responses show the institutional dimension of male privilege. I argue that the Kenyan state still carries distinct gender ideologies, which mould the material reality of both men and women. The GBMs challenge to the unjust distribution of resources, that is, the improper land allocation was seen as a challenge to the patriarchal decision-making machinery. Decisions affecting resource distribution such as those pertaining to gender relations in Kenya are inherently political and men still largely dominate the political sphere (Mshindi, 1991)

Land is a source of wealth and livelihood for the vast majority of Kenyans. Issues pertaining to land are sites of struggle, which are mediated by gender and class, with the state acting as the tool of the dominant group who are mainly men. In this context, the state felt threatened by the activities of Maathai and her cohort who were exposing how men in power positions were using those positions to advance their own interests. It is therefore important to understand gender and environmental and resource issues not only from the point of resource management but from the broader context of the country's

political economy.

On another level, understanding the GBM as a vital component of the growing civil society in Kenya can also be analysed within the context of Kenyan women's struggle for a gender based democratization (Nzomo, 1996). From the onset, I have pointed out that the operations of the GBM have a clear gender interest. Interwoven within the GBM goals and objectives has been the need to empower women by promoting a positive image of women in national development and by giving them training, information and a voice to articulate their needs and preferences (Maathai, 1988:9). Through this the GBM hoped to address the power imbalances in Kenya, particularly along gender lines. This is clearly a political project as the GBM has realised that addressing environmental issues cannot be removed from broader social and political issues in Kenya.

In the area of mobilization, the GBM has gone beyond educating its members on environmental conservation matters to matters of national social and political realities. As Ndegwa (1996:88) puts it " the deceptively simple activity of tree planting undertaken by semi-illiterate rural women has provided an appropriate entry point not just for environmental education but also for consciousness raising about national political realities and empowerment." This has been made possible because of the already established network of women's groups involved with the GBM. Ndegwa (1996) sees this as the GBMs

ability to seize an opportunity to undermine the undemocratic state. While this is true, I would further suggest that this an opportunity used by the GBM to reshape the political situation in Kenya by tapping into a political niche whose capabilities in mainstream politics have long been undermined and underestimated, that is women. The women's groups network provides an important channel for political education and for raising general national social and political awareness among its members and their local communities (Ndegwa, 1996).

The GBMs political engagements that have taken the form of protests and advocacy have been integral to its evolution. Maathai has sought to politically mobilize women in particular through civil education campaigns and through protest activities. For instance, the GBM showed solidarity with a number of women who held a protest for human rights in Nairobi in 1992⁶ Maathai joined mothers of political prisoners at Uhuru Park where they led a peaceful hunger strike advocating for release of their sons. Their sons had been jailed for challenging democratic principles and the dictatorship of a one party state. This incident attracted a lot of international and local media

⁶ These were part of the protests by Release Political Prisoners (RPP) pressure group. This group was formed to lobby for people who had been incarcerated in Kenyan prisons because of their advocacy for multi party politics and for more accountability by the government. These political prisoners included Koigi wa Wamwere, Miruki Kariuki, Rumba Kinuthia and Harun Wakaba (Nation, 1992)

attention (Daily Nation, 1992; Wallace, 1993).

Women in Kenya have been portrayed as a political minority because of their minimal participation in politics. Only a handful of women have been elected to parliament (Nzomo, 1996). On the other hand, the government has used women's group networks as one of the means to popularize itself. These groups have provided a ready-made conduit for the government to promote its agendas and political philosophies (Wanyande, 1987). Furthermore most male politicians have always relied on the vote of women to get elected in parliament. This is because women make up 52 per cent of the voting population (Nzomo, 1996; Wanyande, 1987). The Kenyan government has for some time now relied on the women's groups in promoting its rural development plans. The state shapes and limits women's organizing even as it promotes and patronizes it (Thomas-Slayter and Rocheleau, 1995). This was made even more obvious when the government increased its assistance to later incorporation of the *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* which is an umbrella organization for various women's groups in Kenya as part of the ruling party KANU network (Abwunza, 1995; Wanyande, 1987). Organizations such as the GBM have sought to change and expand the role of women in the Kenyan political scene.

