



# terrat

*Bridging the Indigenous and Modern*

A newsletter published by Terrawatu

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VII. Solstice 2003                      Southern Winter                      Northern Summer  
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## About this Newsletter

*terrat* is a publication of Terrawatu, a non-governmental organization based in Arusha, Tanzania, East Africa and Seattle, Washington, USA. *terrat* is an e-newsletter published quarterly on the solstice and equinox.



## Project updates

### school partnerships

The computer lab "in the bush" -- now known as the **"Siwandeti Computer Center"** -- was officially opened on 9 April in Siwandeti Village, Arumeru District, Arusha Region, Tanzania. Co-Director, Lekoko Ole Sululu, managed to bring the desktop machines to Arusha in record-time. The computer shipment -- donated by WITAG (World IT Aid Group), Denmark with packing and shipping paid by DANIDA (Danish International Development Assistance) -- arrived at the port of Dar es Salaam on 9 March 2003. Because of strict security at the port due to on-going terrorist threats along the East African coast, it proved to be quite difficult to clear the shipment through customs.



Even though Terrawatu has a VAT exemption certificate, the customs officials still required more paperwork from us than anticipated. This is typical for ports in developing nations -- the customs "crocodiles" make things very difficult for people. Terrawatu ended up working with an official clearance agent who helped facilitate the process for us in just three weeks. We were incredibly lucky to get this done so quickly and at a "low" cost. Most people wait three to four months to get their shipments cleared, at the cost of tens of thousands of dollars.

After the 13-hour drive to Arusha, we rented a pick-up truck and began transporting the machines up to the computer lab site, a half-hour drive from Arusha town up a very rough road/cowpath. We had spent three months remodeling a room at a secondary school; working with the local electricity company to extend 11 poles to the site; wiring the space to receive the machines; and erecting a radio-wireless Internet tower. When the computers eventually arrived, many villagers, including women carrying bananas on their head to the local market, stared in disbelief -- "Are these televisions? What is going on?"

Terrawatu's IT Expert, Steven Kisanga, networked all the machines and connected them to the Internet. On 9 April, the lab was ready to be opened to the community. The *mwenyekiti* (village chairman) was invited, as well as village elders, parents of the school children of Natema and Olchoki Primary (the first beneficiaries of the project), the Arumeru District Educational officer, Terrawatu members, and all of the school children. Dr. Pergola had tears in her eyes as she listened to the children singing in Swahili "Tanya, Tanya, you look like golden moonlight, you show us things we have never seen before".



A Computer Lab "in the Bush": Siwandeti Computer Center

During May Terrawatu engaged in capacity-training activities to sustain the lab. Dozens of applications were waded through in order to find local youths willing and capable of learning enough about computers to in-turn train members of the school and surrounding community. We now have a head teacher and an assistant, as well as six volunteers and a night watchman working at the lab daily. As computer education is not yet part of the Tanzanian national curriculum, students and teachers are not yet "allowed" to use the facility during school hours. Terrawatu is working with the Arumeru School District and expects that this will change by August. In the meantime, students, teachers, and community members are using the lab during non-school hours.

This lab was made possible by the grant we received from USAID in partnership with the World Affairs Council for the "**Linking Lands Project: A Partnership Between Seattle and Tanzania.**" As part of this year-long project, the six American partner teachers who hosted the Tanzanian teachers in their homes in Seattle during March will travel to Arusha from 1-17 August. Terrawatu is finalizing the itinerary which includes continuing computer training in the new lab, a visit to Arusha National Park for wildlife viewing (which will be a first for the Tanzanian partner teachers as well since cost of transport and entry fees into the National Parks are prohibitive for local school teachers), workshops on Tanzanian politics, history and former President Nyerere's legacy, homestays in the teacher's village homes, and visits to a variety of government and private schools in the area.

We are very excited about the evolution of this pilot project that links indigenous villages in Tanzania to classrooms in Seattle and to the international community via the World Wide Web. While much is still to be implemented, completed and evaluated, we have just received word from WITAG and DANIDA that 80 more desktops are on their way to Dar es Salaam! We are currently seeking funding and additional partners so that we can set up two to three more computer labs and extend the teacher exchange aspect of the program. More to come!...

