

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ONDIRI, NYONGARA AND RUNGIRI WATER RESOURCE USERS ASSOCIATION
(ONRU-WRUA)

Community Environment Facility Launched With Call for Proposals.

On Monday the 24th of January, 2011, the Community Environment Facility (CEF) of the Development Trust Fund

financing agreement between the Government of Kenya (GOK) and the European Union (EU), and gazette under legal Notice N. 330 dated 26th March, 1996. This was repeated through Legal Notice Number 172, dated 20th September 2007, thus allowing the CDTF to be, multi-donor funded.



Participants from Community Based Organizations attending the CDTF launch

(CDTF) 2011 was launched at a Nairobi Hotel. The CDTF was established in 1996 through a

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Since 1996, the CDTF, as part of the Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, has over the years implemented some 800 community-based environmental and socio-economic projects in rural and peri-urban areas in Kenya. Funding of the projects has been provided by the EU and the Government of Denmark through the Danish International Development Cooperation (DANIDA). Overall the Community-based environmental projects contribute to the Government of Kenya's

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decentralized agenda, especially improved livelihood systems and conservation of community natural resources.

In 1998-2001, 235 projects were funded followed by 273 projects in 2001 to December 2006. From September 2000 to June 2001,



Mr. Bernard Rey, the EU delegation to Kenya Head of Operations at the launch

the Fund funded 18 projects which were part of the Drought Emergency Programme. The Biodiversity Conservation Programme (BCP) kicked off in September 2000 and lasted until March 2006 with a total of 37 projects receiving funding. From 2007-2010, 179 projects were funded with an additional 61 projects funded by DANIDA and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in the Environmental Programme Support (EPS).

The Community Development Phase that was launched is the Fourth Phase (CDP4) and its duration is from October 2010-2014. The overall of the CEF objective is to support community projects aimed at poverty reduction through improved livelihood systems and the conservation of community

natural resources and initiatives for enhanced environmental management and governance.

Kenya's natural resources fuel her economy and if wisely used will continue to sustain its growth on sustainable pathways. Environmentally critical areas also provide important goods and services to adjacent communities and beneficiaries further afield. Linkages between these environmentally important areas and downstream communities form a network of interactions. These interactions continue to benefit or harm both adjacent and downstream communities depending on how they are managed. Due to human use pressures, these interactions have been disrupted negatively affecting the quality and the productivity of such environmentally important areas in terms of environmental goods and services. Climate change may potentially alter interactions between and across ecosystems. Climate change coupled with pressure resulting from increased demands for environmental goods

and services, will affect the ability of critical ecosystems to continue supporting livelihoods for local communities. Building ecosystems' resilience from climate change and providing alternative livelihood and energy sources to communities is urgent. Capacity building and empowerment of communities will be critical in achieving the twin goals of poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. The CEF call for proposals is targeted at enhancing productivity of environmentally critical areas so as to achieve poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. Kenya's diverse ecosystems are targeted as what happens in one part of an ecosystem, has implications on that particular ecosystem, as well on adjacent ecosystems. See annex 5 for a description on

the ecosystem approach adopted for the CEF call for proposals.

Under the CEF sub-component, the Community Development Trust Fund (CDTF) will assist communities to design suitable projects, provide training and guidance in project management and governance, and engage with governmental, non-state-actors and quasi government institutions in the implementation of environmental initiatives in environmentally important areas.

The categories of projects to be considered under this call for proposals are:

Lot 1: Projects proposed to be implemented in Kenya's five main water towers of **Aberdares Range, Cherangani Hills, Mau Forest Complex, Mt. Elgon, and Mt. Kenya.** This is because of their critical contribution to the Kenyan economy in hydropower production, ecological sustenance for wildlife, agricultural production, tourism and biodiversity conservation¹. Support to Lot 1 projects will amount to 40% of the CEF investment.

Lot 2: Projects proposed for support in **any other important environmental ecosystems in Kenya** such as in forests, swamps, lakes, coastal, marine, important wildlife areas, river basins and dry-lands. Support to Lot 2 projects will amount to 60% of the CEF investment. Recognizing the need to enhance resilience of ecosystems and communities to the adverse impacts of climate change, take off pressure on forested ecosystems from energy requirements and address gender aspects, this Call for Proposals accords priority to projects proposed in the priority areas of 1) Climate change adaptation and mitigation, and 2) Renewable Energy.

Broadly, the priority issues for both Lot 1 and Lot 2 include, but not limited to: conservation of threatened ecosystems; soil and water conservation; renewable energy conservation; water, sanitation and pollution; nature-based enterprises; eco-agricultural

initiatives, climate change adaptation and mitigation, alternative technology adoption; and enhanced natural resource management.

