

Adaptation Learning Programme in Kenya
In the Margins of Society:
A snapshot of the climate change impact on the Munyo Yaya community



Abdi Turura tends to his portion of the Baad group farm, where rain-fed agriculture has become increasingly difficult to practice.

ALP Community Stories

Abdi Turura is a 56 year old man from the Munyo Yaya (commonly referred to as Munyo) ethnic group in Balich, a settlement 45kms north of Garissa town in Northern Kenya. He is married to three wives and has 17 children, 8 sons and 9 daughters. Abdi lives with his family on Baad farm, a 'community' farm owned by a group of 47 members (10 women and 37 men).

The community has traditionally relied on small scale rain fed agriculture for subsistence. 'However, now times have changed' points out Abdi, 'we used to have two planting seasons in a year, we call it 'ganna' and 'hagaya' (long and short rain seasons respectively). This has recently changed to either one season or none at all in a year.'

With the change in the rainfall patterns, it has become difficult for the Munyo community to practice rain fed agriculture. The community has not been able to engage in irrigated agriculture as it requires expensive inputs such as pump sets and the construction of water canals in the farms.

"It was only after CARE Kenya, through the Livestock Purchase Fund (LIPFUND) Project, supported us with a water pump that we are now able to irrigate portions of our land to grow fodder for sale and some food crops," Abdi says. 'CARE taught us how to grow fodder for sale and we have managed to make some income out of it. However, we still face challenges due to lack of other expensive farming equipment and resources for irrigation.'

Abdi currently has only 20 goats and maize crops on his one-eighth of an acre portion of a group farm upon which his family depends for their livelihood. He is not able to feed his family from the farm output and the goats' products and therefore relies on government provided relief food. "Livestock productivity has drastically reduced over the years with dwindling pasture for grazing", Abdi notes.

The Munyo Yaya community is found mainly along the Tana River in Garissa district. It is a small, Oromo speaking minority

community that is classified under 'other' languages in the national census. The community has been traditionally excluded from development, leadership and decision making processes. In addition to the social and political marginalisation, the community has further been affected by frequent resource based conflicts that they have had with neighbouring communities. As a result, they have lost most of their livestock and have been unable to farm due to limited resources and the political volatility in the area.

"It is really difficult for us women. Feeding our children is becoming an uphill task - the children run to us, mothers, and cry at our feet when hungry." Halima, Abdi's wife

Women in the community are doubly marginalized, facing challenges of illiteracy, early marriage, limited access to leadership and decision making, extreme poverty, high maternal mortality rates and violence. A high number of the women are engaged in petty trade; mainly mat weaving as an income generating activity. The children in the area are highly susceptible to the health effects of climate change; recurrent drought and floods affect the food production in the area, leading to malnutrition, disease, starvation and even death.

Abdi's wives help him around the farm and tend to the meagre remains of his goat herd. "Life is becoming tougher by the day" Halima, Abdi's eldest wife notes. "To cope with the situation, during periods of drought, we reduce the number of meals taken in the home. On the other hand, we have to walk longer distances to fetch firewood. Sometimes we use donkey carts, but not everyone has one," she adds

Generally, there are high incidences of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and political underrepresentation. As a coping strategy, the community, mainly the youth, engage in casual labour and petty trade such as charcoal burning and selling. To burn and sell charcoal, the youth cut down the meagre trees in the community. Trees are an important contributor to rainfall and fewer trees contribute to decreasing rainfall in the area, which is important for food production and pastoralism. Charcoal burning also negatively affects the environment through the emission of high levels of carbon dioxide, which is one of the major greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming and climate change.

Globally, the inhabitants of dry lands have over the years learnt to cope with the droughts and unreliable rainfall that characterise their areas. However, in recent years

these coping strategies have been thrown into disarray with increased unpredictability of weather patterns, making the residents more vulnerable. The sustainability of their pastoralist way of life has been questioned, and this has resulted in these nomadic communities being excluded from critical leadership and decision making processes, especially regarding development work.



Halima, 47, is Abdi Turura's eldest wife. She often helps her husband around the farm.

It is in this regard that CARE International's Adaptation Learning Programme (ALP) will work with vulnerable households such as Abdi's to increase their capacity to adapt to climate variability and change. The programme will further look into encouraging the incorporation of community based approaches into policies and programmes at all levels –local, national, regional and international.

For more information on the ALP in Kenya, please contact alp@careclimatechange.org or emmabowa@care.or.ke or visit www.careclimatechange.org/adaptation-initiatives/alp.

Story by Hussein Wario and Emma Bowa, July 2011

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