

ELGEYO MARAKWET FORESTRY POLICY BILL AND REGULATIONS DEVELOPMENT AND DIALOGUE ON FOREST CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT FOR KEIYO NORTH & KEIYO SOUTH ON 20TH JUNE 2019 AT SIRIKWA HOTEL.

INTRODUCTION

Forest bill enactment in Elgeyo marakwet county is a consultative process that requires all community members to be informed so as to make meaningful contributions to the bill. With regards to this, community representatives from all the sub- counties in Elgeyo Marakwet have been informed of the process through the several multi-stakeholder meetings being funded by UNDP and support from the County Assembly joint committees on Environment, Physical planning and Administration of Justice and the County Government of Elgeyo Marakwet. The consultative meeting among the Keiyo north and south communities was meant to understand the issues surrounding forest conservation and management in the two sub-counties and it was held on the 20th June 2019 at Sirikwa hotel -Eldoret. The meeting brought together the focal leaders in the community to represent their constituents including the ward and sub- county administrators.

OBJECTIVES

The meeting was meant to collect views from the Keiyo community members regarding forest management and conservations in their localities. The meeting, other than informing the communities on the process and planned activities for the enactment of the forest bill, emphasized on understanding the concerns and experiences of communities in conserving their forest as well as the best practices that can be adopted as a way of managing forest resources.

DELIBERATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The meeting was officially opened by the CEC in charge of Lands Water Environment and Climate Change who explained to the participants the approach that the county government is taking in enacting its forest bill. In his speech, he emphasized that community participation is key in achieving an inclusive bill that is owned by all citizens of Elgeyo Marakwet. He stated that the county does not have a bill that regulates the use and management of forest resource making it hard for him to enforce and manage the resources. He highlighted an example of Charcoal burning and bush fires which is a major driver of bush and forest depletion in the lower valley and the escarpments in the county and that the perpetrators can't be taken to task because there is no law in place. The CEC in charge of Agriculture and Irrigation, who was also in attendance, emphasized that there is need for sustainable farming that will allow communities utilize their farms without affecting the environment. She mentioned that bush fires emanated from farmers thus calling upon community members to be keen and report such people for further action. She also assured her support throughout the process mentioning that the two departments needs to work together closely in achieving an inclusive and a participatory forest bill.

The Committee in charge of environment also assured their support throughout the process citing that the county does not have a law in place that governs its forest resources.

Contributions:

Forest fires and landslides in Keiyo south escarpments are rampant according to Susan Kirui, a member of County Environment Committee. The fires in her view as well as deforestation along the forest escarpments is the major drivers of the landslides in her area. She stated that the forest laws should look into ways to curb this to avoid future recurrence of such disasters. She also put forward that farming along on hills without gabions causes degradation of the escarpments that the county takes pride of, thus there is need for action on this.

Nicholas limo who represented the Okiek/Ndorobos of Kaptagat and doubles up as a CFA in Kaptagat forest block avowed that the community who nature the forest products are never compensated for their work when the mature trees are harvest. He mentioned that the returns they get are not enough and so urges that the upcoming forest bill should address the cost-benefits sharing of the forest resources between the contracted parties to harvest the resources and the local communities. He expressed his concern on the eviction of the Okiek community members violating their right to live, thereby looking forward to a bill that would protect all the community members irregardless of their status and culture.

Mzee Kokoi from Keiyo north also exclaimed that water resources have been depleted by poor farming practices including planting eucalyptus trees along the water streams, wetlands and on the watersheds. He said that the county should enact a law that would regulate its planting and put stiff measures on it as well. He also mentioned that charcoal burning is rampant in the county and so there is need for its regulation. He also, while applauding the Marakwet community and Sengwer, explained that most of the forest in Keiyo Locality is largely exotic as compared to the forests in Marakwet that are purely indigenous, thereby encouraging communities to plant indigenous trees so as to subliment the existing ones. He posed that he supports the process and looks forward to a day that the communities reap from the forest resources through the citizen-owned forest bill.

Mzee Kiptukaa explained the concerns of the Sengwer community that they have since conserved the forests from birth, and that they are the forest custodians yet they have been continuously evicted and their rights violated by killing their community members and raping their women in the forest. He expressed that they have been drawing their livelihood from forests and so their concern is that they would wish that they are allowed to live in the forest for as long as they given conservation conditions. He further asserted that his constituents are willing to support the forest bill process.

WAYFORWARD AND CONCLUSIONS

The participants agreed that the process was satisfactory and that the bill would be beneficial in the management of the county forest resources as well as a way to raise county revenue on forests. They asserted that the discussions should be input on the bill and that it should be subjected to public participation when a draft is out to establish its inclusivity. The UNDP representative ascertained to them that the process is transparent, participatory and inclusive and therefore they will be involved in the whole process.

Pectorals:





