



2023 Annual Report



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ICE PARTNERS



WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR



Mr. Martin Muriuki - Institute for Culture and Ecology Director.

I hope the year is going on well so far as we continue serving our communities and the nation at large. This note serves as an appreciation for the great collaboration that enabled us to achieve remarkable milestones in 2023.

The past year was particularly significant for our advocacy work. In partnership with other stakeholders, we successfully launched a landmark policy on agroecology—the Murang’a Agroecology Development Policy 2022-2032 and the Murang’a Agroecology Development Act 2022.

These frameworks, the first of their kind in the country, positioned Murang’a as the leading county in agroecology and food transformation in Kenya. This recognition as County 001 of Agroecology underscores the transformative potential of our collective efforts in promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

Our work in 2023 was driven by our commitment to environmental conservation, community development, and sustainable agriculture. We enhanced community livelihoods by teaching sustainable farming techniques and promoting ecotourism. They also empowered farmers by connecting them with essential resources and knowledge. Additionally, they actively participated in policy-making processes to ensure sustainable practices were prioritized.

As we reflect on these achievements, I am filled with gratitude for your unwavering support and partnership. Together, we have made tremendous progress in creating a brighter and more sustainable future for our communities. I look forward to continuing this journey with you, building on our successes, and striving for even greater impact in the years to come.

Thank you for your dedication and collaboration.

Martin Muriuki
Executive Director,
Institute for Culture and Ecology

The Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE) is a Kenyan non-governmental organization (NGO) that was established in 2006 under the NGO Coordination Act. ICE was established in response to a clear need in Kenya to promote culture's inherent and natural role in environmental and resource management.

ICE works with communities to rediscover the significance of local knowledge and naturally endowed resources/potentials in improving livelihoods and conserving the environment. As a result, communities can take control of their own development and break free from the cycle of poverty. ICE collaborates with like-minded organizations, institutions, and individuals nationally, regionally, and globally.

ICE Mandate: To promote environmental conservation and natural resource management through buttressing traditional knowledge in community-based environmental and resource management initiatives and facilitating cultural-based learning that would lead to social and ecological wellbeing of the earth community.

Vision: Empowered communities living in healthy ecosystems.

Mission: To enhance resilience of ecological systems and community livelihoods using diverse knowledge systems.

Core values; In order to deliver on its mandate ICE is guided by the following principles:

1. Respect for diversity: ICE accommodates diverse cultures as a way of promoting mutual respect and nurturing relationships.

2. Equity: ICE believes in equal opportunities for all irrespective of gender, religion and ability.

3. Accountability: ICE embraces openness and responsibility in all its actions and activities.

4. Professionalism: ICE upholds work ethics and diligence in its undertakings.

ICE Target Beneficiaries

Small-scale farmers [including men and women], people with special needs (those with disabilities and HIV/AIDS), and youth in and out of school are the focus of ICE. ICE has been working in Kiambu, Machakos, Tharaka-Nithi, Murang'a, Embu, Kilifi and Meru counties for the past twelve years on various projects. Serving over 10,000 families (61 percent women and 39 percent men). ICE will continue to expand and deepen its work in these counties, as well as expand into other counties based on need and potential.



Fig. 1: A Youth tree planting activity in Meru Polytechnic.



Fig. 2: During the signing of the Uplands Participatory Forest Management Plan for 2023-27.

Programmes Implementation.

ICE partners with like-minded organizations, institutions, county and national government departments, and individuals at national, regional, and global levels to gather diverse knowledge systems and achieve effective implementation of innovative culture-based strategies, as well as undertake advocacy initiatives.

ICE Approaches.

Implementing ICE programs is essential for preserving and transmitting traditional knowledge and cultural heritage. These programs aim to bridge generational and cultural gaps, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation. To effectively implement ICE programs, various key approaches are used:

- Capacity development is a fundamental approach in ICE programs. It involves training and empowering individuals within communities to become leaders, educators, or facilitators. By enhancing their skills and knowledge, these community members can effectively participate in the preservation and transmission of cultural and intergenerational knowledge.



Fig. 3: A training session to farmers in Murang'a county on Agroecology.

- **Eco-Cultural Mapping and Calendars:** Eco-cultural mapping is a process of documenting and mapping the relationship between culture and the environment. This approach helps communities identify important cultural sites, practices, and resources tied to their surroundings. Eco-cultural calendars, meanwhile, assist in scheduling and celebrating cultural events and practices based on environmental indicators, such as seasons, lunar cycles, or agricultural activities.



