



Planning for Climate Change: Can Traditional and Government Planning Processes Complement Each Other for Climate Resilient Growth?

Background

Increasing climate variability and the likelihood of more frequent extreme weather events (e.g. droughts and floods) will create serious challenges for people whose livelihoods strongly depend on climatic conditions, such as farmers and pastoralists. These challenges, which will be particularly pronounced in Tanzania's drylands, must be proactively addressed if these populations are to adapt to climate change and ensure resilient, sustainable and secure livelihoods.

Traditionally, pastoralists have been highly skilled in dealing with climate variability and unpredictability. They have developed strategies not only to adapt to frequent changes in climate, but to proactively harness climate variability as a resource to maximize productivity. Unlike farmers who rely on regular and predictable rainfall, pastoralists through their strategies thrive on rainfall variability. But today, pastoralists often do not have the political space or power to influence planning processes. Instead, planning tends to be carried out in a formalized process, through government procedures and top down approaches. Decentralization of planning to the local government level is widely supported through numerous policies and strategies in Tanzania (MKUKUTA, Vision 2025 and the Local Government Reform Program and Decentralization by Devolution). Yet despite commitments to devolve powers – especially in planning – grassroots communities are not as involved as they could be, and links between pastoralists' traditional methods and government approaches remains unclear and untapped.

Planning must play a central role in identifying strategies for climate adaptation in Tanzania's drylands. And with traditional knowledge and years of adapting to climatic variability, pastoralists can offer unique and effective methods for adaptation and resilience.

Understanding Government and Traditional Planning Processes

Research was carried out in three Northern Tanzania districts – Monduli, Longido and Ngorongoro – to better understand how climate change is impacting rural livelihoods, how communities are responding to these changes, and how government planning systems are able to address changing climatic conditions. It also examined the level of collaboration between government and traditional planning processes and the challenges and potential opportunities for achieving climate resilience and adaptation. Through research, interviews and a multi-stakeholder workshop, recommendations were developed to improve and harmonize planning processes so that they are more supportive, flexible and adaptive to communities and a changing climate.¹