Thus it was understandable that when the GBM became involved in civic education campaigns which were aimed at eventually swaying its members, the

majority of whom are women, to an alternative political viewpoint the government felt threatened. The government reacted to this move by the GBM with backlash. It made it difficult for Dr. Maathai to hold public seminars on democratization by denying her permits to hold meetings. The government also used local administration in some areas such as local chiefs in villages to intimidate GBM members (Ndegwa, 1996; Wallace, 1993). In addition, women's groups loyal to the government were once again used to criticize Maathai's efforts. In one instance KANU women leaders held a press conference to denounce Dr. Maathai's efforts to carry out civil education accusing her of being an inciter (Standard, 1993) Thus the government was employing 'divide and rule' tactics so as to maintain its hold on women's votes. The government even resorted to violence to try and crush GBMs activism. This was demonstrated when the police gassed and beat up Ms Maathai and other women and their sympathizers who were on a hunger strike over political prisoners in 1992 (Daily Nation, 1992; Wallace, 1993).

The GBM's metamorphosis can be understood as part of the democratization wave in Kenya. But it is also part of growing activism by women who have come out strongly demanding their voices be heard. Women activists are embarking on a massive campaign, which is advocating for the inclusion of gender-based interests in the democratization agenda. In the civil education seminar proceedings, Maathai emphasized the importance of women

standing for leadership positions rather than always supporting men who do not represent their interests (GBM Free and Fair Seminar, Nyeri 1992, Sunday Nation, 1992). An opposition leader commenting on GBM activism and mobilization of women was quoted in Wallace (1993:19) as saying "women have been recruited into the opposition and are participating in political leadership to an extent that they will never again, I hope, be ignored". This, I argue is partly due to the realization by women in Kenya that the only way to effect change favourable to them is by demanding equal representation and participation in all levels of decision making. As WED theorists have pointed out, an analysis of women's role in environmental issues, especially in the developing countries, cannot be limited to a dualistic understanding of gender and the environment, but should be broad enough to look at women in relation to all sectors of their society.

Lately, the GBM and other activists have raised voices against illegal allocation of land or "land grabbing", as it is popularly known in Kenya. Land grabbing has slowly encroached many parts of Kenya where politically situated individuals are being allocated public land for development without regard for the environmental implications of some of these projects. The GBM has drawn attention to the encroachment and destruction of indigenous forests and urban open spaces. Maathai, commenting on private allocation of Karura forest which is one of the government protected forests noted that " [g]iving out such forest

land as political gifts to friends and supporters or selling it away to private developers and private individuals ...is both irresponsible and unacceptable" (Daily Nation, 1997). This trend reflects the way in which in modern Kenya capitalist economic "growth" takes precedence over all other considerations when it comes to the natural environment with little regard for the negative implications of such growth.

This phenomenon is having enormous implications for resource access and has led to increasing levels of deprivation among the poorest sectors of the population many of whom are women. On the other hand, the majority of those who benefit from this system are usually men with access to economic and political power. Political intervention in land privatization has resulted in a trend where the wealthier have been able to acquire more land while the poor lose out, broadening the gap between a landed and landless class. As Wangari *et al* (1997) have also noted, the rich and powerful easily acquired land while the poor and women have been left out. Therefore class and gender once again intersect in mediating resource access. As socialist ecofeminists have pointed out, political structures are some of the structural issues that women have to face under a patriarchal society. Political structures have played a major role in shaping access and control of resources in many third world countries.

