



gatekeeper

# The Pastoral Women's Council

## Empowerment for Tanzania's Maasai

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**The role of local  
organisations in  
sustainable  
development**

# The roles of local organisations in poverty reduction and environmental management

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All poverty reduction is local. This is easy to forget given how discussion and debate on the subject is dominated by bilateral aid agencies, development banks, national governments and international NGOs. But regardless of higher level commitments and decisions, what actually happens on the ground in particular localities is what makes the difference. Many barriers to poverty reduction are local — local power structures, land owning patterns and anti-poor politicians, bureaucracies and regulations. Much of what the poor require — schools, healthcare, water and sanitation, land, social safety nets, getting onto voter registers — must be obtained from local organisations within this local context.

Local organisations have a major role in addressing these realities, helping poor groups access entitlements and engage with government. They may be local NGOs, grassroots organisations of the poor, or even local governments or branches of higher levels of government. But they function on a local level, have intimate knowledge of the local context and should be accountable to local people. Many operate on very small budgets, outside the main funding flows and frameworks. Yet they are not isolated from larger governance issues; indeed, much pro-poor political change has been catalysed by local innovations and by political pressure from grassroots organisations and their associations.

This publication is one in a series of case studies and synthesis papers looking at the work of local organisations in development and environmental management. These publications were developed in collaboration with the local organisations they profile. They seek to encourage international funding agencies to rethink the means by which they can support, work with and learn from the local organisations that are such a critical part of pro-poor development.

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# Executive summary

The Pastoral Women's Council (PWC) is a community-based organisation established in 1997 in Tanzania. It was founded to promote the development of Maasai pastoralist women and children by facilitating their access to education, health, social services and economic empowerment. It seeks to address women's marginalisation in patriarchal Maasai culture, as well as the poverty among the Maasai that has long been underpinned by land access restrictions for pastoralists, hunters and gatherers. PWC's concerns include preventing the loss of land to the national promotion of tourism, conservation and large-scale commercial farming. Maasai pastoralist women lack property ownership rights, access to social services and the power to make decisions about their own lives (e.g. marriage, education, access to health services). A movement in the 1990s brought about many rights and improved livelihood benefits for pastoralists, but often neglected the gender inequalities and injustices prevalent in Maasai society.

PWC has created and facilitated the formation of women's action groups and has organised local fundraising for its credit programme. It provides Maasai girls and women with opportunities for education as well as a revolving livestock programme. It has established a small-scale agricultural development programme and it promotes women's rights and leadership by raising women's awareness and critical understanding of politics, legislation, women's rights and their role in development (e.g. through paralegal training, studies, talks by experienced guest speakers, meetings, and encouraging women to talk openly). Its approach is to empower indigenous communities to secure their access and rights to natural resources and to have their role in the management of these resources recognised. Thus, PWC has not only improved tangible aspects of Maasai people's lives (e.g. improved nutritional status, created new sources of income, acquired access to land), it has also helped women gain confidence, skills, knowledge and respect.

The organisation is women-led. Providing women with a forum for discussion allows them to reflect on the positive and negative aspects of Maasai culture, to act on their findings, and to mobilise local efforts and resources. As a result to date, girls have escaped forced marriage; women have gained confidence, skills, respect and knowledge in different areas; the credit scheme has provided women with tangible financial support; and girls are graduating from secondary school and are now teaching in PWC schools. Through its work, PWC has developed large networks and strong relationships with various international NGOs and donors, as well as district, village and regional government. These relationships have facilitated financial support and have influenced the passing of traditional land tenure structures as well as the establishment of government-led programmes that focus on the poor.

# The Pastoral Women's Council

## Empowerment for Tanzania's Maasai

Maanda Ngoitiko

### The context of PWC's work

#### Threats to pastoralist communities

Ngorongoro District, in the Arusha Region of northeastern Tanzania, is home to the country's pastoralist Maasai community. The district has become a leading area for tourism due to its wilderness, the Maasai culture and the ecosystems of areas such as Natron and Oldonyo Lengai. But pastoralist Maasai in Tanzania, like other indigenous people in the world, are facing a crisis. Their livelihoods, culture and way of life are threatened. Since Tanzania came under German rule in the 1880s, pastoralists, hunters and gatherers have been excluded from benefiting from much of the country's natural resources and now have only restricted access to their environment. Poverty is rapidly increasing among these marginalised people because they have no control over the land upon which they depend.