Despite all the excitement with the computer lab opening, we have not forgotten about our classroom construction project at Natema Primary School. Our goal is to complete a four classroom building on school grounds to help reduce the current class size of 150 students per room. The cost of each classroom in this two-story building averages \$8500. Funds raised from our child school sponsorship program (CSS) have gone towards installing windows and doors in the first near-completed classroom. For those of you who would like to contribute financially to the classroom construction project, you have two choices: 1) direct contribution with donation details found at [www.terrawatu.org/financial\\_info.htm](http://www.terrawatu.org/financial_info.htm) ( earmark donation for "appropriate education"), or 2) by sponsoring a child at Natema, details found in *terrat VI* - [www.terrawatu.org/terrat\\_VI.pdf](http://www.terrawatu.org/terrat_VI.pdf) under Child School Sponsorship (CSS) program.

## plant conservation and indigenous knowledge

There were a lot of anxious feelings in April as the long rains threatened not to appear this year. Taps were dry and seedlings were struggling for survival. Terrawatu staff vowed not to let this happen again and are making a point to gather support for a rain harvesting system (see "Needs" section). Eventually, skies began to darken and drops began to fall. While many farmers in the area lost their harvests this year, our tree-planting networks lost only a few trees. Dedicated network members traveled long distances to fetch water. They are determined to bring back the forest in Nadosoito and Mkonoo villages. Terrawatu is identifying the most successful homesteads in the communities that cultivated the largest number of healthy trees after transplanting them from network nurseries. In partnership with Heifer Project Tanzania, we will "reward" these families with goats. This "**livestock for trees**" approach is a way to provide incentive during Terrawatu's first attempt at reforesting Maasailand.



Terrawatu's Community Forester, Kephas Ndiamasi, teaching members of *Orkolili* Network how to use a cow urine mixture as a natural pesticide.

Terrawatu's expertise in the traditional medicine of the Maasai people has caught the attention of some local lodge owners in the Arusha area. We have been training a few carefully selected young people who are interested in re-discovering the names and uses of the plants traditionally used as medicine by their ancestors. We then facilitate matches between these young "healer-guides" and lodges and camps interested in providing this service to clients. As part of this "indigenous knowledge" package, Terrawatu is also providing informational signs for tree species and beginning development of traditional medicinal tea products.

## cross-cultural exchanges

Global Exchange Reality Tour Tanzania, "Global Problems, Local Solutions" is set for **September 7-20, 2003**. As the tour operator, we have added a few new activities to make this journey even more special: a day hike on Mt. Kilimanjaro including a tour through coffee farms, a visit to Mererani town to see the mining of tanzanite gemstones, and short homestays in our tree-planting villages. To read the rest of the itinerary and reserve your place for the tour, go to [www.globalexchange.org/tours/](http://www.globalexchange.org/tours/) and find your way to "Tanzania". Or, contact Sarah Dotlich directly at 1.800.497.1994 or [sarah@globalexchange.org](mailto:sarah@globalexchange.org). Time is running out so if you have been flirting with the idea of coming to East Africa and want a unique experience that you won't find with any of the standard tour operators in northern Tanzania, make the decision to participate in the **Global Exchange Reality Tour Tanzania**. If you would like to extend your trip and include a classic wildlife safari and/or climb up Mt. Kilimanjaro or Mt. Meru, do contact us at [info@terrawatu.org](mailto:info@terrawatu.org).

If you, your family, and/or friends would like to book your own customized ecological-cultural safaris into the wildlife areas and day trips to indigenous communities in northern Tanzania, and/or to find out dates for a future *Oloipung'o Experience* with Terrawatu, send us an email at [info@terrawatu.org](mailto:info@terrawatu.org).



## Organizational News

Terrawatu is making a film about the work of our organization! Called "**Time is Cows**," filming was completed by Onesmo Ole Kishapuy in Tanzania in May. Moving Images of Whidbey Island, Washington will work with Dr. Pergola to edit the film in June. Watch for the announcement of the release of this film in the coming weeks.

Our Annual General meeting was held on Saturday, 17 May 2003 under the tree in the courtyard of the Terrawatu office compound in Arusha. Over thirty people were in attendance, including Terrawatu Board Members and 10 new members. Annual dues were collected and ID photos were taken. For those of you who have not picked up your ID cards yet, please stop by the Arusha office when convenient.

