

Report from Mbaruk, Kenya

7 September 2026 Based on 11 June 2026 report to NECT AGM

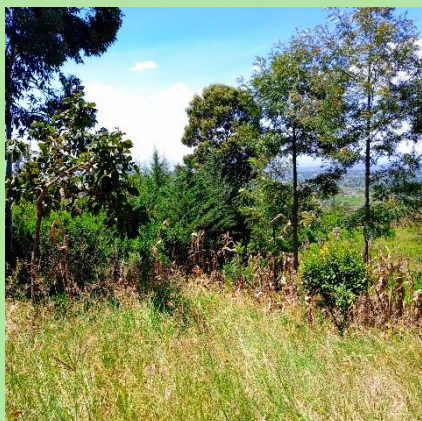
Mbaruk Field Study Centre (MFSC)

Achievements

- received its certificate of registration, dated 17 April 2025, as a Kenyan national NGO.
- has six board members: Nim Njuguna (Chair), Augustine Karimi (secretary), Peter Njuguna (treasurer), Margaret Maina, David Kiarie Nyoro and Martha Muchiri.
- successfully achieved Level 1 Accreditation as an arboretum with ArbNet, the interactive community of arboreta.

Challenges and opportunities

- one board member resigned suddenly necessitating a new application to the NGO Board for the required permission to open a bank account and apply to have the new secretary recognised and to add new board members. The application to open a bank account is still in process.
- mentoring board members with no prior experience to empower them in their roles



The shamba

In 2025, 22 households cultivated eighth to three-quarter acre plots for their own use, mainly growing maize, beans and potatoes (2 seasons in a year).

The acreage available has been consolidated into one area in 2026; 17 households cultivating eighth to half acre plots, a total of 4.250 acres, freeing up spaces for other programmes/projects. Between 80 and 100 trees (including fruit trees) planted on the shamba, and at MAH and the home plot.

Into 2026

Working with a local community group, which represents 240 households (approx. 3,000 people), in the area where the shamba is located. Nim & Liz are involved in two capacities: (1) as personal members; and (2) on behalf of MFSC offering guidance, support and potentially training to the new board. Continuing development of the Demonstration Area: a programme of MFSC.



Arboretum (a programme of MFSC)

[Arbnet | Mbaruk Field Study Center Arboretum](#). This accreditation required the documenting & GPS recording of a minimum of 25 trees (28 were recorded) and signage added (scientific family, name, local name), with the trees/site being available to visitors.

Next steps: work towards Level 2. *In addition to meeting the Level I criteria, a Level II arboretum must have a collection with at least 100 labelled kinds of trees or other woody plants, employ paid staff, offer enhanced public education programs, and have a documented policy for managing its tree collections.*

Fund-raising idea

Ask friends to donate £5 to support a tree and in return receive info & a photo of their tree, e.g. In the form of a certificate.



Hosting visitors on the shamba

We often invite our visitors to join us for a walk to the shamba (heart rate testing as the path climbs the lower foothills of the Rift Valley escarpment) to experience the location, the trees, plants and crops, the water courses, and the panoramic views across the valley. We then share tea and a snack at the picnic spot among purple and banana passion, surrounded by rosemary. We return to MAH/home by walking along roads and pathways for visitors to see the context within which we're located, passing smallholdings and small shops, businesses, churches and schools.



Saturday Art Sessions nurturing local young artists

In 2025

The Saturday Art Sessions ran from May to October 2025 for local young people (target group ages 10-17, with some siblings attending as young as 7 or 8 due to childcare responsibilities). We capped our capacity at 20, with any who dropped out being replaced from a waiting list. The graduation event on 25 October included displays of artwork by the student artists including a collaborative project called Mbaruk Yetu (Our Mbaruk) a collage of their paintings on the theme Mbaruk.

Into 2026

Weekly sessions started on 6 June for young people showing artistic potential, to nurture their talents further. Our art attachment student is the main teacher for most of this term. We plan to offer general art sessions for other young people once more teachers are identified. We are asking parents to contribute a minimal amount towards the expenses per term of 10 weeks. (In keeping with our central aim of empowerment, we offer parents who find a monetary amount difficult, an option to barter.)



Produce harvested from the shamba, MAH and home compounds in 2025:

16 different types of fruit: avocados, pawpaw, guava, strawberry guava, custard apple, white sapote, passion fruit, dragon fruit, cape gooseberries, strawberries, thorn melon, pepino melon, oranges, lemons, pomegranates, rhubarb.

19 different vegetables: spinach (chard), kale (2-3 varieties), lettuce, managu (African nightshade), sagat or sagaa (spider plant), aubergine, onions, carrots, tomatoes, pumpkin, courgettes, cucumber, French beans, sweet potatoes (3 varieties), peas, vine spinach (Malabar spinach), green peppers, chilli peppers, cassava. And 9 herb varieties. (Sold some veg and seedlings locally.)

5 different crops (larger scale): maize, beans (5 varieties), grass for hay, potatoes, cabbages.

Successfully experimented with chia, flax and ground nuts.

Harvested honey from the one traditional hive on the shamba.





