

# CLIMATE CHANGE PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN EAST AFRICA

“Drops from God”: Climate Change, Prolonged Droughts and the Insecure Livelihoods of Tanzania’s Indigenous Peoples

## Introduction

The word Enkai (also spelled Engai) in Maa, the language spoken by the Maasai pastoralists of northern Tanzania and southern Kenya, means both God and rainfall. Rejuvenation and a jovial mood become obvious in the villages and among all members of pastoralist and hunter-gatherer (P & HG) communities whenever the long-awaited drops of “Enkai” (rainfall) finally hit the ground. Why is this so? The answer is simple: P & HG communities depend solely on the natural environment for their livelihood.



Photo 1: Walking miles is part of what indigenous peoples pay for their cattle to have water. Maasai Youth attending their herds in Engaresero, Arusha Region. (Elie Chansa/PINGO's Forum)

Across the generations, P & HG communities have made use of the seasonal rainfall and adjusted their lives accordingly. Customary rules of resource management have concurrently been developed and implemented. The Maasai “bank of grass preserved for the dry season”, or Alailili, is an example of such customary practice. What effect has climate change had on indigenous livelihoods and these customary practices? The following section explains.

## Effects of climate change



Photo 2 A dry river bed cutting across Terrat Village, draining survival hopes (Elie Chansa/PINGO's Forum)

The advent of climate change has not only made these “drops from God” more scarce, it has also intensified conflicts over grazing lands and other natural resources. Prolonged droughts in the East African drylands have had a devastating effect on the lives of P & HG communities. In the past, even though it was hard to bear the dry season right the way through to the end (the Maasai word for the dry season, “Alamei”, is the same as the word for hunger), the rains would finally come and life would go back to normal. The prolonged droughts suffered since the advent of climate change tell a completely different story. Here are some of the effects that have been directly felt by local communities:



Photo 3: Farmers community geared up to invade a pastoralist community in Kongwa Village, Morogoro. (Juma Mtanda/PINGO's Forum)

- In Longido district, Arusha region, pastoralists lost more than 70% of their herds in 2008.
- Wild fruit and small game, which have sustained the Hadzabe hunter-gatherers for centuries, have become scarcer thus threatening a complete change of lifestyle.
- Many rivers have dried up due to a failure to involve traditional institutions in their management.
- Poverty levels have increased as a result of prolonged drought.
- Increased migration of youth in search for employment as night watchmen in big cities such as Arusha, Dar es Salaam and Mwanza as a coping mechanism after losing their livestock.
- Intensified inter-community conflicts (such as between pastoralists and farmers).
- Land grabbing in the name of investment and forest reserves.

These are just some of the direct effects/impacts that can be felt on a daily basis by ordinary families in P & HG communities.

### Is climate change the real problem?

There is no doubt that climate change in general and a prolonged drought in particular have had a devastating effect on the lives of P & HG communities, as noted above. However, climate change is not the only problem. In fact, national policies, laws and programs that undermine indigenous peoples' efforts to adapt to climate change represent the nub of the problem. The national, and sometimes global, interventions focused on climate change mitigation in Tanzania actually only intensify the impact of climate change on indigenous peoples. These include the following:

- (a) The country's Land Laws (1999) and Policy (1995) do not guarantee collective ownership of the land, thus endangering the future of pastoralism. These laws support a land tenure system that favours the individualization, titling and registration of the commons, leading to a fragmentation of the rangelands and endangering the livelihood of indigenous pastoralists and hunter-gatherers.
- (b) The Wildlife Act 2009 and Policy 1998 do not recognize the interdependence and historical coexistence between wildlife and

livestock, thus fuelling eviction and fortress conservation sentiments at the expense of indigenous peoples.

