



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Intangible  
Cultural  
Heritage

**INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE  
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND**

**NARRATIVE REPORT**

Beneficiary State Party: Kenya

Project title:	'Traditions and Practices associated to the Kayas in the Sacred forests of the Mijikenda' (Kenya).
Time frame:	Starting date: 01/07/2011      Completion date: 15/04/2014
Budget:	<p style="text-align: right;">Total: US\$29,454</p> <p><i>Including:</i></p> <p>Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund: US\$20,497</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">State Party contributions: US\$8,957</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Other contributions: US\$Nil</p>
Implementing agency:	Department of Culture
Implementing partners:	National Museums of Kenya through its Coastal Forest Conservation Unit, Permanent Presidential Music Commission, Kenya Forest services, and communities concerned.
Contact person:	<p>Title (Ms/Mr, etc.): Mr.</p> <p>Family name: Kanyenze</p> <p>Given name: Robinson M.</p> <p>Institution/position: Department of Culture/Ag. Director of Culture</p> <p>Address: P.O. Box 67374-00200, Nairobi, Kenya</p> <p>Telephone number: +254 020 2727980-4</p> <p>E-mail address: robbykanyenze@gmail.com,</p>

## Background and rationale

*Provide a brief description of the situation existing at the time of the request and the need that the assistance aimed to address. For safeguarding of a particular element, provide a description of the element, its viability and why safeguarding measures were required. For preparation of inventories, strengthening of capacities, awareness-raising, visibility or other safeguarding not focussed on a particular element, identify gaps that were to be addressed. For emergency assistance requests, describe the nature and severity of the emergency at the time of the request.*

*Not fewer than 750 or more than 1000 words*

Kayas are fortified settlements inhabited by Mijikenda communities. The Mijikenda include nine Bantu-speaking ethnic groups in the Kaya forests of coastal Kenya. The identity of the Mijikenda is expressed through oral traditions and performing arts related to the sacred forests, which are also sources of valuable medicinal plants. These traditions and practices constitute their codes of ethics and governance systems, and include prayers, oath-taking, burial rites and charms, naming of the newly born, initiations, reconciliations, marriages and coronations. Kayas are fortified settlements whose cultural spaces are indispensable for the enactment of living traditions that underscore the identity, continuity and cohesion of the Mijikenda communities. These Traditions and Cultural Practices associated to the Kayas have bound them in harmony with the natural environment for a long time.

The use of natural resources within the Kayas is regulated by traditional knowledge and practices that have contributed to the conservation of their biodiversity. The Kambi (Councils of Elders) acts as the custodians of these Kayas and the related cultural expressions. The Mijikenda communities were gradually abandoning the Kayas in favour of informal urban settlements. Due to pressure on land resources, urbanization and social transformations, the traditions and cultural practices associated to the Kaya settlements were fast diminishing, posing great danger to the social fabric and cohesiveness of the Mijikenda communities who venerate and celebrate them as their identity and symbol of continuity.

Despite legislation classifying the Kayas as national monuments and creating the forest reserve, leading to their inscription as cultural landscapes on the World Heritage List, and despite the continuing importance of the Kayas for burial and ritual practices, complex forces including modernization, emigration of community members to urban areas and changing land-use practices around the forest were putting the viability of the traditions and practices associated to the Kayas at risk;

However, the traditions and practices associated with the cultural space of Kaya forests are still viable and constitute an important basis for their identity and ultimate survival of the communities. The Councils of Elders continue to have, alongside their traditional knowledge in managing Kaya forests and performing traditional rituals, an important function of governance. This involves rendering of social justice, maintaining peace and harmony within and between the communities, and coordinating the use of natural resources of the Kaya forests.

The traditions and cultural practices associated to the Kaya are regulating mechanisms for a cohesive social order that upholds peace and inclusive harmonious life amongst the Communities. Leaders seek blessings from the Council of Elders before making major decisions such as venturing into political contests. The Council of Elders evaluates them on the basis of their moral behaviour, braveness and the ability to lead. In the absence of the traditions and practices associated to the Kayas, irresponsible behaviour could find root among the Mijikenda. The traditions of the Mijikenda have worked to reduce wayward behaviour such as theft, promiscuity, intolerance and corruption.

Modernization, formal education, influence of religions, tourism, land reforms and migration, among other factors, led to the diminished enactment of traditional practices related to the Kayas. Given the advanced age of most of the elders, continued transmission of the

traditions and practices related to the Kayas was at great risk. There was a strong wish among the Mijikenda to safeguard their traditional practices together with the associated cultural spaces that are indispensable for their enactment. Holistic safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage of the Mijikenda, in relation to the sacred forests of the Kayas, can largely be achieved by simultaneous measures flowing forth from inscription on the lists of both the UNESCO 1972 and 2003 Conventions.

