



**Drylands Learning and
Capacity Building Initiative
for Improved Policy and
Practice in the Horn of Africa**



INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY IN TURKANA COUNTY



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By Miriam Naspaan, Intern DLCI

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Introduction

Turkana County is in the northern part of Kenya, and is predominantly inhabited by the Turkana community most of whom are pastoralists. With the latest oil and gas discoveries in Ngamia One and water resources in Lotikipi, and mineral resource finds in the however, other communities from other parts of Kenya have come to work and even settle in the County. Most natural resources such as gold, gemstones and saltlicks, oil, gas, wildlife are believed to be found in the county.

Turkana County has been one of the regions in Kenya that has faced decades of social, economic and political marginalization, with one of the highest levels of extreme poverty, illiteracy and continued vulnerability to drought. Devolution and decentralization of power as espoused in the Kenyan constitution of 2010, now provides new opportunities for economic and social transformation provided that communities are given the platform to voice their issues as well as to participate in decision making.

Information is key in any society. Furthermore the quality of information is paramount. Turkana County for a long time has been faced by general lack of information and the proper channels to disseminate the same due to natural constraints and many challenges. Public advocacy and general interest in governance is slowly growing, with an increasingly vibrant civil society and professional and student associations grounded in the community. However, there is a general reluctance and disinterest from the majority of the population to engage in governance discussions.

In the past, most organizations and the government used chiefs who were mainly based in the urban or peri-urban centers as the main agents of communicating information to the locals. This was a disadvantage to those based in the remote areas, who would either not receive the information or have to trek long distances to access it. Other channels of communication dissemination were through the village elders who were selected by the community to provide leadership and make major decisions on issues that affect the community.

The downside of this approach of sharing information was that the chiefs and elders had focus on immediate issues affecting the people and in most cases made key decisions without

necessarily engaging the community. Therefore, development issues and government policies received little attention.

The current trend

With the current transition to decentralization, civil society has stepped up advocacy campaigns to enlighten indigenous Turkana people on various issues ranging from governance, development, human rights and access to justice, land and natural resources. Many environmental and human rights advocacy groups have stepped up advocacy and sensitization on the impacts of oil exploration and how to allocate revenue to benefit the locals.

Turkana County has remained mainly unserved by mainstream media since Independence, with the little spotlight being informed only by disasters, especially recurrent droughts and insecurity. The County has been experiencing communication barriers attributed to biased reporting and stereotype mentality among people and even major media houses when it comes to Turkana where dailies are read a day after others and “unofficially sold at double price because of “remoteness.” The image has been tarnished with some personalities and institutions taking advantage of recurring hunger and starvation to raise funds with no clear accountability for the assistance or aid given apart from there being no practical involvement in the setting of early warning systems to curb or mitigate against the circle of tragedies.

Media has also become a critical platform to relay information, and various radio stations have opened in Turkana, including: Maata FM, Sayare FM, Hosanna radio, Akicha FM and Radio Jambo, this has been a reliable source of information dissemination as most of Turkana residents like listening to radios due to the wide radio waves coverage in the County. Local newspaper publications existing in Turkana include: Turkana Mirror Newspaper, Turkana Times, and The Guardian, in addition to the national newspapers. They are bound to increase.

Radio channels

Jambo Turkana- *Ongea Usikike ‘Kiyanak Kiirar’*

Jambo Turkana is Home of Turkana most engaging and interactive breakfast show: Ewala Turkan ‘dawn in Turkana’ by Emmanuel Ekuwom and Teresa Kachila. Broadcasting from Lodwar and

across the county in Kiswahili and Ng'aturkana making it the most vibrant radio station in the county.

Coverage is across the whole of Turkana County. Frequencies 92.7 Lodwar, 92.1 Lokichoggio, 90.1 Kakuma, 94.9 Lokichar, 94.5 Lokitaung, 92.4 Kapedo, 96.7 Kalokol, 90.5 Lokori, and 96.1 Todonyang.””2019

Target: The station target audience is from both the rural and urban centers reaching over 800,000 Kenyans in Turkana County.

