UJAAMA COMMUNITY RESOURCE TEAM (UCRT)

Northern Tanzania

Name: Ujaama Community Resource Team - UCRT
Location: Arusha Tanzania
Year of foundation: 1998
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1. The Context:

Ujaama Community Resource Team (UCRT) develops its activities in the Northern Tanzania, in the following districts: Hanang, Karatu, Kiteto, Korogwe, Loliondo, Longido, Mbulo, Simanjiro.

The region is a crossroad of different cultures and indigenous peoples with ancient heritage and UCRT works in support of hunter-gatherers and pastoralists communities inhabiting these areas.

By today the organization has provided support to 8 different indigenous peoples in a total of 37 villages spread across the eight above mentioned districts.

Some of the main indigenous peoples which have benefited from UCRT work are: the Hadzabe (ancient hunter-gatherers), the Iraqw (agro-pastoralists), the Maasai and Barabaig (semi-nomadic pastoralists); the Bantu speaking Sonjo (hunter-gatherers), the Akie (hunters-gatherers).

The landscape is mainly made by savannahs and grasslands, and some mountainous areas. Agricultural cultivations cover only a small percentage of this area, and it is used by pastoralists communities to diversify their livelihood. In those areas, there is also abundant wildlife (elephants, zebra, giraffes, lions etc), which attracts tourists especially in the National Parks, such as the very well known Serengeti National Park.

Terrat is a village in the Simanjiro district about 80 km from Arusha in Tanzania. The population in the area is Maasai, whose livelihood is based on livestock and small farming. UCRT has supported the community to secure their land and natural resources management.
2. What can we learn from the UCRT experience?

From UCRT experience there are 4 key areas of learning:

1. understanding the application of land (and other) policy and legislation in Tanzania; its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, based on the experience of UCRT and the communities it works with, including Village Land Use Planning Process (VLUP);

2. understand how UCRT has implemented (and in some cases challenged) the application of land policy and legislation, in order that rangeland communities (including pastoralists and hunters and gatherers in particular) can obtain greater security of access and use to their land and resources;

3. Observe the experience of UCRT and its communities in relation to the development of tourism and conservation in the area and its impacts;

4. Draw lessons from the experience of UCRT as a civil society organization that has been able to mobilise itself and the community into a strong position for advocacy and lobbying on land and resource rights for rangeland communities.

3. UCRT’s objectives and Trajectory

Ujamaa is a swahili word which means “familhood”, it was used by the first President in Tanzania, Mwalimu Nyerere, to describe the socialist nation, and the meaning of this word is very closed to the sense of collective community and sharing the resources at community level.

The Ujaama Community Resource Team (UCRT) is a non-profit environmental and social justice organization, whose vision is to: “Strengthened livelihoods and social justice for pastoralist, hunter-gatherer and agropastoralist communities through security over land and natural resources, and sustainable community-based natural resource management.”

UCRT started its activities in 1997; until 2002 it worked under the auspices of another NGO called Tazama Trust. In 2002 UCRT has been officially registered as a trust organisation, with its own board of directors. In 2010 it was re-registered as a not for profit company, the Ujamaa-Community Resource Team (UCRT). In 1998 there were only 3 founders members; while in the last years the organization has highly increased its personnel, currently employing forty five staff, most of whom are based in the rural communities on the ground.

UCRT has its main office in Arusha and other 2 field offices, in Loliondo and Hanang. The organizational structure is composed by a Board of Directors which meets twice a year and by a management group made up of staff members from all the regional zones where UCRT works.

UCRT main office in Arusha
UCRT agreed by Statute to work with pastoralists and hunters gatherers communities, who depend on communal resource management regimes to support their livelihoods. The main goal is to fully involve local communities to develop strategies for long-term sustainable management and wise use of land and natural resources. UCRT’s mission consists of *strengthening community capacity to improve their livelihoods, to secure rights to land and natural resources, and to sustainably manage them.*

The organizations’ main axes of intervention are the following:

1. **Land rights activities:** this component is aimed at securing land rights to communities under the existing legislative national framework, in particular by providing support to obtain legal titles on communal lands, facilitating demarcation of village’s boundaries, providing support for Village Land Certificates, facilitating the development of land use plans and customary land of occupancy.

2. **Community Natural resource Management:** this component is aimed at facilitate the common management of natural resources. UCRT supports the local communities in identifying locally available resources that can be used for economic development, local control and use of resources. It facilitates community formulation of natural resources management plans; the adoption of village by-laws in support of land use planning and natural resource management plans. Moreover UCRT supports and advises villages to ensure fair contracts and agreements with investors.