The Kenyan capitalist economic and political structures are instrumental in influencing land acquisition and this has further exaggerated land alienation

in Kenya. Those in government promote "development" strategies that are geared toward short-term profits thus allocating land to private developers with the hope of achieving these goals. The problem is that the market economy is disconnected from the daily physical realities of most of the people and its operational imperatives bear no relation to people's needs. As in many instances it is women who have mostly been negatively affected by such moves (Rocheleau and Thomas-Slayter, 1995; Thomas Slayter, 1992; Wangari *et al*, 1997). It is therefore evident that issues around resource access and control in Kenya are mediated by factors of gender and class. These are inextricably linked to power relations in the Kenyan context.

The following section looks at the structure of leadership in the GBM at the grassroots showing how to a certain extent, men influence GBMs operations.

5.2 WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

At the centre of GBM activities are rural Kenyan women. These women operate from established group networks, which mainly run the tree nurseries. But as noted earlier, participation in the GBM is not restricted to women, as both men and children are also involved in some of its activities. (Maathai, 1988). An important thing to note though is that the majority of the women involved are poor and semi-illiterate (GBM Field Monitors report, 1993). This, I argue has implications for the trend that manifested itself in terms of local

leadership roles.

Although the overall leadership of the GBM is by women who make up 5 of its 6 executive members (GBM AGM, 1992), the trend seems to be reversed at the grassroots. In listening to the seminar and annual general meeting proceedings there seemed to be a greater presence of men than women in leadership positions. The majority of those who presented district reports and recommendations were men (GBM (AGM), 1992). This was also the case with monitors and advisors. Women were mainly nursery attendants, but men held the more administrative positions of field monitor and advisors (GBM Field Monitors seminar, 1992, GBM AGM, 1992).

This phenomenon of men in women's groups is one that needs to be documented further. Although there was not enough information in the data available to make a conclusive analysis, I have offered some preliminary thoughts in this apparent contradiction. The main explanation of this phenomenon has been that men are better trained in book keeping and management skills (Harrison, 1997). This can be explained by the disparities in the literacy rates between men and women in Kenya. This to an extent is true with the GBM. Most of the field monitors reported encountering very old and hard working women. Most of them could only speak their native languages (GBM Field Monitors Report 1993). Since there was a lot of paper-work involved in the GBM tree planting activities these women need the services of

people who were literate to do the documentation and book-keeping for them. One of the male members noted "the problem of accuracy in record keeping is because most of the women involved have poor mathematical skills and they need help in this area" (Patrice in GBM AGM, 1992). This area needs further exploration.

As Wanyande (1987) has noted, in most Kenyan communities it is a common trend to appoint men as co-ordinators of women's group. This is because of a prevailing attitude among women that men are in a better position to gather and generate new ideas. This point is subject to debate because at a larger scale the GBM has enjoyed its various successes under women's leadership. What I see, as a potential factor is the age of the women involved at the grassroots. The majority of the women are elderly (GBM Field Monitors reports 1993) and this generation in some respects still uphold the view that leadership is the domain of men. This, added to the literacy factor, could partly explain the presence of men in the leadership positions at the grassroots in some women's groups.

Another reason might be because of the private public sphere split which is still prevalent in most societies in Kenya. In most communities, men take more charge of the public domain. As Thomas-Slayter (1992) found in her study of a community in Kenya, men usually take the positions of authority while women were subordinate. Thus it is men who appear to be more

comfortable speaking in public forums. Underlying patterns of gender based roles and responsibilities within the household and within the public sphere have shaped the differences in participation of men and women in gendered organizations.

In conclusion, this chapter shows the relationship between capitalist development, patriarchy and the domination of nature. The GBM has brought to our attention how growth of the market economy is being promoted at the expense of the environment in Kenya. The GBM also connects issues concerning the environment to larger socio political issues in Kenya. This is central to ecofeminist and WED proponent since these theories show that domination of women and nature is related to social justice issues.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ANALYSIS.

