

# ANNUAL REPORT



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## ICE VISION

Empowered communities living in healthy ecosystems.

## ICE MISSION

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

## ICE Partners



**Traditional knowledge offers timeless guidance for sustainable food systems and responsible land stewardship.**

# Word from the Director



*Martin Mwenda Muriuki- Executive Director,  
Institute for Culture and Ecology*

This past year was marked by significant strides in our mission to promote environmental sustainability and resilience. Among our proudest accomplishments, I am thrilled to highlight the ecosystem restoration of 30 hectares of degraded land in Lower Imenti Forest, Meru County, including rehabilitation of riverine areas and beating up of Lower Imenti forest Central beat. This area has

undergone a remarkable transformation. Through dedicated efforts in clearing these invasive plants we have witnessed the rebirth of this ecosystem. This project serves as a beacon of what can be achieved when commitment meets effective environmental management.

Furthermore, a pivotal moment for ICE's future was the successful Forest Biodiversity-assessment of Forest Policy Environment in Kenya publication. This comprehensive document, born from rigorous research and collaborative dialogue, contains recommendations that will be vital in guiding ICE's strategic direction and programmatic interventions moving forward. It lays a strong foundation for our continued advocacy and on-ground work in forest conservation and management.

Your contributions, whether through funding, expertise, or advocacy, have been the bedrock of our success, enabling us to make tangible differences in communities and ecosystems.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration.

Martin Muriuki  
Executive Director  
Institute for Culture and Ecology.

## Programmes Implementation.

ICE collaborates with like-minded institutions, organizations, county and national government departments, and individuals at the national, regional, and international levels in order to collect a variety of knowledge systems, successfully implement creative culture-based strategies, and carry out advocacy activities.

### ICE Approaches.

Implementing ICE programs is essential for preserving and transmitting traditional knowledge and cultural heritage. These initiatives hope to promote collaboration and understanding between people by bridging generational and cultural divides. Several crucial strategies are employed to carry out ICE initiatives successfully:

**Capacity Development :** One of the core strategies used in ICE programs is capacity building. It entails educating and enabling community members to become facilitators, trainers, or leaders. These community members can effectively contribute to transmitting and maintaining cultural and intergenerational knowledge by improving their knowledge and abilities.

**Material support.** ICE has supported communities in preserving their traditions, which include traditional art forms, dialects, and rituals. By providing support for livelihood projects, it also contributes to improving community livelihoods. Furthermore, material support is essential to the conservation part of ICE initiatives, as communities are provided with agroforestry plants, water harvesting and storage tanks, and beekeeping supplies.

**Learning Exchanges.** Individuals or groups from various generations and cultures get together to share experiences and expertise in learning exchanges. These interactions make it easier to impart knowledge and cultural awareness. In order to promote intergenerational and intercultural learning, participants frequently take part in workshops, seminars, or practical exercises.



*Fig 1: Manyirani waterfall, a recognized sacred site in Tharaka Nithi County.*

**Intergenerational and Inter-gender Dialogues:** Promoting understanding and collaboration between generations and genders requires courteous, open communication. The sharing of thoughts, viewpoints, and experiences is made possible by these discussions. They support social cohesion in communities and aid in resolving disputes based on gender and generation.

**Networking and Partnerships:** ICE programs gain access to important resources, knowledge, and visibility by forming networks and partnerships with other organizations, both locally and globally.

For ICE efforts to reach a wider audience and obtain more support, partnerships with academic institutions, cultural organizations, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies are essential.

In conclusion, ICE program implementation necessitates an integrated approach that includes policy formulation, networking, collaborations, learning exchanges,



*Fig 2: A young farmer demonstrating their experiences in poultry farming in Embu County.*

Eco-cultural mapping, capacity building, learning exchanges, intergenerational and intergender discussions, and material support. Together, these strategies support mutual respect and understanding between generations and cultures while ensuring the preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge and cultural heritage.



*Fig 3: Tree planting by members of the KFWG during a validation workshop*

## 2024 Overview

This report summarizes the results and outputs of the work done by ICE from January to December 2024. Working with target communities in seven counties, ICE's initiatives in Kenya aimed to preserve important community ecosystems and advance environmentally friendly farming methods.

