

## Project launch workshop

21 - 23 February 2022

Shika Adabu Hall, Rabai, Kilifi County, Kenya

Workshop report

# Establishing a Biocultural Heritage Territory to protect Kenya's Kaya forests

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Organised by KEFRI, IIED and Rabai Cultural Village

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## About the project

For more information about this report, or the 'Establishing a biocultural heritage territory to protect Kenya's Kaya forests' project, visit [www.iied.org/establishing-biocultural-heritage-territory-protect-kenyas-kaya-forests](http://www.iied.org/establishing-biocultural-heritage-territory-protect-kenyas-kaya-forests) or contact: Krystyna Swiderska, [Krystyna.Swiderska@iied.org](mailto:Krystyna.Swiderska@iied.org)

## About the organisations

IIED is a policy and action research organisation. We promote sustainable development to improve livelihoods and protect the environments on which these livelihoods are built. We specialise in linking local priorities to global challenges. IIED is based in London and works in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific, with some of the world's most vulnerable people. We work with them to strengthen their voice in the decision-making arenas that affect them — from village councils to international conventions.

KEFRI is Kenya's lead agency for research on coastal forests, through its Coastal Region office covering Kilifi and Kwale Counties. It has conducted action-research on Kaya forests, traditional knowledge, traditional crops and sustainable products in Mijikenda communities since 2005, including in Rabai since 2012.

Rabai Cultural Village is a Community-Based Organisation registered in 2013, comprising 26 micro-enterprise groups and a cluster of traditional houses adjacent to Kaya Mudzi-Muvya. It includes Kaya elders as advisors and members, showcases cultural practices, songs and dances, and hosts traditional ceremonies and a community seedbank. Its main objective is to conserve Kaya Mudzi-Muvya and Rabai's cultural heritage.

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## List of Acronyms

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK)
BA	British Academy
BCH	Biocultural Heritage
BCHT	Biocultural Heritage Territory
CIP	International Potato Centre
FPIC	Free, Prior and informed Consent
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
KEFRI	Kenya Forestry Research Institute
KFS	Kenya Forest Service
NMK	National Museums of Kenya
SIFOR	'Smallholder Innovation for Resilience' project
RCV	Rabai Cultural Village
TK	Traditional Knowledge
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

## Summary

Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI) in collaboration with the International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED), and with financial support from the UK Darwin Initiative, is implementing the project 'Establishing a Biocultural Heritage Territory to protect Kenya's Kaya forests' in the Rabai Mijikenda community. Rabai sub-county forms part of the Coastal Forests global biodiversity hotspot with a very high level of plant endemism and is currently under severe threat. The project aims to promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and genetic resources in four sacred Kaya forests (Bomu, Fimboni, Mudzi Muvya and Mudzi Mwiru) and across the landscape, with a particular focus on threatened endemic trees important for livelihoods, the endemic and endangered golden-rumped elephant-shrew, endemic butterflies, indigenous vegetables and traditional crops. It aims to establish a collective Biocultural Heritage Territory governance institution which brings together Rabai's Kaya elders and village elders and empowers Kaya elders to enforce conservation rules. It also aims to enhance capacity to generate alternative livelihoods, restore endangered trees in Kayas and on-farm, install fuel efficient stoves, and restore agroecological practices. Biocultural Heritage Territories (BCHTs) are self-governed landscapes which protect and revitalise interlinked biodiversity and cultural heritage based on traditional knowledge and customary laws. The Potato Park in the Peruvian Andes is a successful example, which conserves rich Andean crop diversity and wildlife. The project aims to adapt to this model to the Rabai context, as a pilot which can then be scaled out more widely.

The project launch workshop brought together the Rabai community and key government agencies to discuss and plan the project and develop a common vision for establishing a community-led BCHT in Rabai. The workshop focused on the Darwin project in the context of a longer-term community-led process to establish a BCHT. The first day was held with just the Rabai community, to prepare for a multi-stakeholder workshop with government agencies on day two, and foster a power equalising approach:

- Day 1 – 'Developing a common vision' (21 February), brought together Kaya elders, village elders and community researchers at the Kaya Court, and included a livestreamed presentation by the Potato Park communities.
- Day 2 – 'Engaging key stakeholders' (22 February), brought together the County Government of Kilifi Director for Culture, environment and agriculture department representatives, National Museums of Kenya, Kenya Forest Service, Kaya elders, village elders, community researchers, the local Area Chief, IIED and NAMATI (see Annex 1). The workshop included a presentation on community land registration by NAMATI, and a virtual presentation on the Potato Park by A. Argumedo (ANDES, Peru).
- Day 3 – 'Planning the approach and activities' (23 February), involved discussions with Kaya elders and community researchers on the challenges facing Kaya forests, decolonising action-research approaches, the proposed project activities, M&E and next steps.

On Day 1, IIED explained that BCHTs are landscape mosaics, deeply linked to ancestral knowledge and cultural traditions, which seek to combine economic development with conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage. They are collectively governed by all villages in a landscape which come together to form a landscape level governance institution, building on traditional governance systems and customary laws. In the Potato Park, six Quechua communities have joined their lands forming a territory of 9,280 hectares. This has enabled them to protect their land rights against mining, reduce resource conflicts between communities and influence government policies. The communities conserve high native potato diversity, mountain ecosystems and four potato wild relatives, which has enhanced food and nutrition security and resilience to climate change, while collective micro-enterprises for biocultural products and ecotourism have doubled incomes. The park's decolonising action-research approach, centred on community leadership and traditional knowledge, has been key to its success and self-sustainability, generating strong community ownership. KEFRI explained that the Darwin project builds on previous action-research projects in Rabai on Kaya forest conservation, agrobiodiversity, traditional knowledge and cultural values. Rabai Cultural Village (RCV) has established various nature-based enterprises, including an indigenous tree nursery, ecotourism marketed to local and international tourists through its website, and traditional crafts and foods.

Kaya elders and village elders welcomed the idea of establishing a BCHT in Rabai, to enhance community cohesion and reduce conflicts, conserve their territory, environment, culture and agrobiodiversity, strengthen rights over their resources, and strengthen livelihoods and food security. Previous village committees linking Kaya elders and village elders could be revived. Kaya elders stressed the importance of alternative livelihoods and agroforestry to provide alternative wood sources and reduce pressure on Kayas, and the need for greater support from the government for Kaya elders and conservation. They set out their vision for a BCHT in Rabai: “to preserve our territory for the benefit of future generations and conserve Kaya forests”. They proposed that the project should revive Rabai’s Mudzini concept as the guiding vision for the BCHT, as this would enhance respect for the land, trees and traditional farming systems. The concept is anchored in the coconut tree, which “is the mother of everything in our land”. The BCHT can also be guided by Rabai values of harmony ‘Amani’, ‘Soyosoyo’ or ‘Kwelevana’, respect to everyone in the landscape and the landscape ‘Heshima’, and transparency and accountability ‘Uvasi’. Kaya elders stressed the need to create a lot of awareness in the community for the BCHT to succeed. Village elders further stressed the need to create employment for the youth to reduce destruction of Kaya forests, and proposed that a landscape management committee be established that brings all villages together, along with village level committees to assist with implementation, noting that “when community members are united, we can advocate against destructive activities like mining”. They highlighted the need for sustainable livelihoods like beekeeping and tourism, the importance of traditional chemical-free foods for health, and the problem of destruction of crops by livestock.

Quechua communities in the Potato Park in Peru explained that six communities joined their lands in 2000. They established a collective Association of Potato Park Communities, which includes the elected indigenous leaders from each community, to govern the territory. Their governance organisation comes from their traditional governance system, indigenous values and the principles of ‘Ayllu’ where the human, the wild and the sacred have to be in balance to achieve wellbeing. They have established several economic collectives – for medicinal plants, gastronomy, crafts and weaving, ecotourism etc - which are largely composed of women and are autonomously governed. They have developed an inter-community agreement which sets out key customary principles to guide the equitable sharing of 10% of the profits from the Potato Park micro-enterprises amongst the communities. The Potato Park provides autonomy and land rights and allows them to use traditional agroecological practices. It has enabled them to protect their land against mining, to enhance conservation of the landscape and agrobiodiversity (they have 1377 varieties of potato), improve livelihoods and adaptation to climate change and revitalise cultural heritage.

On Day 2, different government agencies, including Kilifi County government and National Museums of Kenya (NMK) expressed support for the project, emphasising the need to preserve Kaya forests and Rabai culture and enhance support for Kaya elders and the Kaya Court. KEFRI emphasised the need for gender-inclusive solutions for climate adaptation and mitigation, and the importance of alternative livelihoods. RCV has established a relationship with a US organisation which brings regular ecotourism visitors. The main challenges facing Kaya forests according to the community are loss of culture and lack of TK transmission to youth, poverty which drives illegal exploitation, insufficient collaboration between government agencies, lack of support from some county and sub-county officials, lack of alternative wood and fuelwood sources, and industrial activities (mining and quarrying). Continued degradation of Kaya forests impacts negatively on biodiversity and livelihoods and leads to increased human-wildlife conflicts. Traditional crops should be restored for resilience and nutrition. Establishing a collectively governed BCHT will help address these challenges. Rabai could develop by-laws and register Kaya forest land under the National Museums and Heritage Act and private land under the Community Lands Act. Participants agreed to establish a multi-stakeholder Project Advisory Committee which will meet every six months.

