

SCRIPT MAU FOREST KENYA

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Lead:

It's one of East Africa's dearest resources, and one that is fading fast. The Mau Forest, in Kenya's Rift Valley, is the country's biggest freshwater catchment area, feeding four major rivers, and providing water for 30 percent of its people. Thousands live there, too – many of them on land provided by the government. But deforestation due to the growing settlement has now put the water supply at risk. Facing a severe drought, the Kenyan government now wants to evict the Mau Forest dwellers, who say they have nowhere else to go.

Voiced report

Soundbites:

(man) RICHARD TERER, retired military in Mau Forest
(man) JOHN MWANDUKA, Friends of the Mau Watershed
(man) ERIC KIPKURIR, UNILEVER, Kericho
(man) ERIC BETT, farmer Mau Forest

Script:

Richard Terer is 50-years old and he lives on the slope of a hill in Mau Forest. He received the right to his plot after 27 years of service in the Kenyan army. Now he faces eviction by the same government he served for so long.

SOUNDBITE 1 (man) RICHARD TERER, retired military in Mau Forest, (9 secs, Kiwashili)
I have been sweating all these years,
and now they tell me to get out.
It's not good, and they know I bought it.
That will give a lot of problems.

Spanning 4,000 sq km Mau Forest is the biggest in East Africa...
and the largest freshwater catchment area in Kenya.
Its population has exploded in just a few decades,
Thanks to in large part to the government, which handed out settlement rights.
40,000 families live here. They have felled much of the forest...
or to burn lumber to sell as charcoal.

A practice that conservationists say is threatening Kenya's precious resource.

SOUNDBITE 2 (man) JOHN MWANDUKA, Friends of the Mau Watershed, (8 secs, English)
Since early nineties to date over sixty per cent of the Mau Forest has been destroyed.

Deforestation has led to a radical drop in groundwater levels...
Water shortages are being felt across the region. Including at nearby tea plantations.

SOUNDBITE 3 (man) ERIC KIPKURIR, UNILEVER, (10 secs, English)
There is a low production in the tea fields since early January to May.
We received less rain due to destruction of the forest.

Faced with a severe drought, the government is now looking to roll back its earlier policies
and seeking to evict the forest dwellers, to let the forest recover.
But several communities says that it will not go without a fight.

SOUNDBITE 4, (man) ERIC BETT, farmer Mau Forest, (10 secs, English)
I will go it on my own or together with my colleagues to go to court to challenge the
decision by the government to evict us from this area.

With legal battles pending, the settlers will remain in the forest for now.
While water table continues to drop, and drought parches Kenyan lands.