This study provides a gender analysis of the GBM of Kenya. The evolution of the movement was mapped out through gender lenses, exploring how the incorporation of a gender perspective brings out other themes that were not looked at in previous studies. Women's involvement with environmental and other broader issues within the GBM has been examined in the in the context of social, economic and political structures of past and recent Kenyan history.

It is evident that women who are involved with the GBM do so because of how their communities are structured along gender lines. There is a clear gender-based division of labour and distribution of property and power in Kenya today, which has defined how women respond to environmental issues and other broader social issues. For instance, women in most communities in Kenya have prescribed social roles, which make them responsible for cultivating the land, fetching fuel and other production roles within the family. This requires that they interact with the environment more frequently than men do. In this context the women have responded more readily to the degradation of the environment because they are more affected and threatened by the impacts of a degraded environment.

Thus an analysis of women and men's relationships to the environment

in Kenya is rooted in their material reality and in specific forms of interaction with the same environment. This problematizes some arguments by ecofeminists who have attributed women's relation to the environment to biologically deterministic notions of femininity and to women's nurturing characteristics (Merchant, 1980; Shiva, 1989;). Women are not embedded in nature in an essentialist sense. As social and socialist ecofeminists have argued, women's relationship with the environment is tied to social institutions, ideological constructs of gender and gender roles and to the wider political economy. Women's involvement in environmental concerns in Kenya as in many other developing countries is related to their productive and reproductive roles, which for a long time was not accounted for in development discourses. Thus a constructivist approach to understanding women's relation to the environment has been reiterated in this analysis of women in the GBM.

Another theme that emerged from the study was that both short-term and long-term interests shape environmental friendly practices by the women in the GBM. Short-term interests such as earning extra income through tree planting activities was a major factor in women's involvement with the GBM. This was evident in AGM reports where the issue of payment for tree seedlings distributed by the women's groups to the communities was pivotal (GBM (AGM), 1992; GBMb, n.d). Thus women relate to natural resources as part of their livelihood strategies. The long-term interests that mediated environmental

conservation were ensuring a long-term availability of forest products for consumption such as firewood, fruits and food and a general sustainable environment.

On the participation of men in women's groups, it was found that most of these men were poor. Therefore gender intersects with class, as women the majority of whom are poor and poor men seem to be more involved in environmental conservation initiatives, because environmental degradation directly affects their livelihoods. This area was not explored in detail because of limited data and this is an area that is open for further studies of the GBM.

What also came out through the analysis was that the GBM's development can be better understood when analysed in a historical context since various historical changes in Kenya have had significant effects on environmental conservation efforts. It was shown that colonial and postcolonial periods in Kenya have had a gender effect on resource management and access. An analysis of the GBM's evolution as a women's movement is also better understood in the context of powerful wider political forces and gender relations in Kenya which systematically differentiate men's and women's positions in the larger social structures. For instance it was noted that the role of women's organization is shaped by gendered power relations which characterize the socio-political organization in Kenya that tries to limit women's participation in decision making. It is within this frame of reference that the

GBM has evolved into its political phase as it tries to address issues of power imbalances which not only affect women but other marginalized members of the wider Kenyan society.

The study's findings reinforce constructivist arguments in ecofeminist and WED perspectives as women's central role in the GBM is shaped by their social production and reproduction roles. I have further argued that these roles are not just a mere perpetuation of a traditional division of labor. The policy structures especially pertaining to land and the social and economic structures of post colonial Kenya have influenced women's participation in the GBM. I hope this study has moved beyond a general analysis of women and environment, to the specificity of the GBM in a Kenyan context. This was intended to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities, through various histories in Kenya, that have influenced the course taken by the GBM in its development.

Recommendations.

This study has opened up a number of areas for future exploration. The thesis focused on the evolution of the GBM of Kenya. But as noted, the GBM has also spread to other portions of Africa culminating in what is called the Pan African Green Belt Movement (PAGBM). It would be interesting to see how these other GBM's have evolved over time and specifically whether gender has been an equally important factor in their development and organization. Thus a

comparative study could be carried out on a number of GBM branches in Africa. Another area worth exploring would be a comparative study between GBM and other popular environmental movements such as Chipko in India (Guha, 1998) especially since these two movements have in many instances been used as examples of women's initiatives to deal with environmental concerns.

