

The Caravan

2019 EDITION



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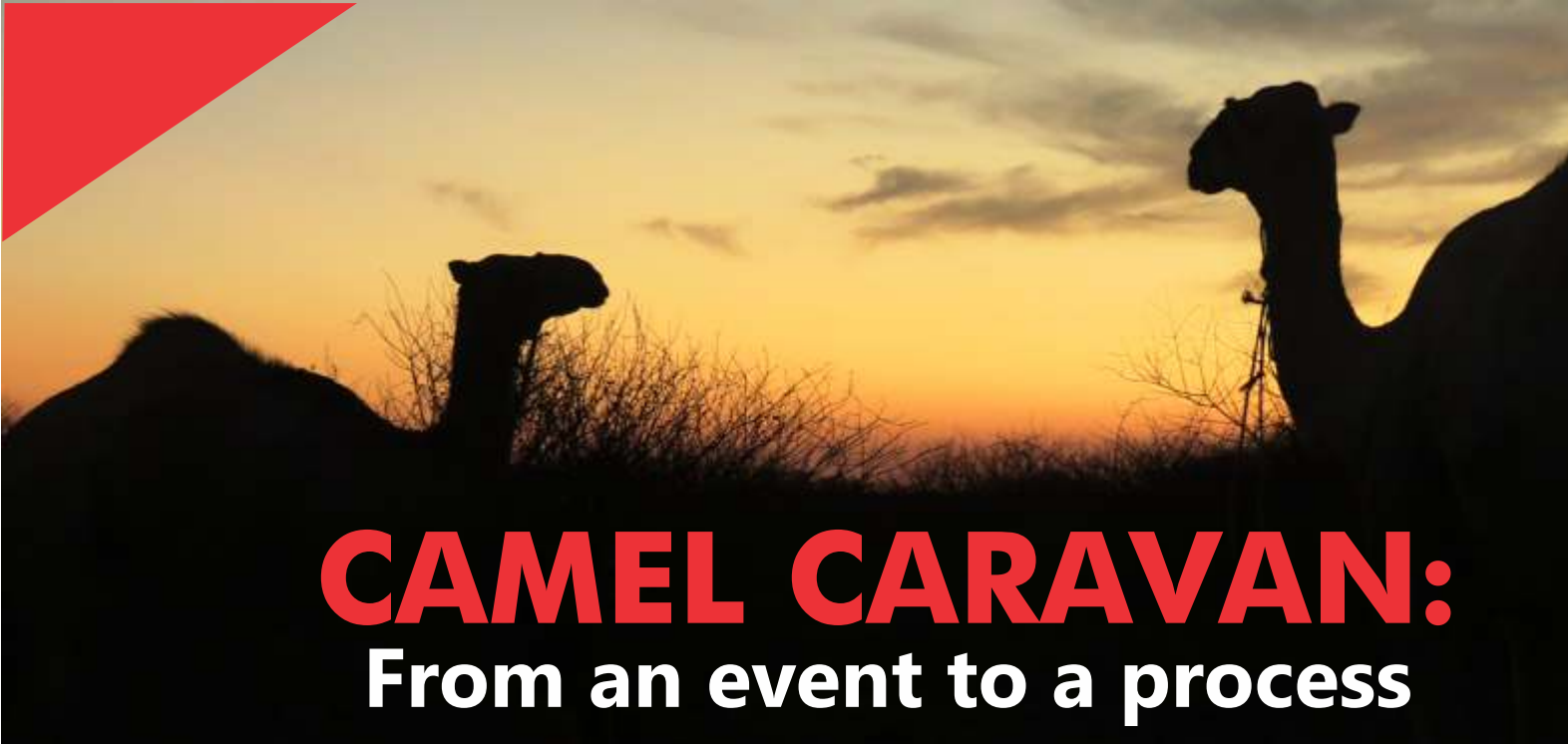


- ▶ National Government spells out strategies to conserve Ewaso Nyiro River Basin
- ▶ Why downstream communities are jittery over proposed construction of Isiolo Mega Dam
- ▶ Journalist's experience during the 2019 Camel Caravan
- ▶ Camel Caravan no longer an event but a process

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CAMEL CARAVAN:

From an event to a process

Since 2014, an event geared towards conserving one of the critical ecosystems in Northern Kenya has been taking place annually except in 2016. The Ewaso Ng'iro River Basin has in recent years been facing threats that endanger livelihoods of communities and their livestock as well as the tourism sector owing to the many wildlife species in this ecosystem.

Top on the risks experienced include drying up of this massive water source, once referred to as "The Mighty Ewaso Ng'iro River". Whereas in the past it could flow for nine months in a year, community living downstream says it now flows for only three months. Stretching over 700 kilometres through six Counties with its source being Aberdare Ranges and Mt Kenya, it is fed by more than 35 tributaries.

