

Creating awareness for communities to lobbying National and County Governments to adopt problematic regulations in West Pokot

Series of county level trainings on land laws and their applications in the area of food security and DRR have been done in the recent past by KAS and other partners targeting the government and non-governmental actors in the two counties. Nonetheless, the need to amplify these trainings at the community level has emerged as an important step in wide spreading public awareness on emerging issues. On a different note, community training approach is becoming more useful in connecting lobbying and advocacy efforts at the county level with practical evidences at the community level.

The land and natural resource management topics have for a long time been both a sensitive/emotive and interesting subjects that needs integrate discussions with communities, awareness created, issues clarified and positive stands adopted if the food security situation in Baringo and West Pokot is to be improved progressively. Under the Ending Drought Emergencies which focuses interventions in the agro-pastoralist and pastoralist areas, the capability of communities to diversify their livelihood options relies directly on land governance.

Engagement on land issues is important in addressing the community insecurities that are fuelled by cattle rustling and local politics among others. This is because with improved community knowledge, the different communities will be able to push forward lobbying upwards, setting the agenda for political discussions at the county level. To this end, KAS held three community forums at Kongelai, Siyo and Wei-Wei Wards mainly: to increase community knowledge on land sector governance and food security and to gain room to collect and share with government institutions on community ideas for implementing the respective land sector related laws.

More than 110 community opinion leaders were engaged for a period of 2 days in each of the three Wards. The training primarily connected land sector governance to food security and disaster risk management, pointing out to the application and the relevance of the community land regulation and laws. Discussions were held to understand how communities can move from being un-registered to being registered, and the advantages of such approaches in promoting food production and self-reliance. Land plans, the processes of land conversion and the role of women in food security were also discussed.

On land conversion, the participants discussed on their oversight role in ensuring that conversion of public land into private land (substantial transaction) gained the attention and

approval of the County Assembly as well as to help reduce the possibilities of future attempts at land grabbing. Specifically, when the market value; location; size; cultural and historical value; environmental importance/impact; national interest; and the level of investment are deemed as having high stake in the transaction, then the role of the county government was pointed out as imperative. This is because these aspects were strong enough to either affect positively or negatively the capacity of the surrounding communities to access or produce and distribute food while managing and building resilience against disasters unique to them.

Community representatives generally agreed that even though they were yet to get any notice from the land registrar for public meetings to elect the members of the community land committee, they would still go ahead and develop a comprehensive register of communal interest holders and share with development partners including KAS, FAO, RECONCILE etcetera for lobby meetings with the respective government institutions.