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Charcoal production and deforestation

According to a report by UNDP and Kenya Forest Service, deforestation dispossessed the Kenyan economy off 6.6 and 5.8 billion shillings in 2009 and 2010 respectively, this is compared to the 1.3 billion shillings per year injected by forestry and logging. This is mainly as a result of unregulated charcoal production, exploitation of indigenous species and human settlement among other multiple complex drivers. Forests are natural carbon sinks and rapid deforestation releases the stored carbon into the atmosphere contributing to global warming.

Our National forest cover is estimated at 7.14%, while Kitui county and Tharaka Nithi county has 7.08% and 19.40% respectively, this is according to a report by Kenya Water Towers agency in 2013. The two counties are major charcoal production zones in the country. Unregulated and unsustainable charcoal production has continually reduced the tree cover in the two counties. Reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation is a strategy that mitigates Climate Change, however communities in the two ASAL counties depend on

charcoal production and forest resources for their livelihood development and sustenance. They will require alternative sources of livelihoods to increase their resilience to climate change impacts caused by deforestation. Kenya's Forest Act 2009, legal notice No. 186, of charcoal rules and regulations puts in place measures to promote sustainable charcoal production in Kenya.

SUSTAINABLE CHARCOAL PRODUCTION PROJECT

Green Africa Foundation under ACT! Changieni Rasili Mali (CRM) facility that is supported by UKaid and Embassy of Sweden has been implementing the project on sustainable charcoal production in Kitui and Tharaka Nithi Counties. This two year project is enhancing environmental sustainability and Climate Change resilience through capacity building and policy advocacy in the two counties.

The objectives are:

- To strengthen communities capacities to respond to climate change impacts through capacity building and advocacy initiatives in Kitui and Tharaka Nithi Counties in Kenya.
- To promote the establishment of a National charcoal legal framework on the management of Charcoal by 2014.

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE CHARCOAL PRODUCTION IN KITUI AND THARAKA NITHI COUNTIES



“Modern charcoal production technology guarantees high quality charcoal.”

Insert: A charcoal kiln constructed by Green Africa Foundation at KFS zonal office at Marimanti, Tharaka.

In the pursuit of sustainable charcoal production, multi-stakeholder cooperation is paramount to ensure gradual transitioning from the current unsustainable practices. We recognize their crucial role in implementing and enforcement of the Forest Act 2009, Charcoal rules and regulations.

In the months of January to March 2014, we engaged stakeholders in the charcoal industry in Kitui and Tharaka

Counties. They included charcoal producers, sellers/marketers and transporters, County decision makers, Kenya Forest Service officers, Administration police, area chiefs/ elders and church leaders. The stakeholders met in the county informative meetings, consultative workshops and quarterly meetings where they critically discussed

charcoal production in their respective counties. Interestingly, all the stakeholders identified with the impacts of deforestation on natural resources in their counties. The residing river beds and crop failure from poor performing farms were among their woes as a result of climate change and deforestation.

INFORMATIVE COUNTY FORUMS ON SUSTAINABLE CHARCOAL PRODUCTION

The devolved system of government has with great ease penetrated government service to Kenyan especially those living in rural areas. In its mandate in governing county affairs, it has a crucial role in natural resource conservation and ensuring sustainable development in the counties. It is in cognizance of this that we have been working with the county governments in the two counties to promote implementation and enforcement of the provisions of the charcoal rules and regulations

1. Tharaka Nithi county leaders' forum

In collaboration with the Tharaka Nithi County Government and Kenya Forest Service, We organized a county forum that was graced by various leaders in the county. Hon. Albert Mugambi the County Minister of Environment, Tourism and Water resources officiated the

forum, other leaders in attendance include Ms. Lucy Karimi the County Executive on Environment, Mr. Joseph Wakiaga and Mr. Anthony Mwangi KFS Ecosystem Conservator and zonal coordinator respectively, Mrs. Patricia Wambua NEMA Director Tharaka Nithi County, Njoka Kauni the

chairman of the Njuki Ncheke council of elders, Joseph Njeru the Personal Assistance to Hon. Muthomi Njuki, MP Nithi constituency, Tharaka Nithi chiefs, KFS rangers, KWS warden and CPA representatives.