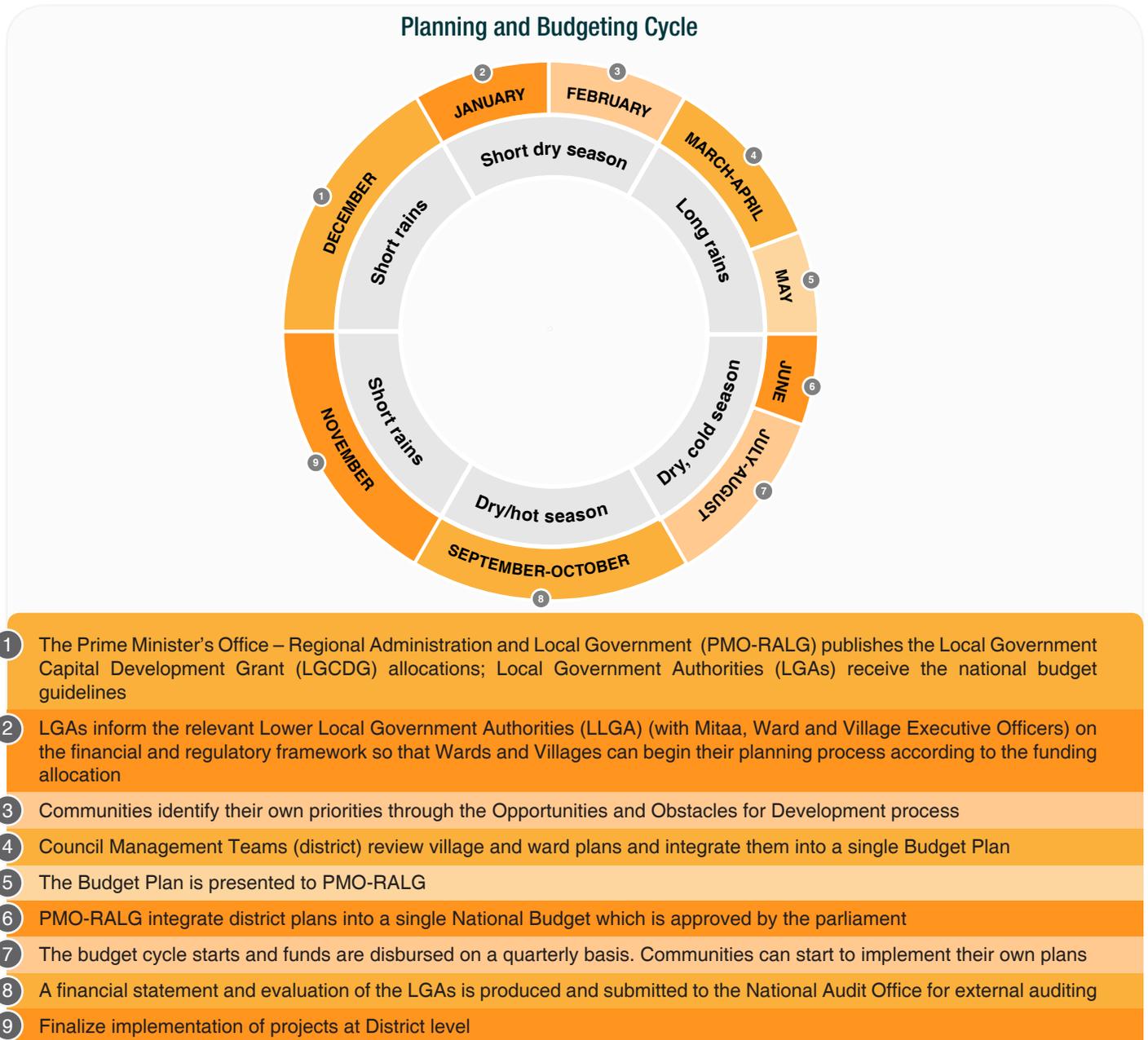
Government planning

Districts play a critical role in planning. They serve as the middle-man between local and national level, trying to answer community needs while following national guidelines and priorities. In times of increased environmental constraints and uncertainty, local government will face pressures to respond in a timely and flexible manner. The question is: will the existing system enable planning in an adaptive manner?

¹ This information brief is based on the in-depth study, "Mainstreaming climate change adaptation in drylands development planning in Tanzania: Research on traditional and government planning processes."

How it works

The planning and budget cycle in Tanzania has defined steps, deadlines and procedures to facilitate achievement of its policy objectives. These are outlined in the diagram below.



Government planning and challenges with climate variability

There are two major limitations with the government planning process that undermines the ability of districts to implement and adjust plans in response to changing conditions at the local level: 1) the rigidity and prescribed top-down nature of the planning system; and, 2) the level and quality of participation in the process.

Rigidity and top-down approach to planning:

- Pre-determined and fixed planning cycle* – The planning cycle does not take into account seasons and their implications for local livelihoods. Community level planning starts in January during the short dry season. Planning begins in January, and funds are dispersed in July-August. This system doesn't allow for modifying plans and there is a high risk that plans developed in February (short dry season) will no longer be relevant in July-August (after long rains) when the funds are made available. The government planning cycle is not sensitive to climate conditions on the ground.
- Inflexible Budgets and Centralized Funding Mechanism* – Planning budgets are organized from the top down, without devolution of financial resources. The reallocation of funds from one department to another or from one activity to another within a single department is prohibited. The process is also entirely sectoral in approach, providing little room for cross-sectoral planning and collaboration. This rigidity creates serious obstacles in allowing districts flexibility to respond to changing climate conditions.

- c. *Community Contributions* – Communities are required to contribute 20% (either financial or human resources) to the total costs of a “productive project” (a project to increase community production, e.g. dams or dipping facilities). While this is meant to foster community ownership, its rigidity does not take into account times of economic and environmental pressures when communities are unable to contribute. Without a certain level of flexibility, this system will likely see even more challenges with increased climate variability.
- d. *Cumbersome Granting Guidelines* – Seven Block Grants are available under the national planning and budget guidelines – each with separate instructions, restrictions and conditions – as well as other development funds for LGAs that are also limited by sector and purpose. The complexities, restrictions and fragmentation of these grants and funding mechanisms create challenges at the local level (particularly because funds cannot be reallocated). This can result in high dependency on community and district support, and projects often remain incomplete.
- e. *Delayed Funding* – Funds are distributed from the treasury on a quarterly basis; however, they often reach the local authorities in the second quarter, and activities for the first quarter have to be postponed or do not happen. This limits the ability of local government to respond to emergencies and unforeseen events.
- f. *Monetary and Infrastructure Focus* – Planning is seen in terms of budgets and financial investments in infrastructure, which is not always the kind of support needed for drylands planning. Sometimes communities need support to implement their own planning systems – e.g., livestock mobility or controlling access to critical dry season grazing – rather than an investment in infrastructure. There is a disconnect between government vision for development and community planning realities.