Co-Director Dr. Pergola will be in the States and Europe during the month of July. On 18 July, she will be presenting at a conference "New Media Technologies for International Development" at Oxford University, UK.

## Needs section

☉ **DONATE A DONKEY!!!** Terrawatu's philosophy is to bring community members into our "team" as much as possible, as opposed to perpetuating the "donor"- "recipient" attitude that so often prevails in Third World development projects. With our tree-planting network project, our goal is to create sustainable forests of medicinal plants entirely supported by the villagers who grow and maintain this resource. However, this will only happen after some initial inputs, given the extreme poverty prevalent in the areas where we work. We make it clear that Terrawatu will only consider requests from the community after careful assessment and research into alternative possibilities. We gather a list of needs once or twice a year. For those of you interested in supporting the conservation of traditional medicinal plants, reversing environmental damage, and alleviating poverty, please consider a contribution to this effort by providing funds for:

- ☉ Donkey to carry water (US\$50) plus water drums (US\$50) = \$100
- ☉ Watering cans, planting containers for seeds, hoes = \$75
- ☉ Materials to construct rain harvesting tank = \$695

Please write your check to Tides Foundation/Terrawatu Fund and send to: Finance Department, Tides Foundation, P.O. Box 29903, San Francisco, CA, 94129. Or donate on-line with a credit card on our very secure site: [www.terrawatu.org/financial\\_info.htm](http://www.terrawatu.org/financial_info.htm) - click on "Donate Now" button and earmark donation for "Conserving Biodiversity". All donations are tax-deductible for US citizens.

☉ **Contributions for resource center** - The Medicinal Plant & Sustainable Development Resource Center, based at the Terrawatu offices in Arusha, is a collection of primarily academic literature covering the following subject areas: medicinal plants (with a focus on Tanzania and other African countries); indigenous knowledge (from all over the world); pharmacological evaluation of medicinal plants; Tanzanian and East African sustainable development policies; and Maasai culture and current political issues effecting Maasai people. Users of this center include Terrawatu staff, international students, visitors, and local people. If you have something to contribute to this growing collection contact us at [info@terrawatu.org](mailto:info@terrawatu.org) to let us know what you have and we will let you know the best way to get it to us (e.g. electronically or by post). Materials can be in English or Swahili.

## Activist corner - what you can do from where you are

There are now several ways to get involved in Terrawatu activities:

- ❖ **Choose to sponsor a child at Natema Primary School.** Your financial support helps in classroom construction, educational support for an individual child during primary school, and a special chance for that child to attend secondary school. More information can be found at [www.terrawatu.org/terrat\\_VI.pdf](http://www.terrawatu.org/terrat_VI.pdf) under Child School Sponsorship (CSS) program.

- ❖ **Join us in Tanzania for the Global Exchange Reality Tour** scheduled for 7-20 September 2003. See the section "Cross-cultural Exchanges" above for more details and tell your friends about the tour.
- ❖ **Continue your financial support or become a new supporter of Terrawatu.** We are a lean organization but still need to cover basic costs to keep our projects going. Details about how to contribute can be found at [www.terrawatu.org/financial\\_info.htm](http://www.terrawatu.org/financial_info.htm)
- ❖ **Keep us in mind when you hear about grant opportunities** and/or partnering possibilities with other foundations and organizations that work in the same arena as Terrawatu. Many of you have already provided us with excellent contacts and recommendations that have helped us grow and blossom. Thank you and keep up the good work!
- ❖ **Tell your colleagues and friends about our work.** Forward this newsletter to those you think may be interested in hearing about Terrawatu.



## Recipe- East African specialties

### Grilled Fish with Mango-Pepper Sauce

It is summer BBQ-season in the Northern Hemisphere and a plentiful time for mangos in the Southern Hemisphere! We thought we would share with you a dish that you can find from the coastal restaurants in Dar es Salaam to beachside tables in the Caribbean. We've adapted this recipe to ingredients that can be found in most non-tropical food shops at the higher latitudes. Serve with some rice, grilled plantains, and/or a salad. Recipe serves four people.