Fig. 4: An image of an eco-calendar for Kilifi county.

- **Material support.** ICE has provided support to communities helping them to preserve their cultural practices, including traditional art forms, languages, and rituals. It also helps in enhancing community livelihoods by offering communities support to undertake livelihood projects. Also, material support is critical to the conservation aspect of ICE programs in that communities are supported with agroforestry trees, water harvesting and storage tanks and beekeeping materials.



Fig. 5: Offering material support, modern beehives, to improve livelihoods.

- **Learning Exchanges.** Learning exchanges involve individuals or groups from different generations and cultures coming together to share knowledge and experiences.

These exchanges facilitate the transfer of skills and cultural understanding. Participants often engage in workshops, seminars, or hands-on activities to foster intergenerational and intercultural learning.



Fig. 6: A learning exchange between Kivaa and Tharaka farmers, in Kavaa Cultural center 'Thome'.

- **Intergenerational and Intergender Dialogues:** Open and respectful dialogues between different generations and genders are essential for fostering mutual understanding and cooperation. These dialogues allow for the exchange of ideas, perspectives, and experiences. They help to address generational and gender-based conflicts and promote social cohesion within communities.



Fig. 7: An all inclusive community dialogue.



Fig. 8: During the validation of Agroecology short course in Murang'a University of Technology. (Mariira Campus)

- **Networking and Partnerships:** Establishing networks and partnerships with other organizations, both local and international provides ICE programs with valuable resources, expertise, and exposure. Collaborations with academic institutions, cultural organizations, NGOs, and government agencies is critical to ICE initiatives since they help in reaching a broader audience and access additional support.

In summary, implementing ICE programs requires a multifaceted approach that combines capacity development, ecological mapping, material support, learning exchanges, intergenerational and intergender dialogues, policy formulation, networking, and partnerships. These approaches collectively work to ensure the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge while promoting mutual respect and understanding among different generations and cultures.

FunFact!



Organic farming was once the only kind of farming!

Year 2023 Overview

WHERE WE ARE NOW

This report is a synthesis of outputs and outcomes from ICE work undertaken in the period January to December 2023. ICE activities in Kenya focused on working with target communities across seven counties to protect critical community ecosystems and promote ecologically sustainable agricultural practices.

1) A summary of achieved results towards the project objectives stated in the application during the reporting period.

Objective 1: To enhance environmental regeneration and sustainable use of 5 critical ecosystems in the target areas by December 2026.

During the reporting period, ICE spearheaded comprehensive efforts to enhance environmental regeneration and promote sustainable ecosystem use across target areas. Through meticulous planning and collaboration, ICE successfully planted 11,220 tree seedlings in critical ecosystems spanning from Meru, Tharaka Nithi, Embu, Machakos, and Kiambu counties. This planting targeted stakeholders and community members in areas within the Mt. Kenya and Aberdare ecosystems, recognized as vital ecological landscapes of the Country.

FunFact!



ICE prioritized capacity-building initiatives, empowering 4,512 community members with the necessary skills and knowledge to champion environmental conservation within project areas. Five community networks, including the Uplands Community Forest Association, Kiang'ombe Community Forest Association, Lower Imenti Community Forest Association, and the Gitune, Kivaa, and Kianda community groups, received extensive support from ICE. This assistance ranged from supporting them with indigenous seedlings to offering beekeeping materials and conducting capacity-building sessions on environmental conservation practices.

In addition to community engagement, ICE facilitated six stakeholder workshops aimed at fostering dialogue and knowledge-sharing on crucial matters such as natural resource protection and management. These workshops served as vital platforms for identifying key stakeholders and fostering collaboration to advance ICE's goals in natural resource management.

Lastly, ICE embarked on initiatives to support alternative livelihood options for communities in select areas such as Kilifi, Kivaa, Tharaka Nithi, Kiambu, Murang'a and Meru. By providing resources for beekeeping and goat rearing, ICE aimed to alleviate pressure on natural resources while simultaneously enhancing economic opportunities for local residents.

Agroecology's core principles are based on the indigenous knowledge and practices by communities.

Objective 2: To enhance food, seed sovereignty and economic empowerment among 6000 households in target project areas by December 2026.

ICE's commitment to enhancing food sovereignty and economic empowerment was evident throughout the reporting period. In collaboration with local farmers in Meru and Murangá Counties, ICE distributed 600 macadamia seedlings and 300 avocado seedlings during optimal rainy seasons. Additionally, farmers received support in diversifying their livelihood options through the provision of goats (diary and breeding).



