

# Relatively Speaking ▶ Inner circle truth

## The little 'Hummingbird' fighting climate change

At the age of nine, **Alice Wanjiru** has set out her vision clearly—she wants to contribute positively to the climate change agenda. She has planted at least 5,000 trees in two years and wants to plant 10 million others in the next five years. She lets us in on her journey to become a climate change activist

by Oscar Kimani  
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### Tell us about yourself

My name is Alice Wanjiru, a Grade Five pupil at the Brookhouse International School in Nairobi. I am a nine-year-old climate activist, humanitarian and a champion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure by 2030, all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

### What drove you to be an environmentalist?

A couple of years ago, I visited my dad's business (she is daughter of the Afro Sayari Hotel, near Ruai Shopping Centre along the Eastern Bypass in Nairobi). The area was largely a bare land with no trees. But I also noted that my dad loved trees and planted so many of them at the facility. Definitely, there was a huge difference between the hotel and the surrounding areas. My dad taught me the importance of planting trees and conserving the environment. Together with the existing programmes in our school, I developed the interest and researching on how I can contribute to conserving environment.

### Who is your role model and why?

In my research, I learnt of the late Prof Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan who won the Nobel Peace Prize for her contribution in conserving the environment. I have watched so many of her interviews that have inspired me to stay the course. I also read of a story she narrated about a little bird that did what big animals were reluctant to do. Her little efforts saved a forest on fire. I pictured myself as the little Hummingbird and how my little input can save our planet for we do not have a planet B. It is from Wangari's story that I borrowed the Hummingbird phrase and spiced it up to form 'The Green Hummingbird Movement'. Inspired by the story, I started planting trees. But apart from Wangari, I am inspired by other environmentalists such as Elizabeth Wathuti. I also learn a lot from the Cabinet Secretary for Environment Soipan Tuyu who is a woman putting a lot of efforts to make Kenya green. I would like to meet her one day.

### What have you achieved so far and what is your plan going forward?

By now, I have planted at least 5,000 seedlings. I have achieved this through the Green Hummingbird Movement where I am an ambassador. At school, I am an active participant of environmental conservation programmes and part of the activities include planting trees. I hope to plant at least 10 million trees by 2027. With the support of my mentors, we have developed strategies for how we shall achieve the ambition.

One of the strategies I am employing is to recruit as many children as possible to the tree-planting programmes, especially by targeting birthday celebrations. I appeal to all children to consider planting trees on their birthday. From the coming year, I will intensify the campaign and through the Green Hummingbird Movement, I will



Alice irrigating new seedlings.  
PD/COURTESY



Alice Wanjiru, a climate activist.  
LEFT: Alice with Dr Paul Wanjohi, Sharp Education Centre Director after a tree planting exercise.  
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support them with seedlings.

Other strategies include engaging more partnerships with Green Hummingbird Movement and also aligning myself with the government's programme of planting at least 15 billion trees in the next 10 years.

### Tell us a bit of the Green Hummingbird Movement

This is a movement by the children inspired by adults who are environmentally conscious, friendly and responsible. The children in the movement, are despite their tender age, joining efforts towards combating the current deadly crisis; the climate change. Apart from planting trees, we also do clean-up exercise and also engage in humanity work. Our aim is to inspire the current generation of children and those younger than us so that we can have an environmentally responsible generation. Our slogan is; 'You are not too young to make a change.' We already have a tree planting project dubbed 'Afro Forest'. We plant trees at the Afro Sayari, which plans to have its own theme park. I am the ambassador of the movement.

### What are the environmental programmes in your school?

At Brookhouse School, Runda Campus where I school, we are actively engaged on environmental issues, from learning about environment to having round table discussions to creating awareness among us and periodic tree planting activities. I am a member of the school's environment club. As an environment champion, I plan to propose an annual tree planting day in our school to be observed even in the school calendar.

### What do you think the government should do to tackle climate change?

I think the government should make more efforts to plant more trees and come up with rules for how Kenyans can use green energy such as wind power. The government should also emphasise more about environmental conservation in schools. I was happy when recently President William Ruto announced a public holiday for Kenyans to plant trees. Together with other members of the Green Hummingbird Movement, we participated in the national activity by planting at least 500 trees. I like the President because he

### KEY NOTES

- Alice Wanjiru is the founder, The Green Hummingbird Movement.
- Apart from planting trees, she also organises clean-up exercises and engages in humanity work.
- Her role model is Prof Wangari Maathai, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for her contribution in conserving environment.
- Her aim is to inspire the current generation of children that we can have an environmentally responsible generation.

likes talking about climate change. I hope to also meet him one day.

### Have you attended conferences and trainings about environment? How was the experience?

I have attended several trainings. In one of them, we were educated on how to take care of tree nurseries. I have also attended local conferences on how to protect the environment.

### How do you incorporate other children in your campaign to ensure a better environment?

Before engaging in any tree planting event, we normally have a discussion so that we can understand what we are all doing. I intend to be hosting children conferences so that we can share the knowledge in our efforts to conserve the environment.

### What challenges have you identified so far?

Because of my young age, sometimes it becomes difficult to convince people who are older than me. If I tell people to stop littering for example, most of them do not listen.

### Where do you see yourself in future?

I would like to be in a community that embraces nature and takes care of it. I envision myself having other forest projects such as that at Afro Sayari. I hope to study and end up in a career that is directly involved in environmental issues.

### What is your message to children?

I will encourage my fellow children using the phrase; 'We are not too little to make and bring change. Let us give it our best and join our efforts to achieve more.'

Alice Wanjiru

**We are not too little to make and bring change. Let us give it our best and join our efforts to achieve more**