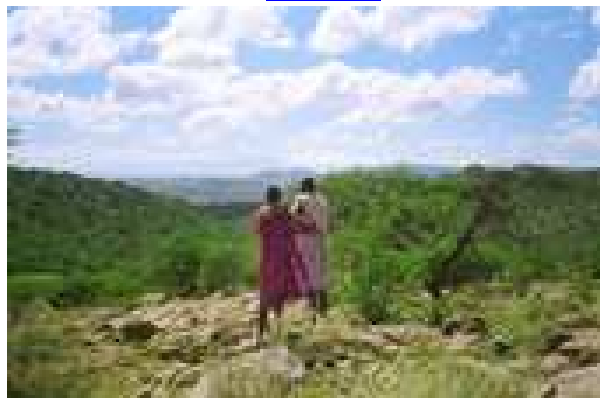


MUKOGODO BEEKEEPERS & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION GROUP



INTRODUCTION –

Mukogodo Beekeepers and Environmental Conservation Group (MBEKEC) is a Community-Based Organisation (CBO) that was established by **Indigenous** local people in order to address the needs & challenges of the **Ildigiri Laikipiak Maasai Pastoralist Community**.

MBEKEC was started by local community members in May 2003 & was registered as a self-help group with the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture & Social Services at Nanyuki on 26/07/2004. The organization currently has 43 fully registered members - 24 men & 19 women, & is fully constituted in accordance with Kenyan law & has its own bank account.

The organization of **MBEKEC** emerged from a concern among the local Indigenous Ildigiri Laikipiak Maasai men & women that insufficient development initiatives were being undertaken in their pastoralist area. The organization was therefore formed upon the realization of untapped traditional cultural & natural resources & is committed to exploit this through effective & quality environmental conservation & management for improved economic status, health care & enhanced food availability.

MBEKEC values participation as a driving force behind the full realization of genuine development efforts towards long-term future sustainability of environmental conservation, improved livelihoods & poverty reduction .

MBEKEC is therefore addressing poverty & other challenges among Indigenous Ildigiri Laikipiak Maasai pastoralists by means of stakeholders' participation in solving problems through maximizing the use of locally available resources as well as promoting a sense of ownership of projects in the community.

VISION STATEMENT

Envisage a just, progressive and self-reliant society through working together to conserve and utilize the traditional cultural and natural resources.

MISSION STATEMENT

To promote and facilitate the empowering of the poor & marginalized Indigenous Ildigiri Laikipiak Maasai Community and enable them to transform themselves in a sustainable manner by pooling resources, sharing knowledge and collaborating with all stakeholders.

OBJECTIVES (OVERALL)

- 1) To enhance the economic status and food security through effective and quality resource utilization & management.
- 2) To ensure habitable sanitation and general hygiene through improvement of environmental conservation.
- 3) To train and facilitate community members in the acquisition & use of beekeeping equipment for high quality bee products.
- 4) To provide market for honey and other bee products, including possible local refinery.
- 5) Sensitize and mobilize the community on prevention of HIV and AIDS through workshops and meetings

INTERVENTION AREAS

- 1) Betterment of lives & livelihoods of **Indigenous Ildigiri Laikipiak Maasai Pastoralist Community**
- 2) Documentation & conservation of traditional music, knowledge & culture
- 3) Environmental protection & conservation
- 4) Entrepreneurship, income generating activities
- 5) Livestock improvement & beekeeping
- 6) Water & sanitation
- 7) Community-based Primary Health Care & HIV/AIDS awareness & prevention
- 8) Education (formal & informal)
- 9) Child welfare (lobbying, protection & advocacy - particularly for girl child rights, including FGM & other issues)
- 10) Community capacity building
- 11) Gender sensitization

BACKGROUND & LOCATION

Musul Beekeepers & Environmental Conservation Group (MBEKEC) is based at the Musul Group Ranch, Ilpolei Location, in the western area of Mukogodo Division, Laikipia District, Rift Valley Province, Kenya.

Situated in a hilly area with good rock catchment in what is otherwise a harsh semi-arid environment, Musul Group Ranch is 7,000 acres in size, with 2,000 acres of this land set aside & managed by the local community as a conservation area for wildlife.

The Group Ranch has a human population of approximately 450 indigenous pastoralists (plus children), & their livestock (mostly cattle, goats, sheep & some camels), & is legally owned by the indigenous community with full title deeds. Musul Group Ranch is bordered by three other community-run group ranches – Ilpolei to the south, Momonyot to the east, & Kijabe to the north. Musul is bordered in the west by 2 small-scale ranches run by local community people as non-conservation areas. Kijabe Group Ranch also operates as a conservation area & eco-lodge.