A section of leaders from Tharaka Nithi County lead by Hon. Mugambi Minister of Environment, Tourism and Natural Resources

Mr. Simiyu and Ms. Jacqueline from Green Africa Foundation presented the organizations baseline survey of charcoal production in Tharaka Nithi County that was conducted in 2012 and the project milestones respectively. The stakeholders were amused by the alarming rate of deforestation and forest degradation in Tharaka Nithi and they mentioned of the high rates of tree felling for charcoal burning and timber, the loggers supply tea factories in the region.

Gladys Gatiba led a discussion where the stakeholders came to terms with the impacts of climate change that were evident in the county. Further, she discussed ways of adapting to these changes and mentioned the need to plant drought resistant crops and fast growing trees. Green Africa Foundation Executive Director, Mr. John Kioli further reemphasized the need for all stakeholders to dutifully carry out their responsibility in order to curb unsustainable charcoal production and unregulated natural resources exploitation. Each stakeholder had an opportunity to critically examine and further discuss their role in the pursuit of sustainable charcoal production as follows;

National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) - Mrs. Patricia Wambua noted that no E.I.A. has been conducted in the County on charcoal production besides it being a requirement for the CPAs. Importantly, it would also provide valuable baseline data for the County Government and KFS to measure their ongoing afforestation efforts. She urged the CPA to consolidate their resources and where necessary seek support to ensure the E.I.A is conducted.

Tharaka Nithi County Government- On behalf of the county government, Hon. Albert Mugambi, the County Minister of Environment, Tourism and Water resources conveyed their commitment in promoting sustainable charcoal production through the activities of his ministry. He attributed deforestation as a key factor that may affect the achievement of vision 2030 in Kenya. According to KFS data, 97,000 bags of charcoal were produced in Tharaka County which is only 60% of the true figure. The rest is lost through illegal charcoal production, sale and transportation. A lot of energy is also lost when traditional charcoal production methods are used. His ministry is determined to ensure natural resources in the county are equitably and sustainably used. In collaboration with KFS, the county government has plans to carry out county reforestation through tree planting initiatives and activities. The county government recognizes enhancing environmental sustainability and mitigating climate change requires multi-sectoral collaboration and has incorporated this in the county Integrated Development Plan.

Kenya Forest Service (KFS) Tharaka Nithi County - We are pleased to work with the designated authority and custodian of the charcoal rules and regulations in Kenya. This has aided smooth coordination with the Charcoal Producer Associations (CPA) and Charcoal Producer Groups (CPGs) members in both counties. In Tharaka Nithi, the office of the ecosystem conservator and the zonal coordinator are the focal points of our engagement. From our monitoring and evaluation exercise, there has been improved rapport between KFS and the CPAs.

The various training and forums we collaborated with KFS has also steered ahead their enforcement and CPA capacity building of the charcoal rules and regulations.



Ranger Yatichi shares his experience in enforcement of the charcoal rules and regulations

During this forum, Mr. Wakiaga and Mr. Mwangi appreciated the foundations inputs and the strengthening of the CPAs in their roles. They informed the stakeholders of the various KFS field stations where CPA and community members can access tree seedlings for free to carry out tree planting activities in their respective areas of residence. Mr. Wakiaga called upon all stakeholders to collaborate in promoting sustainable charcoal production and environmental conservation.

Mr. Anthony made an informative presentation and interpretation of the charcoal rules and regulation as stipulated in the Forest Act 2009.

“When human beings destroy wildlife habitat, we cry out to our God, who does the wild animal call out to?”

Notably, he illustrated the available energy saving technologies for charcoal production and use. This served to reinforce our activities that aim at adoption of energy efficient technologies in charcoal production through our past demonstrative training in May 2014.

Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Tharaka Nithi County - Mr. Mwongeli Julius, informed the stakeholders on KWS’s initiatives that promote nature based enterprises that reduce communities dependence on forest resources. It has trained communities on bee keeping, butterfly farming and ecotourism among other nature based enterprises.

