

# Water Towers project research results Itare, Mau forest

## Objective:

To establish whether and how community forest associations and water resource user associations work to jointly govern forest and water resources

### Overview of Itare forest

Itare forest is located in the southwestern part of Mau forest and covers a total area of 16,700 hectares. The Itare Community Forestry Association (CFA), which has about 2000 members, has the following user groups: beekeeping, grazing, water harvesting, ecotourism, fuelwood, fisheries, tree nurseries, butterfly, mushrooms and quarry. Itare Chemosit Water Resource User Association (WRUA), which has 72 members, is within the Itare-Chemosit sub-catchment (247 km<sup>2</sup>). All told, 32 community members are in both the CFA and WRUA. Most are men 35 years or more as indicated in Figure 1.

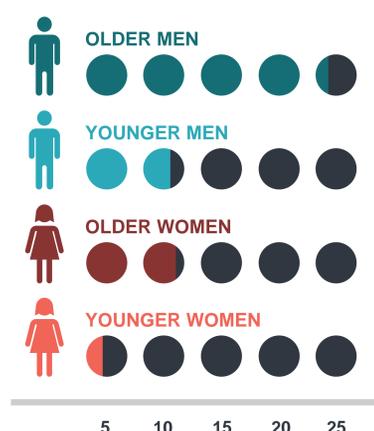


Figure 1. Gender distribution of people who are members of both CFA and WRUA.

### Research process

Two locations were selected (Kaptebengwet and Cheptalal CBOs). The following user groups were selected: grazing, water management, tree nursery, beekeeping and firewood collection. We conducted 30 focus group discussions with members and non-members of the CFA and WRUA, and 6 key informant interviews with leaders. We talked to 247 men and women, who were also differentiated by age.

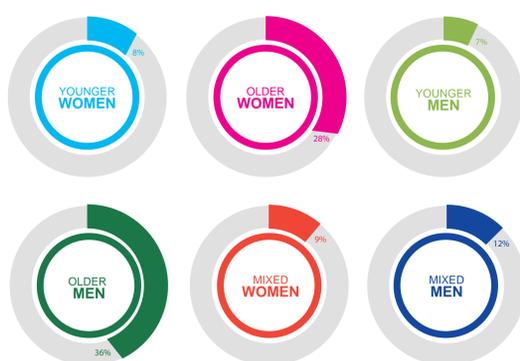


Figure 2. Percentage of men and women respondents in focus group discussions.



Figure 3. Number of focus group discussions in Itare per user group.

### Community perception of forest and water condition and change

Forest size was reduced in the past 5-10 years, extinction of Indigenous tree species such as mahogany and lemon wood (*awonet*, *rerendet*). Causes of the changes are population increase; illegal activities such as overgrazing and charcoal burning; and demand for firewood by tea factories.

Water levels in some streams have completely dried up in the past 5-10 years (Itare-Chemosit, Kipsanai). Increased runoff leads to siltation. Causes of drying up streams and increasing siltation include over-abstraction of water by upstream users; poor cultivation practices in sloping areas and along the riparian zones; and planting eucalyptus around water sources.

*Link between forest and water:* The community understands the linkages between forest change and water quality and quantity. In 29 focus group discussions, participants mentioned reduced forest cover as a cause of reduced water levels and drying up of streams. Among participants, younger women had a different view. They mentioned that water is clean because people were trying to conserve water. Older men and women mentioned that streams had dried up due to cutting down trees. They also thought that planting eucalyptus along rivers contributed to rivers drying up. Cultivation on slopes causing erosion and eucalyptus on riverbanks were mentioned as a cause of rivers becoming dirty and brown.

### Leadership

The CFA chairperson and secretary are men, whereas the treasurer is a woman. At the user group level, all treasurers are women, but only 3 of 10 (Tomboiyot, Arise and Shine, and Mt. Sinai) have women as chairpersons. The office term for the CFA is three years and the last election was held in 2016. Women are elected because they are found to be committed, honest and trustworthy. Men are elected because cultural norms associate men with top leadership positions. In addition, men are not bogged down by household chores.

The WRUA has two levels of leadership: management and four sub-committees, comprising procurement, floods and

drought management, monitoring, livelihoods and finance. At the management level, there are four men and one woman. At the sub-committee level, there are 15 women and 15 men. The office term for the WRUA is three years; the last election was held in June 2018.

### Joint activities between CFA and WRUA

Most CFA user group members did not have joint activities with WRUA members. Four out of 10 user groups mentioned they work with the WRUA. Although CFA and WRUA membership overlapped and the groups had joint activities, it was not clear which activities were conducted jointly and how often. CFA members mentioned tree nursery establishment as joint activities, while WRUA members mentioned collaboration in cutting down blue gum/*Eucalyptus* sp in riverbanks and beekeeping. The CFA user groups with members in WRUA are indicated below.

Table 1. CFA user group members also in WRUA.

CFA user group	Members	Members in WRUA
Arise and Shine (Livestock grazing)	Older men and older women	7 of 13
Meswondo (Firewood collection)	Older men and older women	5 of 11
Kapleleito (Tree nursery)	Young women	3 of 14
Sakweta (Water abstraction)	Older women	9 of 20
Kiptobon (Beekeeping)	Older woman	1 of 60

Activities by CFA user groups were limited to forest areas and none were involved in water management. Similarly, WRUA members were not involved in forest management activities, but rather focused on riparian areas. These activities were planting Indigenous trees along the riverbanks, and planting bamboo to replace the eucalyptus trees along the rivers Kisumek and Itare Chemosit. Reasons given for not having joint activities include lack of adequate knowledge about WRUA and CFA activities, and dissatisfaction with leadership.

The first joint activity by the CFA and WRUA took place after the onset of the Water Towers research program. It involved joint tree planting of 5000 Indigenous trees at Kabaibai site in July 2018. Species planted include *lamaiywet*, *arorwet*, *rerendet*, *silipchet* and bamboo.

### Participation of CFA and WRUA members in meetings

Women's participation was low and constrained by lack of time due to household chores and long distances to meeting venues. There were no joint meetings between the CFA and the WRUA.

### Suggestions for improving participation

CFA and WRUA leaders could organize meetings for their respective members in accessible places, and communicate the date, time and places for the venue in advance. They could also provide a transport allowance for members who travel long distances to meeting venues.

### Suggested areas of collaboration for CFA & WRUA

- establishment of tree nurseries, management of the riverbanks
- collaboration in income generating activities e.g. water-bottling, beekeeping.

Paradoxically, joint CFA/WRUA meetings were not part of suggested joint activities.

### Conclusion

CFA and WRUA members both see the link between forests and water. They were able to relate the change in water levels and color to degradation in the forest. However, joint activities were limited, even in the few instances where membership overlapped. Leadership of both CFA and WRUA was composed primarily of men, with women taking the treasurers' role. Activities for both WRUA and CFA were limited to riparian conservation activities for the WRUA and forest conservation for the CFA. Both WRUA and CFA members agreed on the need to work together on some activities. The joint tree planting activities, tree nursery establishment and riparian conservation were mentioned as potential points of collaboration.

### Recommendations

- Strengthen collaboration between Itare CFA and Itare Chemosit WRUA.
- Enhance understanding so that CFA members undertake water management activities downstream, and WRUA members undertake forest management activities.
- Target capacity building to enhance coordination between CFA and WRUA and enhance participation of women in management positions within the two associations.
- Hold joint meetings between the CFA and WRUA leadership as a first step to achieve collaboration.



### With financial support of