Most pastoralist communities are not aware of their citizenship rights. And these communities lack confidence to defend their interests and rights. Numerous decisions are made at the national and at the international levels without considering the impact on these communities.

Government policies do not recognise pastoralism as a sound livelihood strategy. The government does not recognise Maasai traditional land rights, nor their right to full access and control of the natural resources therein. This has resulted in high levels of alienation of Maasai land (Box 1). National interest, promotion of tourism, commercial farming and hunting are all cited as justification for the alienation of land and natural resources. Maasai youth are leaving their communities to migrate to towns for employment as night watchmen, and women stay behind to fulfil both reproductive and productive roles.

#### Marginalisation of Maasai women

The Maasai are generally known for the strong socio-cultural practices and norms that govern all aspects of their community. This culture is so ingrained in the growth and upbringing of individuals that it leaves little room for external influence and makes it difficult to introduce and accomplish social change. This socio-cultural dimension has negatively affected Maasai women, who have experienced high levels of marginalisation

#### BOX 1. THE PLIGHT OF THE MAASAI IN LOLIONDO

In January 1993, former president Ali Hassan Mwinyi's government gave the entire Loliondo Game Controlled Area (LGCA) to the Ortello Business Company Limited (OBC), a game-hunting firm based in the United Arab Emirates. The government licensed OBC for hunting activities and allocated it hunting blocks. OBC's license also permits the trapping of some live animals, which are flown to the UAE. The people of Loliondo were not party to this agreement and, in fact, were not meaningfully consulted.

After five years, stakeholders, including the central government, the district council, Maasai communities, and OBC were supposed to discuss the renewal of this contract between OBC and the government. But Maasai community members were merely informed that OBC would remain and that the government had sealed the deal. The desperation of the Maasai over continued marginalisation and alienation from their land and resources is captured in the following words of an elder whom PWC recently interviewed during a protest meeting in December 2007 in Soitsambu village:

*The government and, indeed, justice are not on our side. We have been forced to accept things as they are because we have no power.*

These were the main concerns expressed by most people in various meetings:

- OBC's unrestricted capture and indiscriminate killing of wildlife.
- OBC's highhandedness and interference with regard to Maasai grazing rights.
- Continued alienation of the Maasai from their ancestral lands by the central government. The establishment of an exclusive hunting block further marginalises the Maasai.
- Unclear and lack of benefits to the community who are affected by the Arab contract.

The Maasai of Loliondo have for a long time accused OBC of grave human rights abuses and environmental violations. They have described acts of intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, and even torture by OBC officials and security forces, as well as by Tanzanian police and military acting in the name of OBC. They allege brazen violations of grazing and land rights, wanton environmental destruction and imminent extermination of the wildlife. They have seen leaders who once opposed OBC's practices become corrupted and bought-off. Currently there is a greater deterioration of the Maasai life and survival due to external and internal pressures and forces at both global and national levels.

for many years. Examples of this can be seen in their lack of property ownership (including livestock), high mortality rates, low levels of education, forced marriages, heavy workloads and physical suffering. The Maasai community is very patriarchal, with minimal opportunities for women to challenge these circumstances or influence community decisions.

For these reasons, Maasai women are among the poorest and most marginalised groups in Tanzanian society, and their vulnerability is increasing in this unstable economy. Women contribute 58% to Tanzania's GNP, but conditions for them are getting worse. Maasai women lack proper representation at all levels, from the community right up to national government, and there is also little appreciation of and respect for these women and their rights. They lack access to political power and frequently have development policies imposed upon them. The seeds for subsequent tensions are often sown by this lack of participation, while the potential for peaceful coexistence between

different communities is thwarted by the denial of pastoral rights to resources that are essential for their livelihood.

## The push for free market policies

Many Tanzanians are becoming increasingly sceptical about free market policies. There is a concern now that government economic policies are hurting the majority while only benefiting a few. The gap between the rich and the poor is much bigger than a few years ago. With the government's failure to intervene on behalf of the people, the disparity between rich and poor is perpetuating notions of individualism and the belief that their predicament can only be resolved by themselves. Tanzania Vision 2025, the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction (NSGRP) and the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy (ASDS) all highlight the role of the private sector as the engine of development in Tanzania and both urban and rural citizens are being encouraged to engage in business. Policy-makers are drawing on the theories of Peruvian economist, Hernando de Soto, who sees the formalisation of property rights as the only route to poverty reduction.

