This year’s theme for the World Environmental Day is: Biodiversity for sustainable livelihoods. As a vehicle for enhancing awareness and action for the protection of the environment, Kilifi Natural Resources Network (KICORNET) with support from the community and Kaya Institutions, has planted a total of 19,630 seedlings (7,043 trees at Kaya Gandini, 662 at Kaya Fungo and 11,925 trees in Rabai) in the month of May, 2020.
KICORNET started the tree planting program about 17 months ago as part of a project titled: ‘SUSTAINABLE BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY UTILIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE MIJIKENDA SACRED KAYA FORESTS OF COASTAL KENYA’. A total of 20,128 indigenous trees have been planted to date since the project inception in January 2019. The trees are planted by members of KICORNET, in collaboration with National Museums of Kenya, Kaya elders and community members living in close proximity to the kayas.

Some of the trees have been planted along kaya Fungo and Kaya Gandini forest boundaries to mark the borders, while others were planted within the degraded sites of the forests in the form of enrichment planting. Community members have also planted seedlings on their farms, and the demand for seedlings across the landscape is growing. At least 80% of the trees planted in 2019 have survived despite the irregular rain patterns experienced. Weeding around the trees is done by the Kaya elders committee. The trees are physically protected with sticks around them to increase the chance of them surviving.

The project focuses on strengthening the capacity of Kaya institutions on traditional heritage for effective biocultural diversity management through trainings to traditional institutions of governance and resource management such as the Kaya Elders Councils. The project also builds capacity of local youths and women with skills that help in reducing dependence on forest resources, such as beekeeping at Kaya Fungo. A processing plant has been set up at Kaya Fungo. The project is implemented in partnership between National Museums of Kenya - CFCU, County Government of Kilifi, Kenya Forest Service, local community groups in conservation and WWF Kenya.

This year’s WED theme reminds us to reconnect with nature. The youth has been able to connect with nature through the deliberate efforts of KICORNET to provide opportunities for them to actively participate in the work and benefits of conservation.
A young girl participates in tree-planting.

Figure 1: Children brought along by their parents participate in the tree planting exercise at Rabai
Figure 2: Boys and girls also involved in the tree planting exercise

Figure 3: Inspecting a community-owned tree nursery
Honey processing equipment for the bee-keepers at Kaya Fungo