#### What you need:

- Four 6 to 8-ounce tuna steaks or any other fish you like
- Juice of 2 limes
- ½ cup mango juice
- 1 stick of butter (4 oz.)
- 2 cloves of garlic, crushed
- 1 green (less-ripe) mango, peeled and thinly sliced
- small white onion, thinly sliced
- 3-4 thinly sliced peppers – use different varieties – red, green, yellow, jalapeno or Scotch bonnet (adjust to your taste for "hot" or *pili pili*)
- 3-4 sprigs fresh Italian parsley, finely chopped
- 3-4 sprigs fresh coriander (cilantro), finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

#### What you do:

1. In a large bowl, combine fish with the lime juice and ¼ cup of mango juice. Coat well, cover, and marinate in refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.
2. In heavy skillet, melt half of the butter and sauté the garlic until just beginning to turn golden. Add the mango, onion, pepper slices and rest of the mango juice. Simmer, stirring

- constantly, until mixture begins to thicken, about 10 minutes. Add parsley, coriander, salt and pepper and continue to stir. Cook for another 5 minutes, set aside, and keep warm.
3. Prepare outdoor grill. In a small saucepan, melt the remaining butter and stir in the marinade from the fish. While grilling the fish, baste liberally with this sauce. (You also have the option to pan-fry the fish if you prefer.)
  4. When cooked to your liking, place fish on plates and top with mango-pepper sauce. Enjoy!



## Where did the Money Go?...and how Terrawatu is doing things differently

**By Siletian Mollel**

I have spent a great deal of time over the past few years working with NGOs (non-governmental organizations) in East Africa. There are thousands of these organizations -- a real industry has developed. The term NGO is very broad, as it means any organization that is not part of the government -- from churches to grassroot community groups. While I believe that many NGOs have the intention of doing good for the people they serve, the larger structure of the way the current global system is set up makes it very challenging for honest and sustainable development to occur. Terrawatu, as an NGO working for sustainable development, is really trying to do things differently. I hope the following thoughts give you a glimpse as to how they are following the road less traveled.

### ***The role of NGOs in communities***

I sit down and ask myself this very basic question "what is the role of NGOs in communities?" In this case, I am speaking of the rural communities where poverty has its deep roots, and where people struggle so hard to meet day-to-day basic needs. I ask myself this question after several years of working with local communities, organizing meetings here and there to discuss conservation issues -- as that is what the organizations I have worked for focus on. The meetings never seem to start with what the communities want, as many NGOs assume that what they want is what the communities want (or should want). The mission is to conserve wildlife, not to help people meet their basic needs. I must say, this makes me feel sad every time I go to the field as the communities I travel to are people of my own ethnic group, the Maasai. The feeling is of being helpless to my community; and yet there is nothing I can do because I need a job and I must follow the organizations' ways, rather than the way I feel is right for the benefit of the communities we work with. I see many NGOs spending money in ways that are not necessary: expensive vehicles used to reach the rural areas; per diems; and many other extravagant expenses. I wish some of that money would go directly to community projects to improve living standards, or even touch the lives of a few people through educational scholarships. I understand that members of the communities must also work hard towards their own development, but initial support is very much needed to get these results.

I am also puzzled by the fact that sometimes a community (a single village) has more than five NGO's that claim to be working with it -- some for poverty reduction, some for education, land use planning, water and so on -- but I am telling you, you reach that community for the first time, the first thing that comes to your mind is: why are there no PROJECTS here? I am only told about the names of NGOs and a name of someone who comes every week to conduct meetings. What is wrong with so many NGOs? Didn't the idea of NGOs come up after years of many governments on this planet failing to provide needs to people? So, what is different now? I know billions of dollars have been spent trying to "develop" places like Tanzania yet I see very few results from those investments.

## ***Who is NGO?***

What I mean here is: who is supposed to do the work out there in the field? In most NGOs I know, the field people are the natives of that area. They are the people who speak the language of the local people. I am one of them. Now, the big question is, why are we failing to provide to the communities when we know the extent of poverty cutting deep to our dear people? I believe one reason is organizational policies to which we must follow and which we cannot change being field people and not decision-makers. Many of these organizational policies are made by people outside the communities, and, for the most part, outside of Tanzania in places like Washington DC, New York City, and Rome! Secondly, many have a narrow view and almost a carelessness about what they want to achieve for the benefit of our communities. It is sad when we drive to rural community land, attend a one hour or two hour meeting, then drive to a posh hotel miles away for comfortable accommodation. I am not trying to say that everyone should live in the communities all their life, but one should spend a few days getting to know the people and their issues. This helps to understand the communities one is working with. I am talking about what is called Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). How on earth can you help someone you don't know that much about? How do you know if what you think someone's problem is, is what that person thinks his/her problem is? Let's get serious and stop using people as marketing strategies to get money to build our own mansions.