On the final day, Kaya elders expressed appreciation at being fully involved in the project from the start. They underscored the challenge of getting people to recognise the importance of their own culture and religion, and noted the need for greater support from Area Chiefs for Kaya forest conservation and Kaya Courts which are effective in resolving conflicts but are being sidelined. The elders believe that the elephant shrew is threatened by bushmeat consumption and cutting of large trees, and stressed the need to engage youth in sensitisation and economic activities. The next step will be a meeting with Area Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs to get their support, followed by meetings in each village to sensitise them on the proposed BCHT and Darwin project, conduct a Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

process, refine the M&E indicators and discuss also using participatory M&E (Most Significant Change). Following the M&E baseline, livelihoods activities will begin, alongside a visioning process to define the BCHT objectives, key principles and governance system.



Workshop participants

# Day 1: Developing a common vision with the Rabai community (21 February 2022)

## 1.1 Opening session

The session began with opening prayers and a ceremony by Kaya elders to bless the ground with beer and call the ancestors, and reaffirm sacred values towards the Rabai cultural landscape. K. Swiderska (IIED) introduced the workshop objectives: to present and discuss the proposed Darwin project objectives, activities and approach with all relevant stakeholders for their input. She explained that Rabai has globally important biodiversity and Mijikenda cultural heritage that are interlinked and interdependent. The Darwin project builds on previous participatory action-research involving IIED, KEFRI and Mijikenda communities since 2005, focusing on traditional knowledge and customary laws relating to medicinal plants; traditional crops and innovations for climate resilience (Smallholder Innovation for Resilience); and Rabai cultural values and wellbeing concepts that promote nature conservation and equity (British Academy project). The project will be implemented through a participatory and community-led process supported by KEFRI and IIED, that contributes to a longer term process to establish a BCHT, and implementation will be spearheaded by locally-based community researchers working closely with Kaya elders and village elders and community authorities.

L. Ndalilo (KEFRI) explained that the Darwin project aims to enhance conservation of biodiversity and genetic resources and establish a community-conserved landscape guided by traditional holistic wellbeing concepts that integrate conservation and development. The main activities proposed are to: establish a collective biocultural heritage territory governance institution involving all villages in Rabai; enhance capacity to generate alternative sustainable livelihoods; promote use of energy efficient technologies such as fuel-efficient stoves and briquettes; restore degraded areas in Kaya forests and plant trees on-farm; and revitalize agrobiodiversity and cultural values for conservation and equity.

## 1.2 Key elements of BCHTs and lessons from the Potato Park

K. Swiderska (IIED) explained the concept of a BCHT as a landscape mosaic of different land uses, deeply linked to ancestral knowledge and cultural traditions. BCHTs combine economic development and food production with conservation of cultural heritage and biodiversity. They are collectively governed by different villages which come together to form a new governance institution at landscape level, building on traditional institutions, customary laws and holistic wellbeing concepts that centre on balance between humans, nature/land and the sacred (such as Rabai's Mudzini concept). In the context of Rabai community, Kaya elders are the custodians of traditional governance system and can oversee the management of BCHT together with village elders/leaders. BCHTs aim to revitalize pre-colonial land stewardship practices; and to establish genetic reserves for climate resilience and adaptation. They also enhance the capacity of communities to protect their rights to land and resources (eg from the threat of mining)

The Potato Park biocultural territory in Peru is a successful BCHT model that can guide the process in Rabai. Six Quechua indigenous communities in the Andes have joined their lands and are conserving an area of 9,280 hectares based on their traditional customary laws. The establishment of the BCHT in Peru has reduced resource conflicts between the communities, protected community land rights against destructive activities such as mining and has enabled them to influence government policies. The Potato Park conserves high levels of potato diversity, sacred mountain ecosystems and four potato wild relatives and has revitalized traditional knowledge and cultural values; this has enabled them to confront significant climate change impacts, maintain crop productivity and improve nutrition; and the Potato Park's collective micro-enterprises have doubled incomes. Its decolonising action-research approach, centred on community leadership and revitalizing traditional knowledge and cultural values, has generated strong community ownership and underpins the Potato Park's success and self-sustainability. KEFRI researchers and a Rabai Kaya elder (Daniel Garero) have visited the Potato Park. In Rabai a collective governance institution could be established that brings together village elders/leaders from each village and Kaya elders, and the community could agree objectives, principles



and by-laws for conserving Kaya forests and Rabai's farming landscapes. It is important that BCHTs are supported as strongly community-led processes and ideally as social movements to reduce dependence on external projects.

### 1.3 Community perspectives on establishing a BCHT

Village elders expressed support for the BCHT model. They recalled that they used to have Village Committees linking Kaya elders and village elders - these stopped due to a conflict but could be revived. Kaya elders explained that Kaya forests are being degraded very fast due to increased poverty, (which leads to issues like logging) so alternative livelihoods are key, along with agroforestry to provide alternative wood sources and reduce pressure on Kaya forests. Establishing a BCHT can enhance community awareness of the importance of conserving their territory and strengthen their rights over local resources, while development of by-laws can help them manage the landscape effectively. A key challenge is that the government is not sufficiently supporting Kaya elders and Kaya forest conservation. Kaya forest rules originate from their ancestors many years ago, and been passed down the generations for continue enforcement. Kayas face many threats and Rabai Chiefs (local government) are not supportive to enforce conservation laws to protect them.

Members of the community further highlighted inadequate collaboration amongst relevant government agencies charged with conservation of natural resources and development. A case in point is the inability to regulate mining activities in Rabai which are causing massive destruction to the environment (like pollution of rivers and dust). The need for collaborative management of the proposed Rabai BCHT was therefore emphasised.

### 1.4 Overview of previous projects in Rabai

C. Wekesa and L. Ndalilo (KEFRI) gave an overview of the process to establish a BCHT in Rabai dating back to past projects, namely: Smallholder Innovation for Resilience project (SIFOR), United National Development Programme (UNDP), Satoyama Initiative, British Academy (BA) and AHRC, which laid the foundation for establishing a BCHT in Rabai community. KEFRI and IIED started working with Rabai in 2012 through the SIFOR project, which supported the establishment of Rabai Cultural Village (RCV) in 2013. SIFOR connected piped water to RCV, established water storage facilities, tree nurseries, and supported development of RCV website and a community seed bank in RCV and related rules. RCV revived many cultural festivals which were dying out. A Satoyama Initiative project restored degraded areas in Kayas using endemic species of value to the local community (cultural, social, economic), supported ecotourism and trained extension officers to support agrobiodiversity and provided training in nature-based enterprises. The British Academy project brought Kaya elders and village elders together and identified ten villages to be part of the BCHT.

Key lessons learnt by the community from past projects were highlighted as follows:

- Past projects have enhanced awareness of community members of the importance of natural resources such as forests, wild plant relatives, rare flora and fauna, rivers, hills and sacred grooves in preserving biodiversity and cultural heritage. The BA project found that the community has immense resources, some of which had not been documented, which can provide benefits to the local community. Mwele village, for example, has the potential to provide water for irrigation, which could be tapped through dams. It found that three Kayas are very rich in wild crop species including cowpeas and bananas which can be domesticated to support food needs; and identified traditional foods in Rabai that the younger generation did not know about, thus preventing their loss. It identified multiple uses of coconut trees and potential economic uses<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Wekesa, C., Ndalilo, L., Swiderska, K. (2021). Towards a Biocultural Heritage Territory in Rabai Cultural Landscape: exploring Mijikenda cultural values and practices for sustainable development. IIED, London <https://pubs.iied.org/20366g>

- Community awareness of the traditional knowledge and cultural values and the transfer of TK from elders to youth has slightly improved following the revitalisation of cultural ceremonies (eg Rabai New Year festival and RCV activities).
- There is enhanced community awareness of the role of a BCHT in the collective management of community landscapes. The BA project brought different communities together and put to rest some fear that people in Kaliang'ombe had because of past projects which have been top down and did not really benefit the community.
- Traditional resource governance systems including the Kaya Elders' Council have been strengthened. However, there is a challenge in harmonising traditional and modern governance systems especially with regard to farming systems, because sometimes the modern system overrides the traditional, and extension officers promote modern ways of farming that some people adopt, which is a major challenge for promoting traditional crop varieties.

