

WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO ESTABLISH SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN THE COAST OF KENYA: THE ALOE PROCESSING AND MARKETING PROJECT KINANGO DISTRICT: BY PHYLLIS MUEMA

BACKGROUND



Secundiflora aloe in Mtaa, Mackinon, Samburu and Taru locations of Kinango district in Coast of Kenya

In Kenya, there are approximately 60 indigenous species and subspecies of aloes. Among these species, five namely *Aloe secundiflora*, *Aloe turkanensis*, *Aloe rivae*, *Aloe calidophila* and *Aloe scabrifolia* are commercially exploited for aloe bitter gum.

Kenya's drylands support 28% of the total human population in the country and occupy 80% of the land area (CBS, 1999). Though endowed with natural resources, these areas remain underdeveloped. This is attributed to inefficient and unsustainable methods of resource



Taru location in Kinango district

extraction. These regions frequently experience prolonged drought and erratic and uneven rainfall distribution. The local communities have limited alternative livelihoods although nomadic pastoralism is the mainstay in these areas. The Government of Kenya aims to reverse these trends through elaborate programmes spelt out in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of 2003, the Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) and Vision 2030 for renewed growth. These policies outline strategies and mechanisms that will uplift the living standards of the local people and eventually have a multiplier effect on the economy.

INTERVENTION BY KENYA COMMUNITY SUPPORT CENTRE AND ALLAVIDA EAST AFRICA: ALOE VERA PROCESSING AND MARKETING PROJECT IN THE COAST OF KENYA



Aloe Demonstration farm in Taru Location

In order to contribute to the achievement of vision 2030, Kenya Community Support Centre (KECOSCE) a local Non-Governmental Organization based in the Coast of Kenya in partnership with Allavida EA and with financial support from Headlay Foundation have identified sustainable utilization of aloes has been as a potential community-based natural resource enterprise through implementing the Aloe processing and marking project in Kinango district of the Coast of Kenya. The project is an attempt to transform livelihoods in some of the poorest communities in Kenya, through social investment and strengthening community enterprise and organisations. The project is being

implemented in Kinango district, Samburu division covering Mackinon Road, Taru, Mtaa and Samburu locations targeting at least 400 families and a population of approximately 25,000. The project is implemented through the following strategies:-

Capacity Building: The project is carrying out a capacity building programme led by field officials using a Negotiated peer and facilitated learning processes, usually taking the form of two or three-day seminars held in communities. The focus of this training is on wider issues of social and community development, including rights, obligations



Farmers' training in Taru

and legislative frameworks, community dynamics, local governance, the role of the private sector and linkage to markets.

Institutional Development: The project is in the process of establishing Nuru Aloe farmer's producer and marketing cooperative involving at least 40 villages, creating 8 community based aloe vera processing units, and train women and youth in core processing and business skills to enable the local enterprises to gradually increase production and marketing of basic aloe products such as soaps, lotions, etc. With technical support from the district cooperative officer, the farmers in the four locations have resolved to form a cooperative and marketing society named Nuru farmers Cooperative Society with the current offices in Taru Location and an interim committee in place. The committee is charged with the responsibility to oversee official registration of the cooperative, members drive and networking and collaboration with public institutions mandated to regular aloe farming. It is envisaged that the cooperative will attract 800 members over a period of three years.



Farmers' consultative meeting at Mtaa location

Expanding production of Aloe Vera: The project is responding to the unsustainable harvesting of wild aloes which poses many threats ranging from overexploitation to ecological imbalance and possible loss of the species. Overexploitation of the commercial aloe species in Kenya prompted a Presidential decree in 1986 banning harvesting of aloes from the wild for commercial purposes. The Wildlife (Conservation and Management) (Amendment) Act, 1989 mandates KWS to formulate policies and regulations to govern conservation of all fauna and flora (not domesticated). In order to encourage domestication and motivate farmers to expand Aloe farming, the project conducted a Training of Trainers workshop for ten (10) community focal persons on Aloe products and nursery establishment, with the aim of expanding and motivating the target farmers to expand aloe farms to ensure sustainable supply of raw materials to the proposed industry.

40 villages are targeted for training on nursery establishment and far, 30 nurseries have been set up using seeds harvested from the demonstration farm in Taru. The seeds are also packaged in 50gram packages for sale to other interested farmers.



Secundiflora aloe seeds



Aloe Nursery in Taru and Mtaa locations



Aloe nursery at Taru Demonstration farm



Aloe Demonstration farm in Taru Location

Training in small-scale processing of Aloe Vera

The project has initiated training of the community focal persons and the women leaders on local level production of soap and other basic products like lotions and packaging of the bitter gum for sale to



other farmers and potential market. The soap has been presented to the Kenya Bureau of Standards for quality assessment and the report indicating the soap meets the required standards provided. The project is now awaiting registration of the Nuru Cooperative society for identity and application to the necessary regulatory bodies for registration and certification as provided for by the law. The TOTs will further conduct training of group members in-order to increase coverage and work within the community calendar.