It was noted how the leadership of the GBM notably, Dr. Maathai, had been the main driving force in its initiatives. Many environmental and social movements have had charismatic leaders who have in many ways shaped the development of such movements. Thus an area that can be explored further is the extent to which the GBM leader's personal philosophy influences the evolution of the movement and what perspective the movement might take on beyond her leadership?

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APPENDICES

The Green Belt Movement

1. Introduction

In order to play a full part in conservation it is essential to appreciate the important role we each play in the future of our world. We need to give ourselves and to urge others to give us an opportunity to play our part while we can still do so. Some are already playing their part. Others have yet to find their niche. It does not matter where we live on this planet. We can always play a part in the healing, rehabilitation and protection of our environment. The green belt movement is an effort in that direction.

The green belt movement (of Kenya) is an indigenous grassroot environment/campaign with tree planting as its basic activity. Although its objectives are many and varied, the tree has been used as the focal point around which other environmental issues are discussed and brought to the attention of the public and decision makers. Trees have indeed become a symbol of hope and a living indicator on what needs to be done in order to realize rehabilitation and conservation of the environment and to also ensure that there is sustainable development i.e. development which endeavours to meet the basic needs of our world today without putting tomorrow in jeopardy.

Tree planting is a simple activity. It has been developed steadily in response to local needs and local capabilities. It relies on local expertise and advisors.

The main objective of the Green Belt Movement is to raise the consciousness of our people to the level which moves them to do the right things for the environment because their hearts have become touched and their minds convinced. To do the right things because it is the only logical thing to do. popular opinion notwithstanding. To obey their conscience (or the God in them) so that, one day, they may be able to look at all what God created and see that it is excellent indeed and, to behold that wonderful creation and be pleased even as God was pleased after He created it and commanded that we be its custodians rather than its plunderers.

The project was developed under the auspices of the National Council of Women of Kenya. It has developed into a programme that approaches the issues of development holistically. endeavours to build on local expertise and abilities and to curb all desertification processes in our country Kenya and throughout mother Africa.

2. Objectives of the Movement

Short term:

- To create public awareness on desertification.
- To also raise public awareness on the relationship between the environment, *per se* and such issues as the fuelwood crisis, poverty, unemployment and under-employment, food crisis, over-population, mismanagement of natural resources and the effects of these on political and economic situation throughout Africa.
- And encourage tree planting so as to provide the major energy source (wood-fuel and charcoal) for over 90% of Kenya's rural population and the urban's lower income groups.
- To promote planting of multi-purpose trees with special reference to nutritional and energy requirements for man and his livestock.
- To encourage soil rehabilitation, water harvesting and conservation and protection of the catchment areas, many of which have been deforested and even settled upon.
- To re-forest Kenya and restore its natural beauty while raising people's awareness on the need to protect Kenya's remaining forests (less than 2.9% and still being encroached upon) to create agricultural land for cash crops).
- To create jobs in the rural areas especially for the handicapped and the rural poor.
- To make tree planting an income-generating activity especially for women.
- To encourage extensive tree farming by private small-scale farmers.
- To promote zero-grazing and organic farming as a means of improving soil fertility and food production.

● To promote and increase awareness on the importance of adequate and balanced diet based on traditional foodstuffs and drought resistant crops.

● To create employment opportunities for young people in the agricultural sector and in the Green Belt Movement

● To initiate tree planting in every community in Kenya.

