



Strengthening local advocacy capacity to improve food security in the drylands of Tanzania

1. Background

This initiative on strengthening policy engagement capacity to improve food security was a three-year project from 2013 to 2016. Funded by the European Union, it was implemented jointly by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Tanzania Natural Resource Forum (TNRF) in Longido District in northern Tanzania. The district was chosen given the severe state of food insecurity amongst the pastoral communities residing there, as determined by a study.

Longido District is a semi-arid district lying in the northern part of Tanzania bordering Kenya. The annual rainfall ranges from 450 to 500 mm per annum with an average temperature of 24°C to 27°C. Majority of the inhabitants are pastoral and agro-pastoral communities whose main livelihood is livestock-keeping. Few on the western part of the district practice crop farming to supplement livestock-keeping. This area has two Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs): Enduimet and Natron.



Scarcity of pastures - Merugoi village (2016)

2. Project Objectives and Strategies

The overall objective of the project was to have an institutional environment in Tanzania that recognised the value of local participation and knowledge in attaining sustainable and resilient food security for pastoralist communities. In order to contribute to this overall goal, the specific objective of this project was to strengthen the engagement and coordination of pastoral associations in local and national decision-making processes to promote the effective implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to food security.

The project targeted pastoral associations and other community-based organisations (CBOs) which worked with dryland communities on poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods. A key strategy was to build the capacity of these local institutions to effectively engage with and represent their communities in policy processes. The project sought to build institutional and strategic capacities, develop advocacy messages and positions, and support the linkages of institutions and communities to build collective voices from local to national levels.

Community consultation meetings, training programmes and community lobby groups called Policy Advisory Groups (PAGs) at the village level to champion the people's issues regarding governance and food security were organised. To ensure the effectiveness of the PAGs, the communities were allowed to organize these themselves with representatives from village councils, religious groups, different age sets, women's groups, etc.



PAG Meeting - Ketumbeini village (2015)

The project focused on creating spaces for the representatives to effectively engage in policy processes by providing opportunities to identify and connect with on-going processes as well as creating new forums for debates on key issues at village, district and national levels. To build an evidence base to inform and influence policy-making, the project included monitoring exercises, developing lessons from the project, and providing opportunities to share different kinds of knowledge among communities, academics and policy-makers at various platforms. Finally, to showcase ecosystem-based approaches to food insecurity, activities to develop community-based enterprises that utilized multifunctional landscapes and promoted sustainable and collective resource management to improve livelihoods and ecosystem functions were organised. The learning from these measures was fed into policy engagement at local and national levels.

3. Outcomes

The project achieved the following outcomes:

- It strengthened the capacities of the pastoralists who participated in evidence-based decision-making on food security issues at the local and national levels. This was made possible by the formation of the local PAGs which championed the people's needs and rights. The communities managed to influence many by-laws on livestock, land, water, and wildlife amongst other issues.
- It increased opportunities for the communities to engage with decision-makers on food security-related issues at local, national and cross-border levels; and for them to link up with regional and global networks. This included attending policy meetings in Arusha, Dar es Salaam and Nairobi.
- There was greater generation, use and sharing of local and scientific knowledge, and learning of ecosystem-based approaches to food security in the drylands across local pastoralist associations. Information was generated through action learning and best practices.

- Innovative pastoral community group initiatives demonstrated practical approaches to enhancing dryland food security through livelihood diversification measures like ecotourism, small businesses, and commercialising livestock-keeping.

For the first time, the communities managed to establish very powerful Policy Advisory Groups through which they could make their voices heard and advocate for better food and livelihood security and governance. The communities became their own change agents on the management of grazing resources, land rights, and constitution amendments. PAGs have addressed over eight governance issues including by-laws regulating dry and wet season grazing areas, support for livelihood diversification, and the active involvement of communities in any development issues.

These lobby groups also gave women a wider space to advocate for women's rights. The number of women in leadership positions from village to district level increased from none to over 10.

Agnes is a very active member of Lumbwa PAG which champions the involvement of women in training programmes on food and livelihoods security and governance. Currently there are three women councillors who advocate for women rights at the District Council Assembly.



"To achieve food security at the household level, women must be empowered properly."
Agnes from Lumbwa PAG.



Election of women to policy advisory group (2014)



4. Conclusions

Pastoral and agro-pastoral communities are among the most food insecure in the drylands of Africa. Efforts to achieve food security must revolve around favourable policies which support the main livelihood streams of the communities.

This project has provided a perfect lesson showing that community empowerment is a sure strategy to addressing food and livelihood security through the sustainable management of dryland resources. Communities can be their own agents of change, given the opportunity to engage in policy processes. The government should, therefore, involve the community

in policy processes which impact their natural resources and food security.

Tanzania is undergoing various new policy-making processes. These should consider the maximum participation of its pastoral communities, especially women, to ensure that their needs are well understood and addressed to support their way of life. Strengthening their voice is key to achieving this goal and the Policy Advisory Groups have been very successful in the four villages where they were piloted. TNRF and partners are currently involved in fundraising to replicate this advocacy model in other villages.



Supported by:

THE OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE
FOR EASTERN AFRICA

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March 2018

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