Fig. 9: Macadamia and avocado seedlings for distribution in Meru county in efforts to boost agroforestry.

Further, ICE conducted 18 training sessions on livelihood diversification across multiple counties, benefiting 893 direct and 240 indirect beneficiaries. These sessions, held in Murangá, Meru, Embu, Tharaka Nithi, and Machakos Counties, aimed to bolster household income and resilience in the face of climate change.

Moreover, 705 project beneficiaries underwent comprehensive training on various agroecological practices, including biological pest control, water and soil conservation, and agroforestry. These efforts aimed to boost food production and increase income levels at the household level.

Notably, ICE observed an 80% adoption rate of agroecological practices among beneficiaries, indicating their efficacy in sustainable agricultural production.

ICE also played a pivotal role in distributing indigenous cereal crops to 220 farmers in Tharaka Nithi County, promoting indigenous seeds recuperation and the revival within the region.



Fig. 10: Distribution of indigenous seeds to farmers in Tharaka-Nithi County.

Objective 3: To strengthen campaign and advocacy capacities among target communities and to influence decisions, policies, and programs on Natural Resource Management (NRM), Food Sovereignty (FS) and relevant emerging issues in target project areas by December 2026

ICE's endeavors to strengthen campaign and advocacy capacities yielded notable results during the reporting period. By empowering four Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in Meru, Murangá, Tharaka Nithi, and Embu counties with advocacy training, ICE through training enabled these organizations to advocate for crucial environmental causes. Notably, the successful lobbying efforts of these organizations led to the protection of Kiang'ombe forest in Embu County, halting illegal cultivation activities.

Additionally, ICE conducted three community sensitization forums on policies promoting agroecology in Meru and Murangá.



Fig. 11: During the launch of Murang'a Agroecology Act and Policy by the Deputy Governor and Agroecology Stakeholders on 9th March 2023.

These forums aimed to raise awareness among community members about existing policies supporting agroecological practices, fostering a deeper understanding of the broader implications of agroecology at the national and global levels.

The launch of the Murang'a Agroecology Development Act and Policy marked a significant milestone in 2023, with ICE actively contributing to the policy's development and implementation. By engaging in national agroecology strategy development and sharing experiences from the Murang'a Agroecology Policy, ICE demonstrated a commitment to shaping policy agendas at both local and national levels.

A forum was convened with stakeholders involved in the conservation of the Aberdare ecosystem, aiming to deliberate on achieving well-coordinated and focused conservation efforts. The participants included representatives

from the Kenya Forest Service (including the County Ecosystems Conservator for Kiambu County and Forest Station Managers from six forest stations), six Community Forest Association (CFA) leaders, one County CFA Coordinator, the Lions Club of Limuru, the Kijabe Forest Trust, Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO), Community sustainable Development Empowerment Programme (COSDEO), Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM- Kenya), Water Resource Users Associations (WRUAs), and a herbal doctor.

Objective 4: Increased strategic collaborations and partnerships on Natural Resource Management, Food, Seed Sovereignty and Economic Empowerment, and Community Advocacy and Lobbying work by December 2026

ICE's strategic collaborations and partnerships expanded during the reporting period, facilitating enhanced impact and outreach. Through participation in workshops and forums such as the Avocado Workshop and Financing Locally Led Climate Actions (FLLoCA), ICE staff gained valuable insights and networking opportunities.

These engagements fostered collaboration with diverse stakeholders and enabled ICE to stay abreast of emerging trends and opportunities in relevant sectors.

Partnerships with institutions such as Murang'a University of Science and Technology strengthened ICE's capacity to promote awareness in agroecology. Additionally, support from stakeholders during the launch of the Murang'a Agroecology Policy and Act underscored the significance of collaborative efforts in advancing shared goals.



Fig. 12: Kiambu County during sensitization on Agroecology policy development.

Objective 5: To enhance evidence-based programming, learning and adoption of new innovations, obtaining evidence needed for ICE programmes in target project areas by December 2026.

ICE's commitment to evidence-based programming and learning was reflected in various initiatives undertaken during the reporting period. Research conducted in collaboration with stakeholders aimed to identify policy gaps and overlaps affecting biodiversity management, providing critical insights for advocacy and lobbying efforts. Training sessions on digital data collection tools equipped ICE staff with the necessary skills to enhance monitoring and evaluation practices, ensuring informed decision-making and programmatic effectiveness.

Moreover, training sessions on agroecological practices empowered field-based project assistants with practical knowledge and skills to support farmers in adopting sustainable agricultural practices. By investing in staff capacity-building initiatives, ICE reinforced its commitment to continuous learning and innovation in pursuit of achieving organizational goals.