Long term:

- Averts desertification processes through tree planting and soil/water conservation.
- Promotes environment conservation and sustainable development.
- Promotes indigenous trees and shrubs which are rapidly becoming extinct as promotion of exotic species intensifies (for rapid economic exploitation and also because the methods for propagating exotic species are now better known to foresters and farmers).
- Promotes a positive image of a woman's personality by projecting her leading role in national development.
- Encourages indigenous initiatives which restore self-confidence in a people overwhelmed by foreign "experts".
- Promotes the protection and maintenance of the environment through seminars, confidence workshops etc.
- Develops replicable methodology for rural development.
- Carries out research in conjunction with Universities and research institutions.
- Strengthens and empowers groups and staff through training and informing.
- Encourages women to make their own decisions, identify their objectives and strategies and implement them in order to benefit from their labour.
- Provides a Forum at which the voice of those working at the grassroot (especially women) can articulate preferences either by words or deeds (or both).

● Emphasize the human persons as a main resource as compared to funds, formal education or specialization.

● Seeks to encourage participants to empower themselves, strengthen their self-confidence and self-esteem and cultivate pride in their cultural values and heritage.

● Strives to share the experience gained in the GBM with others in the region in particular and the world in general.

● Addresses itself to the poorer sectors of societies and endeavours to alleviate poverty.

● In its efforts of re-afforestation GBM is contributing towards reduction of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere and the prospects of climate change.

● Encourages spiritual and cultural values which link people with their roots and with Nature and God. Our traditional values and systems have been eroded, under valued and destroyed in the process of colonialization and modern mode of development. In that process many people have become economically, socially and politically marginalized.

It is the spiritual and cultural values which can contribute towards restoration of self confidence, self empowerment and recognition of the person as the greater resource to self and country.

3. Accomplishments to date

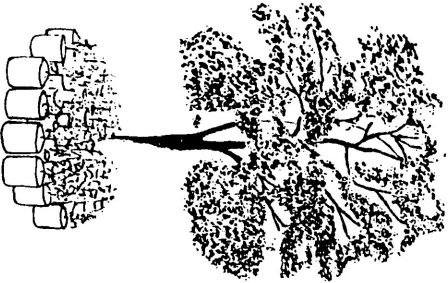
- Over 1000 tree nurseries have been established. Some have died because of one constraint or another. They have produced millions of tree seedlings which have been issued to small-scale farmers, schools and churches.
- Many jobs have been created both in the urban centre but mostly in the rural areas.
- The campaign for indigenous trees and shrubs has been successful.
- Women continue to cultivate a more positive image of themselves. About 50,000 women are involved at nursery sites.

- The groups are proud of their ability to carry out their projects on their own without being patronized.
- Public awareness on the need to protect the environment has increased.
- Two booklets on the green belt movement have been produced.
- Several films on the green belt movement have been produced.
- The Movement is spreading to other African countries and may soon be replicated throughout East and Southern Africa.
- The green belt movement, has been a developing project by the people rather than for the people.
- Over seven (7) million trees are recorded as having been planted and survived, at a survival rate of about 70-80% in the last 10 years
- Over 3000 schools have planted the trees on school compounds and have involved over 1 million school children.
- Over 50,000 households (small scale farmers) have planted trees on their farms. This amounts to about half a million persons.


If you are interested in joining and supporting the green belt movement you should write to:

The Co-ordinator Green Belt Movement
P.O. Box 67545 NAIROBI - Kenya.
The Green Belt Movement A/c 1500785
Barclays Bank Moi Avenue,
Nairobi, Kenya.

The Green Belt Movement
a project founded by the national council of women of Kenya



THE GREEN BELT MOVEMENT



As for me, I have made a choice

4. Membership of the Green Belt Movement

On 5th June 1987 the Green Belt Movement celebrated 10 years of a campaign to raise our consciousness on the urgent need to protect and rehabilitate our physical environment.

Our financial support has largely come from abroad. However, the practical support has come from thousands of individuals who have responded by planting trees wherever they could.

But there is a large section of individuals and institutions who would like to support this campaign for the environment but who have not known how to go about it.

