

AFFORESTATION PROGRAMS AT BILAL MUSLIM MISSION OF KENYA



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Trees are truly splendid creations of Allah SWT, which are mentioned numerous times in the Holy Qur'an. In verse 18 of sura Al-Hajj, we are reminded that these organisms also submit to the will of their creator when Allah the glorified says 'Do you not see that to Allah prostrates whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the Earth; and the Sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, **the trees**, the moving creatures and many of the people?' The Holy Prophet (S) repeatedly emphasized the planting of trees. Kanzal Ummal tradition 9,081 records him as saying 'whoever plants a tree and patiently maintains it and tends to it until fruition, every single fruit consumed from that tree is regarded by Allah as charity.'

There is an intricately close relationship between animal life and plant life. Most of the oxygen we breathe originates in the oceans from plants and plant-like organisms and trees produce approximately 30% of it. Trees are essential in the provision of shade and fresh nutrition and controlling the temperature and humidity in an area. They are vital in the prevention of soil erosion and slowing of water run-off among several other useful functions they perform.



Women plant trees at the Ahlulbayt centre in Moyeni in 2020

Several years ago, **Bilal Muslim Mission of Kenya** began research into how to plant and care for trees so they provide multiple ecosystem benefits. We partnered with **The Lady Fatemah Charitable Trust** in the UK, aiming to achieve the planting of 124,000 trees of a variety of species by the end of the project's life. The trees were to symbolize each of the noble prophets sent by Allah to Earth. With funding and support from The Lady Fatemah Charitable Trust, a project commenced in December 2020 with the acquisition and planting of seedlings at some of our centres during the rainy season. Towards the end of January 2021, we envisioned the expansion of the program and tree nursery experts were brought on board to establish tree nurseries. The provision of necessary raw material and equipment resulted in the raising of a variety of seedlings in the course of the March and April rains. We shared some seedlings with other institutions including mosques, churches, hospitals, schools and government offices as well as with any individuals who displayed an interest in them.

Young healthy trees at Jaffery centre, Masongaleni in 2023



Tree nursery at Husayni centre, Bahakanda in 2022



We eagerly anticipated the October-December 2021 short rains to carry out the next phase of the initiative, however we faced some insurmountable challenges, most significantly prolonged drought and seed dormancy.

This year with renewed hope and optimism towards afforestation efforts, we ventured into planting mini forests. These are small, densely planted and diverse collections of native tree and shrub species representing all the layers in a forest. In July 2023 3,000 seedlings were planted at Jaffery centre in Masongaleni, with enthusiastic support from the local community. These are growing well and it appears that this mini forest is a sustainable one. Bilal Kenya's endeavors towards fulfilling our environmental responsibility were appreciated by Lukenya University, from whom we received a grant for another 3,000 seedlings. The next stage of this program will involve planting seedlings at Rahma Centre in Kilungu and An-Nabi centre in Nzavoni. We confidently look forward to the expansion of this program in the coming years, which will result in the creation of mini forests at all Bilal centres; We will be working in tandem with government officials to enhance successful prospects for the initiative and are also committed to offering the necessary training and resources to community members who aspire to set up their own tree nurseries.

Tree Planting Holiday in Kenya

The 13th of November 2023 was declared a special public holiday in Kenya by Cabinet Secretary for the Interior & National Administration, Kithure Kindiki to allow for a nationwide tree planting exercise. The announcement was made via his official twitter account a week prior and followed a decision made at a cabinet sitting in Mombasa on the 3rd of November. He called on the public to show patriotism and join in the national efforts to curb the devastating effects of climate change as the government endeavors to increase Kenya's forest cover from 7% to 10%.

Having gained valuable experience in recent years, to actuate our environmental concern and to tap into this opportune moment for Sadaqah Jariyah, the mission joined government efforts and tree planting was undertaken at all fifteen Bilal Muslim Mission of Kenya centres in and around the coastal region. Seedlings were available at the centres themselves, or from District Officers and Village Chiefs. Individuals also brought their own seedlings from home. The turnout was commendable, with entire families participating and men, women, children and the elderly showing their support.

The following section of the report includes pictures of the planting initiative and affords you a closer look at the activity at some of our centres on the day.

Al-Hujjah centre, Chengoni



Jaffery centre, Mackinnon Road



Al-Mahdi centre, Samburu



Ahlulbayt centre, Moyeni



Appreciation

Bilal Muslim Mission of Kenya has for several years been actively engaged in afforestation efforts in the country. Tree planting is a tradition taken from the Holy Prophet (S), who planted and tended to trees with his own hands. Our programs avail the opportunity for the spreading of the pristine Islamic message and are a means for the building of local community knowledge and skills towards self-reliance and human dignity.

We thank The Lady Fatemah Charitable trust and other donors, volunteers and well-wishers who have supported us in our noble endeavours in this regard.