

# ipsia

MAGAZINE





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## IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT



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## IPSIA KENYA MAGAZINE

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# *Welcome* **TO OUR FIRST EDITION OF THE IPSIA MAGAZINE**

IPSIA is an international NGO operating for the promotion of sustainable development and social justice, through the establishment of strategic cross border partnerships. Registered in Kenya since 2007, IPSIA country programme focuses on rural development and agro-ecology, specifically providing capacity building on permaculture principles for the establishment of communal gardens; access to water for domestic and agricultural uses (sand dams, boreholes, rainwater collection systems, and more);

promotion of renewable energy systems (photovoltaic systems or biogas); promotion of value chains such as honey, aloe and Opuntia Stricta, milk; trainings on sustainable livestock management and Natural Land Resource Management.

These actions aim at building climate-resilient livelihoods and food systems, which improve the economic conditions of rural communities in Kenya by safeguarding the environment and encouraging resilience to climate change.

We focus on small interventions to have the greater impact on the communities we work with because we believe by empowering few, we can reach out to many. The best practices and activities introduced in a certain area, in fact, can easily be replicated by neighboring communities and this creates a chain reaction that will eventually impact a whole region.

Networking with like-minded people is another aspect we firmly believe in. Partnerships with organizations and local authorities is fundamental to guarantee continuity of the actions and support to the communities once IPSIA steps out from the County. This is what we do in the framework of the project Farming the Future and what we have done in previous projects in Kenya. It has been proven to be effective in ensuring ownership and sustainability.

The principles that guide our operations are honesty, loyalty, solidarity, non-discrimination, transparency and responsibility and these are values we found in our communities. It is true that there is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.

*Giulia Dal Bello*

Istituto Pace Sviluppo Innovazione ACLI - IPSIA

Head of Mission in Kenya

# FARMING THE FUTURE

SUSTAINABLE VALUE CHAINS IN  
AGRICULTURE FOR ASALS IN KENYA



## PROJECT INFO



Target Beneficiaries:  
11 self-help groups



Where: Laikipia  
County – Laikipia  
North- Kenya



Agro-processing:  
770 beneficiaries  
(80,4% Female -  
19,6% Male)



Water Accessability:  
9120 beneficiaries



Project Duration: 40 m  
months – from November  
2019 to February 2023



# FARMING THE FUTURE: SUSTAINABLE VALUE CHAINS IN AGRICULTURE FOR ASALS IN KENYA



**T**he intervention responds to some weaknesses identified among the agro-pastoral groups of Laikipia County, in the Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL) of Northern Kenya. They include; poor agronomic skills, limited access to water resources, poor profitability of business activities related to supply chains and tourism.

Through a holistic approach originating from Permaculture Principles, the project aims at increasing agricultural production and profitability of business activities, which translates to improved economic conditions of the agro-pastoral groups and builds their resilience to the effects of climate change.

The main activities include capacity building and supply of agricultural equipment, access to water for four communities, support to supply chains suitable for dry climates (honey, aloe, opuntia) and strengthening the tourism sector. All actions are anchored on environmentally friendly methods and principles to have a positive impact in mitigating desertification and encourage the protection of local natural resources. The transformation of opuntia stricta, in particular, is a suitable methodology to contain the proliferation of this invasive plant species, whose invasion of the area poses a threat to the community, causing injuries to people as well as both domestic and wild animals

due to ulcerations caused by the spikes when animals feed on it. With time Opuntia stricta causes the loss of livestock which is the main economic activity for the Maasai people hence raising the poverty levels of the already poor indigenous communities in Laikipia.