Implementation status: Objective 1:

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

Across several counties (Embu, Meru, Murang'a, Kilifi, Kiambu, Machakos, Isiolo, Tharaka Nithi), 43,590 tree seedlings were planted in critical ecosystems to increase forest cover and protect riparian zones, involving local stakeholders for seedling care. Additionally, 4512 community members received environmental conservation trainings. Five community networks (Uplands, Lower Imenti, Ntugi, Kivaa, Kianda) were supported in conservation efforts through seedlings, training in beekeeping, ecotourism, and biodiversity registration. The Ntugi CFA was also assisted in developing a new Participatory Forest Management Plan to facilitate a Forest Management Agreement with the Kenya Forest Service, enabling community benefits from forest conservation.



Fig 4: A farmer demonstrates the medicinal uses of herbal trees found around Kivaa Hill area, Machakos County.

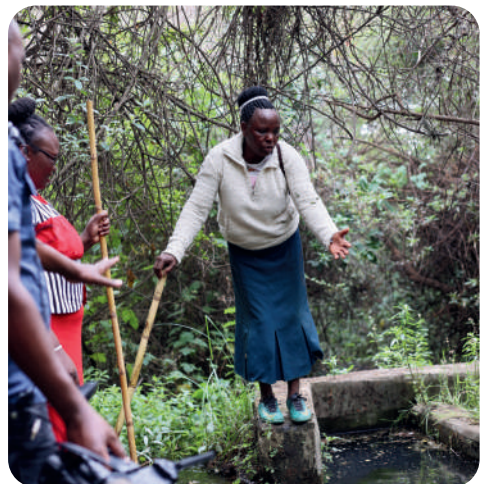


Fig 5: A water catchment site in Uplands Forest.

In a significant move towards bolstering ecosystem protection, ICE convened key stakeholders within the Aberdare Ecosystem, including civil society organizations and community forest associations, to establish a collaborative lobby platform. Two workshops facilitated discussions on the network's structure and potential conservation activities, leading to



*Fig 6: Inside a mushroom unit.*

the formation of an interim committee tasked with developing a unifying Memorandum of Understanding. ICE is committed to ongoing engagement with these stakeholders to jointly implement impactful conservation initiatives. Furthermore, ICE extended its support to the Kenya Forest Working Group (KFWG), a vital national platform dedicated to forest advocacy and governmental oversight in environmental conservation. Recognizing a decline in the group's recent activity, ICE prioritized its revitalization. This included supporting KFWG in the critical process of reviewing and developing a current strategic plan to effectively guide their future actions in advocating for robust forest protection and conservation efforts. The Uplands Forest Community Forest Association's mushroom user right group has successfully established two mushroom crops for income generation, as outlined in the reviewed PFMP.



Fig 7: Packaging of mushroom ready for sale.

Their sales have enabled them to increase production, and they aim to expand to individual farms to meet consistent market demand, which they currently struggle to fully satisfy. This initiative also supports forest conservation through the group's engagement in mushroom cultivation. Additionally, the herbal user right group has been allocated land within the Uplands Forest to create a botanical garden for growing medicinal plants, their source for herbal medicine

production. This endeavor is expected to contribute to the conservation of the wider Uplands Forest as they sustainably source their materials. To promote income generation and conservation, Lower Imenti CFA members visited Embu CFA to learn about their successful ecotourism ventures. Additionally, the Kivaa community received 40 beehives to deter illegal logging in Kivaa Hill, as beehive-hosting trees are less likely to be cut. A youth group in Kivaa was also supported to establish a tree nursery with 3000 seedlings for reforestation and income. In Tharaka Nithi, the *Kayu ka Muuro wa Kathita* community conducted traditional rain rituals due to delayed rains, which were subsequently experienced. These initiatives aim to reduce reliance on forest resources by providing alternative income sources.

