



‘The Future
is ours
to Determine’

Women and Climate Change



Indigenous Pokot Women from West Pokot County, Kenya

Indigenous women possess intimate knowledge about their lands and are uniquely capable of adapting and mitigating climate change. As well the conservation of biodiversity and plant genetic resources is now widely recognized as crucial to food security. Women play an important role as custodians of seeds and conservers of biodiversity. This is the reality for the different indigenous women's organizations and groups that we work with.

For instance, many Indigenous women understand the landscape and often know where the safe zones may be, when disaster strikes like floods during heavy rainfall, they are the ones in charge of getting the children, the elderly and the sick to safety. Nevertheless, some indigenous peoples and women's organization are working to influence policy at local and national level through sharing evidence-based solutions on renewable energy, forest conservation, food security, hence inform climate change policy from the ground up.

Actions targeted at increasing indigenous women's and girls' participation in climate change policy decision making is another avenue indigenous organization have been advocating for. An outcome of which in the international climate change negotiation in the adopted gender action plan, recognition of the need for parties to increase indigenous women's participation in policy process at national and international level and in national gender plans. Participation in the climate policy space is to ensure indigenous women shape ambitious climate policies and climate action because indigenous women have different perspectives than men, on critical issues, ranging from food security and safe water access to renewable energy and disaster relief.

It has been our role as an organization to ensure that the indigenous women we work with in the different areas are able to be empowered and have their capacities built in order to use their traditional knowledge in climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies in their communities and also be able to contribute to the national and international climate change discussions and advocacy platforms.



Knowledge Exchange



Indigenous Women from Marsabit, Narok and West pokot during an exchange visit in Kilgoris

Different women groups from Westpokot, Marsabit, Isiolo and Narok counties in Kenya, gathered to exchange knowledge on climate change adaptation and mitigation and conservation. The exchange visit aimed at building the capacity of the women's groups to understand the importance of community seed banking, the role kitchen gardens play in food security and nutrition, fruit trees and tree nurseries as well as conservation of water sources. Women were able to share different experiences, ideas and knowledge on what worked, what failed for them in their counties when it comes to climate change adaptation and mitigation and conservation.

The exchange visits are important for the different women groups because it brings them together; they were able to network; learn from each other and gain confidence in the work they have been doing. Women leaving their communities and going for exchange visits to other women who have a certain knowledge that they do not have. Learning skills like Voicing their voices in the public in remote areas calling for recognition. You also see there are different styles that women share their secrets and experiences it could come in either sewing clothes or even making arts.



Women from different indigenous communities holding fruit trees

‘Indigenous women are Indigenous knowledge holders and they work to protect the environment around them.’



Indigenous Women Protecting Forests



Indigenous women visit at a tree nursery

Indigenous women have managed biodiversity in a holistic way and they know how to collect the seeds, they know their animals and know the medicines to collect and which plants fits where. They learn by seeing and their arts work tells a story. A story that keeps the cultures and traditions alive for generations. They know the nature more than anyone else in the community and they hold the language that they have learnt from their great mother and they teach the children and generations one by one to keep the community alive.

Women have taken their role as managers and protectors of the forest and are now not only teaching their children the importance of the forest but have also

taken an active role in reafforestation and planting seedlings. this is all to ensure that the forest that they rely on for food and medicinal plants do not go extinct and that they are able to still benefit from the numerous forest resources now and in the generations to come. Indigenous Information Network is working with women in Narok- Ololunga, Kilgoris, West-Pokot and Marsabit so that they are able to preserve their indigenous trees, plant trees in thier homes and also have seedlings for sale to sustitute their income. These women have also been planting trees in the schools around their communities so that they teach the children the importance of forests.

In addition to this, IIN has been working with the Enkutuk Eentim Community Forest Association(CFA) a collective community forest user group formed in 2005 that brings together women groups form Maasai and Ogiek communities bordering Mau forest in Narok county Kenya. The women groups form part of the 24 user groups, which is a platform bringing them together to voluntarily manage tree nurseries, plant trees in degraded forest, conduct environmental education in the community and schools and reduce poverty by investing in the community. It is the first community forest user group in Kenya which is actively operating. The group has made significant contributions towards restoring Mau Forest and preserving its biodiversity. It has worked to restore a total of 10,000 hectares of the degraded forest, as well as introduced farm nurseries and ensuring each member household dedicates some land space for trees to practice farm forestry. It is significant to note that, one of the main leaders in the community forest association is an indigenous woman, Naiyan Jebet. She has been one of the main leaders guiding the CFA work as well as engaging in advocacy and training activities within the community and other community. Enoreteti women group comprising indigenous Maasai women from Transmara, Narok county were trained on tree nursery and planting, and they now have vibrant tree nurseries that is supplying their community and schools with tree seedlings and are able to get income to support their households and protect their water catchment areas.



