



Strong contrast between natural vegetation in Mt. Elgon National Park and adjacent agricultural areas of Trans-Nzoia county of Kenya.

CREATE – a New Transdisciplinary Network for Research in East African Ecosystems

What are the impacts of socio-economic and ecological components of global change on East African countries? What has to be done to protect natural resources such as water, soil, and clean air in this region, and to prevent damage to essential ecosystems due to changing land use by humans? These are the questions addressed by the new international network „CREATE“ (<http://www.bayceer.uni-bayreuth.de/CREATE>). It is supported by a growing cooperation between the University of Bayreuth, Maseno University (Maseno, Kisumu) and Moi University (Eldoret) in Kenya. This cooperation between three universities (which includes an additional broad spectrum of participating international scientists) has been formalized in memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and is supplemented by a strong collaboration with the Lake Basin Development Authority (LBDA), a Kenyan governmental institution for regional development focusing on livelihoods of the rural population around Lake Victoria in Western Kenya. This consortium of universities and LBDA under the um-



CREATE Conference in Kisumu, Kenya. Participants from Bayreuth were: Prof. Dr. Kurt Beck (Social Anthropology), Prof. Dr. Gerhard Gebauer (Isotope Biogeochemistry), Prof. Dr. Bernd Huwe (Soil Physics), PD Dr. Dennis Otieno (Plant Ecology), Prof. Dr. Gerhard Rambold (Mycology), Prof. Dr. Eberhard Rothfuß (Social and Population Geography), Prof. Dr. Cyrus Samimi (Climatology), Prof. Dr. John Tenhunen (Plant Ecology), Prof. Dr. Christoph Thomas (Micrometeorology), Prof. Dr. Christiane Werner (Agroecosystem Research), and Dr. Bärbel Heindl-Tenhunen (CREATE Office).

brella of CREATE is dedicated to strengthening application-oriented research that will benefit local populations. It is the goal of the participating partners to ensure that knowledge gained from research expenditures that concern the inter-dependencies between environment and society, are integrated in a timely fashion and to a greater extent than before in decision-making by governmental institutions, private investors, and individual stakeholders. Furthermore, the consortium provides a new basis for undertaking research projects of transdisciplinary nature that provide improved understanding of natural, cultural and social science drivers of resource use.

An additional goal of the CREATE effort is to stimulate training at universities and environmental education in school systems. „Together we want to achieve that students in Bayreuth and at the Kenyan partner universities learn early in their careers, how global and local



changes influence coupled social-environmental systems in East Africa“, explains Prof. Cyrus Samimi, head of the Research Group of Climatology at the University of Bayreuth. „Due to their high geographical and cultural diversity, East African regions are excellently suited to case studies that combine ecological and social research questions. Without a strong interdisciplinary network, it would not be possible to develop solid concepts for natural resource management that are supported and can be implemented stepwise by the people in East Africa and with respect to their own interests.“

In February 2015, scientists of the universities of Bayreuth, Eldoret, Maseno and of the LBDA, as well as cooperating scientists from Duke University (USA) and Lanzhou University (People’s Republic of China) met in Kisumu to discuss „Integrated Ecosystem and Water Management.“ This international conference had been prepared in workshops carried out during February 2014 in Maseno and in summer 2014 in Bayreuth. The Cabinet Secretary of the Kenyan Ministry of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, Prof. Judi Wakhungu, came in person for the opening ceremony of the conference, which involved more than 100 scientists of the Western Kenya region. Discussions held in conjunction with the diverse informative presentations focused on themes and organisational structures for future cooperation within the framework of CREATE.

Prof. Samimi summed up experiences gained during the conference in the following way, „The diversity of disciplines and scientific interests included here qualifies our network as a forum and international contact center for integrated interdisciplinary research and cooperation with respect to new approaches in sustainable resource management in East Africa“. During the meeting he was nominated as successor of Prof. Dr. John Tenhunen and Prof. Dr. Bernd Huwe (the initiators of CREATE in Bayreuth), as CREATE spokesman. At the same time, an advisory board for the Bayreuth/German group was founded, consisting of Prof. Dr. Gerhard Gebauer (Isotope Biogeochemistry), Prof. Dr. Eberhard Rothfuß (Social and Population Geography) and Prof. Dr. Christoph Thomas (Micrometeorology).

Further information:

www.bayceer.uni-bayreuth.de/CREATE



Contact:

Prof. Dr. Cyrus Samimi
Climatology
Faculty for Biology, Chemistry and Geosciences
University of Bayreuth
D - 95440 Bayreuth
Telephone +49 (0)921 55 2237
E-Mail: cyrus.samimi@uni-bayreuth.de

Editorial Office:

Christian Wißler M.A.
Stabsstelle Presse, Marketing und Kommunikation
Universität Bayreuth
D-95440 Bayreuth
Tel.: +49 (0)921 55-5356
E-Mail: mediendienst-forschung@uni-bayreuth.de

English Translation:

Dr. Bärbel Heindl-Tenhunen

Photos:

Prof. Dr. Cyrus Samimi; free for publication.
In high resolution for download see:

www.uni-bayreuth.de/presse/images/2015/048/