Everybody is warmly invited to become a member of the movement by sponsoring trees. The suggested rate is KShs. 1000 (US \$0) per 100 trees.

Individual and institution members receive attractive membership certificates to remind them of this association with the campaign that cares for our present, world and the future world of our children and grand-children.

The following memberships are available:

- **Full Membership** (Mwanaamitu i.e. one who forests and lives within the forest).
- Any person who is resident in Kenya and is over the age of eighteen years shall be eligible for full membership of the Movement on application and on sponsoring at least 100 trees.
- Any farmer who maintains a successful mini-green belt of more than 100 trees shall be eligible for full membership of the Movement on application.
- Any organisation, group, school, church etc. that maintains a successful green belt or a tree

GBM

nursery shall be eligible for full membership of the Movement on application.

- Any organisation or institution in Kenya committed to the improvement and maintenance of the environment and development shall be eligible for full membership of the Movement on application and on sponsoring at least 1000 trees.

Associate Member (Mwanapori i.e. one who plants trees but so slowly she/he lives within savannah land.

- Any person under the age of eighteen who wishes to participate in the improvement and maintenance of the environment and development shall be eligible for membership of the Movement on application.
- Any person who maintains a mini-green belt of 1-99 trees shall be eligible for membership of the Movement on application.
- Any person who is non-resident in Kenya and is over eighteen years and who is interested in the objectives of the Movement shall be eligible for memberships of the Movement on application and on sponsoring at least 100 trees.

Honorary Membership (Mwana wa Heshima)

- The National Council of Women of Kenya, under whose auspices the Green Belt Movement was founded in 1977.
- National and International Organizations, governments and individuals who support a defined project of the Movement shall be eligible for Membership of the Movement by invitation.

Desert Membership (Mwana Jangwa)

- It is reserved for those who are interested in joining the Green Belt Movement. However, they have met none of the above-mentioned conditions for full, associate or honorary membership. That implies that they are out there in the desert..... they are the **DESERT MEMBERS**.....

APPENDIX B

LIST OF TAPED RECORDINGS USED IN THE STUDY

Green Belt Movement Annual General Meeting Proceedings- Introduction. Nairobi.

15th September 1992. 1 Tape (Swahili).

Green Belt Movement. Annual General Meeting Proceedings- Introductions. Nairobi.

16th September 1992. 1 Tape (Swahili and English).

Green Belt Movement Annual General Meeting Proceedings. District Reports and Questions. Nairobi. 16th September, 1992. 3 Tapes (Swahili and English).

Green Belt Movement Annual General Meeting Proceedings. District Representatives Discussions. Nairobi. 16th September, 1992. 1 Tape.(Swahili).

Green Belt Movement . Monitors Training Seminar. YMCA. Nairobi. 11th October 1992. 3 Tapes (Swahili and English).

Green Belt Movement. Monitors Field Report. Nairobi. June 1993. 2 Tapes.

Green Belt Movement. Pan-African Green Belt Movement Seminar. Methodist Guest House. Nairobi. 17th February 1993. 1 Tape (English).

Wangari Maathai. Free and Fair Elections Seminar. Nyeri. 21st November 1993. 4 Tapes.(Kikuyu).

Wangari Maathai. Free and Fair Elections Seminar. Thika 21st November 1992. 2 Tapes. (Kikuyu).

APPENDIX C



Mr Biwott: "Political thugs"



Mr Karume: "It will assist economy"



Mr Ndong: Quality improved



Mr Musyoka: Questioned sanity



Mr Nabwera: "Foreigners using it"

NABWERA: GREEN BELT SUBVERSIVE

A MINISTER in the Office of the President, Mr Burudi Nabwera, yesterday said in Parliament that Prof Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement was a "front which was being used by some foreigners to channel into the country money for subversive activities".

Following the complex construction proposal, the coordinator of the Green Belt Movement, Prof Maathai came out strongly opposing the move, arguing it was going to beat environment conservation efforts.

