



Knowledge Learning Platform on the Impact of Climate Change and Solutions among Indigenous Women in Northern Kenya



**FORUM HELD AT UMOJA WOMEN VILLAGE
ARCHERS POST, SAMBURU COUNTY**

10TH-13TH JUNE 2021



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1. Introduction



It is believed that over 50% of humanity is comprised of women and girls. This part of the population is endowed with great amount of indigenous traditional knowledge. In essence women have great experience as forerunners of knowledge application in natural resource mobilization hence contribute immensely to climate resilience, innovation, and waste as well as energy management.

According to UN women share crucial community safety information, due to their strategic placement in indigenous resource mobilization women are at a higher risk or more vulnerable status hence need for them to take lead in developing lasting strategic solutions.

Indigenous women being the custodian and knowledge holders, have been sidelines when it comes to decision making, involvement and participation in matters of climate justice in their own communities. Many indigenous people are being forced to relocate as their traditional lands become uninhabitable due to climate change. Indigenous Women have been exposed to specific systemic challenges that hinder enjoyment of basic rights and fundamental freedoms.

This climatic condition has led to more frequent extreme weather events that last longer than usual, irregular and unpredictable rainfall, flooding and increasing temperatures. The effects have made already existing challenges worse with lower water levels, health implications, conflicts and negative impact of economic growth and more challenging to indigenous women. This has increasingly put pressure on lives of indigenous women and girls, as far as climate injustices are concerned, indigenous women have constantly been left out in advocacy for land restoration and conservation, realization of better management of natural resources and inadequate representation in policy making on land use.

Despite women managing, controlling, owning and accessing natural resources, they also address the impact of climate change as well as offer solution with their rich traditional knowledge. It is therefore very important that women are the solution to such solution-oriented processes.

Beyond creating ownership among women, participating in the process deals with underlying issues rather than the symptoms of the problems faced by women.

In Kenya, the negative effects of climate change are increasingly impacting indigenous women lives; desertification is changing grazing routes, nomadic indigenous groups such Pastoralists, hunter gathers, women living with disabilities and fish folk's communities are being forced to move to the cities or higher grounds due to increasing sea levels.

Samburu Women trust (SWT) is an indigenous women-led hub that champion the rights of women and girls among the indigenous communities by strengthening their capacity to influence policies, voice and change in all levels of decision making. Our work is centered around mobilizes, strengthens and amplifies women voices across Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and Minorities communities in Kenya.

It is also the brainchild and convener of the Coalition of indigenous Women (CIWO), an advocacy women movement with more than 40 representatives from pastoralist, hunter gatherers, fisher folk's and women living with disabilities organizations with a mandate of building strong IPs women rights movement across the country as well as developing their capacity to influence inclusion in decision making processes at all level.

2. Workshop objectives

The knowledge learning workshop which was held on June 10 -13, 2021 in Umoja women village, Archers Post, Samburu County, that seeks to offer an opportunity for grassroots women leaders, media radio stations, bloggers and women leaders from Women led organization to interact one on one, and see the reality and impact of climate change as well as sand harvesting in Ewaso Nyiro river, mass charcoal burning resulting to desertification in the areas.



During the meetings the participants drawn from fourteen (14) arid and semi-arid counties of Kenya has an opportunity to visit and interacted with Umoja women village to learn and share practical lessons as well as drawing lessons on how they are offering solutions to climate change solutions.

This also was an opportunity where participants developed a roadmap document which assess, identified gaps and give feedback on how to strengthen women skills and knowledge on climate justices in different levels.

The following objectives were to be met during the training:

- To enhance Women inclusion and participation in climate justice through addressing the existing Women gaps in the process as well as engaging the media to amplify their resilience and adaptation to climate solutions
- To develop strategies/approaches that can be deployed/used at different levels of advocacy/ engagements to increase indigenous women participation and inclusion in all this process.

3. Indigenous women and climate change approach

Indigenous women play a crucial role in climate change adaptation and mitigation, despite having rich knowledge and practical solutions to adopt to the changing environmental conditions, they lack access to financial resources, training and technology, limited access to political decision-making spheres often prevent them from playing a full role in tackling climate change and other environmental threats as well as offering solutions to the world. untapped resources, restricted land rights

These has increasingly put pressure on the lives of indigenous women and girls, as far as climate injustices are concerned, indigenous women have constantly been left out in advocacy for land restoration and conservation, realization of better management of natural resources and inadequate representation in policy making on land use.

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Addressing the Workshop on Knowledge Sharing and Learning on Climate Change for Northern Kenya indigenous women teams Ms. Jane Meriwas noted that indigenous women play a pivotal role in securing livelihoods support efforts of their families and communities they live in. In the process therefore they bring in a wealth of indigenous knowledge developed and perfected over generations to emerging climate change scenarios that require careful maneuvers for adaptation and mitigation. She recognizes efforts done by indigenous women such as the Umoja Women Village in Samburu County terming it as a testimony of women leadership that is organized true to their goal, as well as giving an example of proper environmental conservation practices at Umoja which has attracted local and international partners, funders and tourists to visit Umoja Women Village.

The Director informed participants that the venue of the workshop was deliberate in order to foster learning and exchange knowledge from grassroots women who are experts and custodian of traditional knowledge of climate change solutions through experience sharing and showcase their resilient and mitigation efforts by indigenous women at village level.

Some of the approaches used by indigenous women to curb climate change include the following:

- **Use of Indigenous knowledge** - Indigenous people are key observers of their natural environment, this includes:
 - customary resource management
 - natural disaster preparedness response
- **Indigenous observation and interpretations** of metrological phenomena focusing on their local livelihoods, security and wellbeing as well as adaptations mechanism such as: -
 - Reading of stars
 - Observing animal behaviors
- **Indigenous response to social economic adjustment strategies** such as, engaging in multiple livelihood activities and maintaining a diversity of plant varieties and animal races provide a low-risk buffer in uncertain whether environment.
- **Traditional system of governance and social networks** improve the ability to collectively manage and share resources.

4. Mapping of indigenous resources

The workshop participants were taken through a natural resource identification process in order to draw correlation to climate variability and changes that result to current challenges in their area. They identified the following;

S.No	Resource identified	Types	Work shop discussions
1	Resource trees	<i>Acacia tortilis</i>	Its branches and pods are sustainability harvested and fed to livestock.
		<i>Acacia senegal</i>	Source of gum arabica
2	Pasture land		A vast land scape rich with savannah grassland and perennial livestock browse
3.	Herbal plants	<i>Salvadora persica (sokotei)</i>	Good for dystocia and reproductive health restoration after birth.
		<i>Carisa edulis</i>	Good for common cold
		<i>Myrsine Africana</i>	A general body action herb and an immune booster
		<i>barks of acacia tortilis</i>	Good for stomach upsets.
		<i>Xanthophlea spp</i>	Good for removal of toxins etc
		<i>Croton megalocarpus</i>	Good medicine for general weakness and common cold induces vomiting related to common cold.
4	River Ewaso, Lare Soro		Source of a water for livestock and domestic uses., is a concentration area for wildlife hence a ecotourism area
5	Traditional knowledge	<i>Beadwork, regalia etc</i>	A strong collection of tourism earning for the community

The above matrix is just among an example of rich resource base in these pastoral areas of northern Kenya, an example taken from the workshop venue vicinity.

4.1. Resource access and utilization challenges, a visit to Ewaso River sand harvesting points

After the work shop climate setting and introduction of objectives the team visited Ewaso River sand harvesting activity site. They interacted with sand harvesters including owners of Trucks. The team sort to understand for how long sand harvesting has been going on. In addition, they wanted to know some destructive and depletion man activities affecting the environment and resources. The visited teams of sand harvesters that are spread all along the Ewaso River at least in the portion adjacent to Archers Post and Umoja Women Village. It was shocking to realize that sand is being depleted and important wildlife such as crocodiles are being displaced. The water table is also disappearing in addition to destruction hence disappearance of new plant shoots along the river banks. There is also a lot of river pollution due plastic and other materials dumped at the river. As a result, there is an evidence of inconsistency in Ewaso River flow. Other challenges identified by the team included depletion of essential plants such as *Acacia tortilis* which crucial in animal feeding and shed for livestock and wildlife habitat, harvest of gum arabica is reducing due to destruction of *Acacia Senegal*, commiphora species is also substantially depleted, Lare soro river has dried up as a result of sand harvest, wildlife displacement affecting tourism, aquatic habitats affecting hippos and crocodiles among others. Other key challenges that also contribute to the above ones are regularly gaps on resource harvesting.



4.2. Identification of opportunities for redress

At the plenary the workshop team brainstormed on possible ways to address and find solutions to local women and girls challenges to climate change mitigation and resilience building from shocks associated with it.

The team listed two major opportunities;

- Existence of rich indigenous knowledge within local women in pastoral Northern Kenya.
- Existence of partners that are already engaged in conservation, Climate change mitigation and capacity building.

4.3. Proposed solutions from indigenous women



Plenary discussions suggested the following as possible solutions to address the challenges;

1. **Establishment and provision of alternative income generating activities** to sand harvesters.
2. **Training women on alternative livelihoods** like kitchen gardens, Beads additional value, chicken rearing.
3. **Sensitizing women on climate change policies** at county and national level.
4. **Train indigenous women** on how to influence policies at the local, county and national level to increase women inclusion at all levels.
5. **Develop strategies** aimed at increasing women resilience and adaptation to climate change
6. **Promote tree nurseries** establishments and tree planting
7. **Lobby with County Government** on allocation of space/ Sand Banks where Trucks are organized and revenue collection is mainstreamed which resources can be ploughed back for back stopping on sustainable utilization and environmental management.
8. **Price control** - County Assembly Bills on Laws on pricing/ management of resources especially access and utilization arrangements.
9. **Establishment of risk management** models such as insurance schemes for resource utilizers.

4.4. Role of the media in voicing indigenous women issues on Climate Change

In attendance were media houses for local communities in Marsabit, Samburu, Isiolo and Laikipia. Group discussions developed three level areas for contribution actions by media entities in promoting women voices in climate change plat forms and includes a summary in the matrix below;

S.No	Focus	Action by media houses
1	Resource Mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airing of targeted messages on climate change to the general public • Conduct/ carry out regular radio spots prior to actual radio talk shows on topics of Climate change effects on indigenous women • Enhance visibility of programs on climate change and adaptation through promoting educational materials
2	Laws/Regulations/Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous Sensitization on existing gender responsive laws and policies that promote the role of indigenous women in climate change
3	Establishment of linkages, networking for learning and knowledge management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstreaming media involvement in all programs and enhance targeted information sharing on climate change and adaptation

5. Advocacy strategy (roadmap) for robust indigenous women engagement at all levels

From the workshop deliberations, plenary as well as group works the following areas were apparent as benchmark for developing SWT strategies for Women action in climate change solutions among the indigenous women groups in Northern Kenya;



5.1. Policy and Influence

For those policies in place gaps should be identified especially affecting indigenous women and minorities group in Northern Kenya and matching strategic activities initiated for implementation. There's need also to customized existing policies to indigenous and minorities women and girls set ups. Also, carry out resource mobilization to enhance implementation of gender sensitive climate change and adaptation programs throughout indigenous and minorities communities' territories.

There are already national Climate Change Action Plans being piloted. There's need for women to lead the conversation and advocate scaling up and inclusion in those discussions. Some of the gaps identified is lack of voice among indigenous women, hence there's need for SWT and other partners to focus on available funding to increase effective indigenous women participation and decision making in all climate change conversations.

- Creation of linkages for indigenous women and creation of awareness on existence of such support. This can be done through development of a continuous awareness response program.
- Climate Change Bills at the County can be scrutinized to ensure gender inclusion and social inclusion (PLWD) issues
- Sensitization of law makers at County level. MCAs should be sensitized to articulate voicing of women inclusion in County Integrated Development Programs (CIDP) Plans
- Ensure the role of the media in advocacy platforms on indigenous women voices. The local radio stations are key players in these scenarios.
- Community civic education and public participation to demand for representation. MPs should take up responsibilities on community concerns. In this case the voice of the indigenous women they represent.
- Stakeholders and partners to take responsibility in raising concerns about women representation and actions that ensure inclusion of women in development programs.
- Concerted efforts should be employed to influence funding for prioritizing community issues like land registration, sustainable land management and climate change as well as conservation.

5.2. Mainstream climate change into development partners programs

Plenary discussions clearly indicated that climate change for rural women should be made a household topic for all projects affecting communities.

Development partners and other actors should work towards demonstrating practical solutions on climate change through mainstreaming gender responsive programs.

- In order to ensure resilience, enhance documentation of indigenous knowledge and promotion of practical ownership of the process should inform the focus climate change activities.
- Mainstream and adopt Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in climate change and adaptation programs.
- Institutionalize practical traditional knowledge at home and learning institutions. Encourage establishments of subject school clubs as forums for institutionalization. In this process reviving of traditional storytelling and practical life skills should be done. This is aimed at enhancing intergenerational learning and promote transfer of knowledge from the elderly to the young.
- Promote conservation and environmental regeneration activities such as tree nurseries establishments and tree planting. Encourage food trees as a means of food security resilience building for drought prone vulnerable groups.
- Strengthening of existing traditional platforms i.e., Council of elders to enforce conservation by-laws on governance and management of land to combat climate change. At the same time there is need to enhance transfer of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge. This includes strengthening capacities of traditional healers and herbalists to be able to sustain and transfer traditional medicinal knowledge to the future generations.

5.3. Mainstream programs to accommodate climate change and adaptation solutions

In order to ensure focus on indigenous women voices in climate change, development partners must ensure that Climate Change Action Plans are mainstreamed into their programs.

