

Project Update: July to August 2012

Background

Despite Kenya being a signatory to international treaties on the conservation of sea turtles and having national laws protecting marine turtles, turtles are still being extensively exploited and mangroves are destroyed. The project aim is to enhance the conservation of sea turtles and mangroves by promoting sustainable utilization of marine resources through enhanced community participation. The project will promote and encourage sustainable fishing practices to reduce the pressures of overfishing and illegal fishing that threaten sea turtles. To enhance mangrove conservation, the project will initiate the establishment of woodlots on community farms so as to reduce pressure on mangroves.

Five of the world's seven species of marine turtle are found in Kenyan waters: the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), olive ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), and loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*). Under the national laws and policies, sea turtles are recognised as flagship species for environmental conservation as all threats to sea turtles encompass the general threats to our marine environment. It is from this perspective that national and international laws were put to protect the sea turtles.

Despite all these national laws and policies, regional agreements and international conventions, sea turtles are still under threats.

Marine environmental degradation, destruction of mangroves by the community and deliberate hunting of sea turtles in the entire Coastal area still occurs today. Sea turtles play a vital role in the ecology of the complex marine and coastal ecosystems they inhabit and upon which human populations depend. It is apparent that a higher percentage of the numerous threats facing sea turtles are human caused. Although it is an uphill task to completely eliminate destructive human behavior, this can be changed through promotion of sustainable resource utilization, community empowerment and targeted education and campaigns and enhanced stakeholder and community participation.

Implemented activities

Enhancing Sea turtle conservation

The project has saved seventeen (17) turtles that were caught by fishermen. Two of these turtles were suffering from eye tumors and were taken to Watamu Turtle Watch Rehabilitation Centre. Beach patrols have been conducted in landing sites for nests identification. Throughout the month of August, three turtle nests were identified and reported. The project staff together with the community patrolman translocated one nest that was under threat from the local community to a safe and monitored location. A total of 120 eggs were safely moved to the new location which has been marked for easy of monitoring till the day of hatching.



Left: Turtle nest identified and translocated. Right: Project Coordinator releasing a green turtle

The project is currently seeing the ever anticipated cooperation from the local fishermen in the area. Though visiting fishermen have been hesitant in releasing valuable information related to sea turtle by-catch, most of those who have been working with the project since 2010 have come to understand the need for conserving the endangered species. Cooperation with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) has also increased the success that is currently noticed under this component. KWS has managed to educate the local community about the Kenya wildlife policy especially the policy that guides the protection and conservation of marine life. KWS has clearly shown the consequences of whoever is caught with a live, dead or any part of a protected animal/wildlife, that he or she is risking a penalty of jail. This has played a great role as every community member has been a watchdog of the other and whoever is seen or caught with such an offence is report to the project staff.

Though the issue of alternative livelihood is really an area to focus putting in mind the level of poverty in the community, the project staff have been creating awareness and mobilizing the community to form and register groups so that they can apply for government funding for income generating activities and reduce pressure on the fragile ecosystem. This has yielded much of success and upto date, over 10 community groups have been formed and legally registered.



WTW Manager picking a sick turtle to the rehabilitation centre

The project has built a good partnership with Watamu Turtle Watch (WTW) which has been receiving injured or sick turtles from our project for further attention. Since WTW has a well established rehabilitation centre, it has been recognized national and regionally for turtle conservation. The project looks and working with WTW in capacity building of the local fishermen for sustainability through linking them with WTW.

Woodlots establishment and Mangrove planting

To build the capacity of the local community, a nursery establishment and on-farm tree planting trainings were conducted where twenty five members from the five beneficiary groups attended. The training increased the knowledge and skills of 25 TOTs on tree nursery establishment and management.

The onfarm training focused on selection of a good site for planting different seedling depending on the type of soil, size and health of seedlings to be planted, tree spacing and land preparation. The trainer (Kenya Forest Service) showed the participants the best community woodlots management system for successful silviculture. Participants were very happy for this training and they were advised to go and train the rest of the members of their respective groups.

