

PROJECTS: KENYA

COMMUNITIES MAP THEIR ENVIRONMENT TO FIND NEW WAYS OF SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE USE IN THARAKA, KENYA



Project

The Kathita River in Central Kenya has its source in the area of Mount Kenya and provides vital water to the surrounding areas. For the local communities the river has not only great ecological significance, it also plays an important role in their culture. Due to exploitation of forests in the area of the Kathita river basin, the ecosystem has changed drastically – the forests are no longer there to save water and protect the soils from erosion. The local communities and their traditional way of life are threatened by these effects.

Biovision supports the Kenyan Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE) to find new ways for local groups to use their resources sustainably by reviving their traditional ecological knowledge. The regeneration of degraded forests in the area of the Kathita river basin and the protection of culturally significant locations were designated as priority activities by the groups.

In a workshop, 8 village communities in the Tharaka district are developing a kind of 'eco-cultural map' with pens and paper. The map visualises the communities' knowledge of cultural materials and traditional rules governing use of resources. Elders get the opportunity to document their knowledge of the past. Recording the present encompasses all generations and develops a collective impression of the future and how conflicts arising around resources can be resolved by reviving traditional rules of use.

Relevance

The way of life of traditional communities has undergone great change through globalisation and increasingly, local knowledge is losing significance. Local communities have, over decades, established rich cultural knowledge of how to use the natural resources of their area to support their way of life. Traditional communities' rules of use are overwhelmingly adapted to local conditions and they permit local groups to use their resources sustainably. Nowadays many areas are under the control of local authorities that do not understand or recognise this knowledge. This leads to the difficult situation where local groups are greatly affected by changes in their environment but are not directly included in working out possible solutions. Here community mapping steps in, whereby local groups document their traditional rules of resource use to share with local decision makers in order to seek solutions together.

Development Goal

Demonstrate to village communities new ways of presenting and documenting their traditional ecological knowledge. The maps generated in the community work shall be used in dialogue with local authorities to find new ways of sustainable resource use.

Project number:
BV EH-09

Project start date:
1st June 2011

Project end date:
31st December 2011

Budget for 2011:
5'000 USD

Project coordinator:
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Program responsibility:
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Local village communities visualise ecological and cultural resources of their area on an 'eco-cultural map'. In this way they can independently seek new ways of using their resources sustainably.



The method of community mapping depicts traditional rules of use, making this information available also to representatives of the local authorities.

Beneficiaries

The mapping workshop offers 8 communities in the Tharaka district a platform for knowledge and material exchange regarding natural resource use. The people learn how they can revive their traditional knowledge in order to use the natural resources of their area in a sustainable way.

Objectives

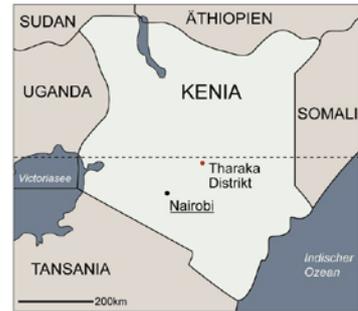
- Execution of a **workshop** with 8 local communities on the ecological-cultural mapping method.
- **Mapping** of a selected area of the Kathita river area by local village communities in order to vocalise existing conflicts of use and find possible solutions
- Support village communities to use plan sustainable resource use by **reviving traditional rules and forms of use**.

Partner organisation

Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE); www.icekenya.org,
[Youtube-Video von ICE: "Reviving Our Culture, Mapping Our Future"](#)

Sustainability

Sustainability calls for a holistic vision: healthy people, animals and plants in a healthy environment. Every project supported by Biovision effects considerable improvements in at least one of the four health areas. The key to effectively replicating the success of the project is the availability of specific information on the methods applied and the results achieved. With this approach and its ‚helix of effects‘, living conditions are improved and the poverty of the people is gradually overcome while the environment is protected.



The Tharaka District lies in the source area of the Kathita river, which provided water for the surrounding areas.



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