**Leading partner:** IPSIA (Institute for Peace Development and Innovation)

**Partners:** Ce.L.I.M. Milano, Laikipia Permaculture Centre Trust

**Project associates:** CAP Holding, University of Milan – Department of Food Science, Nutrition and Environment

## GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To promote the resilience and self-reliance of the communities of Laikipia County in Kenya

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

To improve the economic condition of 11 agro-pastoral groups in the sub-county of Laikipia North in three years

### EXPECTED RESULT 1

To increase and diversify the agricultural production

### EXPECTED RESULT 2

To increase the profitability of micro-enterprises activities

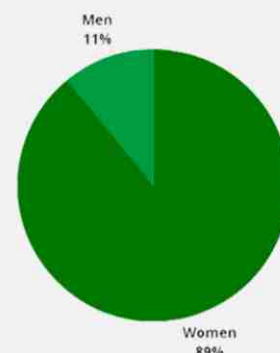
# INCREASE AND DIVERSIFY THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

## 1 A. AGRONOMIC SUPPORT IN ARID AREAS



595 people trained on Introduction to Permaculture  
476 people trained on Water Conservation and Soil Fertility  
457 people trained on Composting  
42 people trained on Vermiculture  
398 people trained on Integrated Pest Management  
590 people trained on Beekeeping  
451 people trained on Seed Saving and Nursery Establishment

Training attendance by gender

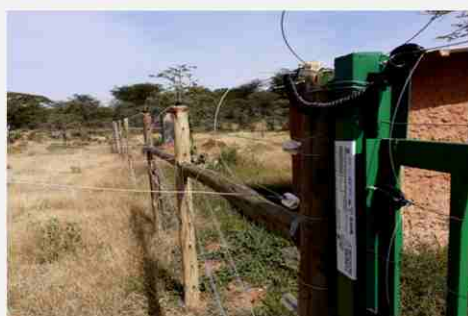


## 1 B. INCREASE OF WATER AVAILABILITY



3 boreholes realized and equipped with solar pumps (1 rock catchment tank in Naatum)  
3 water tanks with platform realized  
1 animal trough realized  
3 water kiosks realized for the public distribution of water  
3 policy documents stipulated and signed

## 1 C. PROTECTION OF FIELDS FROM ENCROACHMENT OF ANIMALS



32 acres fenced  
4 electric fences established for aloe fields

# INCREASED PROFITABILITY OF MICRO-BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

## 2 A. IMPROVEMENT OF TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES OF HONEY AND ALOE



861 people trained on Governance & Leadership and conflict management  
 50 people trained on financial management  
 135 people trained on aloe natural products  
 11 honey processing kits distributed  
 4 transformation plants constructed  
 9 new products introduced

## 2 B. IMPROVEMENT OF THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES FOR OPUNTIA



1 transformation plant built for Laikipia Permaculture Centre  
 2 new lines of products introduced (oil/wine)  
 2 biogas plants installed  
 14 events attended

## 2 C. IMPROVEMENT OF TOURISTIC ACTIVITIES



2 Cottages built, 8 bed capacity  
 2 Conference halls built  
 1 Conference hall renovated

# IMPACT OF FARMING THE FUTURE PROJECT

## ● Gender equality and empowerment

- Women have ownership and access to assets, resources and services that were previously only available to men.
- The project has been strengthening existing producers' groups and empowering newly established groups.
- Target groups have begun to absorb the skills and capacities and are now experiencing the economic benefits of the project.
- Tourism is now an income generating activity for women.

## ● Water access

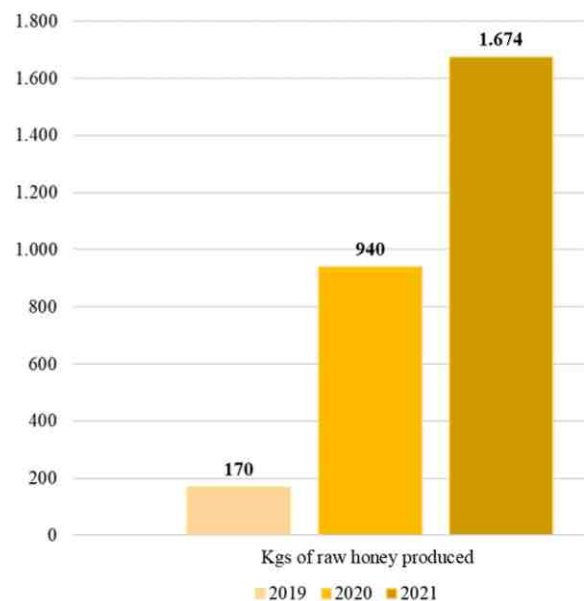
- Water access to communities that previously did not have water for household and livestock.
- Distance to water sources reduced and consequently improved women's life.
- Increased crop production.