- (c) The Forestry Act 2002 and Policy 1998 do not provide for payment of ecosystem services (PES) as an incentive for communities to collectively protect forest resources for climate change mitigation.
- (d) National programs such as Kilimo Kwanza and SAGOT favour crop cultivation, thus facilitating the alienation of pastoralists' land in the name of mass food production.
- (e) Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) have been established.
- (f) International mechanisms to combat climate change impacts such Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+). One of the REDD+ pilot projects conducted in Tanzania three years ago resulted in the eviction of pastoralists from their ancestral land at Masito Ugala in Kigoma region.



Photo 4: Hadza children digging sand to look for precious moisture. (Elie Chansa/PINGO's Forum)

- **The Case of Terrat River - Respect for, and effective use of, traditional institutions to protect and manage resources**

In the village of Terrat in Simanjiro district of Arusha region, the only river - which had been the source of water for residents and their livestock for years – went almost completely dry between 1995–2014 when it was under government supervision. However, when the river was returned to community leaders and managed traditionally, the water started flowing again.

It was also observed that, when the traditional leaders managed the water catchments, the communities voluntarily obeyed the rules and collectively protected their river from further destruction.

The loss of biodiversity due to human activity that is destructive of critical ecosystems has long been considered one of the main threats to environmental conservation in Tanzania, and Africa generally. During colonial times, the government responded by setting aside plots of land considered to be representative of flora and fauna and worth preserving “for future generations”. This form of conservation, also referred to as “fortress conservation” entailed evicting local communities from their ancestral lands and continuing “command and control” policing to ensure these protected areas were free from encroachers and poachers.

While community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) practices have undoubtedly put a silver lining on the public relations landscape of many protected areas that hitherto epitomized an enmity between conservation officials, on the one hand, and local communities in and around protected areas, on the other, it has not YET solved the problem of insecure livelihoods.

PINGOs Forum ('The Pastoralists' Indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations Forum') is an advocacy coalition of (currently) 53 indigenous peoples' organizations that have been working in Tanzania for the rights of marginalized indigenous pastoralist and hunter-gatherer communities since 1994. As a human rights and development network, PINGOs Forum seeks to advocate and support the development of competences on the sustainable livelihoods of pastoralist and hunter-gatherer communities in Tanzania. It endeavours to amplify the voices and foster the interests of pastoralists and hunter-gatherers by advocating for change on good governance and human rights. PINGOs Forum also addresses issues of gender, HIV/AIDS, environment, and climate change ([www.pingosforum.or.tz](http://www.pingosforum.or.tz)).

IWGIA is an international human rights organization staffed by specialists and advisors on indigenous affairs. IWGIA supports indigenous peoples' struggles for human rights, self-determination, the right to territory, control of land and resources, cultural integrity, and the right to development. IWGIA was founded in 1968 with the aim of establishing a network of concerned researchers and human right activists to document the situation of indigenous peoples and advocate for an improvement in their rights. Today indigenous peoples from all over the world are involved in IWGIA's global network ([www.iwgia.org](http://www.iwgia.org)).

TIPTCC was formed in 2013 by a committee consisting of seven key indigenous organizations<sup>1</sup> with the goal of creating a mechanism to raise awareness of climate change and its effects on indigenous peoples' livelihoods in Tanzania and to promote the integration of indigenous peoples' livelihoods and rights in climate change policies and initiatives. TIPTCC has, since its formation, provided a forum for discussing indigenous peoples' positions on different climate change and REDD+-related policies and initiatives, including the draft REDD+ policy, REDD+ safeguards, and the REDD+ information and communication system, plus the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework.



PINGO's Forum

P.O.Box 14437, Arusha, Tanzania.

+255-786-542525

[www.pingosforum.or.tz](http://www.pingosforum.or.tz)

[info@pingosforum.or.tz](mailto:info@pingosforum.or.tz)



<sup>1</sup> PINGOs Forum, the Association for Law and Advocacy for Pastoralists (ALAPA), Community Research and Development Services (CORDS), Parakuiyo Pastoralists Indigenous Community Development Organization (PAICODEO), Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT), Sunya, Lengatei and Dongo (SULEDO), and the Hadzabe Survival Council (HSC).