

## **1.1 OXFAM Global Land and Water Programmes**

Authors: Everlyne Nairesiae and Rudo Sanyanga, OXFAM

Oxfam is an international confederation of 17 organisations working together in over 90 countries worldwide to fight poverty and injustice through development and humanitarian programmes. Read more about Oxfam work on [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org). Oxfam has been working for several years on the nexus of land, water and food. Over the years there has been increasing competition for natural resources, putting pressure on ecosystems and people. This is largely being caused by the construction of large scale infrastructure, agricultural expansion, growing industries, environmental degradation, urbanization and inequitable access to land and water. In addition, land and water grabbing are often intertwined.

These developments directly threaten millions of rural people whose lives, cultural identity, livelihood and food security depend on these natural resources. Although with a wealth of indigenous knowledge, these people often do not have the information and means to cope with emerging challenges. Moreover, they frequently do not have a say in the decisions about the management and use of land and water resources as they previously did, despite such decisions impacting their lives. Oxfam and its partners consider this as a threat to the basic rights of local people who depend on the land and water resources. Oxfam supports and promotes the rights to these resources as advanced in international agreements, standards and guidelines on water and land governance.

Oxfam continues to respond to community needs in land and water governance, and works with partners to deliver its programmes in most rural and marginalised communities in the World. It promotes land, water and other natural resource rights for local communities in order to improve their livelihoods and participate in decision-making processes. Although land and water governance programmes have been implemented separately, the need for a more coordinated programmatic approach continues to gain internal attention. It has continuously been observed by Oxfam that its land or water governance programmes have demonstrated strong linkages and similarities in implementation strategies and with successful initiatives having direct and indirect positive impact on the lives of communities in relation to land and water governance. For this reason, we find this workshop important for Oxfam learning and as an opportunity to share information and provide lessons for shaping the strategy for coordinated land and water initiatives. Oxfam programmes have been designed and implemented through a rights based approach that is participatory and makes women's rights the core of these initiatives.

### **Oxfam Global Land Programme**

Oxfam land programme aims to strengthen civil society's voice on land and to engage with governments, private sector and other stakeholders through in-country programmes; and public advocacy for policy influencing at regional and international levels. Reaching over 40 countries in the world and through interconnected land programme components, Oxfam engages communities and stakeholders to achieve greater outcomes in active citizenship; policy reforms for improved public sector policies and legal frameworks; support implementation of in-country land governance programmes for protection of community and indigenous peoples land and secure women's land rights; and private sector engagement. Through this programme, approximately 20 civil society alliances have been established, strengthened about 130 partner organizations working on land rights and achieved land governance reform processes in Asia and Africa.

### **Oxfam Land Work in Africa**

Oxfam continues to partner with CSOs and land networks, AU-LPI and other stakeholder in addressing land governance issues in Africa, for which women's access and control over land is core. Africa has the fastest growing population in the world; with a current population

approximated to be 1.2 billion which is projected to double (2.4 billion) by 2050 (UNICEF, 2014). Although endowed with fertile land and other land based resources, about 23 million of its population still live in extreme poverty (Africa Panel Progress Report, 2014). Various statistics and literature have shown high inequality in land rights by gender in favour of men; as women are considered by most cultures to have secondary land rights. World Bank estimates that in Sub-Saharan Africa, 90 percent of rural land is unregistered, and 60 percent of the world's uncultivated arable land is found in Africa creating greater interest as seen in the recent 'land rush' from regional and international investors.

Women contribute 60 to 80 percent food production and constitute about 70 percent of smallholder farmers in Africa (Land Policy Initiative, 2013). Despite their hard work, the continent has continued to incur huge food import bills approximated to worth US\$35 billion (excluding fish) every year (Africa Panel Progress Report, 2014). Several studies on land ownership in Africa have shown that women have weaker land rights than men. A study conducted by IFPRI in 2013 on *Gender Inequalities in Ownership and Control of Land in Africa*, show that the highest percentage of male ownership among land owned by households is found in Nigeria (99 percent), followed by Niger (62 percent), Tanzania (44 percent), Malawi (42 percent), and Uganda (34). Although these statistics could be viewed from the fact that most land in Africa is customary owned and undocumented, gender disparity in land ownership is evident.

