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Kenyan project for vulnerable women to adapt to climate change inspires delegates

Warsaw, Poland (PANA) – Kathleen Colson, the woman behind an inspiring project in northern Kenya that has won a UN award, says she wanted to find a solution that will make a difference to the pastoral families in the east Africa country whose traditional way of life has been devastated due to climate change.

The Boma project which enables vulnerable women living in extreme poverty in Kenya's arid lands to adapt to climate change by building small businesses, is among 17 inspiring projects as 2013 Lighthouse Activities and the Momentum for Change initiative of the United Nations being showcased at the UN Climate Conference taking place in the Polish capital, Warsaw.

Colson said the Boma project had changed the lives of 33,000 women and children in northern Kenya since 2009 who have been lifted out of extreme poverty.

"Our goal is to reach 100,000 within five years. The intent is to develop a module that we can replicate across Africa, especially where there are pastoral communities because those are the ones that are making the transition from livestock which is becoming more unsustainable due to climate change," Colson told PANA in Warsaw.

The project helps women living in extreme poverty in Kenya's arid lands adapt to climate change by diversifying their livelihoods by starting small businesses in their villages and they are given a cash grant of about US\$ 100 and after six months, a second grant of US\$ 50 is given if the business is doing well.

"They get three years of mentoring and training and the idea is to graduate them from extreme poverty into poverty," Colson added.

Lighthouse Activities and the Momentum for Change initiative are spearheaded by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat, to shine a light on the groundswell activities underway across the globe towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient world.

"The 2013 Lighthouse Activities are true beacons of hope, demonstrating what happens when innovation and passion come together to address the biggest challenge of our time," UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres recently stated when the 17 projects were announced.
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