

Gendered Decision Making in Natural Resources (Land and Water) for Effective Planning in the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania

Policy Brief

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A. Sikira, A. Sirima, R.M.J. Kadigi, J.J. Kashaigili, F. Kamau, W. Mbungu and J.K. Placid

Laying the Foundations for Effective Landscape-level Planning for Sustainable Development in the SAGCOT Corridor: Ihemi Agricultural Development Cluster (LiFELand)

Introduction

Unsustainable utilization of natural resources results in biodiversity losses and endangered animal and human species as well as plants. Addressing these challenges requires effective participation of communities in the management and decision making over natural resources. While participation of men is traditionally guaranteed, social cultural norms prevents women's participation in the decision making and management of natural resources in developing world Tanzania inclusive.

Women are believed to be the guardians of natural resources as their livelihoods generally depend on land and water as essential resources for agricultural development in Tanzania. Traditionally, women's roles as care givers, food producers, and water and fuel wood collectors make them to be overly affected by the negative impact of environmental degradation. In addition, women are poorly represented when it comes to decision making on issues related to natural resources due to culture and power differences between men and women.



Participants listening to Gender expert (not in the picture) during Training on gender decision making in Natural resource planning in Iringa, Tanzania.

gender mainstreaming approach in which gender is integrated in research projects.

In-line with the above, a project known as Laying the Foundation for Effective Landscape-level Planning for Sustainable Development (LiFELand) in the SAGCOT corridor was launched aiming at supporting local institutions, investors as well as policy-makers sustainably plan within the cluster. Among other things, the project sought to mainstream gender to enhance sustainable development in the SAGCOT area.

Moreover, unsustainable utilization of land and water curtail women roles that have a direct dependence on natural resources for their survival. Therefore, planning for the utilization of natural resources in the SAGCOT area has to consider women's traditional roles as care givers. Therefore, this study aimed at answering the following questions: i) Are women involved in decision making on issues related to natural resources? and ii) Are women involved in the management of natural resources? iii) How do communities acquire land in the Ihemi agricultural cluster?



Therefore, assessing gender relations in the management of natural resources was the basis for this study to harness women's resilience skills and hence increasing agricultural productivity. Based on the above and to achieve gender equality in the the decision making and management of natural resources, the Tanzanian government, NGO's and the private sector have adopted the



Land and water Ownership and Use by Gender

From the findings, women's right to land was mainly considered as a mere right of use, without the possibility of making any decision on selling, hiring or changing its use. Lack of ability to own land among women is due to the fact that customary laws governs land allocation. Customary laws discriminate women from owning land because of fear of transferring the land to another clan when they get married. The assumption is that girls and women would acquire land through their husband. Based on Tanzania's land policy of 1995 and the Village Land Act No 5 of 1999, women are expected to secure land through purchase; however, apart from the fact that the Land Law is in practice. The majority of women in the rural areas generally lack this security as they cannot afford buying land and usually can only access land through male relatives, which makes their security of tenure dependent on good marital and family relations.

Methodology/Approach

A baseline study was conducted in the Ihemi cluster of the SAGCOT Agricultural cluster covering two regions of Iringa and Njombe. Five districts of Mufindi District Council, Kilolo DC, Iringa DC, Wanging'ombe and Njombe DC were involved. In total 607 respondents were visited in twenty villages. One focus group discussion and key informant interview were conducted in each village. It was necessary to conduct key informant interviews to allow triangulation of information obtained from focus group discussions and questionnaire survey. Audio recorded information from Key Informants (KIs) interviews and FGDs were transcribed and organized into meaningful subthemes. Thereafter, the information was analyzed through Content analysis. On the other hand, quantitative data were coded and descriptively analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results and discussion

The findings indicate that the number of Female Headed Households (FHH) was slightly higher in Njombe district (33%) followed by Wanging'ombe (32.5%), Iringa district (25.7%), Kilolo (25.2%) and relatively less in Mufindi (20%). Reasons for this trend were given as death of a spouse due to HIV/AIDS, divorce/separation, while other single mothers decided not to marry (single motherhood by choice).

Respondents were asked to indicate how the land they own was acquired. With exception of Iringa district the majority (i.e. ranging from 60.5% to 75.1%) of respondents in the study area inherited their land from their parents or were given as gift by their relatives. However, for Iringa the majority (54.4%) acquired land through purchase and this could be due to the fact that the District is closer to Iringa Municipality where most of the people are aware of the value and importance of purchasing surveyed land.

It is widely known that ownership of resources goes hand in hand with an individual's decision making power. An assessment was made to ascertain the decision power over land, house and livestock, half of the respondents in Iringa DC (50.9%), Mufindi DC 57.7%, Njombe DC (50.4%) and Wanging'ombe (51.6%) pointed out that the final decision on sale of land was vested in men.

The reason for not engaging women in such important decision making was given as lack of "agency" among them. Agency is defined as the "ability of an individual to define one's goals and act upon them". Women's agency is mainly measured in terms of how they participate in household decision-making. Similarly, decision making on sale, rent and purchase of assets such as Livestock and houses are done by men in all the districts. Nonetheless, for Wanging'ombe district half (50%) of respondents argued that women can only make a joint decision with the husband on purchase of livestock and land. However, FGDs participants pointed out that a man can seek advice



from his wife the final decision rests upon him. Therefore, decision making over major assets is made by men.

Participation in the management of Natural Resource Use

Generally, knowing the proportion of men and women involved in the management of natural resources is important if sustainable development is to be achieved. Majority (77.8% and 76.7%) of respondents in Iringa DC and Wanging'ombe DC respectively, agreed that women are involved in various committee related to natural resources management. Furthermore, women depend on natural resources to be able to access some of the medicinal plants for sick family members. Different types of food such as wild fruits and plants available in the forest are known by women. Despite all the above, 70% to 77% of the respondents from Kilolo, Njombe and Wanging'ombe districts agreed that women do not benefit equally with men in the utilization of natural resource products. And this can partly be supported by the fact that though Njombe and



Iringa are Tanzania's main timber producers only one third of the surveyed respondents agreed that women are involved in timber marketing.

However, women are involved in weaving of baskets using raw materials such as reeds and bamboo trees found in the forest, women are also involved in making crates/baskets (used for carrying tomato). Further to the results presented, women are actively involved in natural resources use conflicts (70%) resolution.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It can be concluded that women lack control over important household assets (land, water and livestock) in the Ihemi area. The lack of control and particularly that of land jeopardizes women's ability to improve their livelihoods' as most of them dependent on agriculture.

Based on the study findings and conclusions it is recommended that for sustainable use of natural resources in the Ihemi SAGCOT cluster there is need for gender mainstreaming in the planning and execution of the different programmes and projects to be undertaken in the area.

It is also recommended that there is need to enhance women's knowledge, agency and collective action in the management of natural resources as this will improve resource productivity; enhance ecosystem conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

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Contact:

Mr. Felix Kamau

The Nature Conservancy
Africa Regional Office, Nairobi, Kenya
E-mail: fkamau@tnc.org

Phone: +254 722 809 830/+254 786 583 113

Prof. Japhet J. Kashaigili

Sokoine University of Agriculture
College of Forestry, Wildlife and Tourism
E-mail: jkashaigili@suanet.ac.tz
Phone: +255 754 207 117