To address these issues Oxfam engages communities through in-country programmes forming strategic partnerships with CSOs, and advocating for regional and international advocacy on women's, community and indigenous peoples land rights. For instance, through Land Governance Programme implemented by Oxfam in Tanzania in collaboration with local partners, saw an increase in number of women (40 percent) receiving Certificate of Customary Right of Occupancy jointly with their husband or solely, during the formalisation of community land in Morogoro, in 2014. Through the Female Food Heroines Programme implemented in 8 countries in Africa, women are trained and provided with skills to improve their food production and putting land at the centre of food production; and through a competitive selection processes a winner is picked and feted annually as Mama Shujaa (female champion) and ambassador for the female food heroines.

Furthermore, access to legal education provided by Oxfam Land Programme in Kenya is making women more aware of their land rights. Oxfam trained community facilitators are working with women and their traditional/religious leaders to drive demand for registration of community land; a process geared towards securing women and community land rights. Oxfam is working in a coalition with other organisations including ILC and will soon be launching the Global Call to Action campaign aiming to double indigenous and community land formally registered and legally recognised by national, regional and international instruments. The campaign is set to be launched soon.

Oxfam continues to engage with the private sector to strengthen policies, guidelines and practices that secure women and community land rights. One of the key successes on a global level include Oxfam's input to the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS); which are now a reference point for many institutes and companies worldwide. Another example is the "Behind the Brands" campaign through which Oxfam secured commitments to stop land grabs in supply chains and improvements in land policies from several multi-national companies with investments in Africa.

Oxfam work with CSOs allies to engage the AU-Land Policy Initiative through the Civil Society Platform; a unique platform for monitoring implementation of AU Guidelines and Frame Work on Land in Africa, the Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa; Pan African Parliament on Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and others policies and legal instruments. It has been involved in the Global Land Indicators Initiative, a process that made contribution to SDGs development process including providing inputs and feedback on proposed

goals, targets and indicators on land. In continuing this initiative, Oxfam is conducting six case studies in Africa in 2015/16 (Rwanda, Ghana and Tanzania are in the planning process and 3 more countries are yet to be selected) on women's land rights. The case studies are designed to help test some of the SDGs indicators and targets linked to land rights to inform their implementation, advocacy and programming.

### **Oxfam Global Water Governance Programme**

Oxfam's expertise on water governance has been evolving in more recent years. With a 10-year track record in Inclusive Water Governance, Oxfam's Global Water Governance Program builds on existing work in three major river basins: the Mekong, Indus and Limpopo. The program empowers organizations, builds networks, supports marginalized communities and individuals depending on water resources, such as farmers and fishing communities, and helps sustain the ecosystem services provided by a healthy river system. The aim is for rural communities in river basins to obtain their fair share of water resources which will sustain their livelihoods. Oxfam programme approach is guided by guiding principles namely: trans-boundary scale that goes beyond provincial and national borders, inclusive decision making, and empowerment of women, rights and responsibilities and power of people in shaping their destiny.

Our Mekong programme has proven over the past 10 years that Oxfam key niche is to strengthen the voices of affected communities in the decisions that affect their lives as a human right. Oxfam and partner organizations in catchment areas of major rivers like the greater Mekong region, Limpopo and Indus joined forces recently, united by a shared concern about the water security of rural communities and the environment in which they live. Through the programme, Oxfam aims to strengthen and extend networks of organizations in river basins that speak a common language, share resources and experiences and so that they are increasingly capable of influencing decisions on water resources. Our approach is focused on inclusive water governance, builds on the experiences in the land programme, and creates synergy amongst the two worlds.

### **The Limpopo River Basin**

Increased claims on water resources in the Limpopo river basin put pressure on ecosystems and people. Water is becoming increasingly scarce. In the rainy season intense storms cause severe run-off of surface water, resulting in massive losses of water for domestic use and food production. Adequate water management systems and coordinated water governance across the countries in the basin (see map below) are required to provide improved access to and a more balanced use of water resources. Key challenges facing communities living in the river basin include increasing water insecurity, unequal access to and distribution of water, inadequate information and means to cope with such challenges, limited linkage of government resource planning with local initiatives, and while LIMCOM agreement was recently ratified there still is limited coordination between and involvement of different actors.