Objective 6: To enhance organizational capacity for effective and efficient implementation of its mandate by December 2026

During the reporting period, the organization experienced significant growth in its project implementation, prompting the introduction of two new key positions: Programme Officer and Programme Assistant to support project activities. The creation of these new positions has significantly bolstered our program team's capacity to effectively implement activities across various projects. The Programme Officer for Food and Livelihoods has played a crucial role in spearheading initiatives aimed at improving food security and enhancing livelihoods within our target communities. Meanwhile, the Programme Assistant has provided essential support, ensuring that project activities are executed smoothly and efficiently.

This expansion has also facilitated a more effective distribution of responsibilities within the team. By sharing out tasks, we have created more time for critical activities such as resource mobilization, strategic engagements, and participating in training sessions that enhance staff capacity. This, in turn, has led to improved performance and delivery by our staff in their respective duties.

Additionally, the organization developed and presented several important policies to the board for review and approval. These include the Child Protection Policy, the Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Policy, and a Photography Consent Form.

These documents are designed to provide clear guidelines on gender and social mainstreaming within ICE programs and projects, ensuring that our initiatives are inclusive and sensitive to the needs of all community members.

Partnerships with institutions such as Murang'a University of Science and Technology strengthened ICE's capacity to promote awareness in agroecology. Additionally, support from stakeholders during the launch of the Murang'a Agroecology Policy and Act underscored the significance of collaborative efforts in advancing shared goals.

The new policies and roles have collectively strengthened our organizational framework, enabling us to better serve our communities and achieve our mission. As we continue to grow and evolve, we remain committed to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and effective working environment that empowers our staff and benefits the communities we serve. This period of growth marks an important step forward in our ongoing efforts to drive positive change through sustainable development and community empowerment.

1)A description of activities that strengthen gender relations and/or gender equality among the target group during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, ICE remained dedicated to advancing gender relations and promoting gender equality within its projects. Notably, ICE developed a Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Policy in 2023, emphasizing inclusion for staff, stakeholders, partners, and communities. Through this policy, ICE is intentional about mainstreaming gender and social inclusion across all activities, recognizing the diverse gender spectrums and ensuring their involvement.

Acknowledging the vulnerability of women to environmental and climate issues due to their predominant roles in food production and household tasks like fetching firewood and sourcing water, ICE prioritizes women's inclusion in initiatives addressing these challenges. Understanding that women's engagement is crucial for effective climate action, ICE ensures their active participation in environmental and livelihood projects.

Recognizing men as key decision-makers, especially regarding land usage and household vulnerabilities, ICE involves them in training sessions to promote initiatives enhancing household livelihoods and resilience against climate change. However, low turnout of men in farmer group trainings poses a challenge, as their absence may hinder the adoption of promoted practices, given their pivotal role in decision-making.

Further, ICE acknowledges the challenges faced by youth, particularly in accessing land for implementing learned practices. To address this, ICE encourages youth to explore opportunities within various value chains that do not necessarily require land ownership, such as transportation, bio inputs production and digital marketing.

Additionally, ICE addresses the gender disparities in implementing certain practices by empowering women to venture into traditionally male-dominated fields. Practices like making beehives and land preparation, which require manpower, may pose challenges for women due to resource constraints. By encouraging women to diversify their livelihoods and venture into non-traditional sectors, ICE aims to overcome these barriers and foster gender-inclusive initiatives.

ICE's efforts to strengthen gender relations and promote gender equality reflect its commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable development within its projects. Through proactive measures and targeted interventions, ICE endeavors to create an environment where all genders can actively participate and benefit from its initiatives, ensuring sustainable and impactful outcomes for communities.

Challenges, Lessons Learnt and Recommendations.

(i). Challenges

Increase in Cost of Living- The sharp increase in the cost of living during the reporting period significantly impacted our project beneficiaries. Specifically, the rise in transport costs made it more challenging for some beneficiaries to attend training sessions and project activities.

Government Transition Delays- The transition of the new county government minister in Kiambu led to delays in the development of the County Agroecology Policy. The transition period resulted in slower responses and necessitated additional efforts and resources to re-engage the new officials.

Ban on TELIS in Imenti Forest-The Government's ban on the practice of Tree Establishment and Livelihood Scheme (TELIS) in Imenti Forest posed a challenge to ICE's reforestation efforts. PELIS had been a key strategy for promoting reforestation by involving community members in planting and nurturing trees while cultivating crops.