## ● Innovation and scaling up

- Agronomic and agricultural support has led to application of new skills and knowledge.
- Less human-wildlife conflict due to solar powered fencing.
- New tourism facilities built using renewable materials.
- Biogas plants have been provided to two groups to transform opuntia into an energy source.
- Introduction of permaculture practices which have improved agricultural output.
- Introduction and scaling up of beekeeping and honey value chain.
- New natural products made with Aloe.



Kgs of raw honey produced  
2019-2021



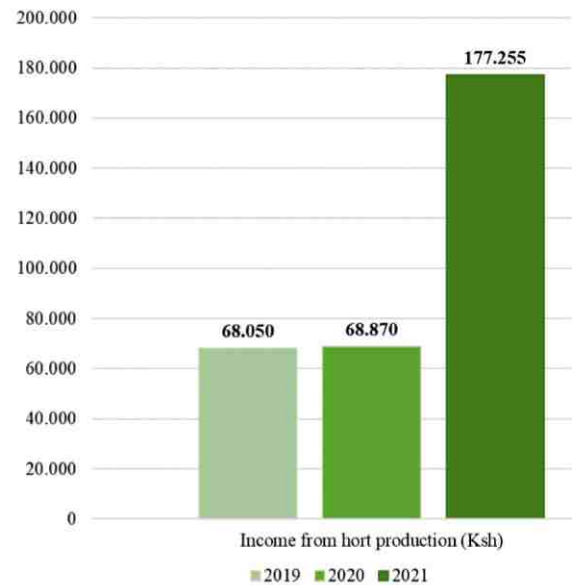
● **Adaptation to climate change**

- New water infrastructures which allow water harvesting and storage with minimum evaporation.
- Introduction of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)
- Incorporation of agroforestry.
- Soil rehabilitation.
- Introduction of solar-power systems.
- Beekeeping for natural pollination.
- Eradication of opuntia

● **Improved nutrition**

- As a result of organic farming and food diversification, malnutrition has been considerably reduced.
- Overall health of the communities has significantly improved.

**Income from hort production  
2019-2021**



## PARTNER PROFILE: LAIKIPIA PERMACULTURE CENTRE



Laikipia Permaculture Centre (LPC) is a community-based Trust that was founded in 2014 as a partnership with 4 women groups from Laikipia North. LPC works with women, mostly Maasai, from across Laikipia County to utilise natural resources in a sustainable way and to provide a source of income for their households.

Pastoralism, the main livelihood for most of the Maasai communities residing in rural areas of Laikipia North, is increasingly unviable due to climate change and decreasing natural resources. Moreover, conflict between communities over water and grazing land has become more and more widespread, affecting mainly women, who are amongst the most vulnerable to climate change consequences. LPC works with the affected women, who are organised in groups, to amplify their voices in the community and improve their food security. The women groups involved now are 13 in total.

Through a partnership with Lush Cosmetics (UK), these organised groups were introduced to commercialization of a local aloe species (aloe secundiflora) for the local cosmetic market and for the international one. The 13 groups were supplied with seedlings and received training on natural cosmetics.

LPC in partnership with IPSIA and through the Farming the Future project is aiming at strengthening the value chains of aloe, honey and opuntia in order to turn them into alternative income-generating activities for the women, thus contributing to the improvement of their socio-economic conditions and eventually to their resilience to climate change impacts.