In 2014, Oxfam launched a regional program "*One drop at a time*" and aims to improve the livelihoods of local communities in the Limpopo water basin by introducing effective local management systems and enhancing inclusive water governance and community participation at the local, national and regional level. This will see vulnerable communities in the Limpopo basin informed, empowered, and have equitable access to water through inclusive water governance & appropriate water management systems. An example of the work of our partners is that of Dabane Trust – Water Workshops. Dabane has developed and piloted low-cost systems to extract and store safe water from surface-dry sand rivers. This has secured access to water for domestic and productive purposes in 400 communities living in water stressed conditions.



• Figure 1 The Limpopo Basin

Source: [http://www.limpoporak.com/\\_system/ThumbnailCache/1Y2P0IJ32E3YHLimpopo](http://www.limpoporak.com/_system/ThumbnailCache/1Y2P0IJ32E3YHLimpopo)

By working with international partners like Acacia Water and TNO, a methodology is now being developed that uses technical groundwater modelling and remote sensing to provide accurate data that can upscale Dabane's practical approach to the entire catchment. We work with a consortium of Oxfam in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Oxfam Novib, and 10 national, regional and international partners.

## The Mekong

The rivers of the Mekong and Myanmar regions are the lifeline for 340 million people. The rivers support farming and fishing activities which are important to the economic well-being of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. It is estimated that some 50 million people rely on the inland fisheries for their livelihoods. This traditional livelihood is under serious threats from national and international investors in large-scale hydropower projects, deforestation and exploitation of resources through mining which have direct impact on land and water resources.

Through the Mekong program Oxfam supports regional and national networks and coalitions, bringing together diverse interests, such as non-government organizations, the media, academic institutions, farmer and fisher groups and community organizations. The broad aim for Oxfam is to support women and men in rural communities in the lower Mekong and Salween watersheds, by ensuring that Mekong citizens receive adequate information about planned developments, participate in decision making and have their interests heard. The Mekong program promotes inclusive water governance and stresses the importance of environmental and social standards including gender equality. As a result of this programme, communities have influenced decision regarding the first planned dams in the lower Mekong River mainstream, which would have severely negatively impacted the people of the lower Mekong. Oxfam also supported the Vietnam Rivers Network (VRN) and the Rivers Coalition of Cambodia (RCC) to ensure that participatory consultations announced by the authorities would be effective. In Cambodia and Vietnam the network members managed to have their participatory

consultations supported by government representatives, thanks to long-standing trust-building activities with local authorities.

### **The Indus Basin**

In Pakistan, agricultural sector is the largest user of water, with 93 percent of total water withdrawals. Due to the predominantly arid and semi-arid climate, 90 percent of all cultivated land in the country is irrigated. One of the major challenges confronting poor and small-scale farmers living in the basin is the fact that the irrigation infrastructure in the Indus Basin does not serve their needs. Poor water governance has led to inequitable distribution among water users at the provincial and local levels, resulting in water conflicts. Oxfam works closely with civil society organizations and district authorities to help adapt to sustainable water management models and influencing public and private sector parties to negotiate water technologies and services in a manner affordable and accessible for low-income households. For instance, Oxfam supported the Indus Consortium in a project of capacity building, mobilizing and training 10 water user associations (WUAs) in the Ali Wah sub-canal service region, who thereafter held meetings with local authorities addressing water governance issues. Meetings with the authorities resulted in the supply of machinery to desalinate the sub canal and restore the flow of water through the system. The entire process was led and monitored by the water users themselves empowered to take charge of their own development.

### **Conclusion**

Oxfam participation in this workshop is inspired by the need to learn and share our experiences around our land and water governance programmes. Our ambition is therefore; to explore more opportunities for coordinated efforts through learning from experts in these two sectors, strengthen our own internal linkages between land and water programmes, work with strategic alliances, networks and partner with allies to explore the future of a more coordinated land and water initiatives.