The international assistance for the implementation of the project on the Safeguarding of the traditions and practices associated to the Kayas in the sacred forests of the Mijikenda aimed at achieving the following objectives:

Empowering,

i. To empower the Mijikenda communities with skills and strategies of promoting viability and ensuring transmission of the traditions and practices associated to the Kaya Forests.

Disseminating,

ii. To disseminate existing information related to the Mijikenda traditions and practices to the public with a view of raising awareness.

Educating,

iii. To educate the youth and other community members on the importance and significance of the traditions and practices associated to the Kaya sacred forests.

Promoting,

iv. To promote cooperation and networking amongst communities.

Promoting,

v. To promote the management and environmental conservation of the sacred Kayas of the Mijikenda.

Putting,

vi. To put in place favorable legislative and management framework in support of the safeguarding measures

Upon achievement of the above objectives, the traditions and practices of the Mijikenda will be transmitted among the various ethnic groups in the Kayas cultural landscape. This will strengthen community ties and reinforce their common identity, while promoting mutual respect and social justice and ensuring balanced protection of their forest environment.

### **Objectives and results attained**

*Overall, to what extent did the project attain its objectives? Describe the main results attained, focussing in particular on the perspective of the direct beneficiaries and communities. For each expected result identified in the request, explain whether it was fully or partially attained. Also describe any unexpected results, direct or indirect, whether positive or negative.*

*Not fewer than 100 or more than 500 words*

The overall objective of the project was to conserve and enhance the unique cultural and natural heritage of the Kaya forests as well as increase the incomes of the Mijikenda community and empower them in order to ensure viability and transmission of the traditions and practices associated to the Kayas of the sacred forests of the Mijikenda.

The primary objectives addressed in the safeguarding plan are as follows:-

i. To empower the Mijikenda communities with skills, knowledge and resources to promote viability and ensuring transmission of the element.

ii. To disseminate existing information related to the Mijikenda traditions and practices to the

public with a view of raising awareness.

iii. To educate the youth and other community members on the importance and significance of the traditions and practices associated to the Kaya sacred forest.

iv. To promote cooperation and networking amongst communities.

v. To promote the management and environmental conservation of the sacred Kayas of the Mijikenda.

vi. To put in place favorable legislative and management framework in support of the safeguarding measures.

The project has achieved the following concrete results:-

i. Empowered Mijikenda communities with skills and knowledge on project management. This goal has been partially attained by almost 50%. The generated income is used to support the enactment of their rituals to enhance continued practice. The enhanced income has also contributed towards meeting subsistence and livelihood needs of the local communities in Kaya areas.

ii. Public awareness raised on the Mijikenda traditions and practices associated through the production and dissemination of brochures. The existing information regarding the Mijikenda traditions and practices associated with Kayas has been availed to the public.

iii. An educated youth and other community members well-informed of the significance of the traditions and practices associated to Kaya sacred forests. The visits to the Kayas by school pupils and students has enhanced transmission and acquisition of knowledge of the traditions and practices associated to the Kayas.

iv. Network and teamwork established amongst communities. The promotion, cooperation and networking amongst communities through festivals has strengthened inter-community relations.

v. Conserved environment and well managed sacred Kayas of the Mijikenda. Increased public knowledge of the traditions and practices was a source of pride beyond the local village environment and this attracted foreign visitors and tourists. The activity has generated income which in turn is used to enact the traditions and practices.

vi. The outcome of objective vi. will be achieved during phase three of the Kaya project when favourable legislative framework will be put in place in support of safeguarding measures.

At the inception of the project, it was not foreseen that the youths will be eager to learn the traditions and practices of the Mijikenda but now there is an overwhelming support and curiosity by the school-going youth who had not got the opportunity to visit the Kayas. The growing interest among young generations has enhanced transmission of the traditions and practices of the Mijikenda.