It drains its waters to the Lorian Swamp which has slowly been losing its wetland status to the detriment of the pastoralist communities who have for centuries relied on it as a source of pasture during drought. In recent years, human activities among them uncontrolled abstraction of water upstream, unregulated sand harvesting, cutting down of indigenous trees on the riparian has been cited as contributors to reduced volume of water flow.

It is out of these concerns that Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid (Cordaid) under its Partners for Resilience (PFR) Programme has been working with Civil Society Organisations in Laikipia, Samburu and Isiolo Counties to sensitize communities, policy makers and other stakeholders on the importance of conserving this fragile ecosystem that supports a population of nearly four million.

Volunteers have been trekking with their camels for six days through the wilderness, spending nights in the open in an effort to draw the attention of the authorities to put in place measures aimed at protecting the Ewaso Ng'iro Basin.

With each of the groups covering about 200 kilometres, the walkers from Laikipia and Samburu Counties have been travelling on same route, commencing at Ewaso Shopping Centre in Laikipia County, through Ol Donyiro, Kipsing, in Isiolo County, Kiltamany West Gate and finally assembling at Archer's Post in Samburu County on the sixth day.

The other group, mainly comprising of downstream residents have made Merti Town their starting point, moving through Biliqo, Dima Adho, Biliqo Marara, Gotu to Archer's Post to join the other group. Various communities residing upstream, middle stream and downstream have been incorporated in this sensitization campaigns so that "they can own it" and support any measures or legislation by relevant authorities or agencies.

In 2019, three groups from downstream basin of Isiolo County participated in the Camel Caravan from August 4. One group commenced their journey at Barambate, joining colleagues who had picked Gotu as their starting point and the other group that had walked from Merti. The trekkers proceed to Archer's Post as one team.

This was one of the most successful events that witnessed an increase in the number of participants to 200, several CSOs private entities, two MPs from Isiolo County, County Governments and representation of National Government led by Environment and Forestry Cabinet Secretary Keriako Tobiko on the last day.

Partners in the 2019 Camel Caravan included MID-P, IMPACT Trust, Kivulini Trust, Isiolo Peace Link, Community Conservancies, Cordaid, Family Health International 360, Partners for Resilience, World Peace Service, German Cooperation, Community members, Pastoralists Alliance for Resilience & Adaptation in Northern Rangelands, Frontier Counties Development Council, Livestock Marketing Systems/Mercy Corps, Sarova Shaba Game Lodge, Waso Trustland and the Media.



PURPOSE OF THE TREK

For the five times Camel Caravan has taken place, it has come with a different theme but the bottom line being to promote conservation efforts on the Ewaso Ng'iro ecosystem. The theme for what is now an annual event is decided by the Steering Committee and is always around the issues of great interest to the communities. The Theme for 2019 was:

Saving the Ewaso Ng'iro Ecosystem Through Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, Enhance Secure Livelihoods and Peaceful Co-existence.

The six-day event aimed at:

- Bringing together communities living along the Ewaso Ng'iro River Basin

- Addressing threats to the ecosystem
- Advocating for protection, conservation and restoration through legislation and sustainable water use
- Promoting peaceful coexistence and secure livelihoods among pastoral communities in the ecosystem
- Jointly reflecting on issues and consequences of the decreasing levels of water in the Ewaso Ng'iro River and the potential dangers to their livelihoods
- Media houses and film makers in documenting and dissemination of information and experiences gathered with the wider stakeholders with a view of achieving the Camel Caravans objectives

Facts on Ewaso Ng'iro River



- In 1940's Ewaso Ng'iro river at Archer's Post had a normal flow of 16.14m³/sec.
- Between 1987 and 2007 normal flow at Archer's Post reduced to 6.47m³/sec
- Pressure on land destroyed catchments, reducing retention capacity;
- Buffalo Springs is main source of flow at Archer's Post during the dry season.

Source: Water Resources Authority, ENNCA, Nanyuki Office

Government's bold measures to conserve crucial ecosystem



In what is seen as a milestone towards conservation of the Ewaso Ng'iro Basin, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry has pledged to initiate practical approaches, adding a voice to what in the past has been a community driven effort.

Environment and Forestry Cabinet Secretary Keriako Tobiko spelt out a roadmap that would see all stakeholders join hands to protect this crucial water source.

The CS was the chief guest during the 2019 Camel Caravan, gracing the event on the final day at Archer's Post while in the company of other senior officials from the National and County Governments.

Mr Tobiko announced that a meeting of various stakeholders would be convened to come up with conservation strategies and formation of a committee to spearhead the initiative. The committee would comprise officials from his ministry, National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), Council of Governors, Ewaso Ng'iro North Development Authority, County Commissioners of Samburu, Laikipia and Isiolo among others.

