

GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Oikos - East Africa, Tanzania

Project: investing in Maasai women for improving rural community wellbeing

Good Practice - A guiding process for a higher sustainability of the actions

1. Key Areas of Good Practice:

- Organising informal economy workers into associations, cooperatives or other officially registered groups (1.9)
- Providing support to informal economy operators/workers to access services (social protection services, business registration, access to formal savings and credit schemes, training, etc.) (3.1)
- Entrepreneurship and business management training (3.2)
- Leadership training, empowerment training (3.4)
- Vocational and/or skills training (3.6)
- Enabling especially vulnerable groups on economic empowerment (women, people with disabilities, affected by HIV, youth, refugees, migrants, minority groups, etc.) **(4.6 – 4.7 – 4.8 – 4.9 – 4.11)**

2. Context - Brief description

Where the good practice was implemented:

The geographical target area is rural communities in Arusha, Monduli and Longido Districts, in Northern Tanzania.

Why it was implemented:

The project focuses on generating sustainable market-driven development.

Most of the women living in the target areas are excluded from the formal economy and structured income generating activities due to lack of opportunities, adequate skills, knowledge of the market dynamics, and related factors.

The lack of alternative income-generating activities to livestock keeping exacerbates the state of poverty and contributes to the rampant increase of unsustainable practices such as deforestation for the production of charcoal, with consequent reduction of forage from the fruits of leguminous trees, a key protein source for ruminants.

In pastoralist communities, such as the Maasai of Tanzania, livestock-related products (in particular meat and leather), non-wood forest products such as honey, and artisanal products, have together a great potential to generate alternative economic benefits, however, marketplace literacy represents the most challenging bottleneck among production and trade of traditional goods.

The development of new skills in the field of market literacy allows women to better deal with the “marketplace” environment as conscious and active players, and to receive a basic education to run sustainable small business activities successfully. The acquisition of new competences and skills on livestock-related products allows women to gain additional incomes opportunities.

As the acquisition of skills is a slow process and the risk of a short-term impact is real, the project understood the importance of setting strategies and methodologies to increase the sustainability of the actions (assessment missions, follow up, continuous technical and managerial trainings, etc.)

Who was involved:

The trainings, follow up, mentoring of trainees and monitoring of the activities is implemented by the local staff of Community Facilitators, constantly in contact with the field, in collaboration with the Project Manager (in the planning and methodology setting part), and the local authorities, facilitating the process.

The activities are targeting Maasai women living in rural communities in Northern Tanzania. These women are personally benefiting from the activities of the project, but as a result, their family and the whole community where the women come from, are indirectly benefiting as well.

When the activity was implemented:

It is an ongoing process, which started in 2016, and is continuing throughout project implementation; the project is phasing out in March 2019.

3. Level and type of innovation of the good practice

The practice is innovative and was not meant to be implemented as such considering the original project documents; practitioners do not usually consider the importance of sustainability of the actions and the definition of an exit strategy to be defined and implemented before the project phases out.

4. Description: processes and steps involved

The good practice consists in adapting effective strategies to increase the sustainability of the actions. Every training activity implemented in an enabling environment, after assessing the opportunities and the potential existing in the geographical area of implementation, together with selection of the beneficiaries, following specific profile criteria.

Every training methodology also schedules many extra days of follow up, monitoring, evaluation, mentoring, refresher courses and further training arrangements, to increase the trainees' skills and knowledge and increase the probability of sustainability of the action when the project phases out.

Another important aspect is related to the trainees' motivation and sense of ownership of the activity: "If the trainees believe in what they do, if they feel the activity is in their hands, if they feel they wish to have a pro-active role in it, if they understand that the result, effectiveness and success of the activity depends on their commitment, then the action will be more sustainable and its impact can be perceived in a more long-term angle".

More specifically, the project adapted this practice in different activities implemented:

Leather processing activity:

The first step was regarding the **selection of the village** where to implement the activity.

The project assessed the existing opportunities in the leather market in the geographical project target areas.

The main objective was to assess the scenarios to establish innovative green enterprises in pastoralist communities, in particular related to livestock by-products upcycling including leather and horns/wood.

