

EWASO NYIRO RIVER CAMEL CARAVAN

"Strengthening Governance Systems to enhance conservation and a peaceful co-existence along the Ewaso Ng'iro Ecosystem",



10TH EDITION 18TH - 23RD JUNE, 2022

INTRODUCTION

The Ewaso Ng'iro river unifies and divides communities in the basin in equal measure. In this period of increasing human population, large-scale agricultural activities, infrastructure development, and climate change, the river dries up, gets polluted, and contested.

Water users, including communities, livestock & wildlife, the public sector, and corporate entities, both upstream, middle, and downstream, often lack a shared understanding of the threats facing the river system and fail to effectively collaborate around integrated water resources management. This leads to conflicts and an escalation of the threats facing the river systems.

In the past few years, the socio-economic livelihoods of pastoralists in the North of Kenya have seen a steady decline. The decreasing water levels in the wider Ewaso Ng'iro Catchment has continued to be a source of conflict, displacement, and loss of lives. Water volume has reduced drastically <https://www.impactkenya.org/post/the-dying-lake-ol-bolosat> , at times, dried up completely. Competition for access to this water has resulted in bloody conflicts amongst different user groups. The unregulated extraction of water by the farming community upstream has contributed largely to the drying of the river.

IMPACT has, since 2013, been conducting the annual 5-day walk Ewaso Ng'iro Camel Caravan along the Ewaso Nyiro Ecosystem to try and assist the communities in the area create awareness of their plight. The Camel caravan has been successful in encouraging the government and other stakeholders to come together with the aim of addressing the pressing water challenges and conflict connected with it.

The theme of the Camel Caravan 2022 was *"Strengthening Governance Systems to enhance conservation and a peaceful co-existence along the Ewaso Ng'iro Ecosystem"*, this walk gathered different stakeholders (including up, mid and downstream community members, state agencies, and international governmental and non-governmental organizations) to agree on solutions relating to the river's conservation. As such, we advocated for a peaceful co-existence along the stream and equitable sharing of scarce resources, created awareness on the shrinkage of the Ewaso Ng'iro and its consequences on pastoralist livelihoods and Captured the attention of domestic and global decision-makers to institutionalize local voices into policy.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this year activity is to:

- Create awareness on the importance of conserving water catchment areas.
- Create a platform for indigenous communities to interact and embrace cultural diversity.
- Identify peace strategies that will help in the mitigation of conflicts among the pastoralist communities.
- Raise the profile of ecological threats and human activities and other threats facing Ewaso Ng'iro River through community and media advocacy
- Encourage "water for peace" through promoting a peaceful co-existence between and among the community's residents in and bordering the Ewaso Ng'iro Basin
- Consolidate and motivate like-minded partners to take a lead in conserving the river
- Positively influencing inter-governmental (inter-county and county-national) discussions and action in conserving the river, and ensuring the coordinated commitment to resources allocation.
- Advocate that the government come up with policies that will help in saving the river, which is on the verge of drying up.
- Advocate for the protection of the unprotected wetlands such as Lorian Swamp
- Advocate for the enactment and implementation of water tapping, and waste disposal policies in the upper basin.
- Advocate for the need for the government to involve communities and other stakeholders like the ranches, conservancies, eco-lodges, and tourist camps in mega projects.



METHODOLOGY

This year's Camel Caravan was planned around looking back at the recommendations from the previous Camel Caravans, after analyzing the impact of the camel caravan since its inception, it was resolved that there is need to reverse the flow by walking upstream and involving farming communities, conservancies, water resource users' associations and private farms in this walk to save the Ewaso Ng'iro river.

There is a need to make these communities understand the impact of their activities upstream to the pastoral communities in the mid and lower parts of the stream and for the stakeholders and partners to address the challenges facing the river with farmers' communities upstream and bring on board pastoralist communities from the lower stream.

18 JUNE 2022

The team left Nanyuki on Saturday 18th of June for Oldonyiro. The Impact team arrived in the evening and prepared the setting for a meeting with the community. In attendance were: The World Peace Service coordinators, Isiolo Assistant County Commissioner, Isiolo Peace Link (IPL) Ewaso Ng'iro North Development Authority (ENNDA), Merti Integrated Development – Programme (MID -P), Community Water Resource Users Association (WRAUS), Group ranch Chairmen, Community Representatives from Ilmotiok, Oldonyiro, Kimanjo, and Kurikuri. Red Cross, Impact Staff, Isiolo Youth Representatives.