"My ministry has come up with an all inclusive policy that would see efforts made towards conservation of this river. Everyone has a right to share this natural resource and we shall not sit back as corruption and impunity continue to destroy our environment," cautioned the CS.

At least 200 volunteers and 20 camel had endured the difficult six-day trek to raise awareness on the threats on Ewaso Ng'iro Basin.

The CS who was accompanied to the meeting by Isiolo North MP Hassan Odha and other senior officials from National and County Governments of Isiolo, Laikipia and Samburu listened

keenly as community representatives and caravan participants called for drastic action to conserve the ecosystem.

"Illegal abstraction of the river and its tributaries upstream and uncontrolled sand harvesting is causing a lot of suffering to pastoralists. If the government fails to take stern action, tourism sector will also suffer," Mr Abdullahi Tadicha from Korbasa, Merti Sub-County of Isiolo County told the CS.

Mr Tadicha who was participating in the Camel Caravan for the fourth time called on the National Government to consult downstream communities before commencing on plans to construct the Mega Dam on the Laikipia-Samburu-Isiolo boundary expressing fears that it was likely to affect the free flow of River Ewaso Ng'iro.

Legislator Hon. Odha pointed out that for many years, the pastoralists had depended on the wetlands caused by flooding of the river downstream but they have all dried up including the Lorian Swamp.

"Several years ago, we could host our fellow pastoralists from Wajir and Marsabit at chaffa (wetlands) but this is no longer possible. I am ready to push legislation through Parliament that will protect River Ewaso Ng'iro Ecosystem," the MP told the gathering.

Several other community and elected leaders from the three counties as well as National Government administrators addressed the gathering with the key message being the need to make urgent intervention aimed at protecting the ecosystem to safeguard livelihoods, environment and for the survival of the tourism sector.



Environment and Forestry Cabinet Secretary Keriako Tobiko

Why communities downstream are wary of the Crocodile Jaw Dam



Site of the Proposed Isiolo Dam.

One of National Government's Vision 2030 project has continued to cause jitters among the pastoralist communities living in the lower Ewaso Ng'iro Basin. Proposed construction of the Isiolo Mega Dam commonly called Crocodile Jaw (Nkutuk Elkinyang) was among the concerns raised by the Camel Caravan trekkers and their leaders.

The dam that would occupy 2,083hectares on the boundary of Laikipia, Samburu and Isiolo Counties was set to be commissioned by year 2020 according to a 2016 Environment Impact Assessment Study Report commissioned by National Water Conservation and Pipeline Corporation. However, implementation of this project appears to have slowed down amidst strong opposition from the locals as well as Community Based Organisations. Their argument has been that currently, the river is flowing only few months in a year owing to effects of a changing climate and other factors and diverting the river waters into a dam will only worsen the situation.

Besides providing water for domestic use, livestock and wildlife, occasional floods downstream that causes chaffa (wetlands) supports animals with pasture and water during drought.

Their fears have been given credence by a February 2017 research paper by Conservation Strategy Fund (CSF) compiled by Thais Vilela and Aaron Bruner titled *Proposed Isiolo Dam*.



Map of the Ewaso Ng'iro River Basin
Source: Leeuw Et al.(2012)

The report in one of the recommendations states that: "Construction of the proposed dam will change river flow dramatically, not only by eliminating seasonal flood pulses, but also by reducing the amount of water available downstream. Using official data, we find that during impoundment and post impoundment, the river flow will be equal to 15 and 38 percent respectively of the current unregulated water flow."

A joint memorandum presented to National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) in 2017 by representatives of communities from Isiolo, Samburu and Laikipia Counties voiced their opposition to the project terming lack of community participation as one of their grievances.

They pointed out that the negatives outweigh the benefits and called for halting of the project until their concerns are fully addressed. However, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report commissioned by National Water Conservation and Pipeline Corporation in 2014 and released in 2016 allays fears expressed by the downstream community.

The report produced by CAS Consultants maintains that contrary to the perception by the downstream community, River Ewaso Ng'iro will actually flow throughout the year and the dam would control destructive floods.

A section of the report states: "The dam will be effectively used to regulate the flow of Ewaso Ng'iro River by storing the flood volume and releasing it later ensuring a sustainable supply of water to various users downstream and subsequent flooding of Lorian Swamp all year round."

The report further states: "The mega dam would also completely eliminate water shortages in Isiolo Town, spur economic growth and encourage development of agriculture, industries, tourism and fisheries."

The EIA report noted that there are some negative impacts that would come with the dam construction but suggests some mitigation measures.

Water Resources Authority (WRA) is in support of the project pointing out that regulating the flow of River Ewaso Ng'iro would reduce water related conflicts witnessed in middle and downstream areas during the dry season.