## ***Development is for us and by us...I like this...***

Much that I am going to say now will contradict what I have already said, but I feel it is important to bring it up. I will be very brief because this is not new to most of us who wish to see everyone on this planet earth happy and living a better quality of life as we are all equal in a bigger sense. I don't know if the idea of NGOs was a good one or a bad one, but I know that it often leads to a "donor syndrome" for many communities that I have worked with. In Tanzania, I believe this started with socialism, where people believed that the government would provide most of their needs. In fact, that is what our former President promised his people. This left most Tanzanians in a horrible and rather dangerous state of mind where most people believed that the government has the obligation to feed them, educate them, and take care of them because they belong to it. To me, this is a very poisonous philosophy. Most people are "dis-abled" now. Being a Tanzanian with a little exposure to other people and places, I feel so disturbed when I think of the future of most people I know, some close friends whom I have known for many years. People believe that development in their society depends purely on donor-funded projects. I am not saying it is a bad thing to depend on donors, I know this money comes from wealthy nations/individuals, but this should not stop us participating in our development, financially, and by giving ideas on a way forward. Hey, we are not disabled, we are very much able and it is the reason why we do exist. A good example is the young Mererani mining community – young people who are becoming financially successful through the mining of gemstones like tanzanite. For some, money is no longer an issue, and I am very happy to know that local communities, precisely my Maasai community, do benefit from the mineral resource that we have in our motherland. My very wish is to see the income generated from these resources touch some of the needs of the society in a special way. It is my very wish for these young men with so much cash to team up and think of what to do in their own communities to support and help the community meet the most crucial needs of these times -- like education, health clinics, and water...rather than building giant homes, purchasing flashy vehicles and staging ridiculously showy weddings.

## ***How I see that Terrawatu is different***

The organization is different. The leaders of Terrawatu come from both inside Tanzania and outside. They work together to understand how to bridge the interests of supporters with the needs of the communities. I rarely see this with other NGOs. The decision-makers actually go to the field frequently and stay there for a couple of days, learning how problems are related to each other and which are the best "levers" to pull first. They listen to the villagers and bring back the issues to the office in town to figure out what to do. Terrawatu actually has PROJECTS going. And they seem to

be succeeding. It is a small organization and a serious one. It is not flashy and I know that the money is spent wisely. It is nice to see. I know there are a lot of challenges as it is hard to get money to operate that doesn't have "strings attached". I think because Terrawatu sees itself not as a "charity" but as "bridge" that is linking two different worlds by boosting each side, that the organization is breaking new ground. My hope is that more people see how Terrawatu works and continue their support, and I hope that other NGOs learn from us about how to do things differently.

*Siletian Mollel is a member of Terrawatu and works with several other NGOs in the Arusha region. She was born and raised in a community located at the southern end of the Maasai Steppe. After completing Secondary School in Arusha, she continued her education in Kenya, receiving a diploma in Environmental Resources Management. She also volunteered with UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) while studying in Nairobi to clean the Nairobi River and also with orphan's homes to care for little ones who lost their parents to HIV/AIDS.*



### Board of Directors and Staff

Tanya Pergola – Founding Co-Director  
Lekoko Ole Sululu - Co-Director  
David Motika - Chairman  
Kephas M. Ndiamasi – Community forester  
Stephen Kisanga – IT expert  
Onesmo Ole Kishapuy – Board member  
Lodi Larashi – Board member  
Abraham Lengai – Board member  
Lilian Titos – Board member

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"There is an urgency on this planet for restoring the natural environment and alleviating poverty. What are we waiting for? Americans have a saying that 'Time is Money'. For the Maasai, who use cattle as a means of exchange, we would say that 'Time is Cows' "

- Co-Directors of Terrawatu

