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Strengthening MAMOCAF for grassroots women engagement in Mara River Basin Management

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OUTLINES

- Mara River Basin (MRB)
- Mara Region – Tanzania
- The MAMOCAF
- Gender Issues
- Women in Transboundary engagement
- Take Away
- Concussion

Mara River Basin (MRB)



- Mara River originates from Kenya – an upstream and drains into Lake Victoria -the downstream; which is in Mara Region, Tanzania. The Mara River Basin covers a total area of 13,750 km² , whereby 65% of it is located in Kenya and 35% in Tanzania (Tarime, Rorya, Serengeti and Butiama Districts) (Kairu, 2008; Tran et al., 2017).
- Soil type and distribution in the basin are governed by the geology, topography and rainfall. Along with rainfall variability in space, the basin is also known for rainfall variability in time. The basin has a bi-modal rainfall distribution of which the first major rainfall occurs between mid-March and June and the second and relatively intermittent, rain is between September and December. The rainfall is generally highest on the highlands with a mean annual rainfall of 1400 mm/year and the lowest in the lowlands with a mean value of 600 mm /year (Tran et al., 2017).
- Mara River Basin is impacted widely by human activities such as deforestation, agricultural, land for settlement, mining, use of fertilizers and excessive livestock keeping. Some of these activities have created a lot of negative consequences such as droughts, floods and pollution.

The Mara Region

- Mara region has a total of 2,372,015 people with 1,139,511 men and 1,232,504 women.
- Farming is the socio-economic backbone of the region and it is mainly for subsistence. Maize is the main crop cultivated. Other crops are cassava, coffee, banana, sorghum, sweet potatoes, and many fruits.
- The region is endowed with large Gold deposits which make it one of the richest regions in Gold deposits in East Africa.
- Serengeti Nation Park is the World natural heritage site, host ecosystem unique and famous for long – year migration of over 1.5 million wildebeest and 250,000 zebra (crossing The Mara River) and many other tourist attractions.(Mara Region Investment Guide, <https://tanzania.un.org/en/download/69353/129369>)
- Other human activities in place are fishery and small businesses.
- Despite having many tribes in, the region is characterized by strong - male dominance in hierarchical structure.
- Women are considered as second sex, owning little or no properties (land), having little or no voices in decision making platforms, yet, they are strong productive forces in the family and community levels.

The MAMOCAF

- Tanzania Nile Discourse Forum (TNDF), is a riparian country Organisation of Nile Basin Discourse – NBD together with its member, Victoria famers and fishers Organisation (VIFAFIO); a Non-governmental Organisation located in Mara region pioneered the establishment of a mechanism which ought to bridge the gap between the government/s and local communities. That is, a tool which could push the grassroot issues/agenda of Mara – Mori catchment to the district, regional, national and hence the transboundary level aiming for human development.
- Mara - Mori Catchment Forum (MAMOCAF) was officially established as a non governmental Organisation in 2019. it is in the custody of Lake Victoria Basin Water Board (LVBWWB)- the board is in the Ministry of water – Tanzania.
- The forum started with 19 member organizations and expanding into 42 currently. Member organizations includes Civil Society Organisation, Community-Based Organisation, Social Groups; and Private sector such as Mining, Hotel and Tourism agencies.

MAMOCAF and Gender Issues

- Men and women have different interests, uses, desires and perceptions in water and water resources management.
- As Mara River Basin is currently stressed, Women in Mara- Mori catchment are double stressed. Mainly due to less involvement in catchment Management.
- Despite MAMOCAF's active engagement, women voices and engagements are limited. This is due to disparity between men and women in decision making inside the forum with negligible influence of women, because of male - dominance hierarchy culture in the place as explained above, that, Women in Mara regions are considered as the second sex, owning little or no properties and having little or no voices in decision making platforms; yet, they are strong productive forces in the family and community levels.
- During the establishment of MAMOCAF, the forum had less than 10 women of whom no one occupied the administration role.
- Through raising awareness and advocacy, the forum now manage to have 3 women in administration (vice – positions); also having more that 40 women in the forum.

Transboundary engagement

- Climate Change hazards; droughts and floods have directly impacting communities in Mara region and the basin at large. The situation has involuntarily made communities to increase the momentum for results-based and collective engagements (grass roots communities/women) in Mara Basin Management.
- MAMOCAF managed to establish Women Championship cadre inside the forum. That is, establishing women - trainers of trainees. Aimed at diving deeper in capacity building (of the selected – women) for effective dialogues, advocacy and transboundary engagement.
- Due to the strong – male dominance structure in the region; women are strongly requested to seek permissions from their husband or family heads to attend trainings. Only 14 women managed to complete the training by 2022.

Green Lights: In the recent 2 years, Champions engage meaningful to the village and wards' yearly - Budget Estimations which fosters district and national budgets.

TAKE AWAY

- Strengthening grassroots women dialogues for meaningful participation in Mara River management and transboundary engagement calls for **Water stewardship awareness**; that is; water should be used in a way that is economically beneficial, environmental sustainable and socially equitable; through stakeholders' inclusiveness.
- Adapting to the Impacts of climate changes on Water Resource Management has taught families and communities a lesson. That is, **Water is a Common Denominator for all water sector users in the community.** WRM to adhere effective multi – sectoral approach as well .

Conclusion

The proportion of men and women according to National Census 2022 stipulates that women are voluminous; Mara Region statistics shows that women are the strong - productive forces in the family and communities; and again, Climate change hazards (droughts and floods); altogether amplify that, **grass root women need to have (more) seats on the table**. Their voices, perceptions, interest, desires and agenda could well be represented and interpreted appropriately by **themselves**.



THANK YOU!