3. **Lobby and advocacy:** in this area of intervention UCRT works in order to make sure that pastoralists and hunter-gatherers are trained about current laws and existing legislations concerning land use and natural resources management. UCRT trains communities about how to advocate for their rights, and how to interface with local and regional governments in order to secure their rights to land and natural resources management. It also provides training to communities on good governance, conflict resolutions and transparent financial management. Under this component, UCRT also promote interventions at community level in order to strengthen traditional local authorities, through the “Community Forums”, which are mostly based on traditional systems of leadership. UCRT also facilitates inter-villages meetings amongst Community Forums of different villages, and also by promoting Community Forums’ meetings at ward and district level.

4. **Women empowerment projects:** traditional leadership system in the communities supported by UCRT are mainly leadered by men: UCRT developed mechanisms to promote women’s empowerment and involvement in decision making. The support to women is provided mainly through 1) economic programmes for women in order to facilitate women’s economic empowerment, especially widows; 2) training on good leadership and facilitate the establishment of women’s forum to make sure that women are represented in all the authorities’ levels and participate in crucial decisions regarding land and natural resources 3)
cross cutting issues, such as HIV and gender measures are introduced in all the other programmes.

5. **Educational support programmes:** UCRT supports the communities to give their children scholarships to facilitate their access to schools (secondary and colleges); moreover it promotes specific trainings for the Hadzabe and Akie communities.

In 2008, UCRT was a finalist for the biennial UNDP Equator Prize awarded at the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona; it was recognized for its exceptional contributions to rural development and environmental conservation and for its efforts to support local communities in conserving their biodiversity.

4. **How is the experience developed?**

The approach of UCRT is to help the communities to use the existing legal framework to undertake local processes to secure their rights to land and natural resources management. The strategy consists of combining formal legal mechanisms with a pro-active attitude by the local communities, in order that they are able to claim for their rights and interact with the local authorities at district and ward levels. In this section some of the most successful tools and experiences of UCRT’s work will be presented.

One of the main tools used by UCRT throughout the last decade in order to secure local communities’ land rights and facilitate natural resources management is the **VLUP – Village Land Use Planning.** VLUP processes are aimed at assisting local communities in clarifying and enforcing local rules about how resources should be used. The VLUP is undertaken through a participatory process, which include also women, children, youth, elders and specific resource users; it gives the opportunity to the community to think about their land and resources and how to balance different needs and uses for different areas.

The VLUP are founded in Tanzania’s land legislation, mainly the Local Government Act of 1982, which enable village governments to pass local by-laws. These by-laws must be approved by the two main organs of the village government, which are the Village Assembly (including all the adults living in the community above 18 years old) and the Village Council (headed by a Village Chairman, it includes at least 7 women and works through numerous sub-committees). Village by–aws are a central component of the VLUP, since after being promoted and approved by the Village Assembly and by the Village Council, they need to be approved also by the District Council in order to acquire legal force. Therefore they become equivalent to other laws in Tanzania, and violators can be persecuted.

The by-laws provisions build on traditional Maasai and other indigenous peoples’ rules, related to livestock and the uses of territory.
The UCRT developed its basic methodology for facilitating VLUPs in the late 90ies, basically the methodology consists of:

1. Introducing basic principles involved into VLUP to district and ward’s officials in order to ensure coordination with land use planning and district development planning at higher scale.
2. Introducing VLUP concept, objectives and procedures at village level in order to generate inputs and reactions from the community.
3. Developing the land and resource management/use plan through formal and informal meetings with the community aimed at drafting the plan in a participatory way.
4. Ratification and approval of the plan by the Village Council, the Village Assembly and finally by the District Council.
5. Once approved, the villagers start implementing the plan by demarcating land use zones and by ensuring compliance with provisions and rules.

During the course of the past decade UCRT has facilitated the process of developing participatory land use plans in over 35 villages. These plans helped the community to secure their land tenure and to improve their resources’ governance capacity. Thanks to the VLUP processes, communities are empowered to manage their land and natural resources, and they acquire awareness and skills in land use planning.

However, the formalization of land use and practices can also bring some conflicts. Delimitating the boundaries between villages can generate conflicts with neighbouring communities and also with other actors interested in the use of those lands, such as local tourism entreprises, private companies and migrants’ land seekers. Therefore the management of conflicts related to land and resource management is a further crucial key activity developed by UCRT in support of pastoralist communities, with the aim of securing their management of natural resources. The cross boarder land use plan is the tool used by UCRT to manage crossborder land use. It consists of making the communities use their bordering areas in the same way (grazing, conservation etc.) in order to avoid conflicts between villagers.

By the way, pastoralists and hunters gatherers communities in northern Tanzania face a number of pressures with regards to their land security and resources uses, amongst which:
- loss of pastoralist grazing land to State and private tourism;
- hunting or agricultural investment projects;
- declining in the human capital livestock due to human population growth;
- increasing local tensions between agricultural and pastoralist grazing areas;
- limited capacities and access to information;
- land grabbing caused by investors, non resident hunting companies, or international touristic companies.

