

# Policies and value chains for local products

A lack of effective local by-laws on resource use and national product standards frequently creates unfavourable conditions for small agricultural producers in marginalized areas of Eastern Africa. ESAPP helped to improve policy frameworks and value chains for small producers of frankincense and camel milk by supporting formulation of by-laws, facilitating consultation of local communities, and helping local producers establish value chains for their products.

## Sustainable development challenge

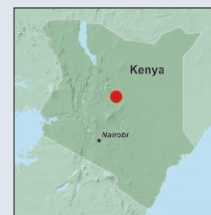
Adequate governance tools are needed at different decision-making levels to foster sustainable resource management and regional development. However, communities in Eastern Africa often lack effective by-laws regulating resource use at the local level, or they do not have the tools to enforce existing by-laws. At the national level, gaps in legislation tend to worsen conditions for local producers in marginalized areas who wish to supply goods to country-level or international markets.

In the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of the Upper Ewaso Ng'iro Basin, north-west of Mount Kenya, natural resources are scarce and contested. Local communities frequently lack by-laws to regulate the harvesting of resources such as gum arabic and frankincense, tree resins that are exported via informal market routes to the Middle and Far East and represent significant sources of income. This leads to overuse, species and rangeland degradation, and low product quality. Pastoralists living in this region also depend heavily on camel milk as a source of food and income. Due to lack of official certification and quality standards, camel milk was considered illegal for commercial trading until recently and thus marketed informally far below its fair-market value. Effective governance with regard to natural resource management and market policies is necessary to prevent further degradation and to improve livelihoods.

## ESAPP's response

Here and in other project areas, ESAPP helped improve the reliability of policy frameworks and value chains for local products by (1) supporting the formulation of clear acts, laws, and certifications at various levels of governance; (2) facilitating consultation of local communities and stakeholders during these processes; and (3) helping local producers in establishing value chains for certified and processed products. At the local level, ESAPP helped to establish user-group governance bodies and regulations on access to natural resources.

In the Upper Ewaso Ng'iro Basin, context-specific harvesting and processing protocols regarding access to, and use of, gum arabic and frankincense were formulated together with concerned communities, tested, and introduced as a basis for negotiating binding agreements between these communities and regional and national institutions. In parallel, ESAPP facilitated a national policy negotiation process to help define quality standards for camel milk and its inclusion in national dairy policy and legislation. This was done to improve pastoralists' economic returns, enabling them to access premium markets, thus improving their livelihoods and food security.



## Main messages

- In order to improve livelihood security and resilience to environmental and economic changes, clear, supportive, and reliable policy frameworks must be established at various levels of governance in collaboration with local communities.
- Information and knowledge generation, policy support, and capacity development are an integral part of this process, as are identifying niche markets and developing appropriate and sustainable land management technologies.
- In arid and semi-arid lands, increasing the (sale) value of local resource-based goods is a good way of responding to resource scarcity; this can be achieved through better quality management, formal certification, and attractive branding.



Camels are a vital source of livelihood for the communities in the semi-arid and arid lowlands of northern Kenya. (Photo: Eliza Peter)



## The project story

In 2005, ESAPP launched a series of projects in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of the Upper Ewaso Ng'iro Basin, north-west of Mount Kenya, seeking to improve the livelihoods of marginalized communities. Two main approaches were adopted: (1) improving people's income through better access to markets, and (2) establishing by-laws and protocols for the sustainable harvesting of natural resources. The projects focused on three key regional products: gum arabic, frankincense, and camel milk.

**Gum arabic:** The project aimed to create reliable market contacts, negotiate supplier agreements, establish collection centres and storage facilities, improve local institutional structures, and develop a marketing initiative to streamline the commercial gum trade. A significant result was the transfer of knowledge and skills to local producers. Gum-producing tree species are now more highly valued and their felling for charcoal burning has decreased. There is renewed incentive to tap gum for commercial purposes, and improved partnerships have attracted interest from stakeholders in the gum industry. Establishment of a central location for sales has enabled the community to fetch better prices, and has enabled buyers to collect gum more easily. Further, local and regional development authorities committed to open and sustain international market links for the local communities.

**Frankincense:** ESAPP aimed to improve market access for locally produced frankincense, enabling pastoralist communities to benefit from an alternative source of income that is not vulnerable to drought. To that end, potential markets were identified and organic and Fairwild certifications (<http://www.fairwild.org/>) were sought. In parallel, the project inventoried *Boswellia* trees, from which frankincense is harvested, in selected monitoring sites; this provided a basis for formulation of locally negotiated protocols for the sustainable harvesting of frankincense. Findings were presented to relevant government partners and new partnership networks were created, contributing to improved research and policy guidelines.

**Camel milk:** In 2005, the Centre for Training and Integrated Research in ASAL Development (CETRAD) hosted a high-level stakeholder workshop involving government agencies responsible for dairy-sector development and standards. It facilitated discussions between leading commercial dairy traders and research organizations on the topic of camel milk production and trade. The workshop recommendations were adopted, and camel milk production was mainstreamed into the national policy and legislative framework. The Kenya Bureau of Standards also developed criteria for raw whole camel milk, the production and marketing of which is now legalized and standardized. Enabling local communities to legally trade camel milk has opened access to new markets, resulting in better prices and improved livelihoods.