## 1.5 Activities of Rabai Cultural Village

L. Mwabaya and L. Kadilo of RCV outlined the enterprises being undertaken. RCV is managed by a committee including a Chairman and Vice-Chairman. It has various nature-based enterprises, and a tree nursery and sells seedlings to many people interested in conserving indigenous tree species. RCV earns income through promoting eco-tourism based on Mijikenda culture, selling traditional foods which also provides income for farmers growing traditional crops, and guided walks through the Kaya forest. It performs traditional songs and dances in RCV and in various national events, such as Independence Day, for income and sells traditional clothes and crafts to tourists. The village also has a website which plays a strategic role in marketing it to both local and international tourists. RCV continues to play a significant role in conserving adjacent Kaya Mudzi Muvya forest and promoting social cohesion through organising various cultural ceremonies.

## 1.6 Community perspectives on the need for a BCHT, vision, values and approach

The community discussed the need for a BCHT, its vision and objectives, guiding values and approach, in two groups: a Kaya elders' group and a village elders' group (mainly women).

Kaya Elders' group discussion:

- Need: We support the BCHT approach. A BCHT is needed because it is bringing the community together, and will improve our income and economic status (eg through a virgin coconut oil processing plant). It will preserve our culture and traditions and protect Kaya forests, and will improve traditional farming systems which will benefit food security and income.
- Vision: To preserve our territory for the benefit of future generations, and conserve Kaya forests. The 'Mudzini' concept is very beneficial to the whole community not just for Kaya forests and those close to them but also those far away. The concept is anchored in the coconut tree because it is a very respected tree and, in the past, if one was cut the person was fined Kshs 8 and 1 black hen. So we expect that the project will revive this concept and the community will continue respecting the coconut tree and it is the mother of everything within our land. Currently people cut coconut trees even for timber. This never used to happen. Making the Mudzini concept central will make respect for land and trees return. The concept will also revive traditional farming systems that will ensure we have enough food (using irrigation from Rabai's rivers).
- Approach: We need to create a lot of awareness in the community for the BCHT to succeed. We need training on various aspects including technical skills on briquettes. Need joint meetings between communities and the local team for implementation, and all of us should sensitise our neighbours and families. Kaya elders must take any opportunity to raise awareness. Elders should lead by example. Government officials should work hand in hand with the community in a harmonious way.

- Values: Harmonious co-existence, staying together in harmony ie. “Amani” or “Soyosoyo”
- Respect to everyone in the landscape and to the landscape – “Heshima”. Transparency and accountability in every action (Uvasi). And ‘Kwelevana’ meaning stay in harmony with your immediate neighbour so there are no conflicts (like Soyosoyo). Clarity of purpose amongst members.

Village Elders’ group discussion:

- Need/Vision: We support the BCHT approach because it will help us conserve the environment and have a clean and healthy environment and will help us conserve agrobiodiversity, especially traditional crop varieties which have been lost over time. It will also enhance social cohesion and build social capital as people can come together and cultivate on someone’s land today and on another person’s land tomorrow. By building social cohesion it will help us address conflicts which are mostly about natural resources.
- Values necessary for implementation: preserving the environment, creating livelihood interventions and employment amongst the youth, and enhanced community awareness.
- Approach - key requirements for successful implementation: a cohesive community; a landscape based management committee that brings all villages together and village level committees to assist implementation, and providing livelihoods to youth to reduce destruction of Kaya forests.
- Lessons learned: We can use the forests sustainably through sustainable livelihoods activities like beekeeping. When community members are united, we can advocate against destructive activities like mining. Sustainable use and management of the forest can help sustain biodiversity and livelihoods, such as through honey production and tourism. We’ve learnt the importance of traditional foods for health because no artificial fertiliser is used, so there is a lot of community awareness about the importance of traditional crop varieties (but less so amongst the younger generations). A key challenge is the destruction of crops at village level by livestock.

## 1.7 Presentation by communities in the Potato Park BCHT in Peru

Quechua community representatives provided a livestreamed presentation from the Andean Potato Park landscape in Peru, including community researchers, women, elders and youth. It began with a traditional solidarity dance. They explained that the Potato Park has a Governing Body (or Community Association) made up of representatives from each village – the elected village leaders or ‘presidents’. It also has a number of economic collectives and a financial administration – these collectives are mainly comprised of women from different communities/villages who come together to develop products and services based on traditional knowledge and biodiversity. They have Medicinal Plants, Gastronomy, Crafts/Weaving, Potato Guardians, Ecotourism Guides, Homestay, Community Researchers’ collectives. Each collective has a treasurer and a chair, is autonomous (ie. self-governed), and pays 10% of its profits into a communal fund, and the economic benefits are shared equitably amongst the communities to support the Potato Park activities. The economic collectives make potato shampoo, teas out of several medicinal plants, medicinal creams for bruises etc. They want to establish a community seed enterprise. Thanks to the potato, a key staple crop and symbol of our shared culture, they came together.

The communities further explained: “Our collective territory is about 9,280 hectares. The Potato Park is about 3,500 meters or higher above sea level. We have 1377 varieties of potato. Our governance organisation comes from our environment, traditional governance system, indigenous values and traditional principles of Ayllu where the human, the wild and the sacred ‘communities’ have to be in balance to achieve wellbeing. We use TK and science because we don’t want to lose our TK since both are important for landscape management. We leave land fallow for seven years and that enriches the soil (fertilises it) and we use the fallow land for grazing, so farming is agroecological. We have three agro-ecological planting zones namely the upper, middle and lower zones within which different crops are grown. Grains such as wheat, maize and quinoa and beans are grown in the lower zone; Andean

roots and tuber crops are grown in the middle zone (eg Oca), while different varieties of potatoes are grown in the high-altitude zone. We plant different crops in the lower zone every year – we decide which crops to grow. Because we are organised, we have influenced government policies - the Cusco government introduced a law against Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) because we don't want GMOs as they pose a threat to crop diversity; and a law against biopiracy, and we campaign against mining in the Potato Park.

The Potato Park was started in 1998 when members of six villages came together to conserve their diverse potato varieties with support of Association ANDES, a local NGO. First, Alejandro Argumedo and Cesar Argumedo spoke to the governing body of one community (ie village authority), and of another community, and those governing bodies spoke to other community governing bodies, and then they spoke to all villagers and agreed to establish the Potato Park. This was followed by mapping of the Potato Park area. The Potato Park Community Association was established in 2000 and legally registered in 2002. We then developed an inter-community agreement which sets out key principles for collective governance and equitable benefit-sharing based on traditional knowledge from our ancestors. The requisite infrastructure was then put in place for the Potato Park Association and local enterprises – eg the medicinal plants collective and traditional restaurant, and for the community seed bank

The benefits of the Potato Park are autonomy and land rights – we plant what we want to, as well as enhanced conservation of the community landscape and improved livelihoods; enhanced mitigation and adaptation to climate change; preservation of cultural heritage; and conservation of agrobiodiversity. Community researchers (Potato Guardians group) conduct transects every 100 meters going up in the mountain and test different varieties for tolerance to frost, drought and disease, and select resilient varieties. They then hold Farmer Field Schools to share the results amongst the communities. The Potato Park has been operational over the last 20 years and is largely a community-led process supported by Association ANDES which undertakes fundraising to support community initiatives, capacity building initiatives and local research by the Potato Park. We ask ANDES for funds to support Community Researchers and workshops; and sell products to visitors and in local and regional fairs.”

#### **Q & A between Rabai community and the Potato Park:**

- In Rabai land is owned privately – how did you establish collective land rights? Under Peruvian law, land is owned collectively at village level.
- How did you deal with COVID-19? The Potato Park's collective organisation allowed us to restrict people entering and leaving the park. And our agrobiodiversity and healthy food meant that we got a few symptoms, but not much effect in rural areas. And we donated 10,000 kg of food to people in lockdown in cities and in other regions, based on our ancestral principle of Solidarity.
- The successful establishment of BCHT in Rabai could borrow from the Potato Park model, but should be tailored to address the unique characteristics of Rabai cultural landscape (eg individual land ownership and eroding TK practices).

## Day 2: Multi-Stakeholder Inception workshop (22 February 2022)

The second day of the workshop brought together all relevant stakeholders including: NMK, County Government of Kilifi's Departments of Culture, Environment and Agriculture, Kenya Forest Service, Kenya Forestry Research Institute, Kaya elders, Community Researchers, Village elders, local administration and members of the local community, Rabai Museum and researchers from International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED) who are key partners in project implementation. The project objectives, planned activities and implementation approach were discussed with all key stakeholders, who all sat together around the main table.