The night was carried with a very powerful performance from one local artist, it is said that music is the great uniter. An incredible force. Something that people who differ on everything and anything else can have in common. The community members came from every direction and joined us as we sang the night away.



19 JUNE 2022

The event was flagged off at Oldonyiro by the Assistant County Commissioner, Isiolo county with the blessings of the local community elders. The Caravan left Oldonyiro and headed for Ilmotiok bridge passing through lobarishoreki village and Koiya group ranch, covering 24.63Kms at 7:12AM an elevation of 431 Meters with the highest elevation being 1771 Meters, the team arrived at Ilmotiok bridge at around 14:15Hr covering the whole distance in 7Hrs 15Minutes. Instead of resting from the long trek, we embraced the drizzle that came that evening, and took some time to step outside and walk in the rain as we breathed in the chilly, fresh air to relax our bodies.

The community members were shown a documentary of the Camel Caravan of 2019, which highlighted some of the challenges to be discussed during the walk. The community members were given an opportunity to express themselves through illustrations and messages on a canvas in a bid to push the drive.



20 JUNE 2022

The team left Ilmotiok bridge at 07:00Hrs headed for Olmaisor Center passing through Impala ranch, Epan Farm, Sosian Ranch, and Suyan Ranch walking in the wild. Just in case you thought elephants were all sweetness, I can attest to the fact that this one had the time of her life scaring the bejesus out of us, she was so close when the rangers were forced to shoot in the air to scare the Jumbo.

With a few stops on the way we arrived at 14:29 hrs having covered 29.27Kms, the plan to have a tree planting activity at the dispensary and at Olmaisor primary was temporarily delayed due to the heavy rains that beat down our tents in its fury, with the silver lining of holes having been dug earlier in the day. Which forced the contingency plan of implementing the exercise the next day in the morning after consultations with the local administration.



21st June 2022

The Caravan team began the tree planting activity at the dispensary early in the morning spearheaded by ENNDA and later at Olmaisor primary school, the schools reception was very welcoming from both the teachers and the pupils. We began our trek for the day that covered 28Kms to Fiesta resort in Rumuruti town where we rested and enjoyed the chilly evening with traditional music from different communities.



22nd June 2022.

The Caravan team was divided into 2 groups, one visited Gatundia secondary school in Melwa village, Rumuruti to educate the students on the importance of conserving our ecosystems. Together with the area chief, teachers and students they took part in a tree-planting activity and gave the school 80 Indigenous trees to be planted and taken care of by the students.

The second team headed to the shores of Lake Olbolossat and met with the communities upstream, they engaged in conversations as they expressed the challenges faced by the communities that benefit from the Ewaso Ng'iro ecosystem. They also discussed ways in which together they could conserve and protect the Ewaso Ng'iro river which is their main source of livelihood. Community representatives from Lake Olbolossat joined the team back in Rumuruti for the final event, where they dance their evening away in a cultural night which was a great way to learn about the different cultures of the people of Ewaso Ng'iro ecosystem, it included performances from different communities, nyama choma, dance and meals and so much more





23rd June 2022.

The final event of the Camel Caravan walk was held at the Fiesta resort in Rumuruti, with representatives from the German embassy, National government, County Government of Laikipia, WRUAs, WRA, and CSOs. This day majorly focused on recommendations from different stakeholders on what could be done to avert the slow death of the Ewasong'iro ecosystem and its headwaters Lake Olbolossat



CHALLENGES AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY STAKEHOLDERS

STATEMENT	CHALLENGES	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS
(Up-stream)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The boundary of the lake is not defined • Destruction of catchment areas. • Human-wildlife conflicts. • Planting of eucalyptus trees which consume a lot of water. • People settling and farming along the riparian areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake boundaries should be marked • Community sensitization • An exchange visit to the communities downstream. • Next year the caravan destination should be lake olbolossat. • People should use alternative sources of fuel to avoid cutting down trees. • Eco-tourism activities should be introduced in the area. • Kenya wildlife service station should be put up at lake olbolossat to respond to human-wildlife conflicts. • The development of the lake olbolossat master plan
(Mid-stream)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water pollution • Illegal water diversion for horticulture. • Use of chemicals in farming by communities' upstream poison the water that flows downstream. • Community incitement by politicians prevents inter-community dialogue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a management plan for the whole ecosystem.
(Down-stream)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sand harvesting • Conflicts over natural resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The law should be enforced to prevent sand harvesting • Resettlement of the people who have encroached on lake olbolossat • The flow of water should be regulated to reduce the amount of water diverted to farms
St. Martin Rumuruti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non- Inclusivity • Water diversion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children involvement • Consultation and dialogues
CJPC Nyahururu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought • Climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing pasture • Promote planting of indigenous trees and fruit trees. • Promote food security through agro ecology and pharmaceutical.



