



22 MAY 2015
INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
BIODIVERSITY FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT



2015 INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY DAY EVENT

Theme: Towards a New Climate Change Agreement and Set of Sustainable Development Goals

DATE: 22 MAY 2015 VENUE: MERU COUNTY-KENYA

Introduction

The preservation of nature has remained the priority of the global community in view of anthropogenic threats that have almost made some important species extinct, which have been exacerbated by climate change.

Though numerous environmental conventions to protect the environment exist, little or no awareness remain the biggest challenge among majority of citizens. More or less, discourses pertaining to these Conventions have remained the preserve of the elites and government bureaucrats.

With the reality of these environment-based challenges posing threat to even the gains achieved over time in the fight against poverty and attainment of sustainable development, there is broad consensus that bottom-up community participation and entrenching community ownership of such processes could provide the missing link between policy making and implementation.

Nothing could be so compelling especially at this period when public participation has been made the legal cornerstone of any policy-making process in Kenya. Obviously as the new practice of community participation may have its attendant challenges, the reawakening that is being witnessed paints a picture of communities seeking to be stewards of their resources and hence their destiny.

The challenge, however, is lack of resources to facilitate such discourses. Creative ways of constant engagement should thus be pursued. One of such ways is to use opportunistic moments such as scheduled meetings of organizations, public barazas and internationally recognized days and new media to facilitate engagements.

And for Partners in Kenya and Africa in general, the 2015 International Day of Biological diversity, celebrated on 22nd May, presents an opportunity for community mobilization and discourse on the two landmark agreements to be concluded later in the year – a new set of goals to succeed the Millennium development goals and a new climate change agreement – to bring into limelight the importance of nature (flora and fauna) conservation as key elements of the new agreements.

2015 is a critical year for the international frameworks to determine how the world will interact politically, economically and diplomatically. This activity therefore aligns with PACJA's strategic plan on public mobilization towards Paris.

Justification

It is with the above background that a number of individuals and community-based organizations in the Eastern part of Mt. Kenya have identified this day as an important moment to rally residents together to take stock of the natural and human-induced problems facing the biggest Water source, Nyambene forest, which nearly triggered human-human and human-animal conflicts last dry season.

Residents will take advantage of the rain season to plant trees as symbolic gesture that they have a role to restore nature. The tree planting exercise will thus be the rallying action, which will remind participants of their duty to connect with their immediate environment, and link their daily struggles with the changes they are observing.

Nature has been hostile to this community of late, as they have stared at the depletion of Nyambene forest and the resultant drying up of key streams, the main source of water for domestic use and farming.

Prolonged drought and unsustainable water piping caused the drying up of the main river in lower Nyambene region three months ago, resulting, for the first time, in intervention by the management of the Meru National Park which ordered all water intakes populating the river course to be demolished to allow water to reach animals which were facing starvation.

The downstream communities were threatening to mobilise themselves to climb upstream to release water in the blame-game that was ensuing in the unprecedented occurrence where Ura river has never dried up.



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This activity will contribute to global call for action against climate change, while at the same time demonstrating that local-level action and people's own solutions can be catalysts of the desired change in the climate-constrained world.

PACJA in collaboration with Caritas Kenya have been implementing a Biofarm Project, a Climate Change adaptation and mitigation pilot project which will be replicated to other African countries as part of response to the reeling impacts of climate change. This activity therefore presents an opportunity to showcase this project as part of capacity building and adoption by climate vulnerable communities.

Miss Tourism Kenya comes handy in this activity since through the partnership with PACJA, the need to enhance the capacity building at the county level as part of the mobilization from the grassroots level is of critical importance.

In addition to the above, PACJA in partnership with Kagoech Foundation Trust and the Kenya Forest Service have been collaborating in the Greening Schools Programme which is aimed at increasing the forest cover across the Country. As part of reaching out to more counties, this activity provides creates an opportunity to introduce this initiative to Meru county.

Key Objectives

- To create awareness on the link between nature preservation, climate change and sustainable development
- To create a forum for local people to exchange ideas and find collective solutions to environmental and water challenges facing them
- To create awareness among local community and general public of the ongoing discourse on the Sustainable development goals and new climate change agreement, and the role of communities and biodiversity
- To launch a local participatory, community-driven water and environmental management initiative to provide a platform for dialogue
- To contribute to grassroots mobilizations towards Paris

Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced awareness by the community about the link between their immediate environment, biodiversity and changes in climate
- 2,000 trees planted and each participant adopts a tree and commits to track its growth – this connects people for continued conversation
- A platform for continued dialogue about environmental and sustainable water management launched
- A process for resident's participation in national dialogue on the new climate agreement and Post-2015 agenda launched.