The tree nursery establishment and management training was based on citing seedbed and nursery, Seed collection and sorting, Seedbeds preparation & sowing Protection/of seedbeds, Seedling tendering, pest and disease control, pruning, watering, Seedling transplanting, Site preparation (staking, pegging, pitting, Hardening and transplanting).



Community members participate during a tree planting training

Majority of the community wanted to go ahead and planting the seedlings already on their farms but they were advised that the rains are not yet predictable since even other crops in the farms are already drying up so they should not do the planting. Climate change is a really challenge in this component as rainfall patterns have really changed and the rainfall experience is always not sufficient to sustain woodlots establishment.



Tree nursery establishment training by a Forest Officer

The project has received support from Community development Trust Fund (CDTF) to help the community construct water pans for tree nursery establishment and domestic use since the area has no running taps or wells.

Community Capacity Building in Natural Resource Management

Following the Forestry policy 2005, the law has spelt out the role of the community in participatory forest management. This is when the community come together to form village committees and then join together to form and register Community Forest Associations (CFA) that are recognized and given support by the government. To foster this aspect, the project carried awareness activities in all of the five villages and mobilized the community to form village committees. Together with the local forester, the project organized for election where representatives of the five committees were democratically elected and will be trained in mangrove resources and management. These five committees will later be facilitated to join and form the CFA for the mangrove ecosystem. Later, the CFA will be trained in best practices and management skills of the forested area. Extra support of this activity was made available by CDTF funding.



Community member's lineup to elect village forest committee leaders

Conservation education, awareness and advocacy

Four community barazas have been held and community sensitized about the project, process of formation of a community forest association (CFA) and the forest policy 2005, illegal fishing and threats facing sea turtles and the wildlife policy.



Forest Officer during community awareness meetings

During these awareness meetings, the local community were also sensitized on HIV-Aids as global cross-cutting issues. This was done with input by community trained health officers. In every meeting held, the officer was given a chance to speak and educate the community about the Aids pandemic on how it has affected current and future generations. The community were told to abscond from behaviours that would ruin their lives families and also affect efforts of environmental conservation.



A community health worker talking to primary school students

Four school visits were conducted where children were sensitized on the importance of environmental conservation, HIV-Aids and the implemented project benefits to schools.

Other Trainings

Beekeeping

A two days training was conducted where beneficiary groups were equipped with skills and techniques for an effective beekeeping practice. Among the areas covered included:

- Legislation requirements of beekeeping and knowledge of the most serious bee diseases and pests affecting honey bees.
- Hive component parts, the costs of buying and or making their own hives, how to assemble the equipment and the importance of the 'bee space'.
- Identification of where to safely locate the bee hives and protect them from the weather
- Identify of the various types (castes) of bee within a colony and, their functions within the bee hive, how a colony develops and how bees forage in the field.
- Bee handling, monitoring and routine hive checks.
- Honey harvesting equipments.
- Bee products, how they are harvested and marketed and the cost benefits of some of the products.



Beekeeping Training done by Pwani University

Goat farming and Poultry

The community was trained on Indigenous Chickens and Goat Rearing for two days. The training sensitized the community on drought coping mechanisms such as destocking, pasture and water management and alternative livelihood (Indigenous poultry and goat rearing). Goat rearing and poultry as a livelihood strategy. Areas covered included:

- Sustainable Indigenous poultry Husbandry
- Innovative Poultry products and marketing
- Introduction to Meat and Dairy Goats, Dairy Husbandry
- Goat breeding Management
- housing
- Routine and disease management practices

The main objectives of this trainings was to unveil to the community the alternative sources of livelihood that the community could embrace and benefit at the same time reduce pressure on the marine resources.



Goat rearing and poultry training by Pwani University