

The case of Himo and its region, Northern Tanzania

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Background

Northern Tanzania is one of the most densely populated areas in the country. The slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro and the fertile plains are well connected by a road and transport network to several important towns such as Moshi and Arusha, to the primate city, Dar es Salaam, and across the border to Kenya. Coffee production is the main cash crop. Education is highly valued by the Wachaga ethnic group, whose members occupy an important place among Tanzania's professional elite.

The area has seen several transformations in the past three decades. The allocation of land from the nationalised and dismantled sisal plantations to mountain village residents is at the origin of new settlements in the plain, along the main road. These have grown steadily into one of the most important markets in the Kilimanjaro area. The growth of one of these villages, Himo, was boosted in the 1980s when it became the centre of a thriving smuggling trade across the border, exchanging agricultural produce from Tanzania for manufactured goods from Kenya. Despite a recent crackdown on smuggling, the status of Himo as a major market had already been consolidated, and in administrative terms, it has been declared a township.

This paper summarises the role Himo plays in the development of its surrounding region, and the opportunities it offers to the residents of two nearby villages: Marawe Kyura, on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro at about 8 km from Himo, and Lotima, situated about six km below Himo in the plains between Mount Kilimanjaro and the Upare mountains.

Agricultural production and access to resources

Agriculture is the main productive activity for people in the villages. When both primary and secondary occupations are taken into account, almost the whole of the population of the two villages engage in farming. However, there are clear signs that this is changing, especially among young women and men for whom farming is more often a secondary occupation than the main one. Several constraints confront small farmers:

- Land shortages are the main issue in the mountain village, where population pressure is intense. Mountain land is mainly for coffee, and in the 1930s village residents were allocated land on the lower slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro. These are used for food crops either for household consumption or, more recently, for sale (especially tomatoes). This land is now under threat from the expansion of Himo Town. Changes in land use (from agricultural to residential) without consultation with users, and perceptions of speculation from 'outsiders' who benefit from government allocation, are important issues.
- In the plains village, Lotima, land is available, whereas access to water is problematic. Irrigation canals run from the mountain. However, there is intense competition for water, and conflicts between other user settlements up the mountain, including Himo Town and Lotima users are a major issue. Insufficient water restricts the production of cash crops; this in turn contributes to making farming less attractive.
- Access to credit is a common problem for farmers in the two settlements. Coffee farmers were among the first in the country to set up a producers' cooperative union (KNCU). With liberalisation in the 1980s, KNCU lost the monopoly over coffee marketing in the area. Delays in payments and mismanagement contributed to its decline. However, farmers have lost a source of credit, and coffee production is declining. This affects household incomes and education expenditure.
- An informal credit system exists between tomato growers and traders, with some traders lending inputs or cash to farmers. Repayment is either in cash or more often in kind, with the lender fixing the price. While useful, this system can be exploitative of the poorest farmers who cannot negotiate repayments. Credit is sometimes the other way around, especially with small traders, who pay producers only after they have sold. This is also the case for cooked food vendors in Himo town.

Access to markets

Physical access to the marketplace is relatively easy: road connections and transport facilities link the villages to Himo, itself a major marketplace. The town is also well placed for connections to major urban centres such as Moshi and Dar es Salaam, and across the border to Kenya. Bottlenecks in marketing tend to be more at the level of access to information for producers, as shown in the case of tomatoes:

- In recent times, there has been a remarkable increase in the production of tomatoes in the irrigated plain. This was triggered by the success of the farmers who first started tomato production.
- Most farmers cultivate after the rainy season, supposedly the period when production inputs are cheapest; however, this results in a glut in the market, not only in Himo, but elsewhere in Tanzania; prices can be as much as ten times lower than during the rainy season, when demand outstrips supply.
- Because of high supply, it is difficult for producers to establish close relations with individual traders with whom they can negotiate credit and prices. Farmers also have to transport their own produce to the marketplace, whereas during the rainy season, traders usually collect it on the farm.
- Rainy season farmers gather information on ongoing prices around the country through a network of relatives and relations with petty traders. Dry season producers may have access to the same information, but they cannot use it to negotiate with traders because of competition with other farmers.
- Access to credit is key to allowing farmers to produce during the rainy season, when costs are higher but returns are also higher. However, this cannot be left only to informal relations with traders.

Patterns of income diversification

Although farming remains the main occupation for residents of the two villages, and social status is largely determined by success in farming, there is a significant increase in non-agricultural activities. In the mountain village, residents have long developed a strategy to counteract problems of land scarcity. Land inheritance was restricted to the first and last sons, and the other children were encouraged through education, marriage and informal links to move out in search of employment or business opportunities elsewhere. However, these opportunities have greatly diminished, leaving a growing number of young people struggling to combine farm and non-farm activities. Another important reason for the engagement of young women and men in non-farm activities is that farming is usually in the form of unpaid

family labour. Especially for daughters, who rarely inherit land from their parents, this makes farming less attractive than non-farm employment, where they keep control of the earnings and are able to make their own independent decisions. One consequence of the reduced involvement of younger generations in farming is the high percentage of households employing waged labour – 28 per cent of households in Marawe Kyura and 46 per cent in Lotima – the latter mainly for taking cattle to pasture, traditionally the sons' work. The main types of non-farm activities vary according to gender and generation:

- The non-farm activities of young men in the village include construction, carpentry, plumbing and portering, operating handcarts and bicycle taxis to and from, and within Himo Town. These opportunities require physical strength, and are less available to girls.
- Young women and, to a smaller extent, young men depend on petty trade between Himo and the villages. Himo is the most important source of employment for Lotima's residents, followed by the nearby town of Moshi, and Kenya. Proximity to these centres allows them to commute and continue farming at the same time. In contrast, the residents from the mountain village, Marawe Kyura, are more likely to migrate further away and abandon farming.
- Trade is an important occupation for women of all ages, because traditionally, income from coffee or from other cash crops grown on the family farm is controlled by men, whereas women retain control over the income from their own trading activities.

