



## **Community Conservancies Concerned Over Lack of Consultation, Loss of Livelihoods and Environmental Damage By Proposed Power line Route**

**NAIROBI, July 25 2013:-** Community Conservancies in Samburu, Laikipia and Isiolo Counties are deeply concerned about the lack of consultation involved in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and the effects on their livelihoods and the environment that will result from the proposed Kenya Electricity Transmission Company Limited (KETRACO) power line routing. They are urging the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) to request assessment of an alternative route prior to accepting the EIA submitted by KETRACO. The current alignment of the power line - set to begin construction in December 2013 with financial support from the World Bank and African Development Bank - has approximately 120km passing through communal and grazing lands in these Counties.

Whilst urging for the re-routing of the power line, the affected Conservancies –which include the Naibunga, Westgate, Ol Lentille, Meibae and Mpus Kutuk Community Conservancies and the Sukutan Naibor Community Based Organisation - are not against its construction. Their concern is that the currently proposed route will unnecessarily affect their livelihoods which are dependent on the wilderness and wildlife that attract tourists to the areas.

They maintain that the process that led to the choice of the route was not undertaken with due diligence as it should have included informed consultations with them prior to decisions being made by KETRACO. Since becoming aware of KETRACO's routing decisions, these Conservancies and other stakeholders in Laikipia have proposed shifting the alignment in a manner that increases the total length of the transmission line by 33kms, enabling it to avoid wildlife concentrated areas which communities rely on for their livelihoods through tourism. However, these proposals have been rejected by KETRACO both at a public meeting in Nanyuki on 14 May and again during a NEMA public hearing in Nanyuki on 19 June. The grounds given by KETRACO for this rejection were that it would now take too long to organize and may involve additional costs

Conservancies are now appealing directly to NEMA to request an assessment of the alternative route prior to accepting the EIA that KETRACO has submitted - acceptance of which will give the green light for the power-line to proceed. They believe the alternative route will help alleviate the potential decline of livelihoods, wildlife and tourism in a region vital for the tourism industry and future economic development opportunities of Kenya.

“We wish to urge for further consultations with the affected communities for their views to be heard before decisions are finalised, and written agreements adopted and signed where necessary before the construction of the power line commences.

We are urging that the proposed alternative route be considered as we believe this will reduce negative impacts, and request KETRACO to avail the correct information to communities. They are currently creating the impression that communities will directly benefit from the power line and get electricity from it. This is clearly not the case', says Nicholas Lempaira , the project coordinator for Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation (IMPACT).

After the decision on where to route the powerline was taken, KETRACO have undertaken a number of what they term 'sensitisation' visits to communities. These visits have been characterized by short notice, a lack of information on the proposed line and an increasingly adversarial dialogue. Peter Kilesi, Chairman of Naibunga Community Conservancy, comments that, 'We believe it is our right to have been consulted during the decision making process on an issue that will affect our peoples livelihoods, rather than just being 'sensitised' after an uniformed decision has been made by others. We are looking to NEMA and the donors to ensure that this right is upheld'.

The Conservancies are also questioning the disposal methods of hazardous waste during the power line's construction phase, one of many issues that is not clear in KETRACO's current EIA submission to NEMA. This poses the greatest threats to the regions most sensitive sites such as Lake Olbolossat which is the main source of Ewaso Nyiro River, the main source of water for families living along the river basin.

For further information and to arrange for interviews with Community Conservancy spokespersons, contact:

Ernest Nyamasyo – Communications Officer, Zeitz Foundation 0720654066