The information collected were:

- Skins availability – disaggregated by type and cost;
- Presence of livestock markets, market day, and number of skins traded per type and unitary cost;
- Present skills in the community (skinners/taxidermists/leather artisans/leather beading groups);
- Opportunities in terms of: presence of water/presence of electricity/availability of an existing structure suitable for leather tanning and conditions.

After analysing all the results and data, the project identified, with the support of local authorities, 2 villages with high potential, which subsequently became the areas where the activities are being implemented.

The second step was regarding the **selection of the beneficiaries**.

It is crucial to select motivated people since the beginning, to increase the probability of success of the action.

Project Staff looked for people who were willing to learn, on a voluntary basis without payment, leather processing techniques and who, at a second stage, would be willing to be part of small groups to create and develop micro-enterprises in their communities. They had to be highly committed and have some entrepreneurial skills.

A pre-screening selection of candidates was done, with the support of village leaders, making sure they responded positively to the following criteria:

- Be able to read and write Kiswahili
- Interested in learning leather tanning/processing techniques
- Be ready to attend a full-time training for leather tanning / processing techniques
- Get support from your family while attending the leather training sessions
- Be ready to be trained in leather tanning/processing techniques on volunteer basis, without sitting allowance

The interview also includes questions on:

- experience in leather tanning, manufacturing, beading
- motivation / readiness to be trained
- origins / position in the community

The following step included a **series of activities to increase the sustainability of the action**, which were not planned since the beginning of the project:

- creation of a small business activity with the trained group (leather tanning and manufacturing of handicrafts);
- formal registration of the leather groups at District level, with the support of local authorities
- support in opening a bank account for the leather groups;
- the setting-up of a leather tanning and manufacturing laboratory in the village where the leather group come from;
- technical follow up trainings with the groups, to insist on the tanning techniques, the materials and equipment needed;
- regular check of the practical production processes (quality control) with the groups
- training on management and administrative tools;
- regular monitoring and evaluation follow up with the groups, to observe their activity and support when and where needed, to increase the effectiveness of the business activity;
- facilitation in connecting the group with market channels.

The same methodology and concept adopted for the leather processing activity has been embraced for the honey production.

As a first step, the project planned to assess the existing opportunities, for each target village, understanding the following information:

- Opportunities
- What is existing in terms of projects from other NGOs and facilities
- Market

The analysis in the intervention areas included an assessment on infrastructure, natural resources, climate and context.

The preparatory activity was based on a multi-actor approach, where different stakeholders were interviewed and involved in the activity design, implementation and monitoring.

The elements evaluated were:

- Former results or current projects of other Organizations active in the context;
- Other Organizations' project methodologies and approaches to the beekeeping sector as a business or as a conservation activity;
- Available data at different administrative levels (District, Village);
- Interviews of local government officials, about their awareness of beekeeping policies, and their favourability to support the establishment of a beekeeping area;
- Interviews with key informants.

After analysing all the results and data, the project identified, with the support of local authorities, 6 villages with high potential, where the activities are now being implemented.

As done for the leather processing activity, the second step was regarding the **selection of the beneficiaries**.

The project staff conducted interviews to candidates about their technical knowledge, needs and commitment to be trained and involved, selecting beneficiaries according to specific profile criteria.

The **training methodology** set to deliver the vocational skills to the selected groups of beneficiaries is very innovative, as planning a stream of trainings modules, evaluation sessions, monitoring, follow up, had never been designed at the NGO or governmental level.

The training is composed of 4 Modules. Each module split in 2 Phases, with evaluation steps with the trainees in the middle of the modules, and debriefing sessions with Project Manager at the end of each Module for updates and to brainstorm on challenges and act accordingly, in a flexible way, to increase the effectiveness of the actions.

The evaluation sessions are very useful also to do mentoring with the trainees, putting efforts to increase their sense of ownership of the project and therefore the sustainability of the actions.

5. What resources and skills are needed to carry out the good practice?

The experience of a local high level and experienced consultant is fundamental to make the activity successful.

The constant involvement of a Community Facilitator in the field, for follow up, monitoring and evaluation missions is also essential.

6. Sustainability of the Good Practice

Every step in the definition of the methodology and training design has been structured to increase/assure the sustainability of the action.



7. Links to Other Resources: Francesca Lucchi francesca.lucchi@istituto-oikos.org