



THE KESHO TRUST

ACTIVITY REPORT: CONSULTATIVE DISCUSSION

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Table of Contents

- I. Introduction..... 2
- II. Objectives 3
- III. Methodology 3
- IV. A Snapshot of the Discussion 4
- V. Concluding Reflections 5

I. Introduction



Monica providing the background

On the 6th September 2025, the Kesho Trust, in collaboration with EMAYO, conducted a joint consultative discussion in Elerai with 12 indigenous Maasai women from Loolera (Kiteto District) and Elerai (Kilindi District). The meeting was facilitated by Dr. Miriam Matinda (Kesho Trust) and Monica Kurumbe (EMAYO). Although participants came from two administrative areas of Tanga and Manyara Regions, their cultural, geographic, and social connectedness, as well as their way of life, gender, and indigeneity, intersected to position them in a similar manner to experience the impacts of climate change.

The consultative workshop began with the Traditional opening prayer from a community member from Elerai followed by the introduction of all participating members. Monica took the participants through the background of the project highlighting the previous and current projects and the relationship between the Kesho Trust, the University of Victoria and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation of Canada. She continued that EMAYO and Kesho Trust have been implementing various projects in collaboration with the University of Victoria. She noted that the forthcoming research project intends to scale up the current climate change project.

Miriam then took the participants through the anticipated forthcoming research project, noting that IDRC – Canada has issued a call for research project applications for the year 2026, and Kesho Trust and other partners are in the process of applying. She noted that the main focus of the research project would be to research climate change and its impacts on Indigenous communities of the Maasai in Tanzania and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation of Canada through a gendered lens.

II. Objectives

The objectives of the consultative discussion were:

- ⇒ To share the initial thoughts about the IDRC call for applications for the research funding, and express the intention of Kesho Trust and EMAYO to apply for it.
- ⇒ To share the proposed themes of the application and discuss with Maasai women, and receive their views and comments about their suitability and reflection on the ground.
- ⇒ To receive additional themes, if any, that could strengthen the application or for further subsequent funding opportunities.

III. Methodology



The consultative discussion was conducted through a cultural observance lens that understands the uniqueness and cultural integrity of Maasai culture in gender issues. The discussion was also participatory to enable all voices to be heard, mainly guided by a traditional conversation style known as '*lomon*'. The medium of delivery was through the Maasai and Kiswahili languages.

The facilitators provided the background of the discussion and opened the room for discussions, whereby the participants had the opportunity to internalize the subject through deeper discussions and the provision of feedback on the subject.

Due to the sensitivity of cultural norms regarding discussions and women's voices in public spaces, the consultative discussion involved women only, who confirmed their flexibility and willingness to participate and give their views, since they would not be able to speak freely if the discussion involved men. The facilitators assured the discussants of their safety and that the discussion is solely confidential, and no information or experience shared by the discussants will be used against the discussants.

IV. A Snapshot of the Discussion

The discussion was preceded by the elaboration of the proposed areas of interventions. The main goal of the proposal is to further climate change impacts interventions through gendered approaches to women's engagement in community leadership, climate change impacts, and inclusive sustainable economic activities.

The reactions to the proposed themes were positive. Women shared that climate change has had various negative effects on their livelihoods and has intensified the change in gendered roles and their day-to-day activities. They highlighted that traditionally, climate change is known as '*Engibelekenya e'ntkop*'.

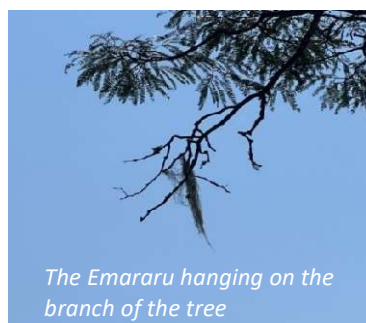
They noted that there have been a number of impacts, including the decrease in pastoral lands for grazing of animals, and consequently, adopting agro-pastoralism. They further noted that despite adopting and transforming to an agro-pastoral lifestyle, erratic rainfalls and long dry spells result in the drying of various sources of water including boreholes, which affects their capability to plant and harvest enough to feed their families. As a result there are still food insecurities at the household levels.

