



# KIPEPEO (Butterfly) Project

USAID/ Manoocher Deghati



A Kipepeo curator displays one of the butterfly species found at Kipepeo (Butterfly) Project in the Arabuko-Sokoke forest near Watamu. Local people profit from raising butterflies and selling pupae to zoos around the world.

**Funding Level:**  
\$930,000

**Duration:**  
January 2005 – September 2014

**Activity Goals:**

- Increase income opportunities for those living around Arabuko Sokoke forest
- Improve forest restoration
- Increase awareness for conservation

**Activity Accomplishments:**

- Grossed more than \$80,000 annually over the past five years, 90% of which was in the export of butterfly pupae to the United States and Europe
- 90% of Kipepeo farmers are women, which means income is directly spent within the household
- Kipepeo farmers have established tree nurseries and woodlots on their farms, reducing over-reliance on trees from the forest
- The project has proved that incentive-based co-management is a successful model for forest conservation

**Implementing Partner:**  
National Museums of Kenya

**Key Partner:**  
Nature Kenya

**ACTIVITY OVERVIEW**

The Kipepeo (Kiswahili for butterfly) Project is a community-based enterprise that supports the livelihoods of people living around Arabuko Sokoke forest in coastal Kenya. The project promotes conservation by creating income-generating opportunities from forest butterflies.

The Arabuko Sokoke forest is the last large remnant of the north-coast forests that once dominated Kenya’s coastline. A vital resource for local communities, it also forms part of the Eastern African Coastal Forest System, considered to be among the top 25 biodiversity hot spots on earth. Kipepeo Project is trying to diminish the threat of unsustainable use by local communities trying to meet their basic needs.

**ACTIVITY AREAS**

In 2003, USAID awarded US \$1.2 million through Nature Kenya and the National Museums of Kenya to support the implementation of Kenya’s first pilot joint government and community forest co-management initiative at the Arabuko Sokoke forest before the enactment of the Forest Act (2005).

The pilot forest co-management initiative aimed to establish sustainable nature-based businesses to create incentives for forest conservation and help reduce forest loss. As part of that initiative, Kipepeo received support to expand its butterfly farming business and its processing facilities, and to diversify its products. In response, Kipepeo has established new export markets for its butterfly pupae. It also produces honey and promotes improved beekeeping among farmers around the forest. Kipepeo farmers have installed modern honey processing equipment, and they now have a website for marketing their products and raising awareness on conservation.

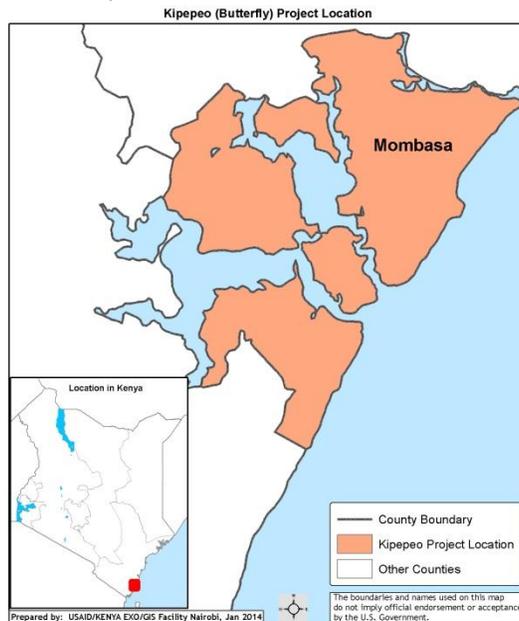
**ACTIVITY IMPACT**

Different species of butterflies serve as indicators of the ecological health of forests. To ensure that coastal butterflies maintain the plants and trees they need for survival, Kipepeo farmers have established tree nurseries and planted trees on their farms to breed pupae. This serves a dual purpose of protecting the mature forest from over harvesting and breeding butterflies for income. Many Kipepeo farmers are now members of Community Forest Associations, helping to protect and conserve the Arabuko forest.

The project has proved that incentive-based co-management is a successful model for forest conservation. This approach has been

### Activity Locations:

Mombasa, Malindi and Kilifi



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### Website:

<http://www.kipepeo.org/>

instrumental in influencing the forest policy in Kenya. Kipepeo has, over the past five years, consistently grossed more than US \$80,000 annually, 90% of which is in the export of butterfly pupae to the United States and Europe. Over 90% of Kipepeo farmers are women, which means income is directly spent within the household. Kipepeo farmers have established tree nurseries and woodlots on their farms, reducing over-reliance on the Arabuko Forest.

In 2012, USAID supported the Fort Jesus Museum to construct a live-butterfly exhibit. The exhibit purchases excess pupae produced by Arabuko and other coastal forest farmers, which, for the first time, provides secure and reliable local demand for butterfly pupae. In addition to ensuring local demand, the exhibit gift shop plans to market a range of conservation-minded community products, further showcasing the biodiversity of coastal forests and generating income for coastal people.

The museum requires more than 400 to 600 pupae every two weeks at a cost ranging from \$0.5 to \$2.0 per pupae, depending on the quality of species. The swallowtails and diadem butterflies are increasingly popular because of their bright color and flight patterns. The butterfly exhibit is quite popular with visitors, and is expected to be a major tourist destination for visitors in Mombasa.

The feasibility study and business plan for the exhibit projects an annual gross revenue of \$20,000 in the third year of operation for butterfly products alone. In addition, the exhibit gift shop will market a whole range of conservation-linked community products from across the region. The opportunity presented by the exhibit to showcase the biodiversity of coastal forests is no less important. The exhibit not only presents visitors with an amazing experience, but also educates them in the importance of coastal forest biodiversity conservation. Tourists, school children, and locals will benefit from this unique project, as will the coastal forests they are learning about.