To be able to market and commercialise the products of the women groups and the centre itself, LPC is also registered as a Limited Company that manufactures organic products in addition to acting as a research, training, and demonstration site. It also offers permaculture training at its site as well as consultancies on permaculture, composting, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), cob-building, earthworks and resilience courses.

The LPC vision is to be the permaculture demonstration site for the region, teaching local farmers and school children good farming practices and how to produce healthy and nutritious food whilst also making an income.

# CLIMATE RESILIENT SOLUTIONS (CRESS) PROJECT:

Laikipia Permaculture Centre has partnered with the African Sand Dam Foundation to implement the CRESS Project, Climate Resilient Solutions, aimed at strengthening small farming communities in the fight against food insecurity, water shortage and environmental degradation in Machakos, Makueni, Kitui and Laikipia Counties. The project is in partnership with Arche noVa-Initiative is for a two-year duration.

The CRESS project aims at improving the living conditions of communities in Laikipia using climate-friendly farming methods. The project is currently working with 4 self help groups with 180 members, who are the direct beneficiaries of the CRESS project.

## **CRESS has supported the groups with;**

- a) Capacity building of the group leadership on conflict and governance;
  - b) 4 groups have been trained on the permaculture approach, particularly on land use management;
  - c) Community Management Disaster Risk training to map potential disasters in their community and develop contingency plans to mitigate the risks;
  - d) Construction of 4 sand dams & 4 Shallow wells for domestic and agricultural use.
- Sand Dams help in promoting regeneration of vegetation along the riverine and subsequently protect from land degradation;
- e) Provision of 2 movable bomas as a sustainable rangeland management strategy, consisting of a system where cattle are kept in a fenced enclosure called Boma for a period of time, after which the enclosure is moved and pastures are regenerated.



# WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM LAIKIPIA PERMACULTURE CENTRE

## THE 7 WONDERS OF AGROFORESTRY

Regenerative agroforestry is a key aspect in the practice of Permaculture where trees are merged with agriculture for the different and complementary benefits they provide for each other. When done correctly and deliberately, the 7 wonders of agroforestry become a reality for the communities in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL's). The term "7 wonders of agroforestry" is used by the team at Laikipia Permaculture Centre (LPC) to refer to Food, Fibre, Fuel, Fruits, Fertilizer, Fodder and Foliage. These 7 wonders are what all communities in the ASAL's desire to have and have to work together to achieve. Laikipia Permaculture Centre is working towards this with "Laikipia Regenerative Agroforestry Project", reaching out to 354 agro-pastoralists residing in Laikipia North sub-county.

The environmental threats faced by the communities in Laikipia North as a result of land degradation, biodiversity loss, deforestation and climate change are the reasons why regenerative agroforestry is critical. For land restoration to be successful there needs to be group participation, use of innovative technologies and human capacity. "Farmers have to be motivated to adopt agroforestry to increase climate resilience, productivity and fertility" says Joseph Lentunyoi, the founder of Laikipia Permaculture Centre (LPC). It is the reason the project established model schools tasked to be a long-term capacity building programme for farmers, institutions, school children and women groups so that knowledge is spread widely through multiple layers of impact. The project also established a tree nursery and was able to produce 5,947 assorted seedlings in the first year and overall distribute over 9,000 seedlings to the community. The interventions LPC uses with the partner women groups are specifically designed to engage the women and keep them fully involved and in charge of the process.



This helps them internalize and appreciate the complementary benefits that combining agriculture and tree planting brings. Through women participation and leadership with such processes, communities benefit enormously. Once the soil is protected from erosion and can retain essential microorganisms and water, improved productivity and biodiversity follows. The end result is self-sufficient and empowered communities that enjoy the 7 wonders of agroforestry.

