

***IMPACT OF COLLECTIVE ACTION DRIVEN BY EVIDENCE-BASED
ADVOCACY Kenya***

Focus of the Case study

Building on the Frontline Survey and the learning from local action, Action for Sustainable Change (AFOSC) Kenya led multiple-pronged advocacy efforts at the national, county and community levels that brought together interested stakeholders in advancing local action to counter and mitigate the negative impacts of three prioritised disaster threats. The case study demonstrates the impact of collective action, driven by evidence-based advocacy, at different levels from the community, county to the national level.

Brief Summary of the case study

With the support of GNDR, AFOSC Kenya conducted a comprehensive participatory action research in six counties that informed the stakeholders mobilised for advocacy action to define priority disasters, and also aided the local communities impacted by the disasters to take necessary action to counter the vulnerabilities caused by the disaster events.

To build evidence for action, AFOSC Kenya implemented local action and established advocacy-working groups at the community level. This experiences was shared with the stakeholders at the county and national level, who were instrumental in developing joint actions to scale-up proven advocacy activities to address three prioritised disaster threats.

On the national front, 14 Organisations came together under the ‘National Advocacy plan’ to define and collectively address the priority disaster threats identified during the Frontline Survey, identifying three key disasters namely drought, deforestation and insecurity. Each organisation contributed their (local) knowledge and expertise in drafting an ambitious (joint) work plan that aims to build a secure, stable and prosperous society where there is a high level of awareness and preparedness to deal with the (high-impact) disasters. Utilising effectively the different tools provided in the GNDR Frontline ‘National Advocacy toolkit’, the group of CSOs defined the problem and objective tree, conducted stakeholders mapping, scenario imagining, and completed the power mapping and the work plans to effectively tackle the three disaster events.

At the community level, AFOSC implemented advocacy and lobbying efforts that brought the disaster-affected communities in Mandera West district closer to the decision makers. Local networks composed of women and youth groups were mobilised to lead on the advocacy efforts at the village level, and linked up to the county administrators, facilitated by AFOSC field teams.

Introduction

In 2015, AFOSC Kenya jointed with other local organisations conducted a participatory action research in six counties in Kenya, namely Mandera, Wajir, Samburu, Nairobi (Kibra), Kwale and Kisumu, interviewing 384 respondents across the country. The research did identify the top threats faced by the local communities surveyed, describing in details its frequency, scale and impact, and the different actions taken to mitigate the negative consequences of these threats.

The respondents identified drought and insecurity as top-priorities, and they have been minimal efforts made to address these threats, though most fall short of addressing the causes and impacts of these threats. While large-disaster events attract the attention of all stakeholders, 89% of the respondents did identify that they were most-affected by the frequent small-scale disaster events, with 66% of the respondents mentioning that they did suffer substantial losses.

AFOSC Kenya led a pilot project in Mandera West County to address these identified threats through local action and an advocacy approach. Local communities were sensitised on the outcome of the survey and mobilised to conduct low-cost feasible actions to build resilience to disasters. Minimal external support was provided to help communities take tangible action to address these disaster events. Local coalitions composed of women and youth groups and community-based organisations were established to build a movement for change at the sub-county level. These groups, with the support of AFOSC Kenya, undertook lobbying efforts targeted at the County officials, local Member of Parliament and other stakeholders to raise awareness on local disasters using the evidence generated in the Frontline Survey.

The evidence gained from this local action that encompassed local advocacy efforts was replicated at the national level, when AFOSC Kenya convened like-minded agencies, with interests in advocacy efforts, to build a national momentum to build a platform to address three key priority disaster threats, namely drought, insecurity and deforestation. These efforts were followed by bilateral talks and reach-out to other stakeholders to build a momentum for change, in line with the agreed work plans for each disaster threats.

Activity implementation

Advocacy efforts benefits enormously from having the right stakeholders engaged in the momentum for change. Gaining from its community knowledge and the fieldwork conducted during the Frontline Survey, AFOSC Kenya identified and mobilised key stakeholders in the targeted community to build a coalition for DRR advocacy efforts. A pilot effort to build a network at the sub-County level was later expanded to build a nationwide network for change, when 14 Civil Society Organisations were mobilised to define priority disaster events and define a joint advocacy plan to bring realistic and desired change.

Jointly with other stakeholders, AFOSC Kenya implemented the following activities at three levels (Country, County and Community level):

Call Public Barazas to mobilize communities: We did also engage political leaders on policy change and resource allocation during their campaign period so that they can put in there manifesto as their first agenda once they won the elective post As part of community engagement process, the network of CSOs conducted a number of public events / Barazas, also taking advantage of the electioneering period to create awareness on drought issues. In Northern counties, drought mitigation efforts were central in a number of public events that was attended by politicians and facilitated by the CSOs, including AFOSC.

More such events are planned for the coming months to continue the sensitisation and mobilisation of the communities.

Advocate for tree planting days: organized informal discussions with local communities and political leaders before the election date on awareness creation on the importance of trees.

Discussions via WhatsApp; we established social media platform for purpose of information sharing and to increase advocacy initiatives at Country level

Drought: sensitized and mobilise local communities, gather evidence and contribute to development of appropriate policies, and engage all stakeholders in an innovative initiatives to end the suffering caused by frequent drought events in the northern Kenya where we closely worked with political and community leaders.

Conduct focus group discussions on the threats of drought: AFOSC regularly meets with key stakeholders in Mandera West to discuss the threat of droughts. Broader discussions to happen at the County level and by other members of the Joint Advocacy Task force. Similarly, other members continued their bilateral engagements with the communities and relevant stakeholders. Consultative focus group discussions were held in Mandera West District by AFOSC. Similar FGDs are expected to be held in Wajir and other drought-impacted districts by sister local NGOs / CBOs (and AFOSC is providing technical support if needed). This is delayed until early 2018 at the end of the current rainy season.