They further noted that they used to have two rainy seasons. However, with the current unpredictable weather patterns, they are unable to plant the crops twice and the animals do not have enough grass and water to sustain themselves.

They also noted that they used to separate the small animals from the grown/matured animals but the current situation does not permit such a traditional practice since favourable grasses like '*orkujita onyokie and njokunonoi*' for the calves are no longer amply available. The change in practice has weakened the animals and exposed them to more vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, they highlighted that currently, they are unable to get the previously naturally available traditional ropes from a tree locally known '*olkirepori*' that are used for house construction. Consequently, they are currently buying synthetic ropes from local shops, which are not strong and are not preferred for traditional housing construction.

The participants highlighted that climate change has brought various effects in maternal healthcare. This is due to the decrease and near extinction of the vegetation named '*emararu*' that is normally used during childbirth for maternal hygiene. They noted that the vegetation is specifically used as sanitary pads by women and to cleanse the blood during childbirth.



The Emararu hanging on the branch of the tree

They also noted that there is an increased number of birth-related complications such as stillbirths, increased maternal mortality rates and increased needs for caesarean section and linked them with the effects of climate change.

Regarding leadership, they noted that at the public level, women have been encouraged to vie for various positions since there are legal requirements from the laws of Tanzania for women to participate. They continued that, despite the legal requirements, most men discourage women and girls from taking part in public spaces and leadership.

At the community level and traditional setting, they illustrated that their voices are not heard often since the traditional spaces are male-dominated. They continued that often the Maasai culture puts women and children under the same category, thus not able to fully participate in decision-making processes. Furthermore, most often, the local government leaders cherry-pick women who do not challenge them and appoint them to various government posts.

To fight against economic challenges resulting from climate change, women from Loolera and Elerai have been engaging in various economic activities such as Village Savings and Loans small groups – VICOBA. These groups provide support to sell corn/maize, to sell milk during the seasons when milk is abundant, to plant trees and to manage beehives.

Despite engagement in such economic groups, women confirmed that they have faced challenges, such as instances where men took all the money from the savings box when the amount reached 10,000,000/-. They did not want women to question where the money was taken nor return the money to date.

V. Concluding Reflections

During the consultative discussion, the following were the observations:

1. Both participants from the Loolera and Elerai communities confirmed that they were freer to participate fully and discuss since men were not directly involved in the consultative discussion. That was due to the social norms that do not empower women to directly participate alongside their male counterparts.
2. Women from Elerai and Loolera communities confirmed the significance of the proposed themes on climate change, economic empowerment and leadership at both community and local government levels and confirmed their willingness to participate in the implementation of the research project.
3. Alongside the proposed themes, women proposed an additional sub-theme of climate change and its impact on the reproductive health of women.

4. Women further proposed that the Research project should also touch on the impacts of climate change in pastoralism and the economic activities in line with pastoralism, since their traditional way of life is pastoralism; thus, integrating the agricultural aspect with pastoralism would be more beneficial.
5. They also proposed that, if possible, in any future projects, there should be separate women's groups and men's VICOBA groups. They further noted that it is significant to provide education to men about women's rights to economic participation and ownership, so that men cannot continue to take their money or animals that women rightfully earn.
6. On leadership participation, they emphasized that although there is a legal requirement for women's involvement in public leadership at the local government level, most often men do not like influential and capable women to take such positions. Instead they end up picking women who are not necessarily capable for such positions. At the traditional community level, they commented that due to the Maasai social norms, they are not accorded any significant leadership role since the culture groups them with children; that is, the community categorize women as children who need care from men.

To this end, the proposed research project will be significant in the Elerai and Loolera Maasai communities.

