



# Indigenous Women Advocacy Strategy on Climate Change Solutions and Adaptation



# 1. Background

Climate change is increasingly impacting the lives of women in Kenya's especially Indigenous women. Climate change has led to more frequent extreme weather events like droughts which last longer than usual, irregular and unpredictable rainfall, flooding and increasing temperatures. The effects of these climatic changes have made already existing challenges of water scarcity, food insecurity, health implications, human security and economic growth even more challenging for indigenous women.



Nevertheless, climate change is putting increasingly pressure on lives of indigenous women and girls, they bear the burden of fetching water for their families and spend significant amounts of time daily hauling water from distant sources. The water is rarely enough to meet the needs of the household and is often contaminated, such that women and girls also pay the heaviest price for poor sanitation.

Indigenous women being the custodian and knowledge holders have been sidelined when it comes to involvement in decision making and participation in matters of climate justice in their own communities. This advocacy strategy will address the impact of climate change among indigenous women, their resilience and traditional coping mechanism.

The extreme effects of drought and famine have affected indigenous women and girls immensely; for instance, the pastoralist nomadic women and girls are forced to migrate to new areas with their cattle in search of pasture and water.

This is not a new practice to pastoralist but in the recent years, the effect of drought has gone overboard resulting to increased deaths of human and livestock. To every pastoralist, livestock remains the most viable investment one can make.

Despite women being the most vulnerable to climate change, it's important to note that, they are also effective actors or agents of change in relation to both mitigation and adaptation. Women often have a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change mitigation, disaster reduction and adaptation strategies.

Furthermore, women's responsibilities in households and communities, as stewards of natural and household resources, positions them well to contribute to livelihood strategies adapted to changing environmental realities.



## 1.1. Advocacy Strategy

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;

- **Policy and influence**
- **Mainstream climate change and adaptation into development partners programs**
- **Mainstream programs to accommodate climate change and adaptation solutions**



### 1.1.1 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.

### 1.1.2 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

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- 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.



### 1.1.3 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.



## 2. 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.

### 3. 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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