### 2.1 Opening Remarks by Key Stakeholders

- The Regional Director for KEFRI Coast Eco-region Research Programme Dr. Linus Wekesa welcomed participants to the workshop and expressed optimism that the Darwin project will help preserve the lost agrobiodiversity and bring about social cohesion. He urged the provincial administration to collaborate with the community for successful implementation of the project.
- William Tsuma, Village Elder, Rabai: I want to appreciate the approach this project is taking, by bringing us together and working together, that is the right direction and I am very sure our biodiversity and culture will be protected. 'Chikola' means coming together in Rabai; and we have 'Rome' which is a round circle meeting between elders and young people.
- Daniel Garero, Kaya Elder, Rabai: I thank KEFRI for working with us and facilitating my visit to the Potato Park in Peru – Krystyna (IIED) took me to this community in Peru. We are asking for collaboration and support.
- Aisha Juma, Community Researcher, Rabai: I appreciate the support of this project and look forward to working with all the key stakeholders.
- Lawrence Chiro, NMK-Coastal Forests Conservation Unit: Rabai has six Kaya forests of which five are National Monuments (eg Kaya Mudzi Muvya), and three of which are registered as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. All Kayas in Rabai total 69 hectares (1871 acres). The area is a biocultural territory because Kaya forests have been conserving rich repositories of biodiversity through cultural heritage. Kaya forests are very important for providing ecosystem services like water and genetic resources for climate change adaptation both in Rabai and globally. They also have a high ecotourism potential. However, there are challenges – cutting trees, especially in Kaya Fimboni (highly degraded, people taking poles) and Kaya Bomu, and overgrazing in Kayas. Culture is becoming less important for communities because of modernisation, and erosion of TK is a key challenge for conservation of Kaya forests. So the main problem is our own community and the solution will have to come from ourselves. Establishing a Biocultural Heritage Territory could be the first step towards helping to preserve Kaya forests for future generations.
- Dr. J. Ndufa, KEFRI Deputy Director for Forest Biodiversity and Environment Management: Biodiversity and community-based conservation are very important. If community resources are protected, they will provide a source of income. The BCHAT approach will enhance the capacity of local communities to conserve their territorial landscapes.
- K. Swiderska from IIED re-called the discussion with stakeholders at the meeting in Rabai in 2019, which identified the need for an integrated conservation and development approach such as a BCHAT, to address degradation of Kaya forests driven by over-exploitation. She emphasised that IIED is committed to supporting long-term community-led conservation of the Rabai landscape, and that the process of establishing a BCHAT will take time (beyond the Darwin project) and will only succeed with the support of all government agencies and stakeholders.
- B. Kalume, Director of Culture, Kilifi County: Our County Executive Committee member for Culture (CEC) knows I am here and will visit soon. I am very delighted for this project because of its focus

on protecting our culture and our lives; it is a very important project and a historic project for Kilifi county. I want to know how TK will help us to run this project and conserve biodiversity. Of all nine Mijikenda sub-tribes, Rabai has conserved its culture and is a good example as this has played a key role in sustainable management of Kaya forests. I believe this will make the project a success. When there is a conflict, the community still embraces the customary court. We need to embrace what our fore-fathers used to do, how they used to conserve forests, we need to go back to our history. Most foreign tourists come here to learn about our culture. There will be challenges - modern religions, youth, modernisation and technocrats who believe TK cannot be used to run a project. A few community members chased Kaya elders from a forest and the police came and asked for evidence from the community. But why not just embrace our own ways of customary resolution – the Rabai Court – everyone is given room to speak, it is always fair and low cost. If we embrace this project, we will get all these benefits. There will be political interference – we will not allow politics and religion to divide us as a community. People who have destroyed their forest are now suffering. Before pregnant women could not go to the forest as it was a taboo, we can bring this back if we embrace culture. We can contribute to the project when needed and I can provide advice.

- Dr. J. Njuguna, KEFRI Senior Deputy Director for Research and Development, expressed satisfaction with the customary approaches to conservation. Kaya forests are very important and are places for spiritual nourishment. We need to develop practical solutions that involve as many people as possible. We have a lot of indigenous trees in the coast that provide fruit, wood, building poles etc. The community should develop gender-inclusive solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, and local environmental challenges. Men go to work and women stay behind to cook and look after kids and once married they may not be allowed to work – women have been oppressed by men. The proposed on-farm forestry under the Darwin project will reduce degradation pressure on Kaya forests and enable women to get wood rather than having to go to the forest for firewood and charcoal.
- Mr. Jao, the Area Chief for Rabai-Kisurutini: I'm responsible for peace. Our forests in Rabai are totally different to those in other areas – we are very committed to conserving the forests. Stakeholder collaboration is key to sustainable management of Kaya forests and my office has effectively collaborated with the Kaya Elders' Council to enforce rules and regulations governing conservation and management of Kaya forests.
- Dr. J. Cheboiwo, KEFRI Director: KEFRI's mandate is providing research and technical knowledge on forestry across the country, with Coast Eco-region Research Programme centres in Taita, Gede and Lamu. KEFRI has collaborated with different partners to implement several projects for conservation of Kaya forests since 2013 – SIFOR, Satoyama Initiative, British Academy<sup>2</sup> and now Darwin - and has documented Indigenous Knowledge associated with Kaya forests. Socio-economic pressures remain a key challenge to sustainable management of Kaya forests hence the gazettement of these forests should be a priority for the Kilifi county government to formally protect them against external threats. If we can provide alternative ways of survival to communities (for example, beehives), the forests can be protected – most of our communities live in poverty. Research on forest ecology and culture is important to develop ways to preserve forests. KEFRI will provide long-term technical support to conservation of Kaya forests and I am thankful to partners such as IIED, County Government, NMK, Kaya Elders Council and Rabai village elders for their commitment to this work.

## 2.2 Process to date to establish a BCHT and introducing Rabai Cultural Village (RCV)

Dr. C. Wekesa (KEFRI) outlined the initiatives since 2013 which have laid the foundations for establishing a BCHT in Rabai: the SIFOR project supported the establishment of Rabai Cultural Village, the Satoyama Initiative developed a community-based monitoring and tracking tool for tree nurseries and restoration of Kayas, the British Academy project which explored Rabai wellbeing concepts,

<sup>2</sup> See: Indigenous Biocultural Heritage for Sustainable Development project. <https://www.iied.org/indigenous-biocultural-heritage-for-sustainable-development>

biocultural resources and traditional governance systems, the UNDP project on agrobiodiversity, Kaya forests and ecotourism, and the AHRC project on indigenous food systems.

M. Kadilo, Coordinator of RCV informed participants that RCV was established in 2012 and registered in 2013 with support of KEFRI and the SIFOR project. The initiatives of RCV are supported by diverse partners including KEFRI, NMK, UNESCO, the Area Chief, County Government of Kilifi and Kenya Forest Service (KFS). RCV has worked very closely with Kaya elders to conserve Kaya Mudzi Muvya and surrounding forest, and preserve IK and cultural heritage (ie through Rabai's annual New Year festival in October) because there is a lot of modernisation. RCV undertakes a number of conservation and livelihood initiatives including tree nursery establishment, tree planting to rehabilitate degraded forest sites and ecotourism. RCV is composed of 1300 members from three wards (Mawesa, Ruruma, Rabai Kisurutini and Kaliang'ombe).

## 2.3 RCV and Challenges to sustainable management of Kaya forests (L. Mwabaya, Assistant Coordinator, RCV)

Members of RCV come from four areas with Kayas. We've been working to restore forests and natural resources in the landscape, such as trees for building, but face challenges such as grazing in the forest. We have started an indigenous tree nursery to restore Kaya trees with social, cultural and economic value. We have micro-enterprises such as beekeeping and ecotourism, and a website to market RCV ecotourism and network globally, which we manage ourselves along with Facebook and Instagram accounts. We have established a good relationship with an organisation from the US which brings visitors annually, and visits from local tourist have increased (especially school children), and this has increased income. We are hopeful that the number of visitors and hence income will increase. We have experts in RCV who make different products, such as Aisha who is very expert in basketry and weaving.

The main challenges to the conservation and sustainable management of Kaya forests, based on the community's understanding, are:

1. Loss of culture is a big challenge to achieving conservation objectives because of lack of transmission of cultural values and TK from older to younger generations. The youth don't like jobs like farming and forestry and some elders are threatened because some youth view them as witches.
2. Poverty which drives illegal exploitation of forest products for income by the community, ie they harvest big trees and sell them. Alternative income sources will provide a solution.
3. Inadequate collaboration amongst relevant authorities in management of Kaya forests, and poor working relationship between government officials and local community. Working with some government officials at county and sub-county level has been a challenge, especially those with no passion for conservation.
4. Lack of alternative wood products and energy sources notably fuelwood for cooking. If people don't have trees on farms, they get wood from the forest. People don't have the culture of planting trees on-farm to provide fuelwood, but a few homesteads have done this, so others can learn from them.

Key threats to Kaya forests include industrial activities like mining and quarrying, which affects Kaya Mudzi Mwiru in particular; proximity to Mombasa and urban development (ie people moving out of Mombasa, and people commuting), some have also used force to get land from Kayas illegally; negative perception of TK by the youth who don't appreciate Kaya elders; and inadequate mechanisms for succession planning amongst Kaya elders.