ACTIVITIES

MBEKEC is currently involved with four main activities:

- 1) Beekeeping
- 2) Environmental conservation
- 3) Livestock rearing
- 4) Production & implementation of MBEKEC's 2006-2012 Strategic Plan to ensure long-term sustainability of all current & future planned activities
- 5) Project Development

BEEKEEPING

ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR –

- (50 beekeepers working with a total of 200 traditional hives, producing a total annual yield of approximately 1 ton of unrefined honey between them. (2 honey seasons of 500kg each).

CHALLENGES

- Previously unreliable market
- Traditional hives limit quantity of honey it is possible to produce
- currently poor harvesting techniques lead to below-standard quality of honey which may be difficult to sell or may fail to get a good price
- MBEKEC can meet minimum yield required for marketing but it would be more cost effective to produce larger yields. Larger yields of 5 to 7 tons may make it possible to sell & market with 'locally-produced' label

- Poor roads & available transport can cause difficulties getting honey to market
- predation of honey & damage to hives caused by honey badgers & elephants
- bees are migratory, so need to maintain enough honey to feed & retain them during periods of drought & out of honey-producing season
- adverse effect of drought & disease (epidemics) on the health & condition of bees, their available pasture, & quality & quantity of honey produced

WAY FORWARD

- Identify & access reliable & sustainable market
- try & find ways of improving (or overcoming) transport & distribution difficulties
- access suitable training & capacity building for improved honey production. (methods & techniques to help improve quality & quantity of honey produced & thereby raising household income levels
- identify and access funding for purchase of modern bee hives
- Need to address question of quality control issues & how to make full use of all beekeeping products
- access advice, funding & assistance on monitoring & how to resolve conflict between beekeeping & local wildlife
- to study & search for source/cause of diseases
- to create/improve water sources eg dams & rock catchment areas
- identify species of bees using hives & make a study of their food preferences & habits so that beekeeping & environmental management techniques can maximize local resources for benefit of bees & honey production
- to implement management methods that will help to minimize effects of diseases & drought
- to improve pasture, abundance & diversity of preferred food plants for bees & improved production of honey

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR –

- As part of a community-led initiative 2,000 acres of Musul Group Ranch has been set aside as a dedicated conservation area with no livestock grazing, resulting in improvement of natural environment with consequent retention & increase in the presence of local wildlife.
- **Musul Group Ranch** is now acting as an 'oasis/refuge' for a wide range of bio-diversity (birds, plants & mammals (including some rare & important mammal species such as Grevy's Zebra) - all of which has the potential to act as an attraction for tourists & assist with the development of future eco-tourism & associated income generating activities.

- Noticeable improvement in available pasture for livestock

CHALLENGES

- Lack of information regarding full species biodiversity which would assist with better understanding of how to conserve & manage local environment for co-existence of wildlife & eco-tourism
- Drought & lack of sufficient reliable local water sources.
- Pressure on conservation area from illegal grazing by livestock from neighbouring non-conservation run ranches
- Threat of land degradation through overgrazing by livestock, destruction of trees for charcoal, fuel, building materials, fencing, etc – all of which lead to adverse soil erosion such as occurs in other parts of the Division.
- Loss of habitat & food plants suitable for sustainable honey production
- Loss of suitable habitat for humans, livestock & wildlife
- Actual & potential future loss of traditional & cultural knowledge about environmental issues, particularly those concerning human/wildlife interaction (beneficial or otherwise) & traditional methods of sustainable natural resource management

WAY FORWARD

- Need to establish a full baseline inventory with appropriate training, capacity building & collaborative monitoring and surveying techniques for local community members in order to provide them with a fuller understanding of how to appropriately & sustainably conserve & manage the area for humans, wildlife, livestock & proposed introduction of eco-tourism.
- Need to have a full environmental impact assessment carried out to assess suitability for construction of eco-lodge & introduction of other eco-tourism facilities
- Need for training & capacity building for local guides & others who will be employed/involved in every aspect of provision of eco-tourist facilities
- Create/improve water sources eg dams & rock catchment areas
- Continue using, & to raise additional awareness, of the value of traditional & cultural knowledge with regard to the sustainable use of natural environment & local resources & to ensure that this indigenous knowledge is successfully passed on for the benefit of future generations
- to limit threat of land degradation caused by overgrazing by livestock; destruction of trees for charcoal, fuel, building materials, fencing – all of which lead to adverse soil erosion such as experienced in other parts of the Division