With respect to land grabbing caused by companies, UCRT succeeded in mobilizing pastoralists communities to demand back their lands which were grabbed by private or stated owned companies. This is the case of the NAFCO company, which 40 years ago grabbed more than 100.000 acres of land to some pastoralists’ communities in Hanang District, with the intention of implementing a wheat agricultural project. Since the project collapsed, the pastoralists communities of the area, thanks to the UCRT’s support, succeeded in having back a part of their their lands, despite the opposite interests of local politicians.

A similar land grabbing event happened to a pastoralist communities in Tarangire National Park, where the Uguro Company received large areas of pastoral lands to implement a beans project. The

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agricultural project collapsed due to mismanagement of the beans farm and the community succeeded to demand back their land (29,000 acres over 30,000 acres) thanks to UCRT support. More than 8000 pastoral families benefited from this.

As regard **tourism and conservation**, UCRT works with communities to improve their ability to benefit from the natural resources of their lands. For instance UCRT played a crucial role in supporting some pastoralists communities in northern Tanzania in developing village tourism ventures with private tour operators, with the aim of providing revenues to communities, especially those ones with an abundant wildlife population. UCRT has facilitated ecotourism contracts between villages and private investors in Loliondo and Lake Natron areas and a Payment for Environmental Services (PES) scheme was established in Terrat village (see box below).

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**Conservation easement in Terrat village:**

The Simanjiro Plains are one of the most important areas of wildlife, inhabited by zebra, antelopes, and other which spend the dry season in Tarangire National Parks. The Maasai pastoralists live in this area and in the last years they have suffered a decreasing of livestock per capita, and other social changes such as immigration of peoples from other areas and the conversion of livestock pasture and wildlife areas in farmlands.

In 2004 UCRT – in collaboration with other organizations such as the Wildlife Conservation Society and private tourism companies – initiated an innovative approach to support wildlife conservation integrated to livestock production. A group of five tourism companies agreed to sign a contract with Terrat Village to prevent permanent settlement and cultivation in the conservation area. UCRT helped to facilitate voluntary arrangements with Terrat Village which have a part of its land in Simanjiro. The Village is paid an annual lease fee by the tourist companies for maintaining the plains as livestock pasture in order to preserve the wildlife’s habitat in the community’s lands.

The agreement has established a new framework for community based conservation, which safeguards wildlife and benefits the community at the same time. As part of these arrangements, thanks to the UCRT’s support in facilitating the negotiations between the community and tour operators, some village game scouts are paid from those touristic enterprises, which develop their business in the area.

The game scouts are paid for their contribution to maintain the wildlife protected against illegal commerce and hunting of wildlife, collect data about wildlife numbers and movements, and monitor the area against the land grabbing from land seekers migrants.

This arrangement is called the first “conservation easement” and has proved to be an innovative way to benefit pastoralists as well as wildlife.
Support to hunters and gatherers: the Hadzabe

The Hadzabe (or Hadza) are one of Tanzania’s most unique and threatened human communities. They have developed through centuries a deep knowledge about natural resources uses, which has enabled them to survive in a challenging semi-arid environment. They depend on natural products such as berries, tubers, baobab fruits, honey and wild animal food; they do not raise any livestock and they do not cultivate the land. Due to their cultural and social characteristics so different from the mainstream society, they have been highly marginalised and discriminated, and pushed in very extreme areas, gradually loosing their lands. Currently a total of approximately 1,000 Hadzabe survive in fragmented areas of Northern Tanzania centred on the semi-arid Lake Eyasi basin, south of the world famous Ngorongoro Conservation Area.

In recent history, several forces have threatened the cultural survival of these remaining communities. Their entire livelihood is based largely on hunting and eating wild animals and birds, which is actually prohibited by the Wildlife Conservation Act (1974). Therefore government anti-poaching efforts constituted a threat for the Hadzabe and have pushed them into more remote and marginal habitats, where increasing pressures from human population growth and increasing pressure on land from adjacent areas have endangered their territory.

UCRT started working with the Hadzabe community in the Yaida valley to secure land rights and their traditional economic land use. From 2004 to 2006 UCRT assisted them to undertaking a cultural mapping exercise aimed at: 1) enabling elders to teach to the youth generations about the strong connection between land and the Hadzabe culture; 2) showing to government and official authorities that the relationship of the Hadzabe with their lands is very ancient and that they need to be recognized for that. The cultural mapping has been a crucial tool to claim with government the Hadzabe’s land, which have been progressively reducing over the past decades due to increasing pressures from farmers and pastoralists. UCRT undertook also a VLUP process with the Hadzabe in order to secure their land area and natural resources uses.

