

TANZANIA – STORIES FROM THE FIELD



Sindani Lang'asani, Emainyo Group Chairperson with meat drying racks on the left

Women in the ECOBOMA project, funded by the European Union, are given the opportunity to 'stand up and rise'

ECOBOMA supports communities in northern Tanzania to adapt to climate change and become more resilient to unpredictable weather patterns. Interventions introduced include income-generating activities which embrace women, vegetable leather-tanning, savings and loans groups and meat drying groups as an example.

In 2018 a meat drying group called Emainyo which means **'let's stand up and rise'** and has 46 members (43 women and 3 men) was set up in Losinoni Kati village in Arumeru District, Arusha District Council. It offers an alternative livelihood, as the only other women-led economic activity for this community is making Maasai jewellery from beads. **"In the past, women were not allowed to participate in development activities, not allowed to do business, not allowed to go to school or engage in discussions, especially opposing what a male counterpart had said,"** exclaimed Emainyo member, Lucy Lumitu.

ECOBOMA began the meat-drying project in 2018 and so far results have shown that there is an increase of 40% in the value of the product after processing. It's a good start. Emainyo members have also benefitted from entrepreneurship training and business skills provided by the project. A mar-

ket needs to be found and better facilities for storing the meat established, especially during the rainy season but the abundance of sun means meat is naturally dried and the project has promoted good simple technologies and improved hygiene standards.

"I managed to influence women to join the group. We had nothing. After participating in training, I decided to go house to house asking for women to start a group, at first about 48 women joined, and then we agreed to each contribute a small sum as a registration fee," said Sindani Lang'asani who also stated, **"Some women left and we remained with 24 members. We managed to open a bank account and started mobilizing resources while still engaging in bead making. We got the opportunity of being trained on other issues affecting our communities such as HIV/ AIDS. We agreed that if a member dies a child takes their position in the group. This is our strategy to involve youth and ensure that the group is sustainable,"** added Sindani. **"I cried, the day they choose me to be a leader, I have never gone to**



school, I asked myself what will I tell others? However, by attending various training programmes I am better educated. I can stand up and talk in village meetings and teach boys and girls about HIV/AIDS and other issues without fear," said Sindani.

Emainyo group members all agree they have more courage to pursue activities which will improve their lives. Children are attending school; houses are being built and livestock well-tended. **"Every woman in Emainyo has her own as-**

37% of groups supported by the projects with women in board positions other than treasurer

146 women are involved in an enterprising meat-drying group

20 boma received biogas stoves which saves time and reduces firewood use



set back home, perhaps a small boma (hut), we do not depend on men anymore," said Esupate Jeremiah.

Alternative sources of energy provide women with more time in their day

Women traditionally bear the burden of collecting firewood used for domestic purposes in rural Tanzania. The rangeland environment in which pastoralists inhabit is harsh and unforgiving. Extreme drought in 2017 followed by flooding the following year has put unprecedented pressure on these communities for survival. In Arumeru District in northern Tanzania it can take one day to search for firewood as deforestation means firewood is not as easily available as it was a generation ago. **"We use animals such as cows and donkeys to help carry firewood. Sometimes these animals get lost and can be a big source of conflict amongst our family,"** said Elizabeth Severe, a Lemanda villager from Arumeru District. Elizabeth lost a donkey once while collecting firewood when she was nine months' pregnant. **"However, my husband was supportive, but it unnecessarily put pressure on us as a family, until the donkey was found,"** Elizabeth stated.

Other social issues involved frequent sexual assaults on women. **"Sometimes women got raped in the bushes when collecting firewood by Maasai youth (Morani) who were grazing livestock. In order to be safe, women walk in groups of no fewer than 8 people and sometimes are accompanied by a man,"** added Elizabeth Severe.

In 2018 the ECOBOMA project introduced 20 biogas plants connected to stoves for cooking to households who had cattle. Five biogas plants were built in Lemanda Village, and transformed the lives of women and their neigh-



Elizabeth and Filippo cook together to provide for their family

bours, as the women invited other households to benefit from the stoves. Biogas stoves use less firewood, which means less time spent looking for it in nearby forests giving women time to pursue other things in their day.

"I was selected to participate in the biogas program and trained on the use and its advantages. All technical aspects and material support needed to install the biogas system was provided by the project. We only had land to build the system. We contributed 200,000.00 Tanzanian Shillings (Approximately 80 USD) which mobilized stone collection, water for construction and the storage of the material," said Elizabeth.

However, there were challenges at the beginning of the biogas intervention. **"A lack of trust about the project from our community meant I was worried that there was some hidden agenda,"** said Elizabeth's husband Filippo Mbaruku, who added, **"It took some time for me to allow my wife to participate, but later on I invited the project to install the biogas plant,"** he said. Pastoralist culture makes it very difficult for women to be decision-makers in their households. Gender equality can seem in

its infancy among pastoralists, with women traditionally being denied any rights to land until recently as an example.

Despite these challenges, men are engaged in cooking food and preparing water for milking cows in the morning. **"In Maasai culture it was not possible to find a man cooking. School children also enjoy eating warm food compared to the past,"** said Filippo.

The ECOBOMA project ran from 2015 to 2019. Its consistent and holistic approach has ensured thousands of pastoralists have been provided with the tools they need to make a difference to their lives. With the support of the local district authorities many women have excelled in improving their lives and providing incomes for their families, and will continue to do so.



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