## MORE OF OUR PROJECTS; MAZIWA PROJECT

IPSIA has recently concluded the **MAZIWA Project - Empowerment of dairy cooperatives in Meru County**, a project financed by the Italian Agency for Development and Cooperation (AICS) that was implemented from 1st April 2018 to 30 September 2021 in collaboration with AVSI Foundation, Don Bosco Association – Mutuati and Meru County Government.

The project goal was to improve the management and production system of producers' cooperatives in the dairy industry in Meru County, Kenya. The projects targeted 2,400 small scale dairy farmers from 5 dairy cooperatives Society namely; Nyaki-Kiburine, Ngusishi, Meru North, Mikinduri and Arithi-Mutuati.



### By the end of the project

- ✓ Cows were producing 9.3 litres per day from 5 litres at the beginning of the project
- ✓ There was a 98% increment registered in the income per farmer
- ✓ There was a 20% increment registered in use of renewable energy at the farmer's level. And 100% at the cooperative level
- ✓ There has been a 57% reduction of cows suffering from Mastitis



# MAZIWA PROJECT SUMMARY

## OBJECTIVE

Helping to achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

### Result 1

TO INCREASE MILK PRODUCTION AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY

### Result 2

TO IMPROVE THE STORAGE CAPACITY AND TRANSFORMATION OF MILK AND ITS DERIVATIVES

### Result 3

TO IMPROVE MANAGEMENT SAVING, MARKETING AND TRADE SKILLS OF COOPERATIVES

### Result 4

TO STRENGTHEN THE COORDINATION AND NETWORKING SYSTEM OF PRODUCERS AND COOPERATIVES

### Result 5

TO INCREASE USE & AWARENESS ON THE USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

## Result 1

### ACTIVITIES

- ✓ 2,327 farmers were trained on Management of Pastures and Methods of Preparing Ground Silage Cereals/Forage.
- ✓ 2,530 farmers were trained on Techniques for Selecting and Improving Genetic Lines and Artificial Insemination.
- ✓ 12 A.I experts and 5 sub-county Veterinary officers from the Meru County staff trained on Synchronized Artificial Insemination.
- ✓ 50 cows have been synchronized and inseminated with sexed semen.
- ✓ 2,153 farmers trained on Milk Production Improvement Techniques, Animal Health and Hygiene.
- ✓ 1,441 aluminum milk cans of various capacities and 245 California Mastitis Testing (CMT) kits were distributed.
- ✓ 184 selected members from the 5 cooperatives participated at two model farm visits.

# MAZIWA PROJECT SUMMARY

## Result 2

TO IMPROVE THE STORAGE CAPACITY AND TRANSFORMATION OF MILK AND ITS DERIVATIVES

### ACTIVITIES

- ✓ 5 Milk Cooling tank 2000L and 5 Milk collection tank with pump purchased and installed
- ✓ 2,371 farmers trained on Milk Quality Analysis, Conservation and Storage Methods
- ✓ Milk transformation equipment for the production of yogurt and mala installed
- ✓ 101 persons trained on Yogurt Production and Quality Certification Standards
- ✓ 1 feed processing plant purchased, installed and in use in Mikinduri Dairy Cooperative
- ✓ 5 laboratories have been installed

## Result 3

TO IMPROVE MANAGEMENT SAVING, MARKETING AND TRADE SKILLS OF COOPERATIVES

### ACTIVITIES

- ✓ 1,439 members of the cooperatives trained on Financial Literacy and Business
- ✓ 1,408 people trained on Village Saving and Loans Association Groups
- ✓ 39 members trained on Information and Communication Technology
- ✓ 5 Business Plans developed
- ✓ 51 dairy cooperative board members trained on Management and Administration of Social Enterprises