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

During the reporting period, ICE supported ten farmers from eight groups in Tharaka Nithi county with dragon fruit seedlings to pilot as an income-generating enterprise, leveraging the area's favorable climate and sandy-loam soils. In Embu, the Mwanzo self-help group received 10 indigenous goats and 36 improved indigenous chickens as a startup, with a replication plan for all members before sales. Gichunge primary school in Meru County was provided with 50 hass avocado seedlings, 10 banana plantains, and 50 indigenous bananas to enhance food security and support their forest conservation efforts.

ICE conducted fourteen livelihood diversification trainings across Murangá, Meru, Embu, Tharaka Nithi, and Machakos Counties, reaching 389 direct beneficiaries, as a climate change adaptation and income-increasing measure. Beneficiaries have adopted various options, including

beekeeping and rearing goats, chickens, and rabbits. A total of 758 project beneficiaries received training on agroecological practices to boost food production and income, covering biological pest control, farm planning, water and soil conservation, indigenous seeds, sustainable land preparation, and agroforestry.



*Fig 8: A farmer from Murang'a presents farm produce during a seed and food fair.*

The adoption rate of these practices was approximately 70%, with some non-beneficiary farmers also implementing successful observed practices. Furthermore, 188 farmers in Tharaka Nithi County were supported with indigenous cereal crops (maize, dolichos, pigeon peas, cow peas, yellow millet, and finger millet) for seed multiplication and distribution to other farmers in 2025.



*Fig 9: A farmer taking a traditional log beehive for mounting at Kivaa Hill..*



*Fig 10: Farmers' exhibition during a Food and Seed fair in Murang'a County.*

### Implementation status: Objective 3

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

Community members across Murang'a, Embu, Tharaka, and Meru counties were educated on the importance of agroecology policies and the advantages of their legal entrenchment, noting Murang'a's existing framework. These sessions emphasized how policy backing facilitates resource allocation and the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices.

Simultaneously, communities actively reviewed their County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and Annual Development Plans (ADPs) to assess current support for agroecology and environmental sustainability, recognizing the crucial role of their participation in shaping these budgetary and developmental strategies. In Kiambu, a focus on the nexus between agroecology, health, and the environment galvanized residents to urgently demand the finalization of their long-pending Agroecology Policy and Act,

Murang'a County demonstrated progress in its agroecology policy implementation, driven by a multi-stakeholder platform that developed operational guidelines and initiated a mapping of local agroecology actors to enhance coordination and identify areas for synergy. Notably, the county government assumed a central secretariat role to ensure the continuity and effective management of the policy's implementation.



*Fig 11: A Public participation forum for the Tharaka Nithi County Culture, Tourism and Heritage Policy process.*



*Fig 12: Kiambu Members of the County Assembly at Rodi Kenya during an exposure visit.*

Meanwhile, in Kiambu, significant momentum was achieved in the development of their Agroecology Policy and Bill, securing executive approval to advance to public participation and presentation before the County Assembly, with strong support from the Kiambu Multistakeholder Platform advocating for its final enactment. In a parallel effort to safeguard cultural heritage and traditional ecological knowledge, ICE supported Machakos and Tharaka Nithi Counties in the formulation of Culture and Heritage Policies. These policies aim to provide legal recognition and protection for sacred sites and indigenous practices that contribute to environmental conservation and address contemporary challenges. The initiative underscores the value of integrating traditional wisdom into formal frameworks for sustainable development and the preservation of cultural identity within these regions.

Implementation status:  
Objective 4

**Increased strategic collaborations and partnerships on NRM, FSEE and CAL work by December 2026.**

ICE actively participated in strategic partnership forums, including Financing Locally-Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) in Kiambu, to enhance local climate action implementation. The organization continued its support for the Kenya Forest Working Group (KFWG) to advocate for sustainable forest management, contributing to the finalization of their strategic plan.



*Fig 13: An interactive session during a FLLOCA meeting in Kiambu County.*

Furthermore, ICE engaged natural resource management stakeholders to provide crucial technical support and training across Meru, Kiambu, and Tharaka-Nithi counties. Notably, ICE hosted students from Ohio University, facilitating a valuable cross-cultural learning experience through interactions with local communities and visits to key conservation sites, which promoted a broader understanding of livelihoods and environmental challenges.