Meet with elders, chiefs, and religious to ask them to use land better: Three meetings were held with the communities' leaders in Mandera County. Other partners held similar meetings in Marsabit, Wajir, Garissa and Isiolo counties.



Security: To avoid election violence peaceful Participation advocacy aimed at enhancing the peaceful participation of youth in the August 2017 general elections and beyond in Kenya as voters, educators, supporters or candidates was enhanced as the country enters its hotly anticipated contest of multiparty elections was successfully conducted and reached to actors.

Country Level / nationwide Stakeholders Engagements: We engaged Cordaid as part of Advocacy reach out, and they have shown interest to use the tools and results of AFOSC Kenya work and nationally, to engage their local NGO partners, to increase the footprint of the advocacy works aimed at reversing the negative impacts of drought, deforestation and insecurity they also agreed to partner with us on frontline project

County Level: Extensive stakeholders engagements at the county level to facilitate the dialogue between the community groups and the key decision makers in Mandera County; county launch of the Frontline Survey report; and influencing funding and political decisions by local administrators and politicians to increase the profile of disaster-risk management and advocacy.

Community Level: Implementation of local action to build evidence for advocacy efforts at the village level, and establishment of local community pressure groups composed of youth and women groups. Through focal group discussions, disseminated the findings of the Frontline Survey, and engaged local leadership in self-mobilisation for positive change, including awareness creation and sensitisation at the community level.

Results / Outcomes

At the community level, the advocacy actions implemented by AFOSC Kenya in Mandera West has improved communities' local understanding of the disaster threats they face, and empowered to mobilise local resources to reduce the impact of these threats. Taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the electioneering period in Kenya, the communities were able to reach out to the local political leaders to prioritise disaster-related actions in their 'manifestos', and support grass-root community-based groups to address these disasters that continuously erode the local communities capacity to deal with shocks. AFOSC Kenya will continue to support these outreach efforts and monitor its impact over the long-term.

The National Advocacy CSO Platform created following the national deliberations held by the 14 CSOs engaged in the Frontline advocacy efforts identified priority actions to be taken to address the following three key threats: drought; deforestation and insecurity.

To mitigate the impact of drought, the network strive to achieve a sustainable livelihoods for drought-affected communities in Northern Kenya by 2020 through advocacy efforts targeted at affected communities, local leaders, National Drought Management Authority, Local and

National Media, Political leadership and other stakeholders mobilise local communities, gather evidence and contribute to development of appropriate policies, and engage all stakeholders in an innovative initiatives to end the suffering caused by frequent drought events in the northern Kenya.

Similar plans were developed to address the impacts of deforestation and insecurity. Adopting a simple but yet inspiring goal of ‘planting more trees than those cut’, the advocacy group intends to create awareness on the negative effects of deforestation and increase the forest cover by at least 10% through advocating for tree planting days, lobbying for legislative reforms on forestry and conducting mass sensitisation to reduce the use of firewood as fuel at the household level was realized.

In order to experience sustainable development, security is paramount and hence the advocacy group also prioritised advocacy efforts aimed at achieving a secure and peaceful environment in which all Kenyans co-exist in harmony. Targeting the youth, women, marginalised groups, religious leaders, media, law enforcement agencies, private sector, community groups and County/National governments, the advocacy platform prioritised to conduct seminar and workshops, peace caravans, live talk shows, and roundtable meetings to create better awareness and define new solutions that maximises the contribution by all to dealing with the challenge of insecurity.

Beyond the 14 volunteer organisations that formed the national Advocacy CSO platform, AFOSC Kenya have lead efforts at the national level to mobilise other stakeholders with potential to contribute to these national efforts. Agencies such as Cordaid was approached, and they have shown interest to use the tools and results of AFOSC Kenya work in Mandera County and nationally, to engage their local NGO partners, to increase the footprint of the advocacy works aimed at reversing the negative impacts of drought, deforestation and insecurity. This momentum of building similar platforms nationwide will continue until a critical mass is obtained across all the 47 counties in Kenya.

As a convener, AFOSC lead other agencies to transform our target communities by achieving these three overall desired changes by 2020: (1) all drought-affected communities understand, mitigate drought risks and related issues to achieve food security and better access to water throughout the year; (2) more trees are planted than cut to reverse the negative impacts of deforestation; and (3) a secure, stable and peaceful society is established where all Kenyans co-exist in harmony, by addressing the threats of insecurity.

Challenges

Illiteracy among the community members and the local leaderships continues to negatively impact on the advocacy initiatives done at the community level. In addition, with the focus on re-elections, most of the leaderships were engaged heavily in political campaigns during that period, and were quick in giving promises that they are unlikely to keep.

Conclusions / Recommendations

The collective efforts by like-minded civil society organisations have made the dream of a happier, more productive society a reality. Local community-based civil society organisations

both at the local (sub-county) and national level realising the negative impacts of different disaster events starts from joining hands in search of a solution. This requires minimal resources injection and can be easily replicated to address even other low-priority disasters. Collectively, these agencies now envision a future where all drought-affected communities are able to mitigate and respond to disaster events through local action, and have a better access to food and water throughout the year through the utilisation of appropriate and sustainable technological solutions. Similarly, other communities impacted by disasters such as insecurity and deforestations are able to mitigate its impact and better prepare to reduce the likelihood of these disasters occurring.

The momentum created by these advocacy efforts both at the sub-county and national level needs to be maintained. The role of the convenor is critical in maintaining a continued engagement by the different stakeholders in the collective efforts, while at the same time maintaining the collective approach in defining plans, to maximise on gains that reflects the different interests and adapted to local events and realities.

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