- to improve pasture, abundance & diversity of preferred food plants for bees and production of honey
- enhance & maintain community capacity for conservation through creation of environmental awareness, resource identification, utilization & management
- to improve awareness & training in use of alternative forms of energy, eg solar, & more fuel-efficient stoves & fuel-less cookers such as the Kakamega jiko & cooking/food warming basket
- [MBEKEC's 2006-2012 Strategic Plan](#) will prepare conservation intervention involving the development of the community-based management plan for the environment through integration of modern & traditional management methods by the local people who directly depend on it, so that they can benefit from this sustainably.
- to identify suitable & willing donors, trainers & capacity-builders who can assist [MBEKEC](#) with the successful & sustainable implementation of its aims & objectives

LIVESTOCK REARING

ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR –

- Improved grazing & pasture management
- reduction in number of livestock towards right sizing to carrying capacity
- improved quality & health of livestock

CHALLENGES

- prolonged dry seasons due to lack of rain
- disease outbreaks
- loss of suitable pasture due to erosion from overstocking & overgrazing

WAY FORWARD

- raise awareness in the use of new techniques in disease prevention
- to create/improve water sources eg dams & rock catchment areas
- implement sound stocking levels & grazing management & improve & extend available available pasture

NB Challenges to livestock rearing for the Ildigiri Laikipiak Maasai pastoralists are many. These, and proposed *Ways Forward*, are more fully outlined in [MBEKEC's 2006-2012 Strategic Plan](#).

WILDLIFE & BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Wildlife & Biodiversity Conservation is a project to boost the already existing community initiatives to protect/conservate both flora and fauna. This project will help strengthen the effort put in place by the organization/community and create synergy among the various initiatives.

The project will involve establishment of an eco-lodge and a cultural center in promotion of bead and embroidery work. The land is currently playing host to many wild animals and game birds.

[MBEKEC](#) will enhance wild life and biodiversity conservation through development of income generating enterprise projects

and capacity building for the local community to sustainably manage continued conservation and emanating enterprise for the budget of the entire community.

ECO-LODGE

The lodge shall be built using entirely low-impact local materials. There shall be plentiful activities and an amazing amount of exploring can be done. The forest within the conservation area is full of butterflies, birds and plants, and local natural experts on the local flora and fauna will be able to introduce people to the medicinal properties of the plants. The bird life is also plentiful and the local Ildigiri Laikipiak Maasai guides have keen eyes and a real knowledge of them. The lodge will be established and maintained to make sure that tourists/visitors will find it comfortable & memorable. Guests will enjoy a memorable experience in actual traditional setting where guests will enjoy the local Ildigiri Laikipiak Maasai culture – social and economic life, family rites of passage and material culture.

Further information

- 1) *The eco-lodge will also have a multi-purpose facility which can be used for environmental education, monitoring, research, classroom for visiting school groups, seminars, office, library and cultural archive, etc.*
- 2) *In addition to the eco-lodge, there will also be provision of home-stay facilities with local families, plus community volunteer & eco-adventure style holidays*
- 3) *Enhanced environmental conservation and management for benefit and attraction of wildlife*
- 4) *Capacity-building, training of local community in project development, management, business skills, sales & marketing, proposal-writing, etc*
- 5) *Training & capacity building in environmental monitoring & surveying techniques, sustainable environmental conservation & management of natural resources, management of eco-tourists and tourist facility and training as local wildlife and cultural guides*

CULTURAL APPRECIATION & CONSERVATION

Local community members will be trained & equipped to record, document and conserve indigenous traditional local Ildigiri Laikipiak culture - not just as an archive, but to ensure its continued use for future generations, eg local language, aural narrative, music, traditional use of medicinal plants, traditional arts and crafts, pastoralist life-style

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT SO FAR

(Following contacts and links provided by Elizabeth Riddiford, Project Facilitator, UK)

-Initiated link and introductory meetings and discussions between **MBEKEC** and various departments at **National Museums of**

Kenya (Mammalogy, Education, Ethnography, Invertebrate) & **Nature Kenya** who may also be able to advise or assist with regard to advice and potential future assistance with regard to training, capacity building and collaborative support in relation to environmental conservation, monitoring, management & education; HIV/AIDS and other health care education and awareness issues; recording and conservation of local traditions and culture

- Initiated introductory meetings and discussions with **The African Propoor Tourism Development Centre** in Nairobi who are now advising **MBEKEC** on way forward, promotion and marketing of proposed eco-tourism, cultural manyatta and sale of curios, jewellery and honey

- Initiated introductory meeting and discussion with **Honeycare Africa** about production, sale and marketing of honey, including training possibilities and sale of modern bee hives & other equipment

- Initiated link and introductory meeting with **UNDP Small Grants Programme** with regard to advice and potential future assistance with funding, capacity building, etc

- In process of contacting other potential donors & agencies who may be able to assist in some way

- Advice, contact support also being provided by Laikipia Wildlife Forum (**LWF**), African Wildlife Foundation (**AWF**) and **Naibunga Conservancy Trust**

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