### **Description of project implementation**

*Provide a description of the activities undertaken and the outputs they generated (e.g. trainings, consultation process, technical assistance, awareness raising, publications, toolkits, etc.) Also describe any problems encountered in project delivery and corrective actions taken. Describe the role of the implementing agency and implementing partners in carrying out activities and generating outputs.*

*Not fewer than 1000 or more than 1500 words*

The activities that were carried out in the implementation of the project in order to achieve the expected results include;

i. Empowering Mijikenda communities with skills on project design and management;

Designing and initiating income-generating activities taking into account the specificities of each Mijikenda community. Sixty-six (66) langstroth beehives, Eighteen (18) catcher boxes,

ten (10) smokers, Eight (8) wheel barrows, ten (10) bee suits, twelve (12) pairs of gumboots, six (6) watering cans, twelve (12) hoes, twelve (12) machetes, twelve (12) spades, assorted seeds, assorted honey processing and packaging materials were bought and distributed to six Kaya communities. Experts in tree nurseries and bee-keeping were engaged to assist the communities to establish the projects. The individual woodlots established in homesteads of Kaya elders have reduced dependence on forest resources such as firewood, timber and building poles. Most Kayas have generated income from the sale of honey and seedlings and in turn the same is used to support the enactment of ceremonies and rituals and supplements family incomes.

ii. Apprenticeship;

Young members of the Mijikenda community volunteer to undergo apprenticeship so as to gain knowledge and understanding of the practices as they prepare to become future members of the Council of elders. For example, Kaya Kauma started conducting ceremonies and rituals from 23rd November to 13th December, 2013, aimed at inducting ten young members of the community into the Council of elders.

iii. Reviewing and integrating information into the national inventory;

The Department of Culture organized consultation workshops for the Mijikenda communities to sensitize them on community inventorying. The workshop focused on community participation in the identification and inventorying of intangible cultural heritage. Since the inscription of the element, the department of Culture has been holding frequent consultation meetings with Mijikenda communities and their council of elders. These meetings have been invaluable in gathering information about the culture of the Mijikenda. The information obtained so far has been used to review and update the National inventory.

iv. Disseminating existing information through printing and distribution of brochures;

Four thousand (4,000) brochures in both English and Kiswahili languages were printed and distributed to members of the public and stakeholders in order to raise public awareness about the project as well as about the existing information related to the Mijikenda traditions and practices. In addition the Daily Nation newspaper carried out a paid-up newsletter supplement on the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Mijikenda Kayas.

v. Community cultural festivals and exchange programmes;

The Department of Culture in collaboration with the Mijikenda communities and other stakeholders organized community cultural festivals and exchange programmes. The Inter-community Cultural Festival was held on 15th April, 2014 at Kaya Fungo, Giriama. The festival showcased the diversity of the traditions and practices of the Mijikenda. There were displays of cultural exhibits of the Kaya traditional lifestyle such as making Makuti thatches, traditional foods exhibitions and handcrafts. To witness this rare assembly of living culture of the Mijikenda was the Giriama Community. The festival was graced by the representative of the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts, Mr. Aghan O. Agan, who was accompanied by the Secretary General, Kenya National Commission for UNESCO, Dr. Evanjeline Njoka, Kaloleni Deputy County Commissioner, Mr. Fredrick Ndunga, a representative of the Director of Culture, Ms Elizabeth Nasubo, a representative of the County Executive Committee Member in charge of Culture, Kwale County, Ms Sylvia Chidodo and the Giriama community. Approximately 120 Kaya elders and over 700 community members were in attendance. The inter-community exchange visits was carried out on the 11th, 12th and 13th April, 2014. It involved Kaya elders, women and youth from Kayas Chonyi, Fungo and Kinondo visiting each other at their respective Kaya locations. The purpose of the visits was to learn from their peers on how they were progressing with projects, intercultural linkages, cooperation and networks for the promotion of intangible cultural heritage activities related to the Kayas.

vi. Field visits to the Kayas by the youth;

The Kaya elders are the custodians of the traditions and practices associated with the

sacred forests of the Mijikenda. Kaya traditional ceremonies and rituals are led by elders, some of whom are of an advanced age to undertake cultural activities and ceremonies. Due to this, there is a danger of traditional knowledge being lost as the elders die without the opportunity to pass on their knowledge to the youth. In Kaya Kinondo (Digo) and Kaya Fungo (Giriama), the Councils of elders invited schools into the Kayas where the elders informally introduced the learners to the traditions and practices of the Mijikenda. Kinondo primary and Makongeni primary school pupils visited the neighbouring Kaya Kinondo while Dzitsoni secondary school students visited Kaya Fungo of Giriama Community. The visits helped to transmit knowledge to the young generation thereby safeguarding the element. A total of 140 students visited the Kayas.

vii. Conservation of the forests;

In Kaya Chonyi and Kaya Kinondo, community conservation groups consisting of the young and older members of the community have been formed to sensitize the youth on the importance of conserving the forests and safeguarding the traditions and practices associated with the sacred forests of the Mijikenda.

viii. Carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities at various levels;

Monitoring and evaluation is an ongoing process. Since the inception of the project aimed at safeguarding the element, every visit made to the Kaya conducted some monitoring and evaluation to assess the progress so far made. Any shortcomings noted were followed by suggestions on their improvement and way forward.