The Ondiri Swamp falls in these categories and the Ondiri, Nyongara and Rungiri Water Resource Users Association (ONRU-WRUA) is developing a proposal to be presented to the CDTF for a three-year project for management and conservation of the Swamp.



**The Acting Director General of NEMA,
Dr. Ayub Macharia.**

The deadline for submitting concept applications is 7th March while that for submitting complete proposals is 22nd August 2011.

While addressing the participants during the launch, the CEF manager, Mr. Joseph Ruhiu, said that proposals that address climate change, renewable energy and gender mainstreaming would add additional points. Speaking during the same occasion, the Director of Rural Planning in the Ministry of Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, Mr Joseph Mukui, said that the second component of the CDF, known as the Community Development Initiative, will be launched in April 2011. This will address six

key areas which are: Health; Education; Water and Sanitation; Economic Infrastructure; Livestock and Animal Health; and, Agriculture.

The EU was represented by the Head of operations, EU delegation to the Republic of Kenya, Mr Bernard Rey. Mr Rey said that the support provided to CDTF had to date benefited an estimated 670,000 people. "This new programme aims at supporting poverty alleviation in Kenya through empowering communities to initiate and implement community-based socio-economic infrastructure and environment projects," he added.



Pollution at the mouth of the Nyongara River that flows from Ondiri.

He told the audience that in its 15 years of implementing the CDTF, the EU had learnt a number of lessons that would guide it in the present phase. Among these lessons is that collaboration, synergy and complementarities between and across many partners is required to have a successful operation-not only to ensure empowerment of communities but also to provide avenues for co-financing of the community-based projects.. "There should be a link between these projects and plans and support from devolved Administration under the new Constitution," he concluded.

Ondiri Wetland Fraternity Marks World Wetlands Day

The last three months have been marked by a severe drought which has seen limited conservation activity in the Ondiri Swamp. The major activity at the



Ondiri Wetland Community during the WWD celebrations.

wetland was the marking of the World Wetlands Day which is celebrated on 2nd February each year throughout the world. In Kenya, the national ceremony marking the WWD was held at the Lake Nakuru National Park. Lake Nakuru, famous throughout the world for its millions of flamingoes, was the first wetland to be designated as a Ramsar site. This followed the ratification of the Convention on Wetlands Wise Use (Ramsar, 1971). This is the oldest Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) and it was signed in the Iranian city of Ramsar along the shores of the Caspian Sea. The Convention provides the framework for both national and international cooperation for the wise use of wetlands and their resources. The newly promulgated Constitution of Kenya demands that all laws, treaties, protocols and conventions to which Kenya is party to be implemented. Kenya became a party to the Ramsar Convention in 1990, designating Lake Nakuru as the first Ramsar site - a wetland of international importance.

The others are Lakes Naivasha, Baringo, Bogoria and Elmenteita. All these have been designated wetlands of international importance, mostly because of their rich avian biodiversity, as exemplified by the flamingoes of L. Nakuru, famed the world over as one of the biggest bird spectacles on earth and a major tourist attraction. The lake is visited by over 300,000 visitors per year, bringing in over USD24 million per annum. Lake Naivasha, on the other hand, supports one of the world's largest horticultural industries with large-scale flower farms that employ over 30,000 people, most of them women, yielding net returns of USD 63 million per year.



Holding hands together in planting bamboo shoots.

encroachment, and resolving conflicts between resource users. It is in this spirit that we, the Ondiri Wetland Community, decided to mark the WWD as part of awareness creation on the importance and benefits of our wetlands. Since all of us could not make it to the national celebrations, we decided to have a local celebration for the Ondiri Wetland Community on the banks of the Swamp. We started our celebration at about 10.00am Kenyan time and it went on for



Catherine Cross of the IUCN, addresses the workshop

However, the race to sustainable wetland management has not been rosy and Kenyan wetlands face a number of threats due to human population pressure and development activities. They have been targeted for conversion to agriculture and settlement over the past five decades or so, partly due to inadequate recognition of their crucial functions and values.

But, all these notwithstanding, Kenya, as a signatory to the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, is obligated to ensure sustainable management of its wetland resources. This includes addressing wetland degradation and



A healthy bamboo stand in the swamp. More will be planted when rains fall.