# MAZIWA PROJECT SUMMARY

## Result 4

### TO STRENGTHEN THE COORDINATION AND NETWORKING SYSTEM OF PRODUCERS AND COOPERATIVES

#### ACTIVITIES

- ✓ 904 cooperative board members trained on Management and Marketing
- ✓ 35 staff of the Department of Cooperatives trained on Entrepreneur Development
- ✓ 465 private and public animal health practitioners attended a well-structured 16 point-curriculum CPD (Continuing Professional Development)
- ✓ 921 people participated to Meru Dairy Union Farmer Field Day, and the Kaguru Farmers training Centre Field Day
- ✓ 1 Sensitization campaign on Nutritional Qualities of Milk and its Derivatives completed in 10 schools

## Result 5

### TO INCREASE USE AND AWARENESS ON THE USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

#### ACTIVITIES

- ✓ 5 cooperatives constructed and equipped
- ✓ 3 (three) 8M3 Bio-digesters plants installed
- ✓ 297 farmers trained on the use of bio-digester
- ✓ 2 15kW photovoltaic systems installed
- ✓ 4 thermal solar water heating systems installed
- ✓ 88 cooperative members visited Mikinduri Biogas demonstration plant



# FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN MAZIWA

## SUPPORT THE ACCESS TO RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR 5 DAIRY COOPERATIVES IN MERU COUNTY

Power remains a huge challenge for the communities living in the rural areas of Kenya and one of the main factors that limits the development of enterprises and the creation of new jobs. The service is also often inefficient, with frequent power outages that affect the steadiness of the production processes.

Between 2018 and 2021 IPSIA has worked in Meru County, Kenya, to strengthen 5 dairy cooperatives. Today these facilities count more than 2400 small-scale farmers, who thanks to Maziwa Project have been able to increase considerably their milk production and income. Equipment including coolers, pasteurizers, cold rooms, laboratory equipment for the analysis of the produce and sealing machines have been installed in each cooperative to improve the quality of the milk collected daily from the members and to start the production of yogurt and mala for the local market.

Because of this equipment all the cooperatives have been able to collect milk twice a day, increasing their profit from the selling of the milk and they have also started the transformation of the milk.

Our next step is to support these cooperatives with the installation of a 30Kw photovoltaic system through a fundraising campaign. This sustainable power system will ensure a continuous electric supply for the cooperatives, and reduce the costs of production, with a positive impact for the income of the small-scale farmers.

**TO SUPPORT THE PROJECT USE:  
MPESA PAYBILL NO: 542542  
ACCOUNT NO: 21099**

# MORE OF OUR PROJECTS



IPSIA has a well-grounded experience in the field of agribusiness and food supply chains, with a focus on environmentally friendly farming practices and women and youth empowerment, as experienced during the project **"Enhancement of food chains and development of renewable energy sources in Tharaka-Nithi County"** carried out between 2015 and 2018. The intervention was financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Italian Cooperation, and was implemented in collaboration with Ce.L.I.M. Milano and Ng'uuru Gakirwe Water Project Trust.

The main aim of the project was to strengthen the agro-industrial supply chains related to the cooperative of Meru Herbs, thus improving the living conditions of women and young people for 500 households.

Meru Herbs is a cooperative born in the framework of a large water project, the "Ng'uuru Gakirwe Water Project", created from community-based associations of farmers. The irrigation scheme has reached 430 families, allowing Tharaka farmers to practise subsistence agriculture and farm fruits and herbs that are processed in the factories and sold in the local and international markets as Meru Herbs jams and teas.

## The Project was able to achieve the following:

- Improved farming efficiency and organic production through the provision of agricultural training and more efficient farming tools and the introduction of an extension service for farmers. At the end of the intervention there was an increase of 180% in the volume of agricultural products.
- Strengthening of the Meru Herbs brand on the local market and diversifying the production on the international market. At the end of the intervention the total value of exports reached an average increase of 18%; total value of domestic sales reached an average increase of 79% in 2018.
- Installation of a photovoltaic system to provide MH facilities with a sustainable source of energy which completely covers the energy needs of the factories, the ecolodge and the residential areas, allowing a considerable reduction of energy bill and more efficient production.
- Construction of an eco-lodge to promote eco-tourism activities as an alternative income-generating activity. At the end of the intervention the revenues from the tourist activities registered an average increase of 188%.