## The PWC: a description

### PWC's evolution

During the 1990s, many pastoralist organisations were created to start working on the holistic development of the Maasai community. The main objective of this struggle, largely against the national government, was to claim and gain recognition of indigenous people's rights over the use and control of land-based resources. Even though this movement led to some livelihood benefits for the general community, none of these organisations picked up on or were sensitive to the inequalities and injustices between men and women within Maasai society. The Pastoral Women's Council (PWC) has been unique in this respect.

PWC is a community-based organisation (CBO) founded in 1997. It implements projects in Loliondo and Sale Divisions within Ngorongoro District. PWC began visiting Maasai communities in 2000/2001. In its early years, the organisation focused on sensitisation: informing local communities of PWC's purpose, aims and potential long-term benefits. Women's action groups were then initiated by PWC. These women's groups were the main force of the whole process, and they formed an executive committee which was responsible for visiting various groups and organising meetings in most localities. The role of the PWC was as a forum for women to meet to discuss issues affecting them individually and collectively, as a community. Educating and facilitating women's meetings and analysing the effects and impact of practical and strategic needs was an important step in the establishment of PWC and developing a sense of ownership. PWC helped women open up, talk freely, and make decisions based on their wants and needs. This led to the development of projects on women's priorities and indeed women's decisions, building their confidence and enabling them to realize their potential. Today the organi-

sation has a membership of anything between 500 and 800 women, who may be both individual members and corporate members involved in women's action groups.

## **PWC's objectives in poverty reduction and environmental management**

PWC's vision is: *"to promote sound cultural, political, environmental and educational development of pastoralist women and children to facilitate their access to essential social services and economic empowerment"*. It is guided in its work by principles of solidarity, equality, trust and transparency.

PWC seeks to realise this vision by supporting the empowerment of women through education, and by supporting the establishment of development projects to address women's practical and strategic needs arising from the oppressive cultures and structures of their communities. This approach is designed to modify inappropriate policies at the local and national levels. It is different because it facilitates the empowerment of disadvantaged groups and focuses on women, who have never enjoyed the freedom of an independent Africa.

Over the last eight years PWC has worked to address three key problems facing Maasai women in Ngorongoro District:

- 1. Lack of property ownership rights.** This has several implications, primarily related to a lack of financial assets and resources. In turn these deprive women of opportunities for better health care and reduced maternal mortality rates (some men do not consider childbirth in a hospital/clinic worthy of selling livestock); ensuring a balanced diet for their family; providing for practical household needs, such as clothes, shoes and medicine etc; and educating their children as they can't meet essential school expenses (as a result a great number of children do not go to primary school).
- 2. Lack of participation in political decisions.** Traditionally, Maasai women are not allowed to speak in public/community meetings or participate in decisions, even those that have a direct impact on their lives. For issues such as domestic violence there is an expectation that decisions will be made and action will be taken by elders and traditional leaders in the community. This has been a major problem and has left women under-represented at the village and at district levels, with community agendas being determined by men. Men are often not willing to address certain issues such as HIV/AIDS, which are a threat to the whole community. While women see HIV/AIDS as an important issue and are seriously trying to address it, their lack of control over their bodies and lack of authority in community politics leaves them in a weak position. Women lack fora to challenge these oppressive practices and to speak out on issues that are important to them, such as forced marriages, HIV/AIDS and property ownership.
- 3. Lack of education for Maasai girls.** This underlies the lack of professional Maasai women in district organisations, the lack of educated women to fight for gender equality between Maasai men and women, and to fight the patriarchal household structures. Normally Maasai women are expected to concentrate on building and

repairing houses, fetching firewood and water, and milking animals, as well as raising and feeding children and cooking for the male family members.

## **PWC's key activities**

PWC seeks to address these three problems through its programme-based activities. PWC's programmes are all implemented by community-based women's action groups. These groups are currently working on the following activities, each of which is described in more detail below:

- Creating educational opportunities for girls and women
- A credit scheme for members of women's action groups
- A Women's Solidarity Boma (WSB) revolving livestock programme
- Small-scale agricultural development
- Women's rights and leadership
- Indigenous rights to natural resources.