**Top:** Before ESAPP's intervention, there were no quality standards governing camel milk and its formal trade was forbidden. ESAPP organized a series of policy dialogue workshops with the aim of integrating it into the national dairy policy framework. In 2007, the policy was changed to enable commercial production, and camel milk became a tradeable commodity. Now, camel milk is even found in some of Kenya's main supermarkets. (Photo: Boniface Kiteme)

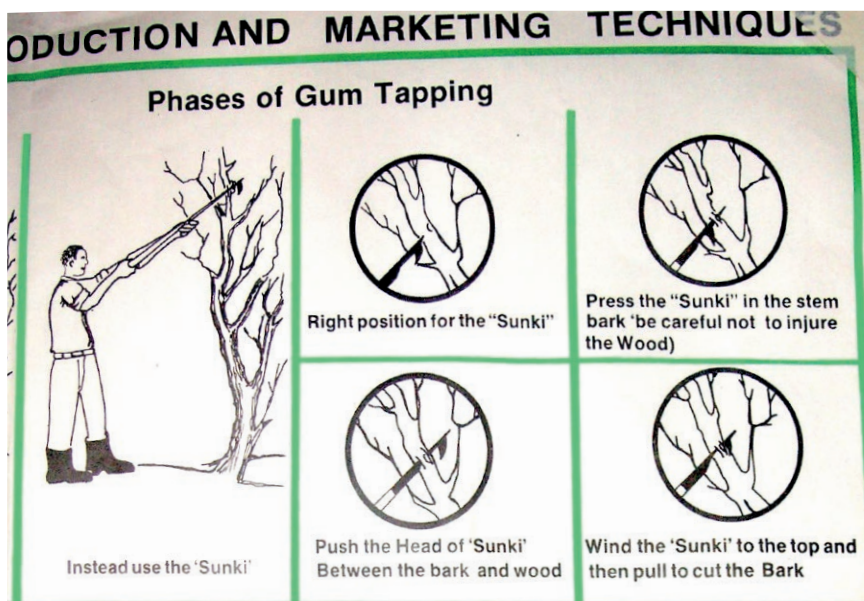
**Bottom:** Before ESAPP started its activities in the region, harvesting of gums and resins was done without regard to resource management, leading to overuse and degradation of the natural resource base. The establishment of community-based harvest protocols and by-laws has helped improve this situation. (Photo: CETRAD photo gallery)



## Innovation and relevance

ESAPP partners used an innovative, integrated approach to help improve the livelihoods of local communities in the resource-poor ASALs of the Upper Ewaso Ng'iro Basin. The approach is two-pronged: On the one hand, it seeks to improve the income of local producers by enabling them to access premium formal markets. This is done by enhancing the value of local products, and establishing quality standards and facilitative policy frameworks at the national level. On the other, it seeks to secure the natural resource base from which these products are derived by helping local user and producer groups enforce a local governance framework centred on sustainability. This includes establishment of context-specific harvesting and processing protocols, which form the basis for negotiating binding agreements on access to and use of natural resources. It also includes capacity development of local producers in sustainable harvesting and processing practices.

Insecure livelihoods of rural communities in marginal and resource-scarce areas are a widespread problem in Eastern Africa. The ESAPP projects described here illustrate the use and potential of pursuing a combined strategy that includes: (1) sustainable local-level resource management and capacity development, in order to secure the production base of local commodities on their own land; (2) quality management and certification of these commodities in order to establish profitable value chains linking marginal rural areas and big national markets; and (3) creation of a beneficial regulatory framework through policy support and national-level negotiations to create more secure conditions for local communities in marginal areas. The experience gathered in Kenya's Upper Ewaso Ng'iro Basin is documented and could be transferred to other areas of Eastern Africa and applied to other commodities.



**Top:** Gum or resin exudate ready for harvesting. Harvesting gum and resin sustainably means protecting the trees and promoting their natural regeneration, planting gum- and resin-producing species, selecting mother trees and seed stands, properly scheduling harvesting cycles, tapping trees selectively, and creating awareness of fire risks and hazards. These and other important aspects of commercial gum production were the main focus of the training sessions facilitated by the projects. (Photo: Eliza Peter)

**Bottom:** Training offered by the project enabled gum and resin harvesters to improve yields while sustainably managing the resource base. (Photo: CETRAD photo gallery)



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### Further reading

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### Highlight profile

This highlight is based on the achievements of 4 ESAPP priority action projects.

**Implemented during:**  
 2005–2014

**Total funds contributed by ESAPP:**  
 CHF 119,900

**Implemented by:**  
 Centre for Training and Integrated Research in ASAL Development (CETRAD), Nanyuki, Kenya

**In collaboration with:**  
 Egerton University, Department of Dairy and Food Science and Technology, Egerton, Kenya; Mandate The Future (MTF), Isiolo, Kenya

**Main beneficiaries:**  
 Pastoralist communities in the lowlands north of Mount Kenya

### This highlight

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### Funded by



### What is ESAPP?

The Eastern and Southern Africa Partnership Programme (ESAPP) is a research implementation programme funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), coordinated by the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern, Switzerland, and implemented jointly by CDE and a network of partner institutions in Eastern and Southern Africa. Launched in 1999 and completed in 2015, ESAPP implemented over 300 priority action projects in the programme region, which included Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Madagascar.

### What are ESAPP Highlights?

ESAPP Highlights are a series of 24 project descriptions providing insights into ESAPP's research and implementation partnerships. Each Highlight describes a succession of demand-driven priority action projects addressing local and regional sustainability issues. The 24 Highlights are collected in a publication that includes additional background information on ESAPP (see citation above). The individual Highlights and the entire publication are also available for download on CDE's website: [www.cde.unibe.ch](http://www.cde.unibe.ch) (keyword search: "ESAPP").