

Maasai to digitally record heritage for prosperity thanks to UN-backed scheme



People from the Maasai community in Kenya

5 August 2009 – The Maasai people of Laikipia in Kenya have received digital recording equipment, marking a milestone in a United Nations-backed pilot-project aimed at helping indigenous communities document and preserve their cultural heritage, the UN intellectual property agency announced today.

The World Intellectual Property Organization (**WIPO**) handed over a digital camera, sound recording equipment and a laptop computer to Chief Kisio and other elders of the Maasai community at a formal ceremony attended by some 200 its members in late July.

The ceremony was a landmark event in the agency's Creative Heritage Project, which provides indigenous communities with opportunities to digitally preserve expressions of their culture and traditions, as well as training in how to protect their intellectual property from unwanted exploitation.

Along with stimulating creativity within the community, the programme can also promote local economic and cultural development by bridging the 'digital divide,' WIPO said in a news release.

The training programme, offered by WIPO in partnership with the American Folklife Center and Duke University in the United States, enables the Maasai to acquire technical skills and provides the equipment necessary to digitize and document their cultural heritage, in addition to an understanding of how to make informed decisions about managing intellectual property.

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