Community leaders- A call from Mr. Njoka the Njuri Ncheke chairman and Mr. Njeru the Personal Assistant to the Hon. Muthomi Njuki persisted on the importance of stakeholders’ participation and collaboration in enforcing the charcoal rules and regulations and promoting natural resource conservation.

By the end of the forum, the stakeholders had come to a consensus on the following:

- Intensive afforestation, sensitization on the forest charcoal rules and regulations and environmental

conservation should be carried out in their various capacities.

- Charcoal producers to form CPGs that would coordinate a manageable number of charcoal producers more effectively, these groups to also engage in alternative sources of livelihood to supplement their produce from charcoal production.
- The County Government to streamline the charcoal industry into county strategic and development plans and also ensure regulations are put in place to compliment KFS and other stakeholders efforts in promoting its sustainability.

2. Kitui County informative forums

We have been working closely with the local administration in Kasala, Kitui County. Joint efforts from KFS and Chief Maundu Mutinda of Kasala location were very instrumental to successfully organize the county informative forum at Kasala chiefs grounds.

The meeting was attended by enthusiastic charcoal producers and representatives from the Administration Police, KWS rangers and chiefs from neighboring locations. Chief Maundu informed the participants that Kasala forest lands have been rapidly degraded by the ongoing charcoal production activities in the area. They have experienced a myriad of challenges arising from illegal production and transportation by community members and cartels respectively. He was appreciative of Green Africa Foundation and KFS initiative in creating awareness and capacity building the charcoal producers on charcoal rules and regulations, environmental management and natural resource conservation.

Kasala charcoal producers have not yet formally registered into a CPA, the informative meeting served to give them a clear guideline on the processes and requirements for CPA formation and their mandate. Through the meeting, we were able to increase the momentum of Kasala CPA formation. Charcoal producers who graced the meeting had an opportunity to concretely discuss a way forward to enable registration. Mr. Kituku, the county CPA chairperson urged the group to seek alternative livelihood activities unlike solely depending on charcoal production. He ardently presented on Mutha CPA activities that have been supporting members’ livelihoods since the county government imposed the ban on charcoal production. The members have engage in merry go rounds, poultry, bee keeping and brick making to support themselves. They do not intend to lay off any of these activities once the the ban is lifted but instead this income will substitute or complement income from charcoal production.

Ultimately, stakeholders present agreed to cooperate in:

- Public awareness creation and community training on sustainable charcoal production
- Pursue alternative livelihoods and reduce their dependence on income from charcoal production, marketing and selling.
- Forming a CPA and CPG as is required under the charcoal rules and regulations.

The chiefs urged KWS, KFS and the Administration police to work together to bring to book illegal charcoal producers, sellers and /

KITUI COUNTY TAKES LEAD IN SUSTAINABLE CHARCOAL PRODUCTION

In July 2013, the County Assembly of Kitui imposed “a complete and total ban on charcoal trade and transportation outside Kitui County until a mechanism is put in place to address issues on controlled production, strong regulations and mitigating measures to this industry”. This was enforced through a special unit that was immediately established for its enforcement. Consequently, the county government through the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Mineral Resource Investments and in collaboration with Green Africa Foundation, line ministries in the county and CPA members begun consultations and eventually formulated the Kitui County Charcoal Policy.

The stakeholders employed the best strategies in the policy that will enhance sustainable charcoal production. This include use of modern technologies of charcoal production and energy saving jikos, support of CPA regeneration plans to boost tree cover in the county, establishment of county environmental committee that shall oversee all activities affecting natural resources including charcoal production in the county. The policy is under discussion in the Kitui County Assembly, upon its enactment, it shall be a best foot forward towards sustainable charcoal production and an achievement to be emulated by other charcoal producing counties.

Ironically, charcoal producers in Kitui County are eager to go back to business once the ban is lifted. For some of them, charcoal production is the main source of livelihood to support their families. Interestingly, they have gradually adopted alternative sources of livelihoods hence reducing their dependence on charcoal burning and transportation. During our quarterly meeting with the industry players in the county, they presented their other income generating activities. This included brick making, poultry, goat keeping, tree seedling production and other business enterprises. Members of Mutha CPA have formed a Sacco that opened a bank account and are already accumulating their savings. They also have “merry go rounds” social net schemes where they offer financial and human resource to needy members.