### Community involvement

*Provide a description of the mechanisms used for fully involving the community(ies) concerned. Describe not only the participation of the communities as beneficiaries of financial support, but also their active participation in the planning and implementation of all activities.*

*Not fewer than 300 or more than 500 words*

Involvement and participation of communities in planning and implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is very crucial. The Department of Culture in cooperation with the National Museums of Kenya through its Coastal Forest Conservation Unit, the Mijikenda Communities, groups and individuals concerned organized a series of meetings to plan on how to safeguard the traditions and practices associated to the Kayas of the sacred forests of the Mijikenda. The first activity for phase II began with organization of a workshop at Makuti villas Kilifi from 9th – 12th September, 2013 for representatives of Kaya elders, women and the youth who were trained on project management related to bee-keeping with a view to generate income for the communities. The training equipped them with skills and knowledge to guide the implementation activities in their respective Kayas. After the training, every Kaya formed management committees to oversee the implementation process. So far the tree nurseries established at Kaya Chonyi and Kaya Kinondo have generated an income of approximately 55,000/= Kenya shillings from the sale of seedlings. Other seedlings are replanted in the Kayas by respective Mijikenda communities to replenish the forests.

The inter-community cultural exchange visits between the communities involved youth, men and women living around the Kayas and this helped communities to share their experiences and challenges in safeguarding the element. The annual inter-community cultural festival brought together all the communities living around the Kayas to witness the traditional performances, rituals and exhibitions which formed some aspects of the element and this strengthened the members who have pledged to keep these traditions alive by transferring them to the younger generations. Field visits to the Kayas were organized for students from Dzitsoni secondary school, Kinondo primary and Makongeni primary schools. The student visits to the Kayas is a clear testimony of the willingness of the young generation to learn from the elders their cultures. The community members mobilized the schools, guided them

inside the Kayas and were enthusiastic to induct the youth who were excited by what they saw and learnt.

The Department of Culture, being the competent body for the implementation of the Kaya project, facilitated and coordinated all the above activities in collaboration with the Mijikenda communities and other Government agencies such as the Permanent Presidential Music Commission, National Museums of Kenya and Coastal Forest Conservation Unit. The aforementioned bodies together with other technical experts provided the human resources required for the implementation of the project.

### **Sustainability and exit/transition strategy**

*Describe how the benefits of the project will continue after the project has been completed. Where appropriate, describe the steps undertaken to ensure the following:*

- *Sustainability of activities, outputs and results, including with reference to how capacity has been built under the project. Also describe any planned follow-up measures to ensure sustainability.*
- *Additional funding secured as a result of this project, if any. Indicate by whom, how much and for what purpose the contributions are granted.*
- *Describe how the ownership (of activities, outputs, results) by stakeholders and the community(ies) in particular has been promoted.*
- *Describe, if relevant, how tools, processes, outputs, etc. have been adopted, adapted, replicated and/or extended for future use (e.g. in other regions, communities, elements, or fields of intangible cultural heritage.).*

*Not fewer than 100 or more than 500 words*

Safeguarding the traditions and practices associated with the Kayas in the sacred forest of the Mijikenda involves all Mijikenda communities at all levels of its implementation. The project has promoted their social and economic development thus strengthening their common identity, mutual respect and social justice while ensuring balanced protection of their forest environment as well as raising interest among young generations.

The Department of Culture in cooperation with National Museums of Kenya, Coastal Forest Conservation Unit, Kenya Forest Service, local administrators have sensitized the Mijikenda communities about the sustainability of the project and incorporated follow-up programmes on the progress of the income-generating activities.

Through the proceeds from the income-generating activities initiated, the Mijikenda communities continue with the enactment of their traditions and practices while part of the income is recycled back to boost the project activities.

Given the fact that many of the elders are ageing, most Kayas have started recruiting and training young and energetic elders for continued transmission and enactment of the element. In Kaya Kauma and Kaya Fungo, for instance, induction ceremonies for young members of the community are ongoing to prepare them to join the council of elders. In Kaya Rabai and Kaya Kinondo, student's visit to the Kayas has been intensified. The same trend is witnessed in the rest of the Kayas. The Council of elders transmit knowledge about the traditions and practices to the young generation through apprenticeship. Through observation, participation and inheritance, these young men will later take up the roles of the incumbent members of the Council. Regular traditional festivals held by Kaya communities play an important role in the transmission process.

Now than ever before, an overwhelming majority of the Mijikenda communities have a strong attachment to their traditions and practices. The sustainability of these traditions and practices are pegged on the fact that the Mijikenda community respect them and are committed to safeguarding them for posterity.

