MAASAI PASTORALIST WOMEN’S VULNERABILITY TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE: A CASE STUDY OF NAMALULU VILLAGE, SIMANJIRO DISTRICT, NORTHERN TANZANIA

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1. THE STUDY AREA: NAMALULU VILLAGE, SIMANJIRO DISTRICT, NORTHERN TANZANIA.

- The village is located 115 kilometers from the city of Arusha.
- It has seven sub-villages which are ormoti, samaya, ngarkashi, orkilorit, orkokoto, olaimirori and madukani.
- It has approximately 250 households and a population of 6000 people.
- It consists of extensive plains and a few scattered hills covered with bushes and grasslands.
AN OVERVIEW OF WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT IN TANZANIA

• In Tanzania, women constitute more than 52% of the population. In rural areas they produce 80% of labour force, 60% of food.

• Due to discriminatory traditional practices women do not control the means of production.

• Many rural women’s daily activities revolves around carrying water, firewood and farm produce on their head, taking care of children, cooking and farming.
In order to improve the situation of women the Government of Tanzania has put in place constitutional, legislative and policy *The Constitution of the united Republic of Tanzania of 1977*.

Legislative measures include the enactment of *The Land Act no. 4 and the Village Land Act No.5* respectively.

The *Penal Code (Cap. 16)* as amended by *the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act (SOSPA) of 1998*.

*The Law of Marriage Act (LMA)*. Section 59

There are still gender imbalances and inequalities in Tanzania.

Maasai women in Tanzania are even more vulnerable coming from the group marginalized from historical injustices, poor policies and lately, due to the impacts of climate change.
3.0 VULNERABILITY OF MAASAI PASTORALIST WOMEN TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS

• As it is the case elsewhere in the rural areas of Africa and in the third world generally, maasai pastoralist women in Namalulu village do not know of the existence of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), or even whether Tanzania is a party to it or not.

• This is not to say that these women are unaware of the fact that climate has changed and that they are disproportionately affected compared to the mainstream society.

• One elderly woman called Ng’oto Naipima , before concluding that she does know climate change and its impacts narrated to the author how less than twenty years ago, Namalulu was known by its beautiful and lush grazing areas which had a carrying capacity for thousands of heads of cattle.

• She said that all house holds had plenty of milk and meat, a number of natural wells and an army of wild animals ranging from small antelopes to elephants and lions. In response to this situation the community has been even stricter in protecting dry season refuge grazing areas commonly known as olokeri or alailili through enforcement of traditional rules and practices. Such dry season refuge grazing lands are protected and used only during very acute drought.
• It should be noted that harvesting is not certain or predictable nowadays due to the impacts of climate change. For example in the year 2009 there was very acute drought and hence no single family managed to harvest anything at all.

• The harvest was very meager this time around and as a result, the price of corn has risen astronomically. Since everyone depends on corn to get them through this difficult time in which the number of livestock can not sustain traditional livelihoods of Maasai households. Many households have to pay the equivalent of sixteen dollars for a sack of corn and one dollar to have it grind into flour.

• In response to low corn and livestock production, women have developed or adapted new technologies to ensure better harvest and better livestock production. These include construction of cost effective corn storage facilities using locally available materials. In relation to livestock husbandry, women cooperate with the department of veterinary services by regularly attending/dipping livestock to kill pests and parasites which infect and lower the production of livestock.
Impacts of Climate change have also resulted into the change in gender roles, hence increasing vulnerability of women and children. Traditionally as documented by Naomi Kipuri (1989, 1996), the primary responsibility of men is looking after livestock. This entails herding, watering, treating sick animals and management of pasture, water points, building and maintaining fences for settlements and protecting livestock from any possible predators.

It is the role of men to supervise sales and exchange of animals. The task of herding is undertaken mostly by boys and young men, with the older men playing a more supervisory role, providing direction on animal husbandry, range management and making decisions about the overall use of communal resources.

Women, mainly manage the home, along with the tasks associated with them. Their duties include building and maintaining houses, milking, cooking and feeding the household and visitors, fetching firewood as well as water, building houses and raising children. Some of these roles are performed with the help of young girls and boys.

Due to the impacts of climate change, men are finding themselves away from home for longer periods of time and their roles have ended up being performed by women.

