

TRADITIONAL FISHING KNOWLEDGE

PRESERVING OUR PAST, PROTECTING OUR
FUTURE



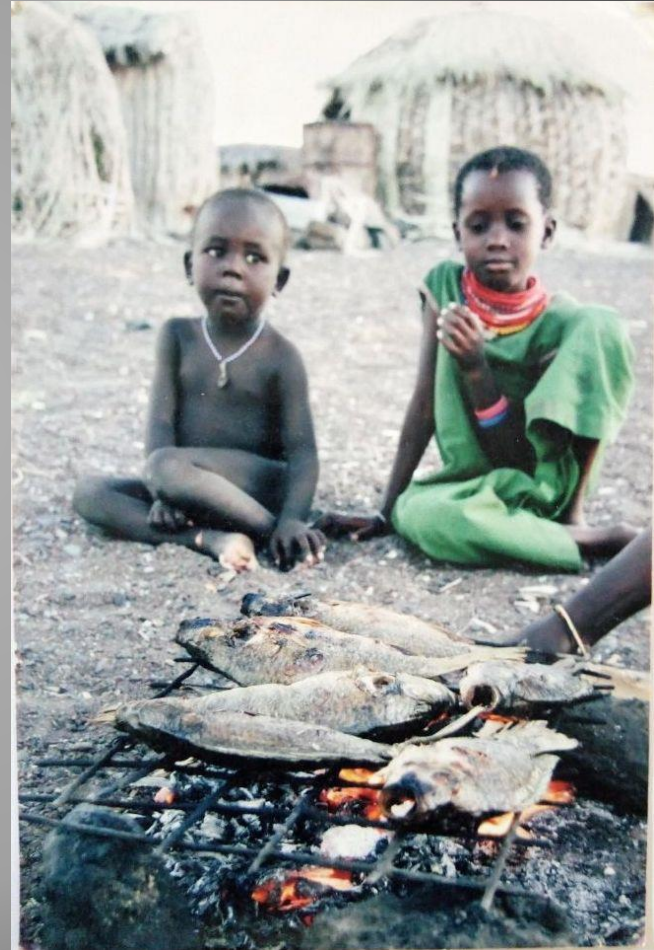
A case of the Elmolo/Gurapau people of Lake Turkana in Kenya

- ▶ The Elmolo people also known as the Gurapau (people of the Lake) is the traditional fishing community of lake Turkana. Elmolo is the smallest tribe in Kenya and live on the South – east of the Lake. The community has always depended on their traditional knowledge on fishing and the natural resources in their territory for survival. For the Elmolo people, fishing is life.



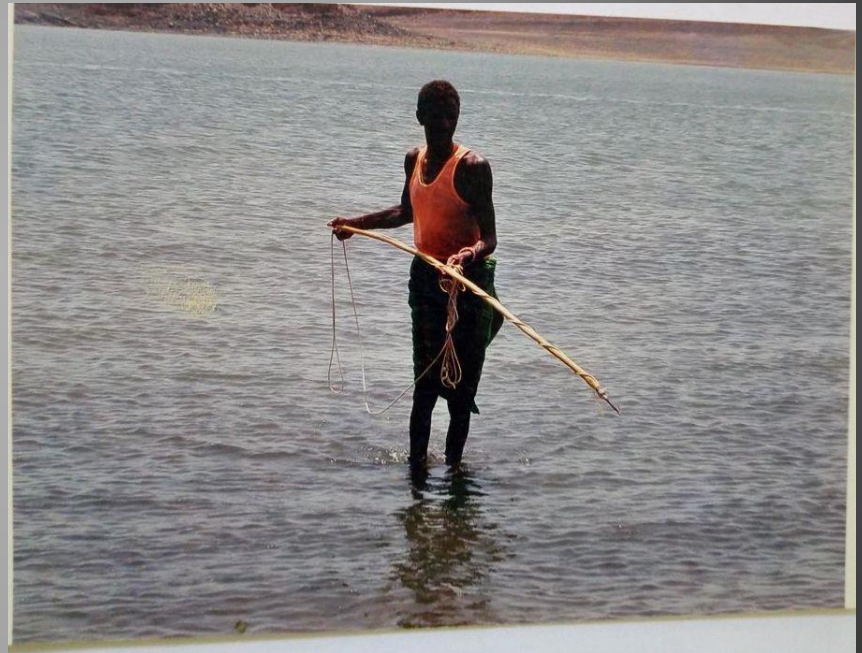
Continuation on A case of the Elmolo/Gurapau people of Lake Turkana in Kenya

- ▶ Traditional knowledge is the knowledge skills, innovation and beliefs passed on from generation to generation, a community requires for its survival and conservation of the environment/ mother earth. Tradition knowledge is deeply rooted in the culture, spiritually and traditional practices, rituals of a particular community.