about three hours. During the occasion, we planted several trees and a number of bamboo shoots. However, we planted a few because of the drought that is currently ravaging the country. Our members came out in force to mark this important day and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Both young and old gathered together and almost everyone present planted at least one tree. During the national celebration, the Minister for Environment and Mineral Resources assured Kenyans that the country will soon have a wetlands policy. To date, this policy is lacking and wetlands conservation has been conducted on a more or less *ad hoc* basis. In the build-up to the WWD, a workshop was held at the National Museums of Kenya's Louis Leakey Memorial Hall. Some members of the Ondiri Wetland Community attended the workshop which was well attended by the country's conservation fraternity. Present were the Director-General of the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), and representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources, the national museums, Birdlife International, The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Wetlands International, Kenya Forest Service, Nature Kenya, Kenya Wildlife Service, universities and conservation bodies. The participants were assured that plans to publish a Kenya Wetlands Atlas were at an advanced stage and the same would be ready by June this year. Many decried the lack of a national wetlands policy but the NEMA Director-General allayed these fears and said that plans were also afoot to come up with one. The Director for Policy in the Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources, Mr. Paul Kere, added that his ministry has established a national task force to carry out a nationwide inventory and mapping of Kenyan wetlands with the ultimate aim of enhancing their management. Its overall objective is to develop the wetlands atlas for the country.

The *Mugumo* Tree that is also home to Ondiri birds

Bang in the middle of Kikuyu Town, along the town's main street, stands a lone fig tree. In the Kikuyu language, which is spoken by the majority of the



Town's landmark – the *Mugumo* tree that stands in Kikuyu Town.

residents and which also gives the town its name, the tree is called *Mugumo*. The botanical name for the tree is *Ficus thonningii*. Among the Kikuyu, the *Mugumo* tree is sacred and was used as a venue for sacrifice to the God of the Kikuyu, known as *Ngai*, to appease him during times of hardship. These included prolonged drought as is currently being experienced in the entire country. During calamities such as famine and disease epidemics, elders of the Kikuyu ethnic group would gather around the tree and give



Egrets and herons are the most abundant birds that nest in the tree.

sacrifice to *Ngai*. Several theories have evolved about this indigenous tree.

Some locals believe that going around this tree seven times would automatically change one's sex. But no one has ever experienced this transformation. Others believe spirits of the ancestors and the living dead hover around this tree. In fact some have claimed to have heard and recognized voices of departed relatives.

A *Mugumo* tree in the Aberdares Forest was used by the Kenyan *Mau Mau* (freedom fighters) movement as a mailbox to safely exchange messages during their days of the liberation struggle. The same tree was declared a national monument in Kenya last year.



The editorial team working on *The Bog*.

Located inside the Aberdares National Park, the Kenya Wildlife Service has now created a path towards the tree so that visitors, both locals and from overseas, can reach the location and pay tribute at the site to the ingenuity developed by the Kenyan freedom

fighters who, prior to independence, took on the might of the British colonial administration in their struggle for independence.

Visitors presently need to walk a distance to the location with a guide, but a motor-able track is due to be opened soon to allow greater access to the site.

All in all, the tree holds significant memories. Memories acquired by a long life span that has outlived many ancestors. The tree, having survived centuries, makes it the only existing tomb for the ancient heroes of this land. Maybe their spirits too are hovering around it giving the tree its sacred importance and hence its special cultural importance.

The *Mugumo* in Kikuyu town is one of the very few that survive in the urban and peri-urban areas where most trees have been removed to give way to buildings. Massive deforestation that has taken place in Kenya over the last two decades has seen the cutting down of thousands of the trees. But the Kikuyu tree has a special significance and is inextricably intertwined with the Ondiri Swamp. This is so because hundreds of birds that breed and forage in the swamp have made the tree their second home.

Every evening, between 5 and 7 pm Kenyan time, these birds fly from the swamp and surrounding areas and congregate atop the tree where they spend the night. It is a ritual that is repeated with clockwork precision. Among the birds that nest here are herons, sacred ibises and egrets. The occasional marabou stork has also been sighted.

In addition to this spectacle that Naftali has observed, the tree is also said to have its fare share of strange happenings. In the year 2000, a tree cutter, who was contracted by the Kikuyu Town Council to fell the massive tree, slipped and fell into a cavity in the tree that housed a swarm of bees. His head got stuck in the cavity and he was stung to death by the angry bees. In yet another incident, another tree cutter contracted to fell the same tree cut off one branch and could not continue for unexplained reasons. Upon reaching home, he fell sick and was dead within a month from a mysterious ailment. Those who witnessed these two events claim that this is what always befalls anybody who tries to cut this sacred tree. But despite these facts, unconfirmed reports say that the Council plans to have the tree felled to make way for a road that cuts through the town. If this is true, the Ondiri Wetland Community will launch a campaign to have the tree left intact so that the birds that nest there are not robbed of such an important refuge.

Some locals believe that going around this tree seven times would automatically change one's sex.



One of the CEF Managers at the CDTF workshop.



The panel at the World Wetlands Day workshop at the National Museums of Kenya.

FOWCON has set up a website (www.fowcon.org) that will be highlighting the activities of the organisation from time to time. *The Bog* is supported by Rufford Small Grants Foundation