# OUR PRODUCTS:

## MERU HERBS



### Red Hibiscus tea bags

The tea contains 80% organic hibiscus and 20% organic Lemongrass in fine powder



### Guava & Hibiscus jams

Home-made tropical Jam (250 grams)

You can find more products (herbal teas, tropical jams and sauces) on Meru Herbs website:  
[www.merusherbs.com](http://www.merusherbs.com)

## LAIKIPIA PERMACULTURE CENTRE



### Opuntia jam



### Natural multi-flowers honey

You can find more products on LPC website:  
[www.lpct.or.ke](http://www.lpct.or.ke)

Phone 0727 845 123/0759 394 231  
e-mail: [info@lpct.or.ke](mailto:info@lpct.or.ke).  
Visit us; LPC organic restaurant at Kariunga Village,  
Umande-Juakali Road.



### Aloe soaps, cream and shower gel

## OUR SERVICES:

### MERU HERBS ECO-LODGE



Meru Herbs eco-lodge has 4 round cottages, made of 2 double rooms each. Every cottage has a veranda from which you can enjoy the greenery. The eco-lodge also provides catering services from its restaurant and has conference halls for training, workshop or ceremonies. The facility is located close to the factories. Visitors can access the production plants and meet the people involved in the project. You will learn how our products are organically cultivated and enjoy eating healthy organic food.

**Contact details;**

<https://meruherbs.com/eco-lodge/> .

email: [meruherbs@gmail.com](mailto:meruherbs@gmail.com) or to

[nairobi@meruherbs.com](mailto:nairobi@meruherbs.com)

Phone us: +254 20 434 9163/ +254 733 339885

### LPC ECO-LODGE



The Laikipia Permaculture Centre eco-lodge offers 5 cottages, which can accommodate families, couples or friends that wish to spend time in nature while learning more about permaculture and LPC projects. Each cottage is made of COB, an environmentally-friendly material made with straws, sand and clay. There are also camping facilities with tents for hire, or you can bring your own. The eco-lodge also has an organic restaurant, where the visitors can enjoy delicious meals made from produce from LPC demonstration farm.

**Contact us on:**

[www.lpct.or.ke](http://www.lpct.or.ke) or

Phone 0727 845 123/0759394231

e-mail [info@lpct.or.ke](mailto:info@lpct.or.ke).

# WOMEN & CLIMATE CHANGE

Women and girls represent half of the world's population and therefore half of its potential. Gender equality, besides being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieving peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development being achieved. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 5 is to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." This is one of the most important yet most challenging SDGs there is in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) as gender equality remains a major hurdle especially with the effects of climate change hitting hard. Women have over the years been the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change in SSA since they are more dependent than men on the threatened natural resources. Women are recognized as active and effective agents of change in society and it therefore only makes sense that they should be equal players, if not leading, in decision-making when it comes to matters relating to adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change. While this should be the case, it is not the reality for many women today. Only 29% of women in Kenya are considered empowered and this affects their participation and leadership in important areas in their lives.

Kenya has made important steps at legislative level in advancing gender equality. Despite the progress, the achievement of gender equality is still far from becoming a reality as slow implementation of laws, inadequate funding and discriminatory and patriarchal norms and practices affect women every day. Access to land, natural resources and decision-making processes is a major hindrance to any meaningful progress.



Despite the challenges, there is hope in interventions like the Farming the Future project.

With Farming the Future, our goal is to address two important areas affecting women in Laikipia North: women empowerment and mitigation of the effects of climate change. Through a holistic approach, we provide women in our partner self-help groups the instruments to live independently and create a future for themselves and their families.

We have implemented different activities through the years that respond to extreme weather and the food security. We have helped women set up kitchen gardens through training them about permaculture principles, which is a holistic approach of farming that takes into consideration the entire ecosystem in which they live in.