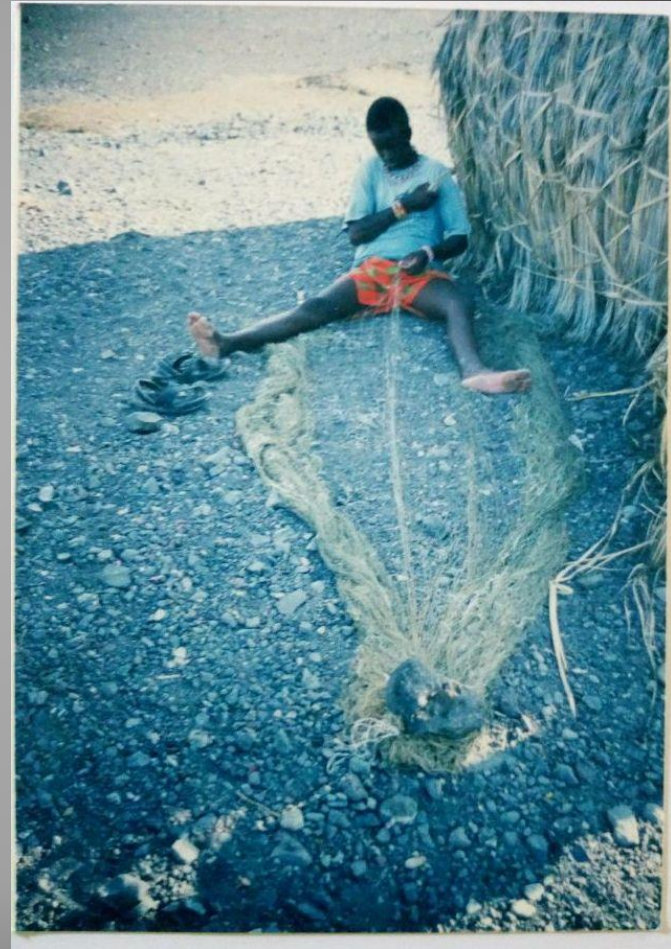
Continuation: A case of the Elmolo/Gurapau people of Lake Turkana in Kenya

- ▶ For TK to thrive and bear fruit it has to go hand in hand with the customary laws, beliefs and spirituality of the community. One major truth in TK that has always been passed from generation to generation among the Elmolo people is that “we must conserve and protect the lake (and environment) for it to feed and protect us”. Always use and treat the Lake and environment with respect.



Continuation: A case of the Elmolo/Gurapau people of Lake Turkana in Kenya

- ▶ Traditional knowledge in fishing/ fisheries involves the traditional studies of climatic and whether conditions, the winds, the brightness and darkness of the moon, position of particular stars, movement of waves and other phenomena.
- ▶ It involves appeasing the ancestors giving thanks to God, Mother earth and the waters (lake) for taking care of families and community with songs, blessings and rituals



Conservation and protection

Conservation and protection are key in the Elmolu traditional knowledge and is practiced through promotion of oral traditions and good practices that are not harmful to the lake, its ecosystem and environs for example;

- Use of appropriate fishing equipment
- Returning undersize fishes harvested back to the lake.
- Practice of migratory and rotational fishing.



Continuation: A case of the Elmolo/Gurapau people of Lake Turkana in Kenya

- ▶ Protecting of fishing and breeding grounds.
- ▶ Protection of environment
- ▶ Acts that are harmful to the lake and environment are punishable by customary law.



Challenges in the practice of TK and customary laws

- ▶ Damming of the Omo river—the major inlet to lake Turkana in Ethiopia to construct mega hydro electric powerdams
- ▶ TK and customary laws are not recognized in the national laws and policies
- ▶ Customary laws and National laws conflict other than complement each other.
- ▶ National laws are supreme and have thus suppressed the traditional knowledge and customary laws of communities/tribes.



Borrowed laws and constitution

- ▶ These are usually, borrowed from other countries (international community i.e. Kenya constitution has heavily borrowed from SA, USA in trying to unify citizens or the nation under them. Unfortunately these have contributed to breaking the fiber, the TK that holds a community together, thus threatening their livelihoods.



Moving forward

- ▶ Research and documentation of TK that involves active participation of target communities.
- ▶ Integration of TK and customary laws in National and international laws.
- ▶ Recognition and use of international instruments that promote the use of traditional knowledge and customary laws such as;
- ▶ Voluntary guideline for securing sustainable small scale fisheries in the context of food secure of and poverty eradication.
- ▶ United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples



In appreciation of the Lake and Natural resources



THANK YOU

BY: CHRISTIANA LOUWA