



Masai-women often face difficult situations upon death of the husband.

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SMALL ORGANISATIONS, BIG CHALLENGES

As elsewhere in the World, in Tanzania small NGOs evolve from the needs of ordinary people. The challenges they are facing are big, their relationship with government authorities is often uneasy, and financial support is scarce.

In addition to many grassroots level activities, local NGOs have an important role in advocacy work and in making known the problems and hardships of local people. The relationship between governmental authorities and NGOs is often problematic, and the government or the local authorities rarely give financial support for organizations.

A common problem faced by local NGOs is finding financial means for implementation of activities. The largest amount of support comes from international governments and donor agencies, especially from Western countries, and the funding agencies and foundations supported by them. The funding is usually short-term and directed at specific projects, which makes it hard to implement activities in a sustainable way.

During the last years, most financial support was granted towards the fight against HIV/AIDS, and as a result the rate of new HIV-infections in Tanzania has been declining. The persisting global economic and financial crisis, however, has reduced donor funding, and is making it increasingly difficult for local NGOs to



Ms. Hindu Ally Mbwego leads the Centre for Women and Children's Development, an NGO in Arusha running a primary school for orphans.

maintain their important activities, such as nurseries and schools for AIDS-orphans, and awareness-raising on HIV/AIDS.

The representatives of local NGOs emphasize the importance of continuation of development aid funding and donor support. In addition, funding from local and national government sources would be highly needed. Also, local businessmen and corporations, and those benefiting from economic growth should take a bigger social responsibility in the society. The gap between rich and poor has grown wider during the last few years. Also, the development of a social security system for support in times of hardship is also considered important.

The challenges faced by local NGOs differ in different parts of Tanzania. In the Northern areas, world-famous tourist attractions offer more sources of employment and income for local people, but Southern areas of the country are less frequented by tourists, and less job opportunities are available. The most important areas of action of local NGOs are the work related to the fight against HIV/AIDS, women's rights, and improving the situation of children, of people with disabilities, of unemployed, youths, and of elderly people. Also, some organisations focus on environmental protection and awareness-raising on environmental issues.

Aids-orphans need the support of NGOs and society

One of the main challenges Tanzanians are facing is HIV/AIDS and the resulting impact on the society and economy. Although the number of new HIV infections has been on a declining level, the number of AIDS-

orphans is still on the increase. It is estimated that there are more than a million children in Tanzania that have lost one or both of their parents due to AIDS.

In many areas with high HIV infection rates, the situation of orphans is problematic, because remaining relatives are not able to provide enough support for the children. Thus, many small NGOs have been founded by local people out of the will to help improve the situation of orphans.

The NGOs provide food for the children, enable their education by helping with provision of school uniforms, school fees and education material, and also increase awareness among local people on HIV/AIDS. Some organizations run nursery or primary schools for orphans.

'The children are served breakfast porridge and lunch at our school. I know that many of them don't get any food in the evening, because their relatives cannot afford it,' states Reverend Martin Mlata, founder of the Good Samaritan Mission in Songea. The organization runs a nursery and primary school for orphans, and currently there are 73 children receiving education in the school.

Tribal tradition defines woman's roles

Despite equal rights of men and women set in the constitution of Tanzania, the role of women in the society varies along with the local traditions. In some tribes, women are relatively equal with men, but in other areas their situation is difficult. Organizations founded by local women are doing important work under hard conditions.

The law in Tanzania guarantees women an equal share of family property, but in many areas the tradition is that all property is owned by men. After the death of a husband, his relatives often take over all his possessions: farmland, house, personal properties and means of transport, for example his bicycle.

- In my area, a woman whose husband dies has three options. The first is to marry a close relative of the husband, like for example a brother. The woman and her children move to his household, often with already another wife and children', says **Happiness Uronu**, founder of the *Women and Development Foundation* in the small town of Mbozi.

'A woman can also marry a man outside the family. The man is then obliged to pay a dowry to the family

of the deceased husband, and all possessions of the deceased will be left to his relatives. The third option for the woman is to return to her parents. Also then the property is given to the deceased husbands' relatives.'

'- But there are stories about a fourth option. In rural areas people believe strongly in witchcraft. Sometimes the widow is blamed for her husband's death, and she is accused of being a witch. In that case she might not survive,' Uronu explains.