## **Educational opportunities for girls and women**

This programme has five main components:

1. **Establishing a "Pre-Form One Centre"** to provide additional tuition for girls leaving primary school who are at risk of missing out on secondary school due to lack of guidance/academic support or arranged marriages.
2. **Providing financial support** to students who are academically able but lack the resources to complete their secondary level education.
3. **Providing counselling support** to enable young women to understand their new school environment in conjunction with their traditional lifestyles and values. This helps them to develop their self-esteem to defend their rights and control their bodies, sometimes against their parents' wishes and/or community traditions.
4. **Running an internship programme** that receives secondary school graduates and secures work placements for a one-year period before the young women continue higher education.
5. **Supporting a nursery school and adult education.** This involves bringing girls into education at an early age and meeting with parents to encourage them to aim for higher goals for their children and ensure they finish primary school. Facilitating the construction of nursery schools has been an essential part of this work. PWC is responsible for providing reading materials and training teachers; parents pay a monthly fee to the nurseries to cover staff salaries. Adult classes are also conducted in these classrooms twice a week, enabling women to read and write about issues such as healthcare and farming. These classes also serve as an opportunity to discuss other issues they consider important.

## **Credit scheme for women's action groups**

Start-up finance for the credit scheme was generated by a community fundraising event in December 2001, which PWC staff and executive committee members organised with women's action group leaders. A total of 2 million Tanzania shillings (approx. USD 1,800) and 49 livestock (goats, sheep and cows) were raised in donations from local men and women and political leaders. Sensitisation and training workshops were facilitated by PWC to prepare women for the credit scheme. The credit scheme operates on a revolving basis – recipients are required to organise themselves into groups to draw up a business plan to pay back the loan as well as make a profit. The returned loan is then passed to another group under the same conditions. Groups have engaged in a whole range of income-generating activities under this scheme, including selling salt, sugar, tea leaves, cooking oil, and other household goods. Others buy and sell livestock, taking advantage of the lucrative livestock market in neighbouring Kenya (Box 2). Still others are engaged in farming, growing maize and sorghum to sell in the local markets. Other groups have formed cereal banks, buying cereals in bulk and storing them for sale at an opportune moment. Some groups make and sell beadwork and other cultural artifacts, particularly to tourists. The scheme is governed by women's groups; each group has a small committee of four people who are responsible for monitoring group members and ensuring the return of the loan. Each group has a mini constitution which stipulates loan objectives, meeting procedures, collective management of profit and loss and recruitment of new members.

This scheme has grown phenomenally: it started by providing support to an initial 20 women; today it supports 335. Capital has increased to 8 million Tsh (approx. USD 7,150) with a total of 45 active groups. The scheme is administered under a separate bank account with its own office bearers and signatories. Plans are underway to establish an umbrella framework to allow the scheme to operate independently throughout the district, with the role of PWC limited to technical support, capacity building and support for networking. The umbrella framework has come to fruition following discussions between the women's groups and PWC over a long period of time. Credit group members will elect the leaders, secretary, and treasurer of the Umbrella Management Committee (UMC). The UMC will take decisions on programme implementation and loan recipients, and will be responsible for monitoring loan repayments, problem solving, networking with economic development groups and bank transactions.

This project is raising women's income and women are learning the best ways to manage and run their own development projects. Women receive basic training in business management, market needs and creative abilities. The training is co-funded by PWC, with contributions from group profits.

## **Women's Solidarity Boma (WSB)**

The WSB livestock programme has been one of PWC's biggest activities. WSB is managed by a committee of four people who are responsible for overseeing daily activities. The programme provides livestock to poor women on a revolving model. For example, a woman is provided with five goats. When these goats breed, the woman is required to

give the first five kids to another woman and she in turn is required to do the same. The fundamental objective of the project is to advocate property ownership for women. Livestock ownership has also helped women gain respect from men and raise their cultural status. Another key objective is to fatten bulls and sell them to raise funds for PWC. There are four project staff employed by PWC who take care of fattening the bulls and herding. Over the last two years, 60 bulls were sold and a total of Tsh 9 million (approx. USD 8000) was generated. Some of the money has been used to pay school/college fees for a total of nine girls (seven at secondary school level and two at university).