The lessons learned and key messages for policy makers are as follows:

- Kaya forests provide unique opportunities for biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods such as bee keeping, production of medicinal herbs, ecotourism.
- Continued degradation of Kaya forests impacts negatively on livelihoods and biodiversity (such as increased cases of human-wildlife conflicts).
- So it is important to conserve our traditional cultural values which are key to sustaining conservation of Kaya forests.
- Traditional crops like cowpeas, cassava, and maize landraces (eg Kanjerenjere) have high nutritional value and are very important for food security and climate change adaptation and should therefore be conserved.
- Community cohesion is very important because it will ensure the BCHT initiative can succeed, and will bring alternative income that is not directly dependent on Kaya forests.

## 2.4 The BCHT Concept: Experiences from Potato Park (Peru) and Stone village (China): What can Kenya learn?

K. Swiderska (IIED) explained that the term 'biocultural heritage' is not a western concept, it reflects the holistic worldview of Indigenous Peoples and traditional local communities, where biodiversity (including landscapes) and cultural heritage (traditional knowledge, cultural and spiritual values and customary laws) are inter-dependent and cannot be separated. The concept was inspired by work with Quechua people in the Andes, and was validated through research with 11 different ethnic groups – including in Mijikenda and Maasai in Kenya. The research found that these interlinkages are evident in Indigenous and traditional peoples' worldviews and exist in practice.

Biocultural heritage territories are mosaics of different land uses, deeply linked to ancestral knowledge and cultural traditions. They combine economic development and food production with conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage. They are collectively governed, new governance institutions are created at landscape level based on customary governance systems and customary laws. They aim to continue and revitalise pre-colonial land stewardship practices; and to establish community-led 'genetic reserves' (in situ gene bank). BCHTs aim to:

- Enhance climate resilience and food security by sustaining natural resources, traditional crops and wild foods (eg Kaya forests and resilient crops in Rabai).
- Promote economic development by developing different value-added products and services based on biodiversity and traditional knowledge (eg ecotourism).
- Protect community rights to land and natural resources (eg from mining, land-grabs), and their rights to self-determination.
- Promote traditional ecological and social values and concepts of holistic wellbeing (eg the Quechua 'Ayllu' concept, and the Rabai 'Mudzini' concept).

The Potato Park biocultural heritage territory in the Andes mountains near Cusco, Peru, has generated multiple benefits. Six Quechua communities joined their lands and registered a collective Potato Park Association in 2002. This has reduced conflicts over natural resources, protected land rights against mining; and empowered communities to influence regional laws. The Potato Park conserves rich crop diversity - c.1377 native potato varieties, of which 400 varieties were repatriated from the International Potato Centre and four potato wild relatives. It also conserves wildlife through sacred mountains and lakes and traditional agroecological farming systems. The Park has tripled crop diversity and enhanced crop productivity and nutrition despite severe climate change impacts; and has revitalised culture, beliefs, rituals, TK, and customary laws/values that promote environmental stewardship and equity



(reciprocity, balance, solidarity)<sup>3</sup>. It has doubled incomes from economic collectives, and its communal fund provides a safety net for the poorest people. It is now largely self-sustaining and self-financing, but the NGO ANDES continues to provide technical support when needed (eg to confront policy threats or resolve community conflicts).

The success and sustainability of the Potato Park is largely due to its strongly community-led and decolonising action-research approach, centred on indigenous knowledge and research methods, which has generated strong community ownership. Action-research projects are facilitated by community researchers from the Potato Park, who are primarily accountable to indigenous village leaders and authorities, rather than to external projects. ANDES provides capacity building for community researchers so that they can take the lead in research design and implementation, and seeks to stimulate the emergence of social movements that persist beyond projects. Economic Collectives bring together TK experts from different villages, strengthening TK and networks between villages – ie medicinal plants; traditional crafts & weaving; women's gastronomy group; ecotourism; potato guardians' group (community seed bank). The Potato Park links neighbouring villages because together they are better able to confront external threats to land and resources such as mining, through collective governance and customary laws. Selling land and using concrete is not allowed. Not everyone will support the BCHT – it is important to monitor this - some people will be against (red), undecided (amber), or convinced (green); continual consensus building is needed.

The Potato Park has been scaled out to establish a Maize Park in Cusco, Peru. These experiences highlight the following key elements and lessons for Rabai:

- FPIC processes should be conducted with village authorities and Kaya elders prior to initiating the process to establish a BCHT and for any projects.
- The traditional governance system provides the critical basis to design a collective governance organisation (one level up).
- Kaya forests and surrounding farms should be mapped out to identify important BCH sites (eg traditional crops, wild crop relatives) through a participatory process to widen the BCHT area and support, identify opportunities for sustainable use, and establish the BCHT boundary and community rights.
- It is important to strengthen legal recognition of rights to land and natural resources (eg forest co-management), and promote international recognition and partnerships.
- Since there are high poverty levels in Rabai, supporting alternative livelihoods should be a key activity.
- It is also important to identify local cultural values for ecological stewardship and equity (eg balance, reciprocity, solidarity) and to link these to the design of all activities.

There are some similarities between the Potato Park and Rabai contexts:

- Traditional 'holistic wellbeing' concepts: 'Ayllu' & 'Mudzini' both emphasise the need to maintain harmonious relationship between humans, nature and the spiritual/sacred world.
- Traditional values: Reciprocity ('Ayni' & 'Kufaana') and Balance (Soyosoyo) with nature, Solidarity (Umwenga), Collectiveness (Kushirikiana)
- Significant climate change impacts, and resilient traditional crops.
- Threats to community land and natural resources from mining
- Tourism potential – beautiful landscapes and rich biocultural heritage.

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<sup>3</sup> See: Asociación ANDES (2016) Resilient Farming Systems in Times of Uncertainty. IIED, London <https://pubs.iied.org/14663iied>

However, there are also some important differences between the Potato Park and Rabai contexts:

Potato Park Biocultural Territory, Peru	Rabai Cultural Landscape, Kenya
Low <b>population</b> density – c. 6,000 people in 10,000 hectares, fairly remote.	High population density – c.80,000 residents in 20,000 hectares; close to city.
<b>Farming</b> is main source of food (only a small part for market)	The market is the main source of food
<b>Traditional culture</b> , values & beliefs are still strong across the population	Traditional culture, values & beliefs are strong amongst Kaya elders
Communal <b>land ownership</b> ; communities joined lands; collective farming	Private land ownership (except Kaya forests)
Strong <b>Indigenous</b> movement, identity & rights	Weaker Indigenous movement; more external interventions.

In Yunnan, Southwest China, the Stone Village and three other villages of the Naxi and related Moso ethnic group have joined forces to establish a Biocultural Heritage Territory Coalition. They were also inspired by the Potato Park in Peru, and have decided to join forces to confront growing climate change impacts (such as a recurring spring drought) by conserving agrobiodiversity and traditional knowledge. Although their lands are not adjacent to one another, they have established a learning network and meet annually to share complementary skills – two of the villages have expertise in participatory plant breeding and community seed banks, while the other two have expertise in traditional Naxi-Moso culture and spiritual beliefs which underpin agrobiodiversity conservation and climate resilience. They also plan to develop some common governance rules to formalise the coalition and its learning activities. This experience shows that it is possible to establish a BCHT in a very different political and legal context to that of Peru – China has a centrally controlled, top-down governance system and communities lease land rather than owning it. However, the BCHT model needs to be adapted to different contexts.

### 2.5 Registration of Community lands under the Community Lands Act 2016: Lessons for registering a BCHT in Rabai - David Arach (NAMATI)

The Darwin project aims to support the establishment of a collective BCHT governance institution in Rabai, which includes elected village elder representatives and Kaya elders from each village. Building on the Potato Park experience, the aim is to legally register a Rabai biocultural territory Association as a community association or CBO, under an appropriate law in Kenya, and to strengthen Rabai’s collective land rights and revitalise customary laws for conservation and equity. NAMATI is an international organisation which aims to support communities to protect their land rights<sup>4</sup>. There are three components of land rights: ownership, control and access. Until 2016, all community lands in Kenya were Trust Lands or Group Ranches. Experience has shown that a community that has a legal title and is disorganised can still lose their land. Therefore, it is very important to strengthen local governance and community organisation. To support communities to be organised and have strong local governance we support communities to document by-laws. Group ranches in Kenya hired lawyers to document their by-laws but that was a huge failure. Community by-laws should come from their own culture, knowledge and life experience, and should be documented using the community’s own language rather than using legal language and terminology. Everyone in the community needs to know the land boundary. We work with communities that want to claim ownership over communal land. The

<sup>4</sup> Kaya forest land is owned by the community, but the County government is the trustee of the land, and NMK gazettes the land.

context in Rabai is different because there is private land as well as community owned land (Kaya forests).