Level and Quality of Participation

- g. *A Communications and Knowledge Gap* – Government and communities often have misperceptions about the way the other perceives and carries out planning – e.g. local government officials perceive community approaches to planning as somewhat ad-hoc. It is felt that communities often propose a simple ‘shopping list’ of proposed projects, without seeing the bigger picture. However, there appears to be little effort to build capacity at the community level for people to articulate a more strategic vision of their development. Communities view government’s approach as rigid, non-participatory and disconnected to community needs.
- h. *Conflicting Agendas* – There isn’t a strong mechanism for reconciling competing and conflicting agendas and interests over land and natural resources (e.g. between family farmers and pastoralists or between pastoralists and farmers and outside investors), and little monitoring of overall decision-making. Although the planning process is supposedly based on need, politics and ulterior motives, especially at the ward and village level, can often have a strong influence on the process. E.g., ward councilors may put forward priority projects in their villages of origin or in the villages where their major electoral constituents reside.
- i. *Quality of Participation/Representation*: Little capacity building at local level is done to enable communities to effectively participate in the government planning process. Further, the process is quite mechanistic, without including representatives from all segments of society (e.g. women and children, local leaders).

Community planning

Traditional planning in drylands directly responds to climate variability, and so can provide us with lessons on how to plan in a changing climate. However, today’s government planning process, along with competing land uses and incompatible policies, have placed restrictions and limitations on the ability of communities to plan like they used to.

How it works

Research in the three districts found that community planning and customary institutions are still significant actors in communities. Planning typically involves managing land and natural resources, and is overseen by the traditional leadership under the jurisdiction of customary law.

Unlike the government process, community planning is less rigid and without strict timelines. Regular planning is in direct response to the seasonal changes in climate and extreme events, e.g. droughts and floods. Planning is done in a holistic way to support the dominant livelihood systems – pastoralism and agro-pastoralism.

The following, using the pastoral system as an example, provides a general overview of how planning is carried out at community level.²

Planning under pastoral systems

The pastoral system is dependent on three key components:

- Access to and control over natural resources (pastures, water, salt licks)
- A livestock herd that is in balance with the needs of the pastoral family
- Institutions for managing natural resources and livestock

Access and control over pastures and water

Planning is done according to season. For example:

- *Rainy season* - at the beginning of the short rains when fresh pastures are quite scattered, pastoralists plan where to move their animals (through what is called *Engigwana –O-Ngishu*) to access these new pastures after a long dry season. When the rainy season is established, they continue planning how to access the most nutritious pastures where there are not many other livestock or wildlife so their animals can quickly gain weight.
- *Dry season* - planning consists of controlling the speed at which the dry season pastures are grazed by livestock – if the pastures are eaten too quickly and before the arrival of the next rains, livestock will go hungry and will need to move. Traditionally, pastoralists control access to dry season water as a way to regulate the number of animals using the surrounding pastures. They also define those areas that are reserved for wet season grazing and dry season grazing (*Ngaron*), and have special areas called *Olokeri* reserved for animals that cannot walk long distances in search of pasture (e.g. calves, sick animals). These grazing areas have strict rules of access that are set and monitored by traditional leaders.

Planning Livestock

Livestock planning involves two key components:

- *Structure of the herd* – planning the structure of the herd

² The study focused on both farming and pastoral systems of planning; however, this summary is simply providing the pastoral system as one example, as it is a livelihood that provides some very interesting lessons.

by age and sex category to ensure it meets the needs of the family in the short and long-term. For example, enough milk cows to feed the family, steers to sell to purchase other food and goods; but also enough heifers and female calves to ensure the herd meets the needs of the family in the future.

