

Research Wangari Maathai

Wangari Maathai (1 April 1940 – 25 September 2011) grew up in the green highlands of Kenya. When she returned from studying college in the US she discovered that her lush homeland was being destroyed by deforestation which caused water and food shortages, malnutrition, and disappearing wildlife. She began to educate others to care for the land and re-plant the forests and they called her *Mama Miti*, “Mother of Trees.” Ms Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement, which empowered woman around Kenya to help take back their land, planting tree by tree.

Wangari Muta Maathai was a Kenyan politician and an environmentalist. An environmentalist works to protect the **environment**. She received the Nobel prize for peace in 2004. Maathai was the first black African woman to win a **Nobel prize**. She is known for her struggle for democracy, human rights, and the conservation of the environment.

In 1976 Maathai began to promote the planting of trees. The goal was to prevent deforestation (removal of bushes and trees). In 1977 she founded the Green Belt Movement, a group for planting trees, in Kenya. Since then, more than 40 million trees have been planted across Kenya. Women planted most of these trees.

Maathai and the Green Belt Movement received several international prizes. Their work also spread to several other African countries. In 1986 leaders of the Green Belt Movement established the Pan African Green Belt Network. This movement teaches world leaders more about conservation and the improvement of the environment. The Kenyan government arrested Maathai several times. She was even attacked for being against developments that would harm the environment.