

# Give mangroves a chance

By MAZERA NDURYA

It was an event reminiscent of the talent-studded drama and music festivals that are held every other year. But while the themes are varied in the traditional festivals, the occasion at Mtepeni Primary School was purely on the environment. And not just any topic - it was about the mangrove tree, which over the years, has been the lifeline of thousands of people at the Coast.

The breath-taking beauty of the aquatic trees, the rich biodiversity that come with it -including birds and, of course fish, were highlighted in an aura of fun and entertainment. But while the composers of the various items on card went on an overdrive to heap praises on mangroves, a grim picture was also painted arising from the destruction of the forest.

Pangs of hunger which keep many children out of school as the drought continue to ravage many parts of the country, and more so the Coast region, could not get a better illustration to the crowd that had gathered at Mtepeni Primary School in Kilifi than in the talent galore showcased.

Drawn from the area bordering the ocean where mangroves are the main source of livelihood for the community, it took an exposition of talent to showcase how much the school children understand about the aquatic trees.

One school after the other took to the arena in various genres of entertainment and after a full day of performances, it was clear that the message revolving around challenging poverty in a healthy environment had been drummed home.

Over the years the communities have been seeing their sources of livelihood



adversely affected but that did not stop them from haphazard cutting of mangroves for fuel wood and building material.

Children from Mnarani Primary School stole the limelight with their play that aptly demonstrated in a skit titled 'tuipe mikoko nafasi iishi' (let's give mangroves a chance to live). And all the other schools came up with various forms of entertainment ranging from poems, songs, skits, artwork and talks on the importance of mangroves.

But it was Mtepeni primary School that carried the day after garnering 80 percent in a hotly contested competition with Mnarani following closely in second position with 78 percent and Shariani Primary School finishing third with 77 percent.

It was song and dance as Mtepeni carried with them a 3000 litre water tank, 3ft horse pipe and a watering can which will be sued mainly for the tree nursery that has withered due to drought. It was a well deserved win and as the crowd walked away from the school compound a new awakening

**Mtepeni Primary School, the overall winners of a school competition for schools in Kilifi District, on the importance of mangroves. They garnered over 80 points in various genres including songs, skits, poems and artwork.**

Photo/Mazera Ndurya

had dawned on the people that unless they conserved the environment around them, there will be no end in sight to the food insecurity.

Mnarani Primary School won 2500 litres water tank and a watering can while Shariani won a 2000 litre water tank.

Fourteen year old Henry Maliki from Mtepeni Primary school who won the essay writing competition had a good grip of the mangrove and as he explained, there was nothing as beautiful as taking a walk under the undisturbed forest canopy.

"But it's not just the beauty because from the information I have gathered from environmental experts, I can now understand why getting fish is a

problem these days because the forest is where the fish breed and if destroyed there will be nothing left," he said.

Kwetu Training centre, in collaboration with the Community Development Trust Fund project has been having a program of supporting schools in Kilifi district since the beginning of the year. Twenty schools were chosen to be supported after being identified and given a go ahead by the ministry of education in the district.

According to the centre coordinator Mercy Mbogho, the schools formed environmental clubs that targeted mangrove conservation and general environmental conservation.

"The environmental club members were organized and led by their patrons who had earlier undergone training in the mangrove conservation at Kwetu in March. The supported schools were issued with mangrove training manual, stationery and were monitored and evaluated on their progress on a monthly basis," she said.

The competition was carried in two phases whereby in the first phase, the environmental adjudicators went round the schools to evaluate and assess what the school environmental clubs are doing to conserve the environment under the following sub topics such as greening and waste disposal.

Event organizers said the show of talent will be an annual event targeting the children who have a way of communicating information to their parents and the older members of the community.

"From what we have seen, there is every reason to believe that more awareness will be created and hope to see positive change in the way local people look at the mangroves," said Ms Mbogho.

## Happy Birthday Wishes

**BRIAN WAMBUA VICTOR**

As we celebrate your 10th birthday, we thank God for illuminating your path thus far.



We pray for God's wisdom to guide your choices in life. Best wishes from Dad Victor Muuo and Mum Brigid Ngina, your grandparents, uncles and aunts. Happy birthday, Brian.

**DAZWEIT IUSUI KWANUTSU**

As you turn six, it is with God's joy that you may live to be a hardworking, responsible and

God-loving son. Best wishes from dd Dan, mum Trufz, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

**KELLY CHEROP**

Happy birthday Kelly, as you turn one, may God's abundance always be with you. Wishes from mum and Dad, sisters Gloria and Chero.



**MARION JONES**

Happy sixth birthday. I wish you opportunities to discover and nurture your gifts and talents as

you grow and develop holistically. God bless you. Best wishes from your Aunt Beckie Magoma.

**JENNY T W GIKONYO**

Happy birthday Jenny. You are now 10 years old. You are one of the most precious gifts that God gave to me. May the glory of God endure in you forever. Lot's of love from mum Jane Ngamau, brother Quincy, cucus, gukas, cousins, aunts, uncles and all your friends at Hospital Hill and at home.



**KAREN NJERI KIMANI**

Nine years ago, an angel was born named Karen. May you live to blow 1001 candles. May God bless you and be with you for the rest of your life. Happy birthday wishes from your mum and dad Mr and Mrs Geoffrey Kimani Mwaura, brothers Dennis and Dave, cucus, gukas, cousins, uncles, aunts and all your friends at High bridges Academy and at home



**NATALIE NAKHUMICHA OSUNDWA**

Happy birthday Natalie. You are a blessing and a gift indeed from God almighty. As you turn four, may you grow to be a truly responsible and God-fearing girl. Best wishes from your dad Alan, mum Phyllis, sisters Michelle and Nicole, brother Miguel, cousins, uncles and aunts, grandparents and all your friends.

**GALVIN JOHN MDENGE**

Happy birthday as you turn two years. You are unique, loved and will remain a treasure in our hearts. Best wishes from your dad Fredrick, mum Alicia and brother Gevira.

Send your birthday wishes to the Editor; Young Nation, P.O. Box 49010, Nairobi. Email: yn@nation.co.ke

