

THE KENGO TRAVELLING WORKSHOP

Peter Karinge

In November 1985, for the first time in Kenya, a group of 44 people from all over the country comprising scientists, educationists, community development workers, NGO project leaders, programme leaders and journalists left their places of work for two weeks to participate in a unique educational travelling workshop to see agroforestry, tree planting and woodfuel conservation projects.

The Travelling Workshop involved extensive travelling, visiting, evaluating and learning from over 20 development projects covering 12 districts in Kenya. Projects visited included Government and bilateral development projects, NGO projects, women's groups, community, school, college and individual development initiatives.

Objectives

The Workshop was organized with the following aims and objectives:

- # To expose the participants to the diversity of environmental conservation and development programmes currently being implemented in Kenya through tree planting agroforestry and wood energy conservation projects.
- # To expose the participants to the practical project activities being undertaken at the grassroot (community) level by these programmes.
- # To provide an educational forum where research, development and aid agencies would have a close encounter with project implementors and appreciate the diverse field realities and challenges which projects face.

Projects

The Travelling Workshop took place over two weeks and visited, among many other the following

projects: the Machakos Integrated Development Programme (MIDP), the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) in Machakos; the Embu-Meru-Isiolo (EMI) Forestry Project; the Integrated Project on Arid Lands (IPAL) in Marsabit; the Fuelwood/Afforestation Extension Project and the ill-fated Euphorbia Project in Baringo; the Kenya Woodfuel Development Programme (KWDP) in Kakamega; the Homa Hills Integrated Development Programme and the Ndhiwa Institute for Rural Development in South Nyanza; the Kenya Renewable Energy Development Projects's Mtwapa Agroforestry Centre and the Baobab Farms at the coast.

Evaluation

Many agroforestry and related projects have been established in Kenya during the last five years (1980-85) through government and other development agencies, as a result of the widespread realisation that the practice enhances environmental conservation and increased resource productivity. It was only timely and logical that project officers of these isolated projects bring their varied experiences together through information sharing and visiting ongoing projects in a forum like the Travelling Workshop.

All too often the evaluation of development projects takes place only among donors and government officials. Meanwhile, project leaders, project workers and key community development workers have not been given a chance to analyze the causes of failures and factors contributing to successes of diverse development projects, so that they can apply this knowledge in implementing their own projects and contribute to the evaluation and formulation of existing and new projects.

The Travelling Workshop provided such an opportunity whereby participants were able to closely interact with project implementers and beneficiaries and to critically and objectively analyze project activities on site.

There were numerous criticisms levelled against projects and programmes visited. Among them participants cited poor demonstration work, lack of community involvement, poor planning, over-dependence on external support and inadequate technical and financial assistance as major constraints of successful project implementation. They also pointed to the serious lack of communication and co-ordination at the technical and ministerial levels, and went further to recommend the following salient desirable features in project management and implementation.

Recommendations

- # The local community should be fully involved from the project's planning through to evaluation stages, being 'part and parcel of the project'.
- # Projects should be managed to be self-sustaining after a given time period to avoid over-dependence and abandonment when donors pull out.

Projects should be tailored to suit local conditions (not the other way round) in order to avoid clashing with people's cultural-economic and environmental set ups.

Conclusion

KENGO was greatly encouraged by the success of the Workshop. It was clearly an experience which should be extended to many more development workers and planners. It is almost pathetic that the majority of development workers in Kenya have minimal exposure to other development activities and perspectives, thereby limiting their potential development horizons. If development planners, aid agencies, project implementers and politicians alike could appreciate the importance of such exposures and undertake to promote them, the district focus strategy would meet considerable success faster than expected.

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1986

Update

In June 1988 KENGO followed up their original travelling workshop with an expedition on genetic resources and wildlife habitats. In this case wildlife sites rather than projects were visited, and expedition members were composed of environmentalists, conservationists, research scientists, academics, development agencies, policy makers and journalists. Authorities on each site led discussions and produced papers and resource materials for participants.

The objectives of the expedition were: to increase public awareness on protection of habitats and genetic diversity through the media; initiate and support a process which will lead to the development of a national plan on plant genetic resources and habitat management; sensitize local and national policy makers on the importance of genetic diversity and habitat protection; increase awareness of the need for scientific information on habitats and genetic resources; and identify areas that need further research.

The expedition's final outcome was a Resource Kit built up from the materials produced at each site, together with a set of recommendations of both a general and a specific nature, about environmental issues in Kenya.