Mr. Kituku a member and chairperson of Mutha CPA runs a goat, poultry and quill farm, he has also incorporated water harvesting and use of solar energy in the farm. Another member has sunk a borehole whose water he is using to irrigate his farm for subsistence production. Mr. Vaati, a former military soldier used his income earned from charcoal to start a vegetable farm; he also runs a driving training school which supplements his income.

Mrs. Rachel Mwangangi utilized this forum to discuss the Kitui County Charcoal Policy tabled and is being discussed in the County Assembly. Ostensibly, the stakeholders were very eager to give their valuable contributions especially on the enforcement. The current devolved system of government has not incorporated the local administration i.e. the chief and headmen/village elder in the system of governance, however they have been signing the charcoal movement permits as well as assisting in arresting illegal loggers and charcoal burners. Further, the county government committed to work closely with the local administration in enforcement of the Kitui County Charcoal policy.



Tharaka Nithi Charcoal Producers Association members during one of their monthly meetings

“A CPA is a social net for a community, it can also incorporate “merry go rounds” or invest as a group.”

By the end of the workshop, CPA members had renewed momentum to aggressively engage in alternative sources of livelihood but also strategize on their modern and sustainable charcoal production methods they would employ upon lifting of the ban.

Role of the media in sustainable charcoal production

We recognize the media as a very effective and efficient tool to convey information of mass interest. Climate change issues have in past received considerable airplay by the media. However, as we all are aware, the technical language would be incomprehensible to local communities who have little or no education. This also is a challenge to some reporters and journalist, they are not trained climate change media personnel hence their capability to decipher and simplify the very crucial information is compromised. On the other hand, these communities are the most vulnerable to climate change impacts; they also have little or no knowledge or capacity on how to boost their resilience. Access to this kind of simplified information is also a great challenge.

To try overcoming this challenge, we conducted training on media reporters and correspondents from Tharaka Nithi and Kitui County. We impacted them with valuable skills and knowledge that has greatly improved their reporting skill on overall climate change issues and more specifically how charcoal production is increasing climate change vulnerability. Since the training, we have had over fifty (50) radio features stories/reports and print media write ups. We have worked closely with The standard, The people and The star newspaper reporters in the two counties. Local radio stations have been very instrumental in educating the community on charcoal production and regulation under the forest act. We have held radio shows in Syokimau FM, Muga FM, Athiani FM and KBC radio where they hosted the Executive Director, Mr. John Kioli and the project officer Mrs. Jacqueline Kimeu while Citizen TV breakfast show by Jimmy Gathu hosted Dr. Isaac Kalua. This was done in collaboration with KFS officers who further discuss the charcoal regulations under the Forest Act 2009.

In this quarter, reporters from radio maisha, muga FM, Meru FM and KBC radio aired feature stories on charcoal production in the respective counties. News paper features appeared on The standard, The star and The people news papers. Listeners in the various radio stations have called to enquire on measures of overcoming climate change impacts that are as a result of deforestation and forest degradation.

We continue to collaborate with the media to create public awareness on the impacts of deforestation from charcoal production to our precious environment and how it is aggravating climate change vulnerability. To counter this, we also educate them on massive and intensive reforestation.

MOVING FORWARD

Biomass contributes to 68% of Kenya's population energy needs. Charcoal and wood are the major sources. Additionally, charcoal industry earns the economy revenue worth approximately 5.1 million shillings and supports a big population of rural livelihoods. It is however a driver of forest degradation and deforestation which is the greatest contributor to Climate Change. The Forest Act 2009, legal notice 186 on charcoal rules and regulations enforced by Kenya Forest Service provides guidelines on regulation of the charcoal industry in Kenya. Communities and Charcoal Producers Association education and capacity building on these regulations shall advance enforcement and implementation. In the pursuit of sustainable charcoal production in the two counties and in Kenya, Green Africa Foundation shall continue to engage the community members and stakeholders towards a holistic approach in enhancing environmental sustainability and climate change resilience.



Mr. David a reporter with the people newspaper and local radio station record the proceedings of a stakeholders