The process of developing rules or by-laws for land governance must be as participatory as possible – all community members should review the existing rules from the ancestors and identify new rules needed (for both Kaya forests and farmland). There can be several drafts, starting with rules that are important for Rabai culture. Then meetings are held with government officials to ensure the community rules don't go against government legislation, and government agencies are asked to endorse the community's rules. Lessons for Rabai: it is necessary to agree as a community how to manage and govern your Kayas and the wider landscape; need detailed and clear rules that you have written yourselves; need community co-leadership structures to implement the rules and need to be organised.

## 2.6 Plenary: Questions and answers session

- How has gender inclusivity been ensured in the establishment of the Potato Park BCHT? SIFOR found that women play a key role in conserving traditional seeds and transmitting TK to younger generations in the Potato Park and Kenya, India and China. But women are often marginalised in household and village decision-making. In the Potato Park, women have majority membership in the enterprise groups and play a leading role in their governance, since men often out-migrate for work. Also, at least 50% of the community researchers are women.
- In the Potato Park, do they have administrators like Chiefs? Yes, but the Potato Park is governed through customary laws and day to day management is done by indigenous village elders who work very closely with community researchers. The local and regional government support the self-governed Potato Park because it is important for agrobiodiversity conservation and tourism.
- In Rabai there is minimal and individual /private land ownership, how to achieve the BCHT concept? Even if land is privately owned, it could still be governed collectively if all land owners agree to a common set of rules or by-laws, based on customary laws, and if a collective governance system is established for Rabai. There could be village level committees that include Kaya elders and village elders and a Rabai landscape level organisation with Kaya elder and village elder representatives from each village, and collective enterprises This could enhance community rights over their territories and natural resources.
- There have been instances of influential people grabbing Kaya land - what role is the County government of Kilifi playing in protecting Kaya forests from external invasion, settlement and infrastructural development? The County Government has prioritised demarcation of Kaya forests and gazettelement of all Kaya forests to enhance their protection. We are having a meeting with CSOs on land grabbing and forest degradation. In Rabai, Kayas are quite well conserved but other Chiefs are not helping to protect forests. The County Executive Committee in charge of lands comes from this area so we will discuss this issue with him and come up with a way forward. Elders should also stop inviting strangers for dining etc if they don't have our culture at heart.
- The Area Chief, Kaya Elders and RCV are at the forefront of Kaya forest conservation – what can be done to stop their victimisation? It is important to engage everyone at village level; all stakeholders should work together to monitor and protect Kayas. The Environment Department can't visit all the Kayas but is sending a warning to those involved in degrading forests.
- The market leads everything – in Rabai there is much influence from the market, so how to ensure conservation? A different type of development is needed that is based on sustaining biodiversity and culture, such as ecotourism and biocultural products.

## 2.7 Overview of Darwin Project: Scope, objectives, activities

(L. Ndalilo, KEFRI) The project '*Establishing a Biocultural Heritage Territory to protect Kenya's Kaya forests*', funded by the Darwin Initiative, will run for three years from October 2021. The main objective of the project is to establish a Biocultural Heritage Territory for conservation and sustainable use of

biodiversity and genetic resources and cultural heritage in four Kaya forests (Bomu, Fimboni, Mudzi Muvya and Mudzi Mwiru) and across the landscape in Rabai Sub-County. The BCHT will be guided by Rabai's traditional holistic wellbeing concepts that integrate conservation and development. The planned activities are to: establish a collective biocultural heritage territory governance institution in Rabai; strengthen capacity to generate sustainable livelihoods; promote use of energy efficient technologies mainly fuel-efficient stoves and briquettes; restoration of degraded areas in Kaya forests; agrobiodiversity conservation for climate resilience and nutrition; and tree growing on-farms.

## 2.8 Formation of a Project Advisory Committee

Participants agreed to establish a project advisory committee which will provide guidance for effective implementation of project initiatives and engage key stakeholders to get their support for the BCHT process. The committee should include representatives from KEFRI (Senior advisor), NMK, KFS, Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation, Kaya elders, Local administration (Area Chiefs), Village elders, RCV/community researchers, County government departments for culture, environment and agriculture and IIED. The committee will comprise about ten members, including women, youth, Christians and Muslims, and will meet virtually every six months. It was agreed that the respective organisations shall consult and forward names of the representatives to the KEFRI project team.

## 2.9 The Potato Park Experience: Key Factors for successful establishment of a BCHT - A. Argumedo (Swift Foundation and ANDES, Peru)

We (the Indigenous NGO ANDES) first engaged in a process of informing, consulting and dialoguing with the community authorities and asked them who to involve in the process. This gave rise to the idea of establishing a collectively governed Potato Park and became an FPIC process and a visioning process. Then we did a mapping of the boundary of the Potato Park with the communities. The next step is to discuss how you are going to manage the area – for that you need a governance body - an association of users, to make sure that the initial visioning becomes the way the area is governed. So you bring together different interests in the communities to think about how you are going to collectively govern the landscape. The governance body is the Potato Park Association, which includes the elected indigenous leaders of each community (ie village) in the landscape.

ANDES then facilitated a process to develop an Inter-Community Agreement to share the benefits from the collective Potato Park enterprises (10% of the profits) equitably amongst communities and avoid conflicts. And then helped get funding to build initial infrastructure for the economic collectives. A Community Seed Bank was built with funds from the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the World Bank (a building specially designed using TK and western knowledge which keeps cool due to air flows over water). A restaurant was built in partnership with an Italian bank. A greenhouse was built with a seed company that supports organic seeds. And we had to build partnerships with research organisations. But those alliances wouldn't have much impact or would be isolating initiatives (ie create divisions between villages) if the community didn't have clear objectives and vision of where it wants to go – so the Potato Park has a Life Plan. The Life Plan establishes a long term vision for the sustainability and resilience of the Potato Park – that is key in the case of the Potato Park and brings unity with respect to the vision of the community. So in many ways the Life Plan is also a policy process.

Then we had to decide how to monitor our activities. For the alliance with CIP for repatriation of native potatoes (that had been collected from the communities but then were locally lost), we decided to monitor through transects to see how fast varieties are moving up the mountain due to climate change related pests and monitor the diversity of potatoes and other crops. But monitoring biodiversity is not enough, communities also need to monitor TK and how it's being transmitted to new generations by involving youth, doing art contests in Quechua language, and through cooking as using traditional foods keeps the knowledge and language alive. This type of monitoring requires tools that are policy tools.

Monitoring also needs to be useful for communities, who need local tools to manage and evaluate their work on biodiversity, seeds, TK, economy and the institutions that are important for this work. The Potato Park communities have contributed to developing local laws (against biopiracy and GMOs), worked with national government to establish the National Day of the Potato, and worked with the FAO Treaty and Svalbard to deposit its seed collection. These activities (including the repatriation agreement between the Potato Park Association and CIP) have created a de facto claim of autonomy by communities, and also helped the national government of Peru to claim ownership of resources that were otherwise in the hands of global gene banks and companies. Locally we have different tools, like the inter-community agreement and by-laws for each micro-enterprise linked to the agreement; agreements for land donation from communities to the Potato Park, so that land belongs to all communities (for Potato Park activities). All these internal agreements are done following customary laws.

Communities need to think about knowledge management and how to communicate the work internally and with the rest of the world, such as via social media, how the youth participate in producing videos or documentaries – it is necessary to use all those opportunities to sell the vision of the community – not just the work, but the vision because that can contribute to global discussions on conservation and development. To engage with policy issues communities, need partners – in our case they work in partnership with ANDES. The communities decide about the process in their communities, and ANDES supports them, provides knowledge and helps them to defend their land against mining and other threats, “because what unites us is that we are Indigenous Peoples that are trying to defend our heritage”.

How to do things so they contribute to national policies? We look for a framework that covers all our interests with respect to conservation of biodiversity, TK and culture. But we didn't find an existing concept that did that – even ‘biocultural diversity’ is not that helpful as although it recognizes the links between biological and cultural diversity it is about biocultural diversity indexing at national and global level. So we created the concept of biocultural heritage with you (KEFRI and Mijikenda communities) and other partners and communities. Peru uses global categories of conservation for protecting biodiversity but these concepts and models just allow land grabs for conservation, Yellowstone National Park in the US for example, was the first park where Indigenous Peoples were expelled and killed and this model of conservation which separates people and nature has been replicated across the world, and we want a model that links people and nature. Therefore, we need a different kind of policy framework that is focused on biocultural heritage (BCH) because no existing policies protect BCH. We have used Peru's Agrobiodiversity Zone law to register and protect the Potato Park as a Biocultural Heritage Territory, where, through food systems, communities conserve biodiversity and ecosystems. There is a need to create new frameworks that fit community needs, so they don't need to use IUCN Category V Protected Areas ('Protected Landscape'), and to bring together policy makers and communities to develop a new framework that contributes to conservation based on the local reality.