(ii) Lessons Learnt

Adaptation to Increased Costs-To mitigate the impact of increased transport costs, ICE adapted by targeting beneficiaries from the same locality for training sessions. Additionally, ICE identified training venues closer to the beneficiaries, reducing transportation expenses and ensuring greater participation.

Effective Government Engagement- The delay in policy development in Kiambu highlighted the importance of proactive engagement with government officials, especially during transitions. ICE learned the value of sensitizing new county ministers directly concerned with agroecology and maintaining constant follow-up to ensure progress. Facilitating learning visits, such as the trip to Murang'a County, proved effective in accelerating the policy development process.

Flexibility in Project Implementation- The ban on cultivation in the forest required ICE to explore alternative methods for promoting reforestation. This situation underscored the need for flexibility and adaptability in project implementation, ensuring that objectives can still be met despite regulatory changes.

(iii).Opportunities

National Tree Planting Day- The designation of 13th November 2023 as a national tree planting day by the Government of Kenya presented a significant opportunity for ICE and other organizations. This initiative allowed broad participation in tree planting activities, promoting the restoration of degraded areas and enhancing carbon sequestration in both public and private spaces.

Strengthened Local Training Initiatives- The challenge of increased transport costs spurred ICE to develop more localized training initiatives.

This adaptation not only reduced costs but also fostered stronger community bonds and more intensive local engagement, creating a more resilient and self-sufficient beneficiary base.

Policy Advocacy and Learning Exchange

The experience with the Kiambu County policy development reinforced the importance of policy advocacy and inter-county learning exchanges. These activities not only facilitate policy development but also build strong networks and knowledge sharing among counties, enhancing overall project impact.

ICE faced several challenges during the reporting period, the organization adapted effectively, learning valuable lessons and identifying new opportunities. These experiences have strengthened our capacity to respond to changing circumstances and continue to drive positive change in the communities we serve.



Fig. 13: ICE staff during the National Tree Growing day -13th Nov 2023 at Mt. Kilimambogo hill in Machakos County.

FunFact!



Agroecology farming yields more than conventional farming!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to our funding partners, collaborators, and the resilient communities we serve. Your unwavering support, dedication, and partnership have been instrumental in driving forward our shared mission of sustainable development, environmental conservation, and community empowerment.

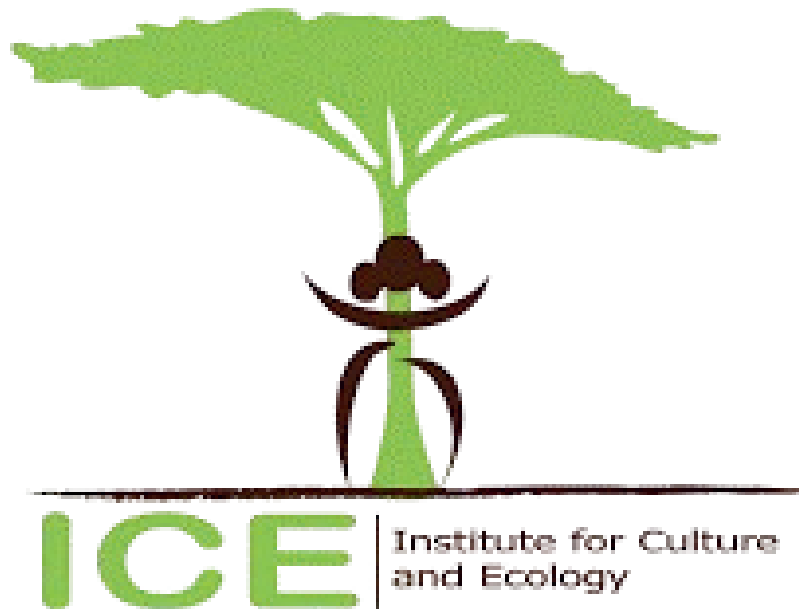
To our funding partners, we are deeply grateful for your generous contributions and steadfast commitment to our cause. Your support has enabled us to implement impactful projects and initiatives, making a tangible difference in the lives of individuals and communities.

And to the resilient communities we have the privilege to work with, we are inspired by your passion, resilience, and active participation in our initiatives. Your commitment to sustainable practices, community development, and environmental stewardship drives us to do our best every day.

It is through the collective efforts and collaboration of all these stakeholders that we have been able to create positive change, protect precious ecosystems, and promote sustainable livelihoods.

Thank you for your unwavering support, dedication, and partnership. Together, we will continue to make a lasting impact and create positive change in the world.

NB: The content of this report is not a direct opinion of the partners.



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