Nutrition and Food Security



Seeds from different vegetable and trees shared by indigenous women

Traditional food sources have become more unpredictable because of climate change. This impacts their ability to feed and provide for their families and in some climate-related disasters, women and children have been 14 times more likely to suffer major losses. Women from Kenya are breeding seeds that can withstand the frequent drought like millet. And the conservation of biodiversity and plant genetic resources is now widely recognized as crucial to food security. Women play an important role as custodians of seeds and conservers of biodiversity. Indigenous women also have seed banks that help in conserving seeds of local crop varieties within the community, facilitating capacity building of women and communities in the production of high-quality seed, multiplying seeds of local varieties that are rare and unique or which are becoming less available to women and community, and making them available every season. The diverse seeds of good quality they have, have potential to adapt to climate change and create a business opportunity for women and community to raise income for their sustainability.

According to African society indigenous women's traditional role as the primary users and managers of natural resources, primary caregivers, and keepers of the home mean they are involved in and depend on livelihoods and resources that are put most at risk by climate change. Indigenous Information Network has been working with Pastoralist women so that they are able to adapt because they have had to supplement their diets by turning to agriculture, a concept that was foreign to them previously as they are animal reares and hunter gatherer groups. The development of kitchen gardens in their homesteads contributes to household food security by providing direct access to food that can be harvested, prepared and fed to family members. Kitchen gardening provides a diversity of fresh foods that improve the quantity and quality of food rich in nutrients available to the family.



Kitchen gardens yield huge fruits for indigenous women

Living in Harmony with Nature



Women in the Olorkoti Knowledge and Resource center garden in Kilgoris

Indigenous information Network has continued working and closely following the process of the convention on biological diversity. This has been very crucial considering the state of the Biodiversity Conservation Globally. The discussions on the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity framework has had progress with the just concluded 2nd working group work in Rome end of February 2020. It is our hope that the recommendations and contribution given by Parties to the convention, Indigenous Peoples, Youth, Women other stakeholders and Partners will continue to enhance the work of the future of our Biodiversity. The protection of our natural resources calls for all key players at all levels. It is for this reason that many of us believe the involve and participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities is very crucial to achieve the 2030 and 2050 Goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity Living in Harmony with nature.

Together with our sister organizations and the different Indigenous Women's Network, are working hard to ensure that participation in different activities at the community level. It is important to have the linkage. The different women groups have come together with our help start knowledge centers at the community level. Centers where they can learn, share innovations among themselves. These centers are knowledge hubs where they learn about their indigenous plants, they are trained alternative livelihoods, types of trees which are beneficial to their own environment and can earn some money like fruit trees medicinal and those that they can use in different uses. It's in these centers that they learn how to collect seeds and distribute among themselves. The centers in kilgoris, Ololulung Narok County, Naanramum in West pokot and in Logologo in Marsabit has motivated the different women groups that are all planning to have such centers.



Water: My best friend

Save water save life, is a slogan which is known by many just as saying water is life. Water is sacred, water can transform a human being to look healthier than ever before. It is for this reason that Indigenous Information network has water as the key activity in every project undertaken. Water issues are mainstreamed through the project cycle. In many countries in Africa, many rural Indigenous women never get access to clean water for cooking and drinking. A sad situation that makes their life and that of their communities fade away. We train our communities in the areas when they receive rain to harvest their water and store for drinking and cooking. This is one of the great project appreciated by the communities. Harvesting the water has made them look healthy and are now proud of themselves.



Women waiting for water in Marsabit, Kenya



Water tanks arrive at Olorkoti Knowledge and Resource Center



Water tanks donated to ensure clean water for indigenous women



Women receiving a water tank at the Paran women center



Indigenous Women's International Participation

Indigenous women have unequal access to knowledge and decision-making processes at local, national and international levels, in important spaces where they can input on their priority issues. Indigenous women not only fight for their families' and communities' health and wellbeing, they also fight for the health of the Earth. Indigenous women have been mobilizing their communities to care about all forms of life. Small gains with great impact at the local level are the basis to scaling up and informing national and international policy and actions.



Alice Lesepen with Joan Carling and Chandra Roy-Henriksen at the United Nations Headquarters in New York



Esupat Ngulupa with FIMI president Tarcila Rivera during the climate change convention in Milan

In the last two years, about 50 grassroots indigenous Women from the network of the Indigenous Information Network have ensured that their voices are heard at the global level in processes such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, The Climate Change Convention, The Commission on the Status of Women, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Sustainable development goals agenda at all levels from the national to the international level. Through these platforms, African Indigenous women are able to share the knowledge, experiences and gain relevant information and good practices that they may be able to replicate in their communities.

This is also a platform for them to be able to meet with partners and policy influencers and be able to lobby for their cause. Indigenous women's participation in the political space to influence the engagement of Indigenous women at the UN Commission on the Status of women Level. For some times now Indigenous women have continued making Political Statement in the framework of the commission. Different discussions have shown that Indigenous women are gaining momentum and their role in the empowerment of Indigenous Women.