Prof Maathai even threa-

tened to seek a permanent court injunction restraining the construction. Since then, Prof Maathai has been blasted by a cross section of leaders who felt that she had other motives for opposing the construction.

Yesterday, Mr Nabwera wondered how a single person could take on the entire Government without support from some "queer corners". "This woman cannot be acting alone, she must be acting on behalf of some unknown masters but we will soon find out the source of her money," said Mr Nabwera.

"This movement claims that it's an environmental conservation body and yet I have not come across even a single tree planted by it, the only thing I have seen is only posters along some roads, so how genuine is the organisation?" posed Mr Nabwera.

The Minister was making his contribution during a Parliamentary motion urging the House to approve the Sessional Paper No. 8 (1989) on Kenya Government Guarantee of loans to the Kenya Times Media Trust from a consortium of banks led by the Standard Chartered Mer-

chant Bank Ltd of United Kingdom.

In his contribution, an Assistant Minister for Co-operative Development, Mr Njenga Karume said the Sh4 billion loan to be given to the KTMT would generate a lot of economic activities in the country and bring about more employment opportunities for the country's youth.

"Anyone opposing the construction of the complex is opposing the pumping into our economy Sh4 billion which would greatly assist our economy," said Mr Karume.

Mr Karume's sentiments

were echoed by another Assistant Minister, Mr Raymond Ndong' (Co-operative Development) who said that from an investment point of view, the KTMT complex would be one of the best paying investments, "even surpassing the KICC".

And the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr Kalonzo Musyoka, said leaders had a duty to speak on the rights of Kenyans without fear of interference from outside.

"We in this House are here on behalf of the 20 million Kenyans and we represent their views.

APPENDIX C

Govt meddling in movement—Maathai

By NATION Reporter

Professor Wangari Maathai says that the Government has been interfering with the activities of the Green Belt Movement at the grassroots.

Prof Maathai, who is the coordinator of the movement, said the Government used chiefs and District Officers to disperse her group members when on field visits.

"In Samburu, Bungoma, Laikipia, Kwale, Embu and Kiambu, office staff have been prevented from addressing groups and checking field work by the local administration," she said.

Addressing the movement's annual general meeting at the All Saints' Cathedral on Wednesday, Prof Maathai said she had written to the Head of Public Service, Prof Philip Mbithi, asking him to direct the administration to stop interfering with the movement's environmental work.

"As a result of this interference, a lot of money is wasted as office staff travel long distances to assess the work being done by members only to be sent back, at times violently, by armed police," she complained.

However, she thanked some administrators whom she said appreciated and helped in tree planting and environmental conservation.

Prof Maathai said plans were under way to decentralise the movement to bring its management and decision-making closer to the people.

She said Kenyans should be allowed to manage and make decisions on matters affecting them instead of relying on the Government.

Prof Mathaai said a plan to start a Pan African Green Belt Movement Network was in the pipeline, adding that a seminar to discuss the modalities was planned for early next year.

Daily Nation. December 9th 1994.

Wangari wins a Swedish award

PROFESSOR Wangari Mathai (right) has been jointly awarded the Right Livelihood Award in recognition of her pioneering work in reafforestation.

The Right Livelihood Awards are presented annually in Stockholm on the day before the Nobel prize presentations. The other joint winners of the award are Winefreda Geonzon of the Free Legal Aid Volunteers Association in Cebu City (Philippines) and Self Employed Women's Association in Ahmedabad, India. The honorary award goes to Imani Khaliph who inspired the Beirut peace movements.

Professor Mathai will receive a cash award of approximately shs. 210,000 to shs. 275,000 to further the Green Belt work.

For a number of years professor Mathai has steered a treeplanting project of the National Council of Women of Kenya known as the "Green



Belt Movement".

After the presentation of the award in the Swedish parliament Professor Mathai is expected to give a talk for approximately twenty minutes about her work and vision.

—KNA