However, going by the sentiments expressed by the community and their leaders during the 2019 Camel Caravan, it is evident that they are not yet convinced by the arguments advanced by various government agencies in support of the Crocodile Jaw Dam.

As matters stand now, only a broadened participation of the affected population of about four million to thrash out thorny issues will bring a compromise to the parties involved.

How the camel caravan has grown into a movement

Q&A: MID-P EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ABDULLAHI SHANDEY



Abdullahi Shandey MID-P Executive Director

Give a brief history of the camel caravan and the idea behind it

The Camel Caravan is an annual event which started in 2014 through support of Partners for Resilience (PfR) programme. Our target has been River Ewaso Ng'iro which serves 10 counties (including recharge of aquifers in Northern Kenya Counties) supporting a population of nearly four million people. The issue of drought and climate change basically affects the waters of this crucial river where at times there is scarcity and excess at some seasons.

Our goal has been to bring people served by the river together to avoid conflicts, bearing in mind that water provision is a constitutional right the same way Egyptians get water from River Nile which originates from Lake Victoria in East Africa. So in 2014, the idea of the annual caravan was mooted and each year we have a different theme with the bottom line being conservation of this crucial water source.

Why did the organizers of the caravan settle for camel?

The camel is a symbol of tolerance, a sign of resilience. It can easily accept a command and follow a person. It is also a sign of unity among the pastoral community since they place a high value on it due to the fact that they live in semi arid areas and the animal can go for many days without water or pasture.

It is capable of drawing attention during the caravan from non participants since it is not found in urban areas unlike if were to use other animals like cows or donkeys.

What are some of the challenges you have had to deal with in organizing this annual event?

When we started the caravan, people at first could not understand

why they had to sacrifice and walk for such a long distance for days. The distance itself is a challenge-covering 200 kilometres on a dry vast area which has security issues. Over the years, we have formed partnership with Biliqo Bulesa Community Conservancy (BBC) where rangers have been providing security for the trekkers throughout the journey. For instance, in 2019, we had to reroute the journey at the last minute to avoid Losesia area after receiving information of an imminent attack on the participants. This forced the team to pass through Nakpurat-Gotu Conservancy which has many wild animals that could attack the people and the camels. But luckily the participants made it through without any ugly incident.

Another challenge has been limited resources as you are aware funds to support such a big event are never adequate. The targeted partner communities have also been slow in accepting to undertake this treacherous journey. However, of late the level of acceptance has risen and people have started appreciating the Camel Caravan.

How are the participants of the camel caravan selected?

One of the criteria used is willingness to persevere the difficulties experienced along the route. Then we have to consider age and gender where there is a mix of youth, women and men. They should be in good health and also people who can articulate issues when called to speak or address a gathering. Also every participant must be ready to accept a role when delegated as there are duties to be shared along the way. The trekkers share responsibilities and elect their leaders.

Can you list some of the achievements realized so far?

One of the achievements I am very proud of is that the Camel Caravan is no longer an event, it is now a process! The Government and other partners have come on board to join the movement and even the private sector is not being left behind; for instance Sarova Shaba Game Lodge is now among many other stakeholders in this process.

Another achievement is that the caravan has become a platform where communities can amplify their voices and concerns. At the completion of the 2019 six-day trek, we saw communities address Environment Cabinet Secretary Keriako Tobiko boldly on how they would wish River Ewaso Ng'iro protected. They have taken conservation of this crucial water source as their duty.

Suspension of the planned construction of the Crocodile Jaw mega dam is another notable achievement. I want to clarify here that we are not totally opposed to this Government project, but communities living downstream must be actively involved on its implementation. Proponents of the mega dam claim that it will control flooding in the lower areas, but they do not understand that we consider the floods a blessing. When we talk of Lorian Swamp, that flooding give us water, pasture and assist in recharging the

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5

boreholes sunk along the river.

The fear is that once the dam is constructed, free flow of River Ewaso Ng'iro would be interfered with. So, we are asking-what alternative are you going to give us? The river also supports our national heritage-wildlife and any action that interferes with the flow of the river interferes with our social and political system and we shall not agree to the project until we are fully involved in its implementation.

What is the current state of the river?

Previously in a year, the river could flow for six months and dry up for six months and the water was enough to sustain life. Today is not the case; flowing for only three months with the main cause of this being abstraction of water upstream. However, we have managed in a small way to bring communities living downstream and upstream together to network and share information. This needs to be strengthened.

How have you been partnering with National/County Governments in this cause?

I am particularly grateful to County Governments of Isiolo, Samburu and Laikipia for creating an enabling environment for the caravan. Senior County Governments officials have been gracing the ceremony on the last day.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the National Government and specifically to the Environment CS Keriako Tobiko for being our chief guest at the climax of the 2019 Camel Caravan. He was very attentive to our concerns, gave us valuable advice and spelt the way forward. There is light at the end of the tunnel, we have set the ball rolling.

Who are the other partners you work with in organizing the caravan?

MID-P has teamed up with Kivulini Trust, Isiolo Peace Link and IMPACT Trust. In terms of funding we are supported by Cordaid, USAID, Christian Fund, Climate Justice, Family Health International 360 and several others. Those who participate in the trekking include Mercy Corps and Waso Trust Land.

Which is the way forward now that you have stated that the Camel Caravan is now a process?

First, Environment Cabinet Secretary Hon Tobiko has given instructions to County Commissioners in the Ewaso Ng'iro Basin to constitute a stakeholders committee which will also include CSOs and Government agencies among others to explore strategies on tangible conservation efforts. This committee will in coming months submit the conservation strategy to CS Tobiko so that it can be presented before the Cabinet for approval.

Secondly, we intend to widen the scope of the Camel Caravan, bringing on board communities from Wajir and Garissa Counties and other stakeholders to the movement. With future funding from our donor partners, we shall support Laikipia, Samburu and Isiolo Counties to come up with relevant legislations on river conservation strategies and particularly on sand harvesting which is one of the threats to the sustainability of this water source.



Merti Deputy County Commissioner Julius Maiyo flagging off the trekkers at Bisan Biliqo



The journey to Gotu



Conquering the stretch to Gotu Market



Caravan team crossing the Gotu Bridge, the boundary of Isiolo North and Isiolo South Constituency



Gotu Primary School pupils and their teachers pass ecosystem conservation message through a song



Gotu Primary pupils help in amplifying the ecosystem conservation message



Isiolo South MP Hon. Abdi Koropu flagging off the caravan participants at Gotu



Caravan team after leaving Gotu Market



Isiolo South MP Hon. Abdi Koropu taking part in the trek holding a reusable water bottle for purposes of protecting the environment



Mix of cultures as entire team of walk participants celebrate after successful completion of the long trek



Environment CS Keriako Tobiko receives a branded T-Shirt from MID-P Executive Director Abdullahi Shandey



Environment CS Keriako Tobiko takes a camel ride in the company of the youngest walker



Uncontrolled sand harvesting on River Ewaso Ngiro is a threat to this crucial water source.



A section of National and County Government officials who graced the final day of the Camel Caravan at Archers Post



Isiolo North MP Hon. Hassan Odha makes his speech on the final day of the Camel Caravan



Environment CS Hon Keriako Tobiko presents a certificate of participation to one of the trekkers, Ms Halima Kampicha, a women leader from Merti.

Journalist's First Time Experience On The Caravan

For journalist Paul Mwaniki, covering the event and being a participant in the six-day journey from Merti to Archer's Post turned out to be a memorable safari, full of fun and challenges.

“The dust finally settled after a five-hour drive from Isiolo town to Merti Township, giving way to a relaxed evening and marking the beginning of a long trek that unknown to me would turn out to be an adventure of a lifetime.

It was my second trip to Merti town with my assignment being to document the annual Camel Caravan, an event I had only heard about before and with only a vague idea of what it entailed.

As I settled down in the evening, I felt the urge to go beyond the call of duty and get a firsthand experience of this treacherous journey; walking through the vast wilderness for six days with minimal provisions to sustain me through.

While leaving Nanyuki on that Saturday morning, my initial plan was to cover the flagging off ceremony at Bisan Biliqo, take a few clips of the trekkers and then hike a car lift to Archer's Post Township and comfortably wait for the participants to arrive on the final day.

Though not well equipped in terms of beddings and other essential accessories, the idea of trekking, having come as an afterthought carried the day.

Mr Molu Tepo, Programme Manager at Merti Integrated Development Programme (MID-P) took time to brief me and a colleague on what to expect along the route.

And when the sun rose on Sunday, August 4, 2019, we checked all our items, making sure camera batteries were fully charged, the tripod was in good condition, microphones working and well shielded from the characteristic strong winds of Isiolo County.

Plenty of water was an essential and not a choice as dehydration could set in any time during the journey and also a cooling agent in the scorching sun.

At the back of my mind, I knew besides being a participant, my core duty was to take the best shots to tell the story on why a group of



people had to leave the comforts of their beds, be away from their families to endure hardships for a whole week.

As we embarked on the journey and engaged other participants in a discussion, it became clearer in my mind why people living downstream had to put so much sacrifice to protect the Ewaso Ng'iro Basin.

"This river is our lifeline, if it dries up, we are doomed. We have to protect it for the sake of current and future generations," one of the elderly trekkers Mzee Ali Racho told me.

As the journey progressed, it became clearer in mind why the community was putting so much effort to protect the river, and for once, I felt a sense of pride walking for this cause.