### **Agriculture development programme**

The aim of this programme is to transform livelihoods through household food security (the prime responsibility of women). The programme targets 5,000 farmers (mainly women and young people) in Loliondo Division where the climate and soil are suitable for agricultural production. Village governments have been persuaded to provide a limited amount of land free of charge to village members. Women are now claiming these as small plots, over which they have complete control and discretion. Almost everybody in Loliondo Division now has a piece of land to farm.

Through this project, more and more women are producing enough food, not only for their own household but also as a surplus to sell. Nutritional status is also improving, and increasing numbers of people (men as well as women) are using ox ploughs and realising their value over ploughing by hand (traditional Maasai views regarding livestock have restricted their use for productive purposes.)

### **Women's rights and leadership**

It has been particularly important to raise women's awareness and critical understanding of politics, legislation (and rights), and their role in development. Activities include paralegal training on civil and land rights, study tours, meetings and talks by experienced guest speakers. Work in this area also involves supporting victims of domestic violence by first linking them with the village government (which as a legal entity is responsible for conflict resolution at the village level) and encouraging them to talk openly about their problems. If they fail to settle their dispute at this level PWC advises them to take their complaint to the nearest police station which will inevitably call both parties and the village government leader in attempting to solve the problem. Occasionally cases are taken to the primary court and PWC's role is then to help inform the magistrate of the necessary facts on a particular case, which in turn will determine the decision made at court.

### **Indigenous rights to natural resources**

Over the last six years PWC and other local NGOs, such as Ujamaa Community Resource Trust (UCRT), have been working with indigenous communities to secure their access and rights to natural resources and recognition of their role in the management of these resources. PWC has been working to ensure that communities are empowered to manage, make decisions and claim the benefits from their natural resources. PWC works

with both men and women but with a particular focus on women and their equal share as stakeholders. PWC has been building capacity at different levels; helping to form natural resource committees, holding meetings with councillors, traditional leaders and young people and forming women's action groups across the district. This process is serving to create strategic connections between the district council and community, as well as allowing men and women to share natural resource benefits and recognise women's significant contribution to the management of natural resources.

Together, the impacts of these key programmes in credit, agriculture, livestock and education have furthered the empowerment of women, helping to advance their property rights through improved economic independence; ensuring they develop a critical understanding of issues that are important to them (and the ability to address them themselves); and creating better opportunities for formal education for Maasai girls, rather than being forced into arranged marriages.

## **PWC's main stakeholders**

PWC serves the Ngorongoro District in Arusha region, northeastern Tanzania. The district covers 14,036 square kilometres and is made up of 37 villages, 14 wards, and three divisions with a population of 144,676. The Ngorongoro Conservation Area covers 56% of land in the district; the remaining land is in the game controlled area. The implication of this designation is that the Maasai community is not allowed to farm, graze or build permanent settlements on the land. Approximately 85% of Ngorongoro's inhabitants are Maasai pastoralists (Ngorongoro District Council report, October 2005). Sonjo, Tatoga and Hadzabe ethnic communities also live in the district. PWC has mainly been working with Maasai and Sonjo communities in Loliondo and Sale divisions. There is no particular reason for choosing such areas other than the needs of the community drove us to respond and work with them. In Loliondo, PWC works in Names, Sakala, Engusero Sambu, Soit-sambu Ololosokwan and Oloipiri villages, and two sub villages in Arash ward. In Sale Division PWC works in Pinyiny and Ngaresero villages. In addition to projects being implemented in these specific localities, PWC has a district-wide focus in girls' education and advocacy for women's rights.

PWC has 800 members (including individuals and representatives of women's action groups). These are registered members from the local community who were not selected, but registered on the basis of their willingness to join PWC. We have been keen to encourage communities to play an active role in the design and implementation of their development projects. Mobilising local efforts and resources has been a key strategy throughout PWC's work. This is done by involving communities in their own development projects and designing projects together in a collaborative manner, and ensuring their active participation on projects and issues before any action is taken.

## **PWC's structure and ways of working**

PWC is run by a staff of 18 people and 12 community volunteers. It has a management team of 11 under the leadership of a Coordinator, and includes heads of department, administrator and the Coordinator. The staff are full time employees and are all respon-

sible for implementing daily activities. We also have 17 community volunteers who are trained to manage nursery schools and adult classes.

The Coordinator reports to an Executive Committee of 12 members (9 women and 3 men) elected by the General Assembly (see below) for a period of three years. The latter meets once a year to review the activities of the organisation during the year and approve its plans for the next year, and is considered the top organ of PWC.