The Kenya Forest Service has started a programme to educate the community to harvest their own seeds from the forest to sustain the tree nurseries. Replanting trees in depleted sacred Kaya forests and homesteads have reduced reliance on the sacred forest for wood

fuel. The activities have improved conservation of the forests, enhanced safeguarding and raised public awareness about the element particularly among the local communities.

Holding community cultural festivals is one of the Department of Culture's annual targets and has allocated funds for that purpose. In this regard, the Department of Culture will strive to continue supporting the Mijikenda community cultural festivals as a way of sustaining the enactment of their traditions and practices.

Safeguarding of the traditions and practices associated with the Kayas of the sacred forests of the Mijikenda has been emulated by other communities such as the Seme community from Nyanza who have requested for a cultural exchange programme to visit the Kayas and replicate it with safeguarding the traditions and practices associated with Kit Mikayi shrine of the Luo community.

### **Lessons learnt**

*Describe what are the key lessons learnt regarding the following:*

- *Attainment of expected results*
- *Ownership of key stakeholders and community involvement*
- *Delivery of project outputs*
- *Project management and implementation*
- *Sustainability of the project after the financial assistance*

*Not fewer than 300 or more than 750 words*

#### **a) Attainment of expected results;**

- I. Planning and implementation of project activities should involve all stakeholders concerned with the project.
- II. Definition of clear channels of communication between the projects implementing organization and the actors on the ground is very vital.
- III. Establishment of project committees to oversee the project on the ground and provide timely and accurate information to the implementing organization is crucial.
- IV. Honesty and clarity of project objectives to all concerned with its implementation is a vital requirement.
- V. Integrity and transparency in the use of project finances is important for the success of the project.
- VI. The project requires constant monitoring and evaluation as well as putting in place corrective measures to maintain the project's intended course.

#### **b) Ownership of Key stakeholders and community involvement;**

- I. The community and all stakeholders should demonstrate in very practical ways that they own the project. Ownership of the project by the stakeholders and the community begins from the planning stages.
- II. Community involvement must be inclusive bringing on board all community members concerned with the project including men and women, the youth, opinion leaders, bearers and practitioners of the element safeguarded, local administration etc.
- III. Mechanisms should be put in place to allow the involvement/ entrance of new stakeholders who were previously not considered in the project when at any time such stakeholders demonstrate and prove that they indeed have a stake in the project.

#### **c) Delivery of Project Outputs;**

- I. Requires a clear understanding of the project objectives by all concerned with the project.



II. Provides a motivation to all concerned and the willingness to constantly improve on perceived weakness for better outputs.

III. Needs flexibility in the manner at which activities are undertaken. The ability to quickly change and adapt to new and better ways of doing things helps in delivery of outputs.

d) Project management and implementation;

I. Training of the team that will manage the project is crucial for its own management.

II. The management team gets a clear focus on how the project is to be implemented and brings congruence of ideas during the implementation period.

e) Sustainability of the project after the financial assistance;

I. Sustainability of the project is based on the ability of the Kaya communities to continue with the enactment of the element after official assistance ends. The Kaya project was designed to equip the Kaya elders and Kaya adjacent communities with livelihood skills that will enable them earn a living and continue with the enactment of the element. Success stories of the project have been reported in some Kayas where proceeds (financial) have enabled the elders earn a living and also use the same to buy ritual items to be used for further enactment of the practices and traditions.

II. The bee-keeping project has to a larger extent been very successful and has provided income to the communities living adjacent to the Kayas as well as the elders. The tree nurseries project established in many Kayas has been quite successful. The Kaya communities have been selling tree seedlings and also replanting some in the Kayas in areas where the Kaya had been depleted as well as establishing woodlots in their homesteads. These two projects are expected to be continued long after the financial assistance gets to an end.

III. Constant monitoring and evaluation of the project by the Department of Culture after the funding closes will also work to give the communities motivation to move on with the project. The Department of Culture will continue to work with the Kaya elders to make sure that the element continues to be safeguarded through the proceeds from the project and also through continued transmission of the traditions and practices associated to the Kayas to the young generation.

## Annexes

*List the annexes and documentation included in the report:*

- *publications, evaluation reports and other outputs, when applicable*
- *progress reports prepared during the contract period*
- *list of major equipment provided under the project and status after termination of contract period*
- *other (please specify)*

The following are annexed to this report:-

- A detailed signed financial statement of accounts.
- Original evidence of payments (original receipts, invoices, etc.; ).

## Name and signature of the person having completed the report

Name: John Moogi Omare

Title: Chief Cultural Officer

Date: 25.06.2014

Signature: