

***Water Hyacinth Utilization
Project (WHUP).***

**Progress Report
(November 2001 - December, 2002)**

1. INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes activities of the Water Hyacinth Utilization on Nairobi Dam Project. This project is largely funded by GEF/UNDP and UNEP. KICK contribution is covered by the resources it receives from DFID for its development activities. The report covers activities that have been undertaken by Kisumu Innovation Center-Kenya during the period November 2001 – December 2002.

The project has two constituent components. The first component seeks to establish water hyacinth purification ponds along Nairobi Dam. This is to demonstrate the possible use of water hyacinth in treating polluted water systems. The second component seeks to establish a production unit for household products, paper and paper products using water hyacinth weed. This is envisaged to create income earning (employment) opportunities to at least 50 artisans from Kibera -- a slum community living along the Nairobi Dam.

2 Component I: Water Hyacinth Purification Ponds

Component one has not taken off due to lack of appropriate site for the construction of the proposed water hyacinth purification ponds. The Nairobi City Council, which had been expected to provide the site owing to its good relationship with UNEP, has so far failed to do so. This is further frustrated by the difficulty of getting land in this high population density area, largely covered by the Kibera slum.

However KICK has been scouting for a site. On September 18, 2002, KICK, EAWLS and UNEP held a meeting with a SACCO officials who own a plot along Kibera Kianda Bridge. This meeting explored possibilities of renting or buying part of the land from the society. KICK and EAWLS are looking at a possibility of joining resources to lease the plot as both organizations are implementing almost similar projects, purification ponds and wetland respectively.

It was agreed at the meeting that the SACCO officials would meet with their members to further discuss this possibility. The SACCO would then get back to KICK, EAWLS and UNEP. Should this go through KICK will then contract a consultant to design and construct the ponds.

The other option being explored is working with a private company interested in having treatment ponds to treat waste. This would build on activities being done by organizations such as Carnivore in treating their waste using biological aids such as the water hyacinth. Support is being sought from UNEP for this.

However, following the historic elections that led to the change of government coupled with the new Minister for Local Governments tough stance on city officials to perform, there is a lot of optimism that the obstacles faced during 2002

will be surmounted. The eagerness to be seen to be performing, crackdown on corruption and threat of the sack should make it possible to move on with this component.

3.0 Component II: Water Hyacinth Utilization

Given the problems encountered in implementing Component I, Component II has been the key focus of attention. Much more has been achieved than planned in many of the areas.

3.1 To establish a production unit for producing household products and paper from the water hyacinth.

The Sailing and Aqua Club' has kindly allowed the project to use its premises next to Nairobi Dam as its base. The club has provided space for training, production and storage. Promising discussions are at advanced stage with a landowner near the club for the use of his land for the project. This would enable the project conduct training, production and marketing activities through a showroom at the site. Furthermore, it promises to make the project more sustainable.

Meanwhile the project has been working with the artisans from their respective locations as satellite projects. This decentralisation is critical for the sustainability of the project. The artisans however still do have access to the dam through the Sailing club for purposes of harvesting and papermaking. The project is in the process of acquiring containers to put up a showroom. This would also provide an office space and a workshop for the project. Talks are currently going on between KICK and Jacklyne Kegode an intern at UNEP/ROA office to help in sourcing the containers

3.2 To carry out training in the production of hyacinth products.

This draws most of its clientele from the expansive Kibera slums in Nairobi. Training activities (component) has been very successful. The training component has met its target. So far a total of 59 artisans - nine more than the targeted artisans, from KICOSHEP, SCC/ILCP, and HOYWICK have been trained on water hyacinth rope making and weaving, paper making and conversion. Training was done in two series. The first session was carried out from in March 2002 where a total of 23 artisans were trained. The second session was held in May 2002, and a total of 36 artisans were trained. The training's were carried out at the Sailing Club where the project is currently temporarily based. These training have proved popular among the community members. To date over 200 training requests have been made to KICK all coming from different individuals and CBOs in Nairobi. KICK has been unable to

respond positively to these requests due to funding limitations. This prompted KICK to seek for further funding for a further training for 40 artisans.

Training was used to develop the capacity of individuals, CBOs and businesses to use the water hyacinth to make products and market them. The training had both theoretical and practical components. The first was a Water hyacinth rope weaving course whose aim was to equip participants with the skills to turn the water hyacinth into rope, that can then be used to weave a variety of products. A hand made paper course that aimed at equipping participants with skills on hand made papermaking followed this. The third course focused on hand made paper conversion and trained participants in using the paper to make a variety of products such as picture frames and scrapbooks.

The fourth was introduction to weaving course that enabled participants to weave sofa sets chairs and coffee tables. A total of 23 people were trained. Four other courses have been held on the same topics benefiting another 36 people. This brings the total number of people trained to 59. Those trained were largely women drawn from the Kibera slums.

Six artisans were retained for further training and to help develop additional quality products for marketing. A number of products has since been developed some of which are; CD racks, corner shelves, magazine racks, lampshades, waste paper baskets, picture frames and cards. The six have gone back to their respective groups to help polish up the group members weaving and paper making skills.

KICK contracted two master trainer businesses: Hyacinth Crafts that trained on rope making while paper lifting and conversion was done by Royal Paper Hyacinth Crafts. The use of business trainers was meant to ensure that the training was practical and relevant.

KICK has also proposed the provision of business start-up and management skills to support the technical skills training given to the community. This is essential in ensuring that the new businesses that they set up as “Environmental Entrepreneurs” are sustainable.

3.3 To develop commercially viable products from the water hyacinth.

Product design and development process is ongoing with new products having been adopted. These largely cover picture frames, cards and furniture. New forms of hyacinth fibre use have been acquired and are being introduced. This new method uses the dried hyacinth directly without weaving it into a rope first. It will reduce the costs of weaving baskets substantially while adding onto the technologies that have already been developed. The new developments are expected to further differentiate the project from its Kisumu counterpart.

3.4 To access local and international markets for the water hyacinth products developed.

KICK is building on its experiences in Kisumu as a facilitator. The desired approach is therefore to develop the capacity of the market chain to capitalize on the weed in the dam.

A market survey on potential market opportunities was conducted in September 2002. The survey looked at potential market outlets for products from the project. Those visited and interviewed included stationery shops, gift shops, furniture shops, craft outlets, exhibitions, roadside outlets among other.

Apart from the trade exhibitions, the project has tried finding market outlets for the artisan's products through various gift shops in Nairobi. Currently the artisans supply; Collectors Den, Siafu gift shop, Kabisa gift shop, Buffords limited, Benrock gift shop, Legacy bookshop and Dagorreti Children Center. However the groups are encouraged to find their own markets.

The project has attended three major exhibitions as one way to help market the project and also exposes the artisans to variety and quality products in the market. The first exhibition, was the "Craft Bazaar" which was used to gauge the response to some of the new products being developed for the project. The second dubbed '*Hyacinth exhibition*' was held at YAYA Center in April - 6th May 2002. This was organized by the project. The exhibition capitalized on the World Fair Trade Day to promote its activities internationally. The second exhibition, organized by AMEGA- KENYA was held in July 2002, at The Carnivore ground. Some of its clients such as the Dagoretti Children Home and Save the Children also participated.

KICK has linked local producers of hyacinth products to market outlets such as Hyacinth Crafts which are interested in selling products from the project. There exist greater market opportunities with some interested individual business people who want to exploit the emergent AGOA market.

The project's water hyacinth activities have also received publicity from both local and international media such as Capital FM, Nation TV, KBC and a European TV network in July, August and September.

3.5 To create sustainable employment opportunities for the indigenous dam Communities.

Presently more than half of those trained are using skills acquired to produce products either in-groups or individually, in addition to their other activities. In order to ensure sustainability, the project has been working with existing groups and organizations with the capacity or potential capacity to market their own

products. This is meant to ensure that the trainees do not become dependant on the project to market their products. Those involved so far are KICOSHEP, SCC/ILCP and HOYWICK. Linking producers with market outlets will ensure project continuity and that artisans realize immediate benefits from the work without necessarily waiting for donor support.