PWC's accountability measures include calling community meetings, like the general assembly which brings together all members and the community annually. In this annual meeting both financial and progress reports are discussed openly and annual plans are approved. The Executive Committee approves monthly finances and small plans. And the community is free to criticise PWC in meetings and in formal and informal discussions.

The members of PWC and the General Assembly ensure that PWC's vision is implemented and strengthened on a daily basis in the following ways:

- Evaluating its activities and measuring success against its objectives, using both quantitative and qualitative measures. These include the number of women attending community meetings annually; the number of girls enrolled in primary and secondary schools and colleges every year; the rate of women's participation in meetings; the number of individual women receiving loans and running their business as planned. Monitoring and developing indicators are based on social change and the impact of people's lives and status. A good example is the credit scheme programme, which started with 20 members in 2001 and grew to 375 in 2007.
- Conducting assessments through case studies, reports and minutes and by conducting internal evaluations.
- The Executive Committee visits all groups once a year to assess their performance and modify plans where necessary. An external impact evaluation, which assesses the effectiveness of PWC's activities against its objectives, is done every three years. A financial audit is done annually and the committee reviews finances quarterly.
- Participating on a monthly board made up of 12 people—4 men and 8 women—and which is entrusted with hiring and firing staff. It comprises local community members and educated individuals who support the PWC vision.

Empowerment through education has been a foundation of PWC's work to liberate disadvantaged community members from situations that limit their dignity and freedom. This empowerment approach has helped Maasai women to analyse their problems and act independently. The organisation will continue to further its empowerment approach using the following methodology:

- Providing education, both formal and informal, to build the knowledge, skills, confidence and capacity of women at all levels.
- Providing resources to help women achieve goals in education and economic development.

- Providing a platform for women to meet together to discuss their own issues and to develop their own strategies. Such platforms include training workshops and meetings, etc.
- Providing an opportunity for women to diversify their economic activities and ensure adequate household food security.
- Facilitating livestock ownership for women and providing a livestock revolving credit fund for poor women (this has already created a sense of solidarity among the women).
- Promoting a mix of individual and collective activities, which help address women's individual and collective needs.

Few other organisations address the strategic needs of disadvantaged groups like women; they normally tend to deliver social services. The focus of our approach is to bring social changes that are practical, equitable to all, and keep women and their communities free from exploitation.

## **PWC's funding model**

### **Local funding**

The mobilisation of community resources through local fundraising has been a key strategy for many years. For instance PWC women's groups raised 3 million Tanzanian shillings (\$3,000) for the women's credit programme. The community has raised funds to pay the salaries of interns acting as nursery school teachers. Each year they pay for nine teachers at 500,000 Tsh (\$500) each. The community also raised funds to build new primary schools. Parents also contribute funds for transport and materials for school children. This strategy of community fundraising will continue to help facilitate our programmes.

### **National and international funding**

PWC has pursued its objectives by developing strategic alliances with both national and international organisations. International partners include Cordaid in the Netherlands, African Initiatives in the UK and Global Partners for Development in the US. More locally, links have been established with UCRT (Ujamaa Community Resources Trust), PINGOs forum (Pastoralist Indigenous Non-Governmental Organisations), The Dorobo Fund for Tanzania, and the Training Centre for Development Cooperation.

PWC's approximate annual budget is USD 175,000. PWC has received funding from both African Initiatives and Cordaid. Funding was provided for capacity building and programming, having built personal relationships with funders. Training has been provided by the MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (funded by the Norwegian government), the Lolwe Foundation, and the Ngaramtoni Training Centre.

We have built strong partnerships with donors through the development of clear memoranda of understanding and partnership principles. These clearly stated working agreements:

- lay out our goals, objectives and working strategies
- increase transparency to our donors and the target group
- help decide on priorities and focus
- determine resource accountability
- share leadership positions in the organisation
- identify strengths and weaknesses of both parties
- decide on reporting procedures and other important conditions
- share information and knowledge, not only money.

These factors allow PWC to have a more open and honest partnership with our donors and foster a sense of collaboration. The organisation will continue to work with donors who support our agenda and help us grow as an organisation.