Woodworking Project

The initial phase was successful with donated monies via NECT used to buy power and hand tools, and Martin Drummond providing training and coaching on carpentry knowledge and skills.

Into 2026

The tools are continuing to be used. Another young man has been introduced to some of their use by the carpenter mentored by Martin and is developing his skills and accuracy.



Rabbit project

Rabbitry: started with 2 bucks & 4 does in 2023: 140 rabbits have passed through the rabbitry; 1 original buck, a New Zealand White, remains with 1 breeding doe, the offspring of a Flemish Giant and Kenya White. Of the rabbits bred, the majority are used for meat, and a few as breeders or pets. Collecting the rabbit urine is a significant reason for keeping the rabbits and by end November 2025, nearly 700 litres of rabbit urine had been used for fertiliser/pesticide use by ourselves and others. Visitors to rabbits: Farming Systems Kenya (2 visits) with view to setting up a rabbitry for similar purposes. Nim and Liz had a stall at Greensteds International School Christmas fayre promoting rabbit urine.



Tree and plant nursery

The nursery serves the local community and the shamba with fruit trees, trees (native and exotic), hedging plants, herbs and plants with medicinal uses and ornamental plants. Some trees and plants are propagated from seed and cuttings, and some are sourced from other nurseries.

Mbaruk Art House (MAH) *community empowerment centre*

In 2025

- an interview by local media in February, initiating interest in MAH, with visitors turning up unannounced because of the publicity that followed on TikTok.
- 90 entries in our visitors' books of whom over half were people we were meeting for the first time.

Into 2026

- short-stay accommodation almost ready for visitors
- art students on 3-month attachments from Maseno and Kenyatta Universities



MAH Visual Arts Gallery collection curated for permanent display; artwork added to the permanent collection: a series of 7 paintings by a Naivasha based young artist (Brian Lein) who has had artwork exhibited in London; 2 paintings by a 13-year-old budding local artist; a painting of Echareria (local centre) by a local artist (David Kiarie Nyoro). Photographs of Mbaruk people taken by photographer Rogers were commissioned and are now displayed in the Willy Brandt Cafe.

Paintings of significant Kenyans added to collection in the Artists' Den: Laibon Lenana by Dan Kole, Field Marshall Mukami Kimathi by David Kiarie Nyoro. (Dan & Kiarie are the artists of the commissioned artwork in the Artists' Den and Cafe Willy Brandt.)



Library

Although not fully open we have lent books to Art Session children on a weekly basis from August: 11 children borrowed books, a total of 44 records to the end of the term; 15 other adults & children have borrowed books: 40 records of books borrowed. Some books borrowed multiple times, particularly from the children/young people's section.

Donations of books received during the year from friends and visitors.

Cataloguing of the collection continues using LibraryThing.



MAH Drama Club – new in 2026

A group of young twenty-somethings, facilitated by MAH, developing their acting talents and aspirations. Current project is using their speech writing and acting skills to prepare and present themselves as candidates for election as political representatives. They will perform to local audiences who will be able to question them in their roles. This project is in the context of 2027 being election year in Kenya and seeks to develop more astute voters as the actors themselves deepen their understanding of the issues, solutions and complexities in the political process of promise-making, alongside challenging the audiences to consider in more depth their voting choices.



Hosting groups at MAH

PCEA church – enjoyed MAH's environment for their St Valentine's afternoon social event.

East Africa Women's League, Nakuru Branch – visited MAH and in addition to finding out more about our community empowerment centre, went on a walk in support of ACWW (Associated Country Women of the World: *ACWW's work has three areas of focus: Climate-smart Agriculture, Rural Women's Health, and Education and Community Development.*)

Twatembea – a young women's wellness community, spent a day at MAH: touring the visual arts and library, with input on social and cultural histories; engaging in a painting session facilitated by two local artists whose work is exhibited at MAH, and a creative writing experience.

Link Up Hub – a young people's initiative to connect young people around different interests to reduce social isolation and foster support in everyday life and their career development, used MAH as their venue on two occasions for different social meet-ups.

Sharing our work and vision

In 2025

Liz gave a presentation online of our work (Following a Vision) to London West Quaker Area Meeting on 16 November 2025 (34 in attendance) with the transcript of the talk with photos and suggestions how people could support the work in Kenya (and NECT) shared more widely afterwards (one outcome being the invitation to speak to a Quaker meeting in Leeds, see below).

Into 2026

Jonathan wrote a news story for The Friend (Quaker publication), published on 19 February, linking back to the article published in January 2024, providing an update, what support would be welcome and inviting readers to find out more by joining an online session.

Jonathan facilitated an online session on 12 March with Nim and Liz speaking about the challenges and opportunities of the work. 11 people attended from the UK, Australia and Kenya.

Nim and Liz gave a presentation to Adel (Leeds) Local Quaker Meeting discussion group on 19 May.

Particular thanks to:

Nakuru branch of the EAWL (East Africa Women's League) for their contributions and individual members for donations of art and craft supplies, and books.

Martin Drummond for facilitating the initial phase of the Woodworking Project and sharing his knowledge and skills.

Wal Warmington for supporting this work.

NECT committee for standing with us.

Liz Njuguna-Wyatt and Nim Njuguna, 7 September 2026

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