<p>WRA sub-regional office</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water scarcity • Illegal abstraction of water • Degradation of Water catchment areas • Water resources pollution with agrochemicals, washing clothes and cars, and direct livestock watering. • Droughts and floods • Water use conflicts between human & human and human & wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WRUAs capacity building on integrated water resources management and cooperative sharing. • Rehabilitation of degraded water catchment areas by growing of water-friendly trees. • Mark and peg all riparian areas for conservation purposes. • Remove blue gum trees along the water catchment and riparian areas. • Plant trees on the farmlands. • Regularize the abstractions through permitting and enforcing conditions. • Promote water harvesting techniques. • Construction of common water intakes, communal water points and livestock watering troughs at strategic points • Networking and collaborating with other stakeholders. • Implementation of the WRUA SCMPs in place and review of the progress.
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“Water conflict caused the death of my 85 year old grandmother and 11 year old nephew due to drought, I started walking the Camel Caravan in 2015 to help save the dying Ewaso Ng’iro river”

~ Mzee Forole Salesa from Isiolo.

The pastoralists communities downstream have been experiencing severe droughts over the years leaving them with very scarce resources, increasing the risk of resource based conflict leading to loss of livelihoods, and death.



SUCCESS

The successes achieved by Camel Caravan are the following:

- It created a conducive environment for effective dialogues and information flow relating to conservation between different stakeholders. Such consultative and integrated stakeholder approach is fundamental to the implementation of a peace strategy.
- It achieved coverage on national media, such as the Nation. This is beneficial to stimulate greater awareness on the need for conservation. In turn, this can motivate decision-makers to create conservation policies.
- It empowered local communities on an economic level, by employing women groups to make peace bracelets for the event, and on a social level, by unifying diverse pastoralist perspectives into one strong, common voice to achieve greater recognition of their problems.
- It ensured that the stakeholder dialogues are inclusive of women and the youth, this inclusivity is reinforced by the bottom-up approach used by IMPACT to brainstorm a conservation model of the Ewaso Ng'iro, where communities self-organize and are viewed as self-sufficient to solve their problems.

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED

The challenges faced by Camel Caravan are the following:

- The absence of ranch and farm owners and WARMA state agency impedes the effectiveness of the dialogue since some key stakeholders are reluctant to join.
- There is a gap between government policies of conservation and implementation. For instance, the government must hold forest-burners accountable for their actions by sanctioning them. Similarly, it should also investigate whether the pumping of the lake Ol Bollosat, that downstream communities claim happens during the night, occurs.
- The establishment of riparian areas (from 6 to 30 meters from the highest point of the lake / river) can only happen if the owner of the land on which sits this area is willing to engage in a dialogue with the Water Resource Authority. The reluctance of land-owners poses a huge threat since the WRA does not have the power to impose the protection of these 6 to 30 meters.
- Water bodies are public properties, this leads to the free-rider problem, whereby community members do not internalize the external cost of water over-exploitation and engage in activities that harm the society's general welfare.
- The hostility between upstream towards downstream communities (and vice-versa) makes it harder for them to reach a consensus on what should be done. Although a lot of discussion have taken place, there is no agreement on what steps should be taken next, and more importantly, who is responsible to implement them.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations to improve the conservation of the Ewaso Ng'iro and ensure the Camel Caravan's objectives are attained are:

- Conduct research to validate or not the upstream communities claim that the underground they use for irrigation is not linked to the lake's surface water. It is important that the findings of this research are recognized and trusted by all stakeholders. To ensure this, community members from all parts of the river could be involved in undertaking the research, since being part of this process increases the legitimacy of the results.
- Create a platform to facilitate communication between upstream and downstream communities in order to increase the latter's resilience to changing weather.
- Write a statement including all community voices to capture the government's attention and ensure that, besides the creation of new regulations on eucalyptus or on riparian areas, the existing laws are carefully implemented. This will reduce the gap between policy creation and implementation.
- Sensitize and educate upstream and midstream communities on the need to conserve the river and the adverse impacts of intensive agriculture and using pesticides which make the water poisonous and have harmful effects on downstream communities.
- Evaluate the feasibility of putting fences up, and subsequently, facilitate their construction by raising a fund for fencing for example.

PARTNERS




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