

## **SUSTAINABILITY, PEACE AND SECURITY**

### **Conflict mitigation for environmental education and restoration within the local communities of Kenya, specifically the Maai Mahiu Rift Valley province**

#### **Green Cross in cooperation with Green Belt Movement**

Within the region of west central Kenya, in Rift Valley, live the peoples of the Maasai and the Kikuyu. The Maasai are herdsman and the Kikuyu farmers. Both utilize the same natural resources for their livelihood. Resource depletion and environmental degradation have increased due to over grazing and deforestation, which in turn has effected the rainfall period and led to a shortage of fresh water. With an increase in population in the region major conflicts have developed, as a result of the competition for land and water, a clash between the herdsman and the farmers. Furthermore the background to the hardening conflict has its' origin in the division of land, where in 1968 areas that were once Maasai were sold by ranchers to the Kikuyu via cooperatives.

The local conflicts exist in relation to a larger context of inequity. Global markets have created a gridlock forcing the prices of locally produced products down to minimum compensation (for ex. coffee, tea, fruit and vegetables) whereby the pressure on the natural environment and between the peoples is increased. Inequity in combination with political instability since colonial times has made corruption widespread, whereby managing natural resources and the basic necessities within the infrastructure are a great challenge.

Long term conflict prevention is a prerequisite for sustainable development. The ability to sustain natural resources is of mutual interest to secure the livelihood for the peoples in the Maai Mahiu Rift Valley Province.

The project goal is conflict mitigation and environmental restoration by uniting efforts within the communities of Maai Mahiu. The goal is twofold, to begin a process of reconciliation between the Maasai and the Kikuyu, and the planting of 100 000 trees in the region. The method is a combination of dialog, education and bringing people together in environmental work. The education aims to promote a mutual understanding to the causes of the environmental degradation and to the long term benefits of cooperation

The Green Belt Movement facilitates the practical work in Rift Valley. The process begins with making contacts within each community. Dialogue is initiated with elders and leaders, followed by meetings with the actual community. In succession larger group workshop and seminars will be held. Finally both the Maasai- and Kikuyu will meet together within workshops, combined with seminars, during a three day period. They will take part in environmental education, learning the basics of plant schools, tree planting and water harvesting. For each tree that survives 10 Kshs are paid to the caretaker.

Within past GBM projects it is often the women who take the initiative in the tree planting. This in turn has produced a sense of empowerment for the women in local communities. The project aims to cultivate the commitment of the people, whereby to secure long term management and insure the management of the natural resources. The status of trees and water harvesting in the various areas will be monitored, followed by regular discussions and interviews with the caretakers.

The role of Green Cross Sweden, in cooperation with Green Cross Japan, is to coordinate the administrative management and importantly document the process in Maai Mahiu. Be it water, land or energy resources today all over the world there is an ever intensifying battle for natural resources. The basic elements of peace are in direct relation to sustainability and environmental security. The Rift Valley project is not only a case study and attempt towards conflict resolution, resource equity and environmental restoration in local Kenyan communities - but symbolic for the world. The documentation of this project will be used to spread new perspective and methods for mediating similar patterns of environmental conflicts.

The Green Belt Movement was founded in 1977 by Professor Wangari Maathai, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 for her commitment to peace, democracy, equity and sustainable development, all the elements of global security. The Green Belt Movement has 25 years of successful experience and has thus far planted more than 30 millions of trees in Africa. The International Green Cross, today in 30 countries, was established in 1993 by Mikhail Gorbachev, a Nobel Peace Laureate. The Green Cross supports the opportunity for Indigenous peoples and civil societies within developing countries to attain empowerment to resolve their own differences, to create self sufficiency and the leadership of women. Green Cross Sweden and this project initiative for peace, sustainability and security are funded by the Folke Bernadotte Academy, a Swedish government agency dedicated to improving the quality and effectiveness of international conflict and crisis management.

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