Doing 30 kilometres a day - 15 kilometres in the morning and a similar distance covered in the afternoon with a bush lunch break comprising of mutton and rice – something rare at my home in Central Kenya, it was starting to look like a an adventurous outing for me.

Once the night fell, open grounds would be converted into bedrooms and having not carried a sleeping bag or a camping tent, my Maasai Shuka, which I always carry during safaris came in handy.

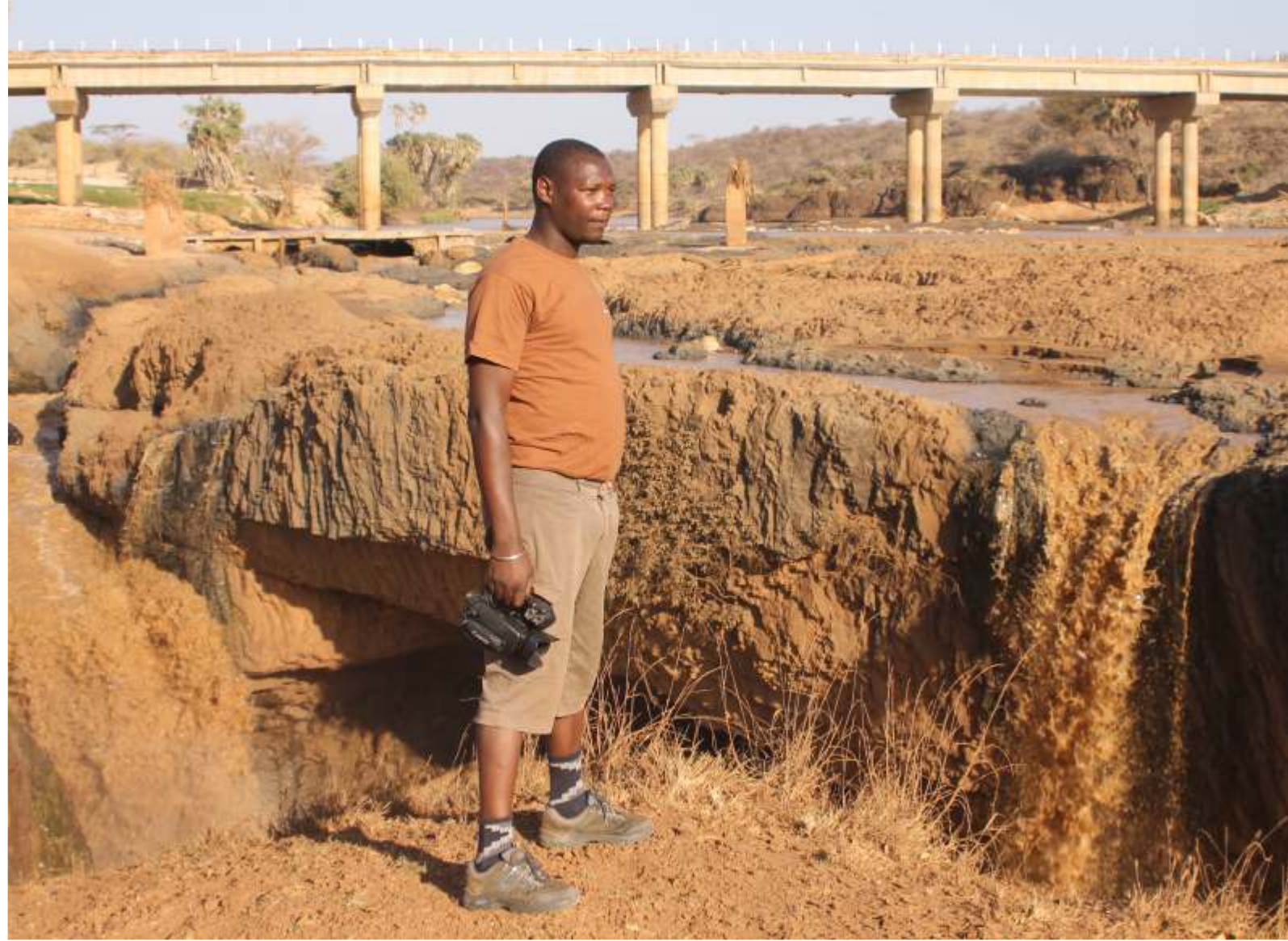
For the first time in my life I was sleeping in the open, conscious of lurking dangers of wild animals, counting the stars in the clear skies of the night. It was the same experience to other men in the team, safe for the women who huddled inside a small camping tent.

Duties and responsibilities were evenly shared based on gender and age and the team worked together in preparation of meals and other chores. Breakfast was taken as early as 6am before embarking on the journey before sunrise. The terrain was tough and having taken all the necessary photos and video clips, I felt exhausted but I was not about to throw in the towel at this stage.

I had the determination to complete the entire journey and for a moment, I did not consider myself a scribe, but an activist pushing for an urgent intervention by the authorities.

Why have the County and National Governments failed to act decisively to protect this crucial water source serving people, livestock and wildlife in several counties most of them in ASAL areas? I wondered silently.

Then came one the toughest terrains, from Gotu market through Nakuprat Gotu Community Conservancy where pebbles filled the walk paths, inconveniencing even the nine camels that were supposed to lead the way. Eventually, we came to a stop, setting up a temporary camp inside the conservancy at nightfall.

[illegible][illegible]

By this time, my camera batteries had drained all the power and the journalist in me could not allow me to continue in the trek while poorly equipped. Suppose something dramatic happened on the remaining part of the journey? Would I be forgiven for failing to document it considering that all phones had run out of charge and could not save a situation? I also needed some reserve battery power to capture the grand entry to Archer's Post.

It is then I resolved to hike a lift on a vehicle heading to Isiolo Town for some replenishment for the trekkers. Water carried by the caravan team had run out, forcing the participants to drink from streams, endangering their health.

My idea was to go charge the video camera batteries overnight and then join the walkers the following day on the last stretch to Archer's Post Township.

Once at Archers Post, I took a well deserved, shower, something I had missed for four days. I also sent some of the video footage to my editor and the news were broadcast same day.

I joined the trekkers on their final day and it was a moment of glory, a mixture of cultures, as all the participants, including those who had started from Laikipia County sang and danced out the night in celebrations.

The climax was the following day when senior officials from County and National Governments joined the caravan tem on the sixth day. National Government was represented by Environment Cabinet Secretary Keriako Tobiko, County Commissioners from three counties and Government agencies while Governors from three counties were represented by senior officials.

Mr Keriako pledged Government's dedication and directed the formation of a committee comprising various stakeholders and Government to come up with tangible approach on conservation strategies which would later be tabled before the Cabinet for approval.

As I received my certificate of participation alongside the others in the team, I experienced a feeling of pride for having walked for a cause. However, at the back of my mind, I knew I had a duty to follow up for the silent majority and ensure that whatever the minister had promised would not turn out to be another political statement.

I eagerly await the day the Cabinet will come up with a policy to conserve this important ecosystem in our country. Meanwhile, I look forward to being a participant next year ready to cover the 180 kilometres; this time, I will be well equipped to deal with any emerging challenge.”



The Camel Caravan..... why the camel?

The ship of the desert has become the symbol of resilience for communities taking part in the annual caravan. Besides being a hardy animal, it is a symbol of unity among the pastoralists occupying Northern Kenya and who stand to suffer immensely if River Ewaso Ng'iro and its ecosystem is not protected.

Not all camels however are chosen to participate in this trek. It involves picking the ones that can obediently take orders from the handlers; only male camels are selected for the trek. Some are experienced and easily submit to the command of their masters, but for new entrants, it calls for much effort to keep them in the long safari

For instance at Bisan Biliqo, the first stop after Merti for the 2019 Caravan, one young camel became stubborn and refused to take any orders, forcing the handlers to come together to muster all the energy and tricks to make it lie down. Eventually the animal lost the battle and it was tightly harnessed with one of the straps going through the mouth and tightening the mighty tongue that was producing the grumbling noise in protest.

The mouth harnessing served as a warning that it had to take the journey silently and painfully. Throughout the journey it produced uncontrolled saliva making it look ugly and unappealing for a trek whose motive was to see that there is plenty of water for people and livestock downstream.

It was never easy even when the camel was removed the

harnesses gear to give it time to rest. A similar resistance and grumbling could be witnessed while what the handler was doing was to give it free time to graze in the neighbourhood of the temporary camp as the walkers took a break.

And this became a norm for the six days trek. Perhaps the camel had an experience during its first trip of the Ewaso Ng'iro Camel Caravan. Having learnt the hard way, probably next time it will easily comply with orders from its handler.

The Camel's Language

Language and signs used by camel handlers is common among the pastoralists regardless of their ethnic background.

Camels are selected and trained to be utilized in various events such as riding, carrying luggage or for the caravan trek.

A trained camel easily understands instructions given either through words or gestures.

The word "Tu" instructs the camel to kneel for someone to ride or for the luggage to be fitted, then "up" tells it to wake up while for the animal to keep moving the words "Haa", "Ta", "Oowa" are uttered by the handler.

Country Cordinator, PfR Programme Ms Zeituna Roba (Right) during the post 2019 Camel Caravan Consultative meeting at Landmark Hotel in Isiolo Town



Broader participation of stakeholders sought in future caravans

Key stakeholders in government and private sector will now participate actively in organising the annual camel caravan in an effort to achieve sustainability towards conserving the Ewaso Ng'iro ecosystem.

This was one of the key resolutions during a post 2019 Camel Caravan meeting held in Isiolo Town to identify the gaps and challenges and deliberate on how to achieve stated objectives.

With representation drawn from Civil Society Organisations, communities from Laikipia, Isiolo and Samburu Counties and Government officials, the meeting heard how vital government agencies which normally would be driving the conservation agenda have been playing a lackluster role.

One of the observations was that the river is crucial for wildlife survival, a major tourism attraction in the region, yet this factor is not well captured in the conservation strategies. The stakeholders resolved to bring on board Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Forest Service and Water Resources Authority to make their contributions in the campaign.



Ewaso Nyiro North Development Authority (ENNDA) acting Managing Director Eng. Josiah Mulwa during the Landmark Hotel meeting

Ewaso Ng'iro North Development Authority (ENNDA) acting Managing Director Eng. Josiah Mulwa regretted lack of participation on their part in the past. He gave a key address as he officially opened the Isiolo Post Caravan meeting convened by Cordaid through its PfR programme and coordinated by MID-P and IMPACT Trust.

"Basically, the mandate of ENNDA is to conserve this crucial ecosystem. From now on, we shall take a leading role on future camel caravan campaigns. The 2019 event has become an awakening call for various government agencies to actively participate in this process," said Eng. Mulwa.

He emphasized on the importance of increased awareness amongst the policy makers on the threats and workable strategies to address challenges brought about by climate change and human activities including unregulated water abstraction, pollution, uncontrolled sand harvesting, cutting trees on the riparian among others.

Planning of the caravan will now be commencing six months prior to the event where all stakeholders including the community and Government agencies will be engaged to give inputs.

The participation of Government agencies and departments right from the planning stage is a milestone in that it gives this campaign a sustainable lifeline, past the PfR funded programme's duration.



Some of the stakeholders invited to the consultative meeting



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE CAMPAIGN

When the first camel caravan campaign commenced in 2014, it was seen as a CSO driven event. But over the years, it has grown to be a regional and national event, attracting interest from National and County Governments and development partners.

The 2019 caravan turned to be the most successful one so far, with Environment Cabinet Secretary Keriako Tobiko gracing the final day and pledging government's commitment towards conservation of Ewaso Ng'iro ecosystem. This is not to say previous events have recorded zero gains. Some of the achievements organizers and supporters of the Camel Caravan take pride in includes:

- It has brought close collaboration between the National and County Governments, civil society organizations, development partners and private entities thereby creating synergy of purpose
- Provides a platform for communities to engage policy makers on the challenges they face and propose tangible solutions. For instance, pastoralist community have demanded involvement

- on the National Government's proposed construction of a mega dam-the Crocodile Jaw Dam
- Brought unity of purpose among warring pastoralists who previously viewed others as rivals
- The event has attracted media attention-mainstream, community and social media thereby assisted in amplifying the voice of conservation, peace and coexistence among various ethnic groups that depend on the ecosystem for livelihood
- Created a network for downstream and upstream communities thereby providing a platform for dialogue to address hazards such as drought and floods
- Informed legislation to guide on sustainable utilization of natural resources; a case in point being the commencement of a process to legislate sand harvesting on River Ewaso Ng'iro by Isiolo and Samburu County Governments.
- Brought about a sense of ownership of River Ewaso Nyiro for various communities on its basin



RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

The Post 2019 Camel Caravan meeting held in Isiolo Town came up with several recommendations listed below which are geared towards achieving stated objectives of the caravan and ensuring sustainability of this event that has now become a process.

- Put in place a plan that guides on the measures to be taken towards restoration of the Ewaso Ng'iro River Basin with benefits on recreation, flood risk management, river line ecosystem including wetlands (*chaffa*) in the lower areas, water quality and wild life concerns
- Conduct complete assessment of the current state of the river, collating together current available information and its livelihood system
- Come up with shared vision by identifying pertinent issues which need to be addressed in order to realize this vision
- Employ conservation efforts and systems that are resilient to climate change and least affected by future environmental and human pressures

- Bring on board new partners/stakeholders from the private sector including flower farms, private ranches, ecotourism lodges etc
- Invest in media engagement right from the planning stage for consistency in disseminating advocacy messages. Additionally, capacity building for journalists on IRM for improved reporting on resilience issues
- Diversify into other forms of communication including traditional media i.e engage pupils /students to compose songs, poems, *mashairi*, dances and craft one message by basin residents to be passed across through performing arts medium
- Raise the level of interaction between various communities during the days of the caravan including village overnight stays and spending the last two days for symposium and speeches
- Widen the scope of advocacy to include all- People Living With Disabilities, the elderly, women and youth





**A Publication of Merti Integrated Development Programme
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