Overall, with the exception of some unskilled and semi-skilled activities for young men, local non-farm employment opportunities are limited to petty trade. No forward linkages between agriculture and processing exist between the villages and Himo. A tomato processing plant is being built, albeit with difficulty, by a private entrepreneur (a migrant originally from the area). However, there are no incentives in place to attract other investors. The limited range of non-farm employment opportunities is one important reason for out-migration.

Migration and remittances

Levels of out-migration in the villages are relatively high: over 50 per cent of households have at least one migrant son; one-third have at least one daughter away. The reasons for moving are mainly related to the lack of local opportunities, from which young women are especially marginalised:

- Daughters are usually excluded from inheriting land. In the mountain village, Marawe Kyura, migration has long been encouraged as a

strategy to counteract land shortages, and young women are expected to move away, either for marriage or for work. Similarly, in the plains village, Lotima, the migration of daughters is directly linked to their exclusion from inheriting parental land.

- Destinations also tend to vary according to the gender of migrants: young men go to nearby destinations for agricultural waged labour, to Arusha to work as porters for Asian traders and in the tourist industry, or to join relatives in Dar es Salaam, where they are employed as apprentice mechanics and welders (activities which are dominated by migrants from the area).
- In contrast, young women tend to move further away – often to Dar es Salaam or Mombasa, in Kenya. Distance from home villages is important because of the social stigma attached to activities such as bar work and prostitution – often the main employment opportunities for women, especially in the international tourist resorts on Kenya's coast. Unwanted pregnancies and the growing incidence of HIV/Aids are often a reason for young migrant women to return to their home villages, at least temporarily.

Especially in the mountain villages, remittances constitute a significant proportion of household incomes. Over half the respondents receive financial support from their children, particularly when these are educated and have good jobs in the urban centres. As the traditional inheritance system becomes less frequent, sending remittances has often become a way to gain parental favour and inherit the family land. Fewer remittances are sent by Lotima migrants, possibly because they are less well educated and therefore employed in lower paid jobs. Compared to Marawe Kyura, most migrants are unsuccessful, despite the exodus to the international tourist resorts of Mombasa.

However, growing employment insecurity and increasing costs, including education and health costs, in the cities have reduced the amounts sent to relatives in the villages. Moreover, remittances are usually earmarked for consumption and there is little investment, although there are some cases of return migrants who have invested their savings in cash crop production or in setting up trade activities. Despite the decline in financial support, social links between migrants and the villages remain strong, and social gatherings and family celebrations are crucial in sustaining social networks across space.

The role of Himo Town in the development of its region

Himo is an important market centre within the intricate marketing system of the Kilimanjaro area. It is an essential collection and distribution point for smaller markets, and receives agricultural produce

from a wide range of regions within Tanzania, as well as manufactured goods from Kenya. However, it lacks urban status and the related administrative and decision-making capacity. Revenue collection is inefficient, market services are insufficient, and conflict over control of the marketplace is rife.

This has other far-reaching consequences: although the spatial development of the town increasingly encroaches on existing resources such as land and water, Himo lacks the revenue and decision-making power to regulate the use of these resources, or to put in place essential services such as waste management and water supply and sanitation. Other services such as health and education are also conspicuously missing. Better facilities are available in the surrounding villages: however, these are private and costly and often not affordable for the local residents.

Himo plays an important role in providing non-farm employment opportunities to residents of the nearby villages. However, these opportunities are mainly limited to petty trade, and it is questionable whether in the long term they can contribute to local economic development. The absence of forward and backward linkages in the form of processing facilities for agricultural produce hinders production, as in the case of tomatoes. This is the result of the inability of Himo to attract investment through incentives and infrastructural development.

Key issues

Despite the proximity of the villages to a thriving market town, agricultural production suffers from a number of constraints, ranging from land shortages to limited water availability. Producers do not benefit fully from cash crop production such as tomatoes because of limited access to credit and information, which results in overproduction at certain times of the year and underproduction at others. Access to credit and information as well as local processing facilities are key to adding value to agriculture.

Himo does not have urban administrative status. This severely restricts its capacity to play a dynamic role in the region's economic development, despite its important position as a local, regional and national market centre. Revenue collection and decision-making capacity are necessary to manage a wide range of services and to resolve the potential and existing conflicts over resource use between the expanding centre and the surrounding villages.

Income diversification is limited essentially to petty trade, and engages primarily women and younger generations. Alternatively, migration is an

established strategy, and young women are an increasingly large proportion of migrants. However, their main employment opportunities are in entertainment and in prostitution, and the negative consequences include unwanted pregnancies and the growing incidence of HIV/AIDS in the villages. Expanding local farm and non-farm employment opportunities is crucial for this group.