



A RESEARCH REPORT
STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND THE
ROLE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN TO INFLUENCE
DECISION IN CONSERVATION AND GROUP RANCHES IN
LAIKIPIA, ISIOLO AND SAMBURU COUNTIES

BY THOMAS MUEMA
MAY 2019



BACKGROUND

- Samburu Women Trust is an indigenous women-led organization that seeks to empower and advance the rights of women and girls in pastoralist communities, an umbrella network of IPs women organizations that collective amplify their rights. The network brings together pastoralists, hunters-gatherers and fish folk communities in Kenya. It is also the convener/secretariat of the Indigenous Women Council (IWC) which aim at influencing the women agenda at the national, regional and international platforms.
- Samburu Women Trust is currently co-managing a 2yr IFAD grant under Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF) and supporting 12 indigenous led organizations across Africa. Its main thematic focus is: - economic social and cultural empowerment, research and advocacy, capacity building and outreach, women and conflict management and girls' leadership programme.



THE FIELD STUDY

- Early 2019 SWT commissioned a study with support from PARAN/Climate Justice Resilience Fund, the a study was carried out in Laikipia, Isiolo, Samburu and Counties whose main focus was on to interrogate the governance structures and the role of indigenous women in conservancies and groups ranches on matters of securing land rights and improve community based natural resource management, strengthening climate change resilience and adaptation and building social movements and coalitions at the grassroots level.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- Undertake research on how indigenous women leadership is visible within governance structures of conservancy and group ranchers
- How Indigenous knowledge help to address climate change and increase resilience and adaptation among indigenous community.
- Determine how indigenous communities can develop natural resource management strategies and tools for enhance climate change resilience and adaptation.
- Identify indigenous women leadership gaps within governance structures in community conservancy and group ranches.



THE HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY CONSERVANCIES

- Naibunga Community Conservancy
- Nanapisho Community Conservancy
- Nasuulu Community Conservancy



MODES OF COLLECTING DATA

- The study used a mixed method approach that entailed collecting both primary and secondary data through interview of community members and also through observation
- Primary data collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) with key actor groups
- key Informant interviews (KII's)
- Secondary data was collected through desk review of relevant reports, annual reports and all relevant programme implementation documents and websites, the strategic plan, publications and news articles.



FINDINGS

Participation of women in the governance structures of community conservancies and group ranches

- Women are included as board members either through elections or nominations by the community
- The elected women don't have a lot of say when it comes to decision making in the board. Their participation is passive
- They have been placed there to satisfy the constitutional requirement of the two-thirds gender rule.



CONTINUATION

- They lack confidence in articulating their issues assertively hence allowing the men to ran the show and overshadow them.
- There are also very few women employed in other departments as few women apply for the advertised positions.
- Most women are still held back by fear and lack of confidence that they can fit in those positions.
- Some of the women are not enthusiastic to be employed as they feel that it will occupy them hence neglecting their children.



CONTINUATION

- But women generally are not involved actively in the process of making the budget hence they can't identify their priority programs.
- Women are included in the board due to legal requirements and not that the men are very enthusiastic about it. Given an opportunity the men would have the board without the presence of women.
- There is no women manager in all the conservancies as non-applied for the position when advertised.
- The overall number of women employed in the conservancies is less as compared to that of men as women fear to apply for these positions when advertised.
- Its worse for women and girls living with disability. They are not given any opportunity to participate in community decision positions due to discrimination.



CONTINUATION

Indigenous knowledge to address climate change, resilience and adaptation

- The study found out that the pastoralists are strongly rooted in their culture, norms beliefs and values. They have a strong oral tradition, passing down their history and customs through stories and riddles.
- These fascinating tales are narrated to the children by elders when sitting next to crackling fires inside the manyattas in the evening, or under moonlit skies in the arid plains around the villages.
- The elders' play an important custodial role of this knowledge hence, are held in great reverence by the community.
- Trees not only provide food and treat diseases, but are an important for some revered ceremonies such as rites of passage and graduation of age sets.
- Trees and shrubs have medicinal value hence the names of trees, shrubs and roots are taught to younger generations to help them survive in the harsh climate



CONTINUATION

- Traditional elders have a deep understanding of the land and the migratory routes of animals as they have been living in the area for long.
- It is imperative to preserve the indigenous knowledge and the culture of the pastoralists for younger and future generations.



FINDINGS

Natural resource management strategies and tools for climate change resilience and adaptation

The study found out that due to frequent severe droughts, which have negatively affected pastoral livelihoods, the families are using a variety of strategies to cope:

- Livestock mobility to track forage and water resources
- Diversification of herd composition to benefit from the varied drought and disease tolerance
- Sending children to school for formal education as a long term investment expected to pay back through income from employment.
- Use of traditional knowledge of preserving food i.e. milk and meat
- Diversification of livelihood by engaging in petty trade such food vending, sale of merchandized goods and buying and selling of goats.



CONTINUATION

- Establishing savings and credit cooperatives (SACCO) under guidance of NRT.
- Women with disability have been trained on alternative energy sources e.g. making and using bio gas and also training them on better skills of making marketable beads (with good finishing artwork) and market trends.
- Empowering women generally (even women living with disability) by training them on the requirements of the Community Land Act (CLA) of 2016.
- Exploiting tourism resources by setting up lodges, camps and adventure operators to provide jobs to local people
- NRTs Conservancy Livelihoods Fund (CLF) supports communities with education bursaries.



FINDINGS

Indigenous women leadership gaps within governance structures

- The study found out that pastoralist indigenous women faced by many challenges.
- They have little or no access to education, are economically disempowered, lack of access to critical services and are subject to harmful cultural practices.
- This diminishes their capacity to stand for their rights and speak up on issues affecting them.
- Women with disability or living with people with disability also face severe discrimination. It was noted that disability is considered a curse in the community.



CONTINUATION

- Men dominate the community affairs and all structures of involvement in community affairs are under the grip of men.
- Women find it hard to participate actively in community forums as they lack the courage to stand and speak before men
- Where women have been elected or nominated to public leadership forums, they rarely raise issues and almost always agree with what is suggested by men
- lack of leadership and management skills among the conservancy board members and other departments. Conservancies lack a training budget.
- There should be mentorship programs for women in order to build their leadership capacities. This should be accompanied by exposure visits to pastoralist in other parts of the country and learn from them.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Capacity building programs should be organized for pastoralist women to gain the necessary skills to enable them participate confidently in community governance forums.
- Hence training on confidence building and self-assertive skills, leadership and management skills, business management skills, conflict resolution and negotiation skills. Part of this will be organized mentorship programs and trips to other regions to expose women to other cultures.
- Pastoralist women should be exposed and trained on how to manage alternative livelihoods such as: bee keeping, poultry keeping, goat rearing, beadwork, sand harvesting and selling manure. This would enable them survive when harsh weather conditions come up in the community.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Initiate advocacy and awareness creation initiatives targeted at women, girls and the larger community on the rights of women as stipulated in the constitution. This awareness initiative should also focus on the rights of women under the community land act and related legislation.
- A cultural museum should be put up as a repository of indigenous knowledge, artefacts and continuous cultural training. Apart from giving cultural training, the museum should together with other stakeholders design projects, which celebrate, preserve, perpetuate and share some of the positive aspects of the Samburu culture.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is need for strengthened legislation and policy frameworks at the county level to enhance and protect community driven conservation efforts.



THANK YOU ALL