With the introduction of the honey, aloe and opuntia value chains, we have given women the opportunity to start small businesses where they sell their products to the local market and as a result increase their household income.

Farming the Future has helped drill new boreholes and with the drafting of water management policies. The local government has fully delegated to our women's groups the management and selling of the water. This allows the groups to use the profits from the sales to venture into new income generating activities.

All these interventions have empowered our women both economically and socially. As a result of these new ventures, the women have been able to gain a position of authority in their communities and are now being included in the decision-making processes.

# MEET OUR WOMEN



## SUSAN LEKIDOTU

Susan Lekidotu is a single mother of 4 and in her mid 30's. She is a member of the Chui Mama's group. In her desperation to fend for her children she used to sell miraa (khat) and charcoal. "I was aware that the business I was doing was not good but I had no choice. I knew miraa was a drug and that selling charcoal meant destroying trees. I tried getting out of this business by selling sugar and a few goats but the margins were very low, unlike the miraa and charcoal" she said. When Chui Mama group partnered with Laikipia Permaculture Centre (LPC) and IPSIA the members were trained in jewellery making and used to sell their pieces to a famous safari lodge at great prices.

They were also offered other trainings including beekeeping, environmental conservation, soap making, organic vegetable farming and business skills. "After the trainings they gave us the raw materials, hives and seedlings for planting. They also helped establish a nursery for vegetable and tree seedlings. IPSIA was with us every step of the way, which gave us confidence." The women now run the enterprises independently and are making honey, beauty products and selling organic vegetables. LPC helps with marketing the products.

"The money we make is saved in the bank and we receive dividends," she said. "Over and above this, LPC uses our labour in the building of sand dams and fencing and we are paid for it. It feels good to be a part of bringing water to the community and helping to fence off wild animals, which have been a nuisance to us. We are now respected by men in the community, especially because we manage the most precious commodity here, which is water. We never had water before so now we have to use it wisely for our children's sake" she adds.



## ANGELINA NAINI

Angela Naini, a 23 year old single mother of 2 daughters, could not wait to move from her village to a more "civilized" town after she completed her secondary education. She moved to Nanyuki, a town far from her home, where she got a job as a chef. Her new life was exciting but she struggled to make ends meet as the cost of living was high and her children were sickly and in and out of hospital. After months of struggle and depleting her savings, Angela made the hard decision to return to the same village she despised years before. Before she left Nanyuki for the village, she used her last salary to buy beads. "I am gifted at beadwork and my original designs always turn heads. I needed something to do back in the village so it was only natural for me to do beadwork." Upon her return, she says she noticed something was different.

"I immediately noticed there were now two kinds of women in the village. Independent ones and those who depended on their husbands." She went on to further explain that she noticed some women, including her own mother, dressed well, walked confidently and talked big. Angela was later to learn that the women she admired were part of a self-help group that did projects together to empower themselves and the community. This excited her and she wanted to be part of it. She immediately signed up for membership to the Twala women self-help.

"From my first day in the group I was learning non-stop. IPSIA had partnered with our group and helped dig a borehole fully managed by the women group. They were training us on various skills ranging from agriculture, climate-smart farming, tourism, business skills, natural resource management and a lot more." The fact that we had water access and were the custodians only made us more powerful and significant in the community. We are respected especially for the way we distribute this water fairly and wisely." The women at Twala run profitable enterprises in tourism, honey and aloe production as well as vegetable farming. They save the money they make together in the group and pay dividends annually.

"I have personally really benefitted from the business skills training because I now know how to treat my beadwork as a business. I keep records and make sure my costing is accurate so that I don't run into unnecessary losses. I also know how to pay myself from my business. Visitors to the group buy my beads at very good prices and I am now saving up to take my daughters to private schools."

Angela attributes the improved health of her children to good nutrition, thanks to the organic vegetables they grow at the Twala group.