### Question and Answers on the Potato Park

- How to handle biopiracy involving IK and practices relating to plant and animals uses? When we established the Potato Park, we included a clause declaring the Potato Park free of biopiracy and that led us to work with the regional government of Cusco to develop a law against biopiracy, which has helped us a couple of times (for example, National Geographic was found collecting blood from a tribe in the mountains). Biopiracy is also an international issue as it is linked to international law and WIPO – while we can do things locally, trade agreements can override local efforts. Peru has an agreement with the US which allows biopiracy. So there is a need to work at both local and international level.
- When the Potato Park was established, what challenges did it encounter at the start? The initial process brought together key members of the community, we were just dreaming and visioning and that took two years (from 1998). We had the first community-wide meeting in 2000. The biggest challenge is how to keep the community together since some people put private interests over collective interests. We've overcome that by using customary laws, because using statutory laws does not support the way people fix things locally.

- What kind of challenges have you encountered in establishing and managing nature-based enterprises, eg access to markets? Membership of economic collectives is a challenge as communities want to change membership of groups far too soon – to learn properly they need more time than one year, as they don't have enough resources or funding to provide training very fast, so a two-year membership would be best, and people can do their own thing privately. The problem is not a shortage of investment but the business model.
- The Constitution of Kenya allows for alternative conflict resolution – elders can handle conflicts at village level. Does the Potato Park have a Kaya elders' court for conflict resolution? Peru's Constitution allows communities to use their own system of law, eg for any kind of family conflict. For infidelity, the Potato Park can expel people from the community. And because land is collectively owned, community elders can be called to resolve conflicts as they have the necessary knowledge.
- In some Rabai villages, village elders are not elected by village members but are appointed by Area Assistant Chiefs and are accountable to them. Previously, village elders were elected by the community, but Assistant Chiefs assumed power due to security issues/criminal activities. There are ten sub-locations in Rabai (each comprises 1-2 villages), and nine Assistant Chiefs and three or four Chiefs. Kaya elders are traditionally the leaders of the whole landscape, and the Kaya court rules over the whole landscape not just the Kayas; there is a need to strengthen its recognition.

## Day 3: Planning the approach and activities (23 February 2022)

The meeting was attended by Kaya elders, community researchers, researchers from KEFRI and IIED, and land rights experts from IIED and NAMATI. It began with prayers from a Kaya elder, and Kaya elders were then invited to provide any feedback or suggestions on the proposed BCHT and Darwin project discussed over the previous two days.

### 3.1 Kaya Elders' perspectives on the BCHT approach and Kaya forest conservation

- Most of us can't read or write. We are very happy with the project and committed to it. There is a need to restore degraded Kaya areas. We didn't choose to be Kaya elders; selection is through the lineage and a spiritual thing.
- We appreciate that the project has involved us fully from the start. United we stand, divided we fall – it will be very easy to achieve our objective if we work together as a team and can learn from each other.
- There is a lot of degradation because of the notion that people are allowed to use the trees. In Peru, they have accepted who they are, but in Rabai we embrace modernity – children go to school, become Christian or Muslim, and have little time to learn about Rabai culture and TK. So first we need to educate people that we are Rabais. It will not be easy. We believe foreign religion and foreign projects are better than our own.
- The elders expressed concern over interference with customary courts by the government which has barred them from arbitrating over some issues such as witchcraft allegations and land disputes leading to animosity in the community. Only Rabai and Meru people have customary courts – these bring people together and reduce animosity. They emphasised that customary courts are effective in addressing local conflicts and land disputes unlike conventional policing approaches and requested a meeting with the Chief to raise this issue. Previously land was given to the eldest son so it was divided and land disputes were not such an issue, but today youths sometimes kill people to get justice.
- Previously, Palm trees used to be respected, people could not cut them down as that was considered an abomination and the elders used to fine people, but now everyone is free and people say the trees are their grandfather's property. There used to be procedures and rituals before planting, but that is no longer happening, we should go back to our communities, create awareness and bring this back. Whenever people went to Kaya forests, they were required to clear access paths and if they didn't do so they would be charged a hen as a penalty. The Area Chief back then, Gonda, stopped that practice because he said people were stealing from the forest.
- Before Kaya Mudzi Muvya had been heavily degraded and we had meetings and forums which helped restore the forest, but people are degrading it again. In the past, young people were not allowed to go to the forest or do any illegal activities; and only every 3 months would women be allowed to fetch firewood that had fallen, so there was a clear system, but now everyone is free and there is no control. The administration is not serious, when we report illegal activities, nothing happens. We should have a serious meeting with the Area Chief.
- The previous governments of Presidents Kenyatta and Moi had a lot of respect for traditional governance systems and worked very closely with Kaya elders through the Chiefs unlike the current regime. The Chiefs would involve Kaya elders to go to Holy places to conduct rituals to bring harmony to villages across the country. But now those systems don't operate anymore with Presidents Kibaki and Uhuru - they believe they are Christians and Muslims. The Kaya elders' powers have been reduced and the County Department of Culture can help to bring back traditional culture and rules for natural resource management at the community level.

### 3.2 Decolonising action-research approach used in the Potato Park: Key principles and steps - K. Swiderska (IIED)

The Potato Park's decolonising action-research approach, methods and tools, developed by ANDES and Quechua communities, has been key to its success. Decolonising approaches seek to revitalise pre-colonial cultures and traditional knowledge systems, by using traditional concepts, research methods and languages. In the Potato Park, many people are also illiterate, but community researchers use audio-visual methods (such as stories, voice recordings and videos) that reinforce oral traditions. Decolonising methods seek to promote TK transmission from elders to youth by using traditional research methods such as participatory transect walks and story-telling, and reviving traditional fora for TK transmission such as the Rome in Rabai. Traditional research methods can be combined with participatory methods. Some key lessons on decolonising approaches from the Potato Park are as follows:

- The process to establish a BCHT should be led by communities themselves – Kaya elders, village leaders and village members (participatory decision-making), and external organisations like KEFRI and IIED should provide support but should not lead the process (ie make decisions about activities and implementation without community approval).
- The first step should always be a FPIC process, for the proposed BCHT and for any proposed project, and each key activity – this is a power-equalising process because communities can deny consent or impose conditions, after being given full information and the chance to deliberate. They can reframe key concepts and adapt objectives and questions to their own traditional concepts and needs.
- Community empowerment is a key objective – strengthening capacity of communities to conduct their own research, to address external threats and influence policy. Traditional community protocols are followed and priority is given to traditional knowledge systems and research methods (for data collection, recording, analysing and storing data). The aim is to build a knowledge base within communities – for example, through the use of a specially designed smart phone app linked to a community database.
- Community researchers are selected by community authorities (ie Kaya elders and village leaders/assemblies) and are primarily accountable to them rather than to external projects/partners. They are TK experts who take the lead in designing action-research methods and activities, through research co-design and capacity strengthening workshops.

### 3.3 Planning for the Darwin project activities

- K. Swiderska suggested that the process to establish a BCHT in Rabai could begin with three main activities: a community consultative process to discuss the BCHT idea and develop a common vision and objectives, mapping of the territory boundary and establishment of a collective governance system (institution and key principles to implement the vision), building on Peru's experience. She emphasised the need for regular consultative meetings between Kaya elders, village elders and community researchers, to ensure the process is community-led. However, in the case of Rabai, poverty is a key issue which also needs to be addressed to engage community members.
- The main objective of the Darwin project is to conserve Rabai Kaya forests through reduction of forest destruction activities since Kaya forests have unique tree species and the elephant-shrew which are endemic and threatened. In order to achieve this, a number of livelihood activities are proposed. They include broom making and basketry (brooms will be collected through collection centres); production of energy saving stoves (need clay soil to make them); production of virgin coconut oil, beehives and honey and briquette making. The project proposes to target 1600 poor households that are most dependent on Kaya forests.
- The livelihood activities can be stationed in different villages and members of other villages are free to join as members to enhance social cohesion. Farmers Field Schools are proposed to revitalise agrobiodiversity conservation and strengthen TK-based farming practices related to these crops.



- The project also proposes to support annual biocultural festivals to share TK practices, enhance seed exchange and share project results. It was suggested that members of other Mijikenda communities as well as Government officials from other counties could be invited to participate in the traditional festivals (like Rabai's New Year festival in late October) to promote replication of BCHAT in other Mijikenda communities, which is a long-term project objective.
- The Rabai 'Mudzini' holistic wellbeing concept could provide the guiding vision or goal for the BCHAT in Rabai, and Rabai cultural values of Reciprocity or 'Kufaana', Balance with nature 'Soyosoyo', Solidarity 'Umwenga' and Collectiveness 'Kushirikiana' could provide its guiding principles. It might be useful to develop a pictorial illustration of the Mudzini concept and these principles to emphasise them during community sensitisation meetings. This is because traditional values underpin conservation of Kaya forests and farming landscapes, and the Peruvian model succeeded because of being anchored in cultural values. The aim is also to strengthen the traditional governance system, and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms such as the Kaya Court. What do you think about the proposed activities?