Implementation status:  
Objective 5

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

Recognizing the critical role of robust monitoring and evaluation in achieving its strategic objectives, ICE invested in the professional development of its field team. Five Project Assistants and two staff members participated in comprehensive training focused on foundational monitoring and evaluation principles. This initiative equipped them with the necessary skills to conduct effective field visits, ensuring accurate data collection and enhanced program delivery. Furthermore, the training provided a valuable forum to address operational challenges faced by field personnel, fostering a more efficient and impactful outreach.



*Fig 14: During a cross-cultural learning session between Ohio University students and Meru communities.*

**To enhance organizational capacity for effective and efficient implementation of its mandate by December 2026**

In 2024, ICE convened two advisory board meetings and a meeting with committee members to review organizational progress and enhance operational effectiveness strategically. These meetings facilitated critical policy reviews, performance assessments, and the establishment of strategic priorities to ensure the continued advancement of ICE's vision.

To further strengthen field operations and improve support for farmers, ICE acquired four off-road motorcycles. These motorcycles have significantly increased the mobility of field staff in Murang'a, Meru, Embu, and Tharaka Nithi, enabling them to conduct essential training and effectively monitor ICE-supported initiatives within farming communities.



*Fig 15: ICE Advisory Board during a Board meeting in Nairobi County.*



*Fig 16: During a staff retreat in Camp Ndunda Falls, Embu county.*

### Challenges.

Increase in cost of living- Our project beneficiaries were significantly affected by the sharp increase in the cost of living during this reporting period, particularly due to rising transport costs, which hindered their ability to attend training and activities.

A key challenge encountered this year stemmed from the unfavorable impacts of climate change, which profoundly affected agricultural productivity for local farmers. This disruption to yields directly threatened the livelihoods of the communities we serve. Consequently, ICE implemented strategies such as introducing drought-resilient crops, diversified farming methods to mitigate these effects.

### Lessons learnt.

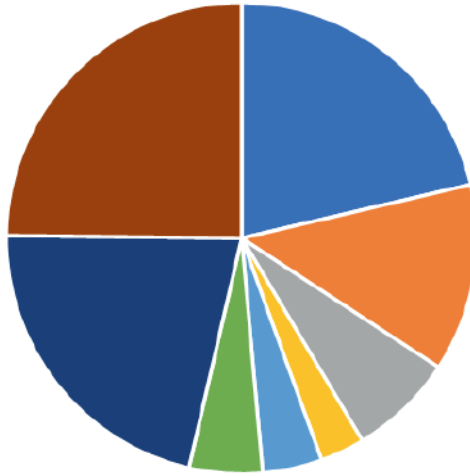
To mitigate rising transport costs, ICE adapted by targeting beneficiaries from the same locality for training sessions and identifying closer venues. These strategies successfully reduced transportation expenses and ensured greater participation.



*Fig 17: A natural forest in Kilifi County- Kaya Jibana.*

In response to unfavorable climate change impacts profoundly affecting local farmers' agricultural productivity and directly threatening community livelihoods, ICE implemented strategies such as introducing drought-resilient crops and diversified farming methods to mitigate these effects.

# FINANCIAL REPORT- 2024



- Objective 1: Natural Resource Management
- Objective 2: Food, Seed Sovereignty and Economic Empowerment
- Objective 3: Advocacy and Campaign
- Objective 4: Networking and Partnerships
- Objective 5: Research and Knowledge Management
- Objective 6: Institutional Development
- Project Administration & Monitoring
- Office Administration



**In every root, fruit,  
and herb, we  
celebrate the power  
of food security..**

# Acknowledgement

We deeply appreciate the invaluable support and collaboration of our funding partners, dedicated collaborators, and the resilient communities we serve. Your collective commitment has been crucial in driving our impactful initiatives in sustainable development, environmental conservation, and community empowerment, enabling us to make a tangible difference and build a better future together. Thank you for your vital contributions.

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



**Thriving with  
nature means  
protecting every  
root, wing, and  
whisper.**



*In every seed lie the components of all life the world has known from all time to now." - Sister Joan Chittister.*



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