The difficult situation of Masai-women

Women's organizations also work against domestic violence and female genital mutilation, which, regardless of official prohibition, is still a common practice for example among Masai communities. Teenage pregnancies are common throughout the country. Apart from education on sexual behaviour, women's organizations are trying to reform the school regulations. Currently the practice is to expel pregnant girls from schools, not allowing them to return even after the childbirth.

The organizations are also concerned about the rights of disabled children. Some tribes react negatively towards children with disabilities, and disabled children are hidden, abandoned or even killed after birth.

'- One day a woman called us saying the village elders were going to bury her physically disabled son the next day. We went to the village and she let her son leave with us. Now he's one of the best pupils in our school for orphans,' says Ms. **Hindu Ally Mbwego**. She is the director of *Karibuni Centre for Women and Children Development*, an organization founded by Masai-women in Arusha. They have more than 120 pupils.

Where do the women get the strength for their work?

- The reason for me to be the founder of this organization is my personal history. I am myself a Masai, and after the death of my husband, I have experienced all the injustices towards women. I decided to do something, so my daughters and other women could have a better life than myself, says **Agnes Saibul**, leader of the Arusha-based *Mategemeo Women Group*.

Another active member of the organization, Viola Riki, stood as candidate for MP in the October elections. She says representation of women's organizations in elections is very important.



Ms. Viola Riki, active member of the Mategemeo Womens' Group, stands as candidate for the Parliamentary and Councillor's elections.

The challenge of conserving forests

'- In Tanzania, it is impossible to separate environmental and social issues. The condition of the environment has a direct impact on the social welfare of people,' says **Benjamin Margwe** from *Environment Coservation in Karatu*.

Even though the country is rich in forests and natural resources, they are often used without thinking about the consequences. More than two percent of the forests are eradicated each year, partly through illegal logging. Timber is exported, used for construction, charcoal, firewood, or the land is cleared for farming.

Even with some of the forest areas under protection, destruction of the forests continues because of lack of control in the conserved areas. Karatu is the town nearest to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Serengeti National Park, and thanks to the flow of tourists, there are plenty of jobs available.

'- The population of Karatu is growing, which increases the pressure to obtain wood from the protected areas,' Margwe explains.

‘ The most important mission of our organization is to provide information about importance of forest conservation. We need to explain to people why the trees need to be saved and why we must plant new trees to replace those that have been cut down. If not, extreme weather conditions like drought become more common, and during heavy rains, erosion flushes the soil away, ‘ Margwe reminds.



Benjamin Margwe of ‘Environment Conservation in Karatu’ explains the organization’s tree nursery.

NGOs fighting poverty

With an area three times the size of Finland, Tanzania is still counted as one of the poorest countries in the World. The population of about 40 million is still growing fast.

Besides the lack of income and material goods, poverty also means poor education, healthcare and social security. AIDS and its social impacts are still among the biggest challenges.

Environmental problems are also affecting people's lives. Lack of access to clean water, deforestation, and growing irregularities in the rainfall patterns, are some of the difficulties many people are facing around the country. The most vulnerable groups are children, women, unemployed, elders, people with disabilities, and people living in rural areas.

In their development cooperation project, the Tanzanian umbrella NGO ‘TANZANIA COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (TACOSODE), together with its Finnish sister organisation, the Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health (STKL), are working to reduce poverty by strengthening the operation of local NGOs. The project ‘CISUNET’ (Citizens Support Network for Welfare and Poverty Reduction) commenced in 2008, and is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland. Further project partners are the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and the Universities of Jyväskylä, Finland, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

The project's Finnish-Tanzanian working team visited and interviewed 57 organizations in Southern, Northern and Western parts of the country, in order to research and assess activities and challenges of the organisations.

Tanzania Council for Social Development (TACOSODE), and Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health (STKL)

CISUNET project: coming activities 2011

- **National Seminar on Challenges, Funding and Sustainability of NGOs in Tanzania**
Thursday, 9th June 2011, Dar es Salaam
- **National Seminar on the Situation and Challenges of Women in Tanzania**
Wednesday, 14th September 2011, Dar es Salaam

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