In addition, women still perform their natural traditional roles.

This deny them the right to rest and enjoy life. It can also be argued that such urban exodus separates families and hence occasion denial of a wide range of human rights. One respondent told the author that she has not seen her husband for ten months now, thanks to the mobile phone technology that enables them to talk and inform each other of how children are doing.

It is also important to note that while women remain managers of households, they do not have regular access to cash for which to purchase foods.
As a result of men exodus from the village to towns and cities some women have assumed the roles of decision making at the household levels. Traditionally this role has been played by men.

Some women currently make decisions relating to selling of livestock. The author learnt that such assumption of decision making role is by few women is interpreted as amounting to empowerment.

Climate change and its impacts have also forced some women of Namalulu village to move to big towns and cities where they end up doing petty businesses. When in town, they are forced to eat culturally inappropriate foods such as sardine and fish.

Other women find themselves employed as cheap laborers earning as low as $13 per month. This amount of money earned is not enough to cater for living expenses in an urban setting. As a result, these women are exposed to prostitution hence increasing their vulnerability to HIV-AIDS pandemic.
There is no concrete available number of infected HIV/AIDS women due to the nature of secrecy and stigma associated with one making his/her HIV status public. Severity of stigma is reflected by the death of one woman in the village three weeks ago. This woman was buried far in the bushes simply because members of her family were afraid of being near the grave of a person who has died of HIV/AIDS. Stigma apart, frequent deaths have served as eye openers to maasai pastoralists’ women in the village and elsewhere that AIDS, called in Maasai language “Blitya” is real and it is not a disease of town dwellers or a curse from “Enkai” (God) as they used to believe.

This author also talked to one of such woman who says that after she declared her HIV status, her husband left her alone to take care of a family of six children. Prior to their separation, the husband left for a mining areas called Mererani where he worked in the mines for two years. Luckily, the author learnt that HIV positive women in Namalulu village have formed a group in order to conduct awareness campaigns to rescue other people.
4.0 NAMALULU WOMEN’S EFFORTS TO ADAPT TO IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

- In response to the hardships caused by the impacts of climate change, indigenous women have done the following to prevent further vulnerability:

- Firstly, they have promoted the traditional practice of sharing locally known as “engelehe”.

- Secondly, the women in Namalulu have formed groups for making and selling bead works. This initiative was motivated by NGOs such as the Maasai Women Development Organizations (MWEDO) and the Community Research and Development Services (CORDS).

- Access to the international market is mainly facilitated by NGOs such as the Maasai Women Development Organizations (MWEDO) and the Community Research and Development Services (CORDS).

- Another thing that women in Namalulu have done to reduce their vulnerability is the formation of Corn grinding cooperatives. After forming the cooperative, these women were in 1990s provided with a grinding machine by an NGO called Inyuat E-Moipo.
• Namalulu women have also engaged in small businesses.

• They sell food and water to miners in the newly discovered mines in the village. Apart from selling cooked foods to miners, they also sell firewood, tobacco, sugar, salt, wild growing vegetables known as “mnafu” and tea leaves in the village market place.

• Formation of adult literacy classes for HIV/AIDS awareness is another commendable initiative. Women in Namalulu use such a platform to educate each other.
5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

• This paper has shown that maasai pastoralists’ women are more vulnerable to climate change and its impacts. These women’s vulnerability is evident in increased poverty as well as susceptibility to HIV AIDS pandemic. In order to reduce the level of vulnerability, these women have come up with a wide range of initiatives ranging from forming cooperative groups to engaging in small scale business. The HIV-AIDS killer disease is also confronted using massive awareness campaigns. In order for these efforts to bear more fruits, the following recommendations are given as part of the concluding remarks.

• Firstly, there is a need to educate the women in Namalulu on climate change including its impacts as well adaptation and mitigation measures.

• Secondly, various benefits attached to international mechanisms for adaptation such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries (REDD plus) should trickle down to women at the village level, including women in Namalulu Village.

• The government should play its important role of ensuring reliable markets to small scale entrepreneurs such as women in Namalulu.

• Fourthly, the government should implement the provisions of the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
Ashe naleng’

Asanteni kwa kunisikiliza,
Thank you for listening !!