PWC is facing a serious problem as one of its major funders, African Initiative (AI), is phasing out in March 2008 due to political issues with Comic Relief. PWC has been working with AI since 1998, and the AI support funds education which is fundamental to PWC's work. AI's withdrawal will seriously affect PWC's education and women's rights components. Recently we have decided to start a dialogue with Comic Relief to explore a possible future partnership with them.

The fact that most donors only fund specific projects without providing any administration expenses puts an organisation like PWC in a difficult position. Also most donors fund short-term programmes, yet they demand immediate positive impacts. But for activities like land rights and education, impacts take a long time to be realised. We are guided by the strategic plan and we have been careful to maintain our objectives.

## PWC's achievements

In the last six years PWC has contributed to the following improvements:

- **Women now feel empowered and are not as marginalised as in the past.** They are able to identify, prioritise, plan and implement issues affecting them in a participatory way. For example they are able to produce enough food for the household and can even sell some. Seven girls have escaped forced marriages in the last 18 months alone—this was seldom heard of five years ago.
- **Women are participating in politics, village government meetings and school committees.**
- **Poverty is being tackled through economic empowerment** brought about by the successful women's action groups (see Box 2). This initiative is expanding every year. The existing groups are very innovative and active in reducing household level poverty.
- **Girls who have received training have returned to assist their fellow community members.** Nineteen girls who have all graduated from secondary school now teach in

the nursery schools and one runs PWC's pharmacy. Another young woman now works as an Assistant Coordinator in the District Council Women's Development Department. She is using her position to support Maasai women in the district and due to the impact of her work she has been contracted to undertake additional work for an international NGO.

- **There is increased ownership and leadership of the programme by local women.** PWC's women-led Executive Committee is one of PWC's key strengths. Members of the Executive Committee have gained confidence, skills and knowledge through their work with the organisation and the work of PWC is becoming increasingly recognised and respected by communities.
- **The credit scheme has provided women with tangible financial support.** For the first time, women in Ngorongoro are engaging in cattle trading – something that was previously the sole domain of men. This change has been made possible through the credit scheme. Credit also enables women to travel and meet women in other towns; for the first time, Maasai women are travelling to sell goods at markets in Narok, Kenya and Arusha. Women now own property, unlike before, and are able to learn new skills for becoming financially independent.
- **An increasing amount of money is being raised locally.** PWC has encouraged women to take a self-help approach in raising funds for community projects, building primary schools and funding teachers' salaries for example. This approach has enhanced ownership of projects by the women involved, as well as increasing trust between PWC and the community.

#### **BOX 2. SUCCESS STORY: THE OLOSIRWA WOMEN'S ACTION GROUP**

The Olosirwa Women's Action Group was set up in 2002 with 25 members and 1 million Tsh which was given on credit from PWC. Half of the group's members were the poorest women in the village. The group aimed to diversify their income and reduce poverty. They began by buying cattle in Tanzania and selling them at their nearest market in Posimoro, Kenya. The first thing the group did when they made a profit from selling the cows was to build four improved houses for the poorest members of the group. The group bought five goats for each of the four poorest women (who had previously been selling firewood and brewing local beer before joining the group). The group is now actively building houses for its other members and has completed 16 houses to date. The group farms maize and beans, sells sugar, tealeaves, and beadwork and supports members to buy dairy cows. They are also involved in raising awareness of HIV/AIDS using Maasai songs and are running an adult education programme and nursery schools. The group's members increased to 45 in 2006. The group has a clear constitution with simple bylaws for members.

# Constraints and challenges

PWC has had to overcome and work around a number of constraints to the effectiveness and scope of its activities:

- **PWC's approach creates problems as it challenges the powerful and seeks to empower disadvantaged community members.** For example when we started an education project conflict arose with various village leaders who said that the organisation was revolutionary and should therefore include men in all of its programmes and consult men before taking any decisions. The disagreement lasted three years, until the district commissioner intervened to declare legal recognition of the organisation and its mandate to address women's issues.
- **Building members' confidence and encouraging women to act differently is a long process.** It is difficult for women to apply the law to stand up and fight for their rights. It is also still very difficult for women to resist pressure from outside. For example, when women demonstrated against an Arab hunting company it was easy for men to hijack the process started by women.
- **Advocating and promoting women's positions in a patriarchal society.** It is still largely the case that cultural practices do not recognise or value the contribution of women to society.
- **The low level of education within the Maasai community, especially women.** This has limited the opportunities for women to get involved in advocacy work due to their lack of necessary skills and resources.
- **There are insufficient resources to meet the rising demand** for support over a huge area and growing pressure from men wishing to join PWC. This puts unnecessary pressure on women and creates further conflict. Due to the success of the credit scheme, for example, men wanted to be included. When it was made clear that this was not possible the men said they would take control of credit resources on behalf of women family members – the women successfully resisted this attempt.
- **There is increasing external pressure to alienate pastoral land** to become conservation areas and government farming land. This leaves the pastoralists without land for grazing or farming. PWC's ability to articulate and seriously address these issues is limited. At the local levels what is most required is unity and solidarity amongst the people; this is PWC's current challenge. This is a big challenge because most male leaders accept bribes to keep silent on the land issues and betray their own people. In the Maasai community leaders are considered important; thus they have the biggest opportunity to change the situation either negatively or positively. Currently PWC is working to promote the powers of traditional leaders which have been hijacked by government elected leaders. Traditional leaders are more faithful and respectful and they fear bribery. Women networking internationally could help bring these issues to the fore more widely. They can also link our issues with big political leaders at the national level. For example, the Tanzania Media Women's

Association has been working closely with the government to stop genital mutilation and other oppressive laws. PWC needs to link with them on land issues. At the international level they could help in providing experts and in lobbying our government on our behalf, and they could advocate for humanitarian laws, by providing resources and useful information.

## Key lessons

Transforming culturally rooted norms and systems in any society requires consolidated effort and strategies. This is mainly because it is difficult to change views overnight; this work requires commitment and adjustments within new socio-economic frameworks.

Our approach is based on critical thinking and analysis of social institutions, and by the traditional leaders who regulate and govern the lives in the Maasai community and which are the heart of traditional values and norms in society. Our aim was to question assumptions and inequalities among community members and beyond, and such an approach is unique in Ngorongoro District. PWC is also the only organisation dealing with women's issues, especially women and girls' education. At the regional level PWC is also unique in recognising the value of traditional laws and regulations, whilst trying to challenge oppressive laws and structures. We are unlike many other organisations who view indigenous people's knowledge and lifestyles as backwards and in need of radical change. Our aim is to enable disadvantaged communities to think critically and analyse issues and existing social structures within and beyond their communities, so that they achieve the means to act for themselves.

PWC's efforts to implement its programmes remain solid and firm. Our key lessons are derived from the strengths and successes of our experiences to date:

- A committed staff and a strong management committee form the essential backbone for PWC.
- Realistic objectives and a focused agenda should be set and concluded from community needs assessments, which in our case have had a special focus on women's practical and strategic needs.
- Past successes should be built upon to foster and develop community support and trust in the organisation by both women and men.
- Working within and across the community with both women and men and without bias has helped PWC become better respected and accepted by the community. PWC works with men at many different levels; at community level we work with community leaders and young men, particularly on land rights advocacy and the importance of girls' education.
- PWC has successfully linked gender inequality with other issues including poverty, livelihoods, land and human rights, local government accountability, and social services such as water, health and education.

- Developing networks with other organisations inside and outside of Tanzania is very important. There are potential benefits of working with other organisations, such as sharing information on working strategies, knowledge and resources. This promotes and builds a strong foundation for the organization to be able to work effectively with the target group.
- International and national networking helps us to adapt skills on advocacy which leads to policy influence that affects communities on the ground.

The successes of PWC's work have been made possible through our strong partnerships with donors and our large network of community members, staff and volunteers to help sustain PWC's work.

There has also been a willingness by other key bodies, including the district government, international NGOs and regional fora, to work with us. For example at the district level government has the mandate to approve and design various projects on behalf of the community, or to sign contracts with investors on behalf of the community. Thus working with them enables PWC to influence their decisions based on what the community needs. One positive influence has been increased government support for girl's education. We work hand in hand with the government to ensure that girls are not forced into early marriages. Another positive influence is the passing of traditional land tenures and by-laws. An increase in women councillors in the district and village government promotes women's representation and voice at the local level. Recently the district council established a credit scheme fund similar to PWC's, although the district fund is much bigger and covers the whole district. PWC staff and few individual leaders influenced the council and led the way.

In conclusion, our successes have been ensured by creating an enabling and peaceful environment to work in, by building understanding and good working relations with other organisations and with the government. We need to form a united force to try to solve community problems.

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