One of the most successful outcome of the UCRT’s work in Yaida valley has been securing the Hadzabe on village Mongo wa Mono, which is the village where their presence is strongest. In Mongo wa Mono, the Hadzabe’s natural resources’ uses practices were officially and legally recognized. They obtained a special additional recognition for their land named “Customary right land of occupancy”.

Moreover they developed a land use plan and specific by-laws which include reserving key zone only for hunting and gathering activities and prohibiting livestock grazing and farming in their areas.

Advocacy and lobbying:

UCRT started its activities working as a local organization which support communities at village and district level. However through the years, it become even more clear the importance of the national governance framework related to securing communities’ land rights. Therefore the organization started a transition from a local grassroots organization to an increasing focus on policy advocacy at national level. The advocacy mission has created the opportunity of broadening UCRT’s strategical networks and partnerships with other actors at national and international level.
UCRT has become an active member of many crucial networks, such as the Pastoralists’ Indigenous NGO’s Forum (PINGOs) and the Tanzania Natural Resource Forum. Another key partner of UCRT is the Pastoral Women’s Council (PWC), which is a key strategic partner also in its work at community level. Moreover UCRT established collaborations with international partners, such as Oxfam-Ireland and Norwegian People’s Aid. Also in relation to this area, the main strategy pursued by the organization is to increase as much as possible villages’ involvement in policy advocacy by linking grassroots organizations with national and international networks and with the policy debate on land at national level.

5. Strengths, threats and opportunities

One of the most remarkable strengths of the UCRT’s strategy consists of having improved land tenure security to pastoralists communities by creating villages lands capacities of dealing with land security issues and natural resources management.

The developing of efficient participatory methodologies has allowed communities through vLUP processes to secure their rights to land under the existing legislative framework in Tanzania. VLUP processes as developed by UCRT provide basis for securing those rights on a long term period, even if the process is very long and complex and involves several actors at multiple levels. The VLUP methodology also created the opportunity for pastoralists communities to interact with local authorities at ward and district level, by obtaining recognition for their land and resources uses.

Concerning tourism and conservation activities, the promotion of the “conservation easement” in Terrat Village, has proven to be a very innovative agreement since it has established a new framework for community-based conservation activity, which both safeguards wildlife and benefits the community. This agreement has helped the village to defend the area for conservation use by external pressures from outsiders, attempting to sottract their land for farm use. One large illegal farm has already been stopped through a village lawsuit and court order, which will discourage future incursions of agriculture into the Simanjiro locally-protected area (Source: Simanjiro Conservation Easement). The conservation easement has demonstrated that by supporting communities’ institutions and providing modest financial incentives, local communities are willing to preserve wildlife with great results on wildlife protection.

Moreover the easement agreement has allowed the Terrat community to overcome one of the major threats faced by pastoralist communities, which consists of being excluded from commercial opportunities offered by conservation of wildlife. In fact, in Tanzania wildlife is always owned by the government and by the tourism private industry, which benefit from the revenues of tourism. On the contrary, the conservation and protection of wildlife strictly depends on how the communities manage their lands and contribute to the protection of wildlife.

As concern the activity of UCRT undertaken in favour of the Hadzabe, one of its major strengths consists of having highly valued their cultural assets through the participatory cultural mapping exercise and by documenting their deep relation with the environment, also through several publications (UCRT 2007). Thanks to this, UCRT was able to support the Hadzabe in dealing and overcoming the high marginalisation suffered by the Hadzabe and raise their claims for land use and for preserving their livelihood as hunter-gatherers. However the major threat faced by the Hadzabe consists of pressures from pastoralists of the neighboring areas who wish to graze their livestock in the Hadzabe’s conservation area, particularly during droughts period. Local Hadzabe leaders face constant threats since often are offered bribes to sell part of their land or acces the community’s reserved area.
6. Conclusions: challenges and lessons learned

The main lessons learned of the UCRT’s work can be highlighted as follow:

- it is crucial to actively involve pastoralists communities in the VLUP processes, since they are enabled and empowered in claiming by themselves about their rights to land and natural resources uses.

- VLUP processes need to be addressed at different levels, they do not only concern the community level, but it is also crucial to involve the local regional authorities, at ward and district level in order to make them effective.

- VLUP processes enable communities to make collective decisions about natural resources management, and they highly contribute to strengthening the local governance at community level. It is very important to value the local authorities of the communities and involve them as much as possible in order that rules and procedures related to natural resources management are respected by all the community members.

- Valuing cultural assets of hunter-gatherers and pastoralists communities is a key tool in order to overcome marginalisation and discrimination of those indigenous peoples.

One of the major challenge for the future work of UCRT consists of enlarging even more its advocacy and lobbying component in order to influence national government decisions related to land and natural resources management for the benefit of pastoralists and hunter-gatherers communities. Balance the lobbying activity at national and international level, by maintaining the strong historical connection with the community and grassroots level will be one of the major challenge for the future work of UCRT.

References:

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