### Questions and Discussion with Kaya Elders

- Some of the poor people degrading Kaya forests come from further away. During implementation of the livelihoods activities, does the project propose to only involve poor households close to Kayas or others too? Will there be a specific number of people managing the livelihoods activities or is that open? How will we involve disabled people? The project aims to target 1600 poor households that are degrading Kaya forests, including those that are further away, we hope you can help identify those households. We hope that you can also help to design the livelihoods activities.
- Rome can be strengthened to promote TK transmission to youth – normally it was in every household, but it can be done at village level.
- We used to have Chiefs that would bring community members in every Monday and tell Kaya elders about government plans and security matters, but this doesn't happen now. Some Chiefs don't have the community at heart. We could involve the County Assembly – elected local MPs, and Assistant County and Deputy County Commissioners. Before Chiefs used to be elected by community members, and village elders were elected - they should be elected by the community but Chiefs want to hand pick them.
- The elephant shrew population has gone down because they are eaten by people and because big trees which are their habitat are cut down. The Rabai community really depends on bushmeat so the wildlife population is decreasing in Kayas. Animals like monkeys and baboons are often targeted. The community has also destroyed fruit trees in Kayas so the wildlife is eating crops and attacking domestic animals. We need to create awareness of potential of wild animals to attract tourists.
- Suggest you start with briquette making machines and fuel efficient stoves and distribute them to communities bordering the forest, as that will be one way to protect the forest.
- It will be important to involve youth in sensitisation activities, and that might make youth more likely to become Kaya elders, especially if there are also economic benefits as that is a key obstacle (and there are very few young Kaya elders). Being a Kaya elder is also based on clannism and spirituality; they can only have one wife and she has to be from Rabai. More flexible rules are not possible as the rules have come from our ancestors; and Kaya elders must be upright and have a clean record of good behaviour.

### 3.4 Monitoring and evaluation framework for the project

- K. Swiderska explained that M&E is important for the Darwin project as it is funded by the UK government (using tax-payers' money). We have identified proposed indicators to establish a baseline at the beginning of the project, and assess changes at the mid-term and at the end of the project. The indicators focus on: income levels; gender inclusivity, community and Kaya elders' empowerment; forest degradation status (tree density and diversity); attitudes towards Kaya elders;

and levels of community involvement in cultural ceremonies. It would be great to review and refine the proposed indicators with the community before conducting the baseline survey.

- Alongside the project-led M&E surveys, participatory M&E could also be conducted in line with the community-led BCHAT approach, ie using a 'Most Significant Change' approach. Members of the community or each village can agree on the broad areas they would like to monitor, such as changes in Kaya forest conservation, livelihoods, traditional knowledge, culture and gender at the beginning of the BCHAT process, and 'stories of change' can be documented by community researchers and shared by villagers and Kaya elders at annual community meetings, to promote learning and inspire action. The community can continue using this approach beyond the Darwin project if they find it useful.
- Kaya elders expressed support for this participatory M&E approach, which they suggested could also enhance respect for Kaya elders from the community.

### 3.5 Conclusions and next steps

- The process to establish a BCHAT in Rabai will most likely go beyond the 3-year Darwin project period. For instance, it is likely to take more than one year for community consultations and visioning on the BCHAT objectives, governance structure and key principles. Community by-laws could be developed for the BCHAT, and registered under the National Museums and Heritage Act for Kaya forests and under the Community Lands Act for private land and a very small area of common land in Rabai.
- There is further need to sensitise the local chiefs and assistant chiefs in the BCHAT process to enhance their support.
- KEFRI will hold a meeting to sensitise Rabai's Area Chiefs to enhance their understanding of BCHAT process since they can play an instrumental role in mobilising and creating awareness in the community for effective establishment of a BCHAT and implementation of project activities. A power point presentation from Peru will be made to the Chiefs during this meeting to present the Potato Park experience.
- Village level meetings will also be held to sensitise the wider community on the proposed BCHAT and develop a common vision. The meetings will also be used to refine the proposed indicators for data collection for the baseline survey. Discussions will also be held on modalities for implementation of livelihood initiatives, and key decisions regarding implementation will be made by members of the community.
- It was agreed that village-based *Romes* (TK transfer family meetings) will be used to enhance TK transfer to the youth.
- Participants agreed on the need to develop village level committees to oversee day to day running of livelihood enterprises among other project activities. The village level committees shall report to the overall project management committee comprising of Kaya elders, village elders and community researchers. Youth and women representation in these committees should be ensured.
- The first step should be an FPIC process for the Darwin project, to enable Kaya elders and village elders and members to deliberate on the proposed project, impose conditions or deny consent. Then the M&E indicators and tools should be co-developed and the baseline survey should be conducted as soon as possible.
- A data management plan will also be developed for the project, to ensure compliance with data protection legislation in the UK. Ideally a community database should also be developed that is accessible to KEFRI and members of Rabai community, to build a knowledge base within the community and protect traditional knowledge (but this is likely to require additional funds).

## Annex 1 - List of participants

No.	Name	Organisation	Designation
1	Mohammed Kadilo	RCV	Coordinator
2	Lenox Mwabaya	RCV	Assistant coordinator
3	Omar Chembe	Mvere	Kaya Elder
3	Mary Komora	Mgumo wa Patsa	Village elder
4	Salma Chiringa	KEFRI	Community researcher
5	Said N Kombo	Bwagamoyo	Village elder
6	Patience N Ndara	Mleji	Village elder
7	Khadija M Kassim	Kaliang'ombe	Village elder
8	Lawrence Chiro	NMK	Project officer
9	Gande Mwambubari	RCV	Kaya Elder
10	George Kadilo	RCV	Village elder
11	Justin Mwambaji	Miyuni	Village elder
12	Felix Ireri	County government of Kilifi	Agricultural officer
13	Jumaa B Mrisa	Bora	Kaya elder
14	James Ndufa	KEFRI	DD/FBEM
15	Jane Njuguna	KEFRI	SSD/R&D
16	Joshua Cheboiwo	KEFRI	Director
17	Krystyna Swiderska	IIED	Researcher
18	Musingo Mbuvi	KEFRI	DD/FRSS
19	Linus Wekesa	KEFRI	RD/Coast
20	Parmenas Tsui Denje	RCV	Village elder
21	Hare Mdigo	RCV	Kaya Elder
22	Ishamail Kaume	County government of Kilifi	County Director for Culture
23	Baya Zaka	RCV	Kaya elder
24	Fondo Kaita	RCV	Kaya elder
25	Aisha Juma	RCV	Community researcher
26	Chome Shehe	RCV	Kaya elder
27	Brendan Schwartz	IIED	Researcher
28	Leila Ndalilo	KEFRI	Scientist
29	David Arach	NAMATI	Manager

No.	Name	Organisation	Designation
30	Ambroze Kingada	Rabai Museum	Curator
31	Fondo Virungu	RCV	Kaya elder
32	Neema Mwango	County government of Kilifi	Environmental officer
33	Dorine K Musya	Jimba	Village elder
34	Catherine Ngome	Mwamtsunga	Village elder
35	William Ngale	Buni Rabai	Village elder
36	Garero Daniel	RCV	Village elder
37	Robert Mwatela	RCV	Driver
38	Anthony Jao	Ministry of interior and coordination of national government	Chief
39	Truphena Njaka	KFS	Forester
40	Mpini Swafi	RCV	Kaya elder
41	Jobu Benaya	RCV	Kaya elder
42	Chemuku Wekesa	KEFRI	Scientist
43	Florence Mwanziu	KEFRI	Dissemination Officer
44	Julius Kazungu	KEFRI	Driver
45	Abigael Kisali	KEFRI	Secretary
46	Aggrey M Hamiltone	KEFRI	Accountant

Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI), in collaboration with IIED, is implementing the project 'Establishing a Biocultural Heritage Territory to protect Kenya's Kaya forests' in the Rabai Mijikenda community. Rabai sub-county forms part of the Coastal Forests global biodiversity hotspot, currently under threat. The project aims to conserve biodiversity and genetic resources in four sacred Kaya forests and across the landscape. It also aims to enhance livelihoods and establish a community institution for collective governance of the Rabai Biocultural Heritage Territory.

The project launch workshop brought together the community and key government agencies to discuss and plan the project and develop a common vision for establishing a community-led Biocultural Heritage Territory in Rabai.



## Event Materials

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### Food Systems, Natural Resource Management

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*Keywords:*  
Biocultural Heritage, Food Systems,  
Indigenous Peoples, Traditional Knowledge



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