- **Breeding** – selective breeding is carried out to build a herd that is resilient to climate variability while being as productive as possible. This involves selling those animals that are considered weak or unsuitable, and breeding from the animals that are strong or high productivity and resilient. They also schedule breeding so the calves are born at the beginning of the short rains. Fresh pastures increase milk production, which leads to strong and healthy calves ready to sustain the first dry season.

Who is involved in planning?

- **Iligwanak (traditional elders)** – they are responsible for setting restrictions on communal grazing areas reserved for a specific time of the year (this is known as *Ngaron*). They assign these areas grazing rights and restrictions for settlements and it is based upon seasonality. The elders are responsible for general utilization of natural resources and serve as the local authority.
- **Morani (warriors/Young Males)** – they are responsible for scouting (Eleenore) out accessible and usable land for grazing during different seasons (although all decisions about usage of this land is made by *iligwanak*). Warriors are entrusted with the herds.
- **Permanent Boma (households)** - the role of the household is to protect the surrounding land and remain while remaining with minimal livestock (e.g. milking cows, goats). It also allows for family life to remain uninterrupted while herds are being moved.
- **Women (Indomonok)** take full responsibilities of looking after families, small stocks, weak stocks and milking cows during the dry and wet seasons when the large herds are moved away to healthy pastures. They also are responsible for managing water use and the family Olokeri.

Community planning and challenges with climate variability

Traditional leadership is instrumental to the calendar described above and through flexible and adaptable customary institutions traditional leadership enacts the planning process, which is dependent and responsive to changing climatic conditions.

However, today there are increasing challenges that communities face when planning:

- Land** – Access, use and control over land and its natural resources is becoming increasingly challenging in Tanzania's drylands. Land is becoming privatized, either by individuals or for commercial investments, which limits mobility and adaptive capacity.
- Livestock Herds** – Livestock herds are steadily decreasing with more families with small herd sizes and a few families with large herds – society is becoming more differentiated. The smaller herd sizes are unable to sustain families and this is contributing to urban migration and a loss of rural labour. People who are highly skilled in rural activities, e.g. agriculture and livestock keeping, are shifting to low skilled jobs in town.
- Planning and decision-making** – Societal and cultural changes, coupled with land pressures and economic challenges, are influencing the overall community planning and decision process, undermining its effectiveness.

Bringing the two together

For Effective and Adaptive Planning in a Changing Climate

Through research, interviews, discussion and dialogue the following areas were identified as needing improvement for effective, adaptive and climate resilient planning in Tanzania's drylands.

Addressing Misunderstandings

"People consider the role of the government as to rescue them from troubles, rather than to collaborate and work with and for them" – government planner

"The government knows about our traditional planning but they don't care" – community leader

Generally, community members feel the government is not willing to listen or to allow them to effectively participate in planning, while at the same time government often feel communities are unwilling to collaborate or include them in community planning processes. It is this unwillingness to listen on both sides that has led to systems that remain separate and that lack strategies or actions for improvement. These communications gaps need to be addressed so that productive actions for collaboration can be developed, e.g. building local level capacity to understand formalized planning processes and educating government officials about the adaptive and flexible planning approaches of communities.

Strengthening Local Level Participation

Local governance is designed to be democratic and grassroots oriented; however, in practice this is not always the case as often local level participation is not well monitored and left to the discretion of a few local leaders. Additionally, community participation is only designed at local level and does not enter into ward or district level decision-making processes. But ultimately, one of the main challenges is that local governance doesn't always recognize traditional leadership institutions, which often brings in local knowledge that is important and unique to particular ecosystems and communities. Therefore, traditional planning systems should be recognized and mainstreamed, and given official status in the government planning process.

Supporting flexibility for adaptability

"We are not allowed to plan for unexpected events, we only respond to disaster" – local government official

As outlined, the government planning process is rigid, top-down and inflexible, which does not allow room to plan for climate variability. Climate resilient growth will require flexibility to respond to climate changes, and this means planning responsibilities need to be devolved and more localized. Funds and budgets should be flexible, and funds should be set aside for unforeseen events.

Conclusion

The skills, knowledge and abilities for climate resilient development exist in Tanzania. However, for this to be realized, strong efforts must be made to better coordinate and align traditional level planning with government processes. Further, budgets and funds should be available that support – and not hinder – this type of planning. Ultimately, for this to happen, national level policies should better reflect this type of participatory approach to planning.