- In programming there is need to strengthen documentation and dissemination of climate change information in project work.
- To enhance linkages and learning, demonstration events for climate change solutions and mitigation activities can be organized. Such events can be school club programs, annual women gatherings and establishment of observation days to commemorate and mark both local and international days through exhibitions, food festivals and intergenerational learning events.

6. Facts about climate change in context of indigenous women

Perceived Role of Local Communities has become apparent during the deliberations that, in spite of low adaptive capacity among local communities they have held traditional coping mechanisms as well as offer solutions to climate change which were never documented hence posing threats to the existing knowledge and solutions among indigenous communities.



Climate variability has posed a threat to traditional coping mechanisms (which for generations have shielded them from scourge of climate variabilities and change), the work shop established that there is need for better adaptive strategies that would blend preparation for emerging trends and local knowledge.

Local livelihoods are threatened by chronic droughts associated with climate related hazards and recovery from these shocks take time. So by enhancing capacities of indigenous women to respond to climate change shocks through resilience building in terms of strengthening ITK documentation, knowledge transmission, and training towards adaptation.

It is historic in pastoralists set ups that common resources attract conflicts whose worse impacts is on women and children. These conflicts situation normally displacement families and increase girls drop out of school or distances to schools hence putting more pressure on girl child and women to look for alternative solutions. Similarly, distances to domestic basic resources of water and firewood and trade among others occur.

Girl child needs become increasingly stressful where girl friendly facilities in schools are lacking among other things. In these scenarios distinctive attention ought to be employed on actions which compensate for gender disparities such as rights of women, education (friendly sanitation facilities, water availability etc.), increase resource allocation for women programs, and women empowerment among others.



In addition to these an economic approach which addresses the economic and governance programs geared towards empowerment of women and girls should be enhanced such as women leadership interventions, special labour management, and women talent building. All these can be mainstreamed or built in or included as Projects within the SWT Strategy in Climate Change. SWT through her capacity building programs will seek to indulge women groups such as Umoja and others in the region to strengthen their capacities. Farther SWT should target gender actions that would sort inequalities in conflict-affected pastoral groups hence building towards respect and equalities in the society.

In spite of all the above local communities especially women have perceived, interacted with and have made use of their local environments with its scarce natural resources and changing climatic conditions with almost utter precision. How can this be documented and its application ensured through a blend with other modern copying mechanisms.

Indigenous knowledge holders especially women are gradually losing their indigenous practices due to development, change to urban set ups, modern technologies in agriculture practices, destruction of natural ecosystems.

These traditional experts are at risk due to misuse of the natural resources and related indigenous knowledge. SWT projects supporting indigenous communities would work towards strengthening formal recognition of constitutional rights of the indigenous communities to ensure equity in access and sharing of benefits between knowledge owners (indigenous communities) and resource users.

SWT can use various approaches such as assisting to create an all-round development strategy where indigenous women and their communities are targeted with programs related to social, educational, economic and cultural development. In additional SWT can initiate projects that promote protection and promotion of indigenous languages, writings, beliefs/ fiction, traditional technologies, skills, art, history of indigenous communities and ethnicities.

This can also include specialized inherent traditional knowledge and commercialization of these indigenous traits and practices. Most import SWT will strive towards inclusion of indigenous women groups in partnerships in the mainstream of County and National Governments development by bringing together northern Kenyan indigenous ethnic groups/ communities.

7. Recommendation and way forward

Indigenous Peoples' observations contribute to advance climate change science, by ensuring that assessment of climate change impacts and policies for climate change adaptation are meaningful and applicable at local level include:



SWT to strategically place herself at national and county levels, important steps forward include the identification of policies for rolling out sensitization and customization at County level

SWT to mainstream climate change projects into its Program Framework. This includes financing, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation in the core strategy of the organisation. This means a specific sub strategy that integrates gender concerns and builds on indigenous women's distinctive knowledge and standpoints

SWT to ensure indigenous rural women participation for equal space and equity in resources allocation in climate change decision making and action at all levels. Climate financing at all levels should be accessible to women

Documentation of indigenous knowledge and its dissemination initiated with urgency to capture ITK as there is rather quick pace of erosion of this knowledge

To strengthen unity among traditional women lobby networks observation of knowledge day/s should be mooted and implemented. Such as Food days, cultural events, common days (pastoralist week) etc

The role of media in promotion of ITK especially for women held IK should be enhanced as well as increase and strengthened capacities

Initiate an incubation model, meaning strong indigenous women groups mentoring young like-minded groups for intergeneration knowledge management for climate change solutions

Increase the participation of indigenous women in climate change forums and workshops both locally and internationally

SWT to lobby for inclusion of funds for indigenous women in County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) working with County Assemblies to create policies that support this initiative. Indigenous Groups should be targeted with programs related to social, educational, economic and cultural development





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