Jambo Turkana give their listeners a forum to speak and get heard on issues around them. For instance the shows at 7:40am-8:15am on hot/topical issues, 8:15am-8:50am on Sauti ya Turkana, and the one at 9:40am-10:00am on Mulika Turkana. Generally these shows talks on what affects the people, who is not doing what is expected and reports on development, leadership and security issues in different locations in the county. The big story of the day is dissected and discussed with all the team having their say, inviting discussions, calls and getting to elaborate.

Jambo Turkana is on air 24hours without any power interruptions.

Maata FM – *Peace is its own reward*

Coverage: its frequencies 101.9 Lodwar

The station first went on air in June 2008. In April 2010 it started LIVE broadcasts. It was officially launched in July 2010. It seeks to promote peace in the greater Turkana region.

Target & Reach: The station reach is approximately 100km in radius from Lodwar town. Mostly Turkana central, Loima division and partly Turkana South. It covers all the way to Kalokol, Turkwel division, Napeililim, Lorugum, Nasiger and Kerio(80km from Lodwar), Loyangayan-the other side of Lake Turkana.

Programming: Maata FM broadcasts social development programs with an aim of bringing communities together. It has three presenters and two volunteers who broadcast in Swahili,

Turkana and English. There also programs for the youth and the old, programs for women and children especially on matters relating with health.

Radio Akicha- *Bringing light to the people*

Coverage: Its frequencies 99.5 FM

It is a radio station started by the Diocese of Lodwar in January 2009 through its communications department which aims at bringing “light” in all dimensions of life in Turkana.

The station is run by a team of professionals and volunteers. The coverage is expanded through the installation of transmission kit of 1000 watts. The waves are now clear in a radius of 80 km around Lodwar.

Reach: The station reach is approximately 80km in radius around Lodwar, 19 different villages surrounding Lodwar and going as far as Nassiger and Lorugum(50Km from Lodwar).

Programming: Language of broadcast is English, Swahili and Ng'aturkana. Programmes includes Akicha Niamshe in the morning that targets the whole community, Burudani east africa in the afternoon that targets youths and promotes local artistes, Turkana Nayok that is broadcasted in Ng'aturkana in the evening and religious Programmes that evangelizes to the community. There are Programmes that provides information about rights/governance, for instance, justice and peace that is aired every Wednesday and live interviews with politicians, stakeholders of various companies every day from 1pm to 8pm which gives local residents chance to ask direct questions through calls or messages.

Sayare FM and Hosanna radio

These stations are well known for their worship songs and daily sessions for readings and preaching in the county.

Sayare FM- *Sauti ya Rehema 'Voice of mercy'* is a Christian radio and television station based in Eldoret. The main target audience is the rural and urban mature audience who represent the

decision makers in the homes. The secondary target is the women and youth who represent the vibrant part of the family.

Frequencies: Radio Hosanna 89.5 Lodwar.

Sayare 93.5 FM Lodwar: (Turkana and Southern Sudan)

Print media channels

Turkana Guardian Newspaper- *Voices of a new dawn*

It is a rising local newspaper that has print as well as electronic media and the internet through its website- www.turkanaguardian.com. Its target is to become an effective voice of the Turkana people. It has commitment to Turkana community as an information sharing platform in the areas of education, peace and security, education, environment among other issues.

It also does advertising on Turkana tours and travel agency and Centre for Advocacy Relief & Development (CARD).

Turkana Mirror Newsletter- *Making all voices count*

Turkana Mirror is the Turkana county monthly newsletter. The newspaper under the auspice of TUBAE is pursuing the media agenda as a tool to bridge the communication barrier as means of giving residents an alternative source of relevant and credible information on various aspects of development more so under the devolved system of government. The Mirror enhances information and news sharing and progressively update the county residents on the daily happenings.

The main focus is on the socio-economic development in the county. Apart from the monthly publication, daily highlights of crucial and important news is accessed in electronic form through www.tubaeturkanapeople.org. The publication focuses on breakthrough and successes in various development sphere, challenges, human interest stories which are unique to the county, service delivery & marketing of local innovation, products & services.

Turkana Times Newspaper- *The Arid Voice*

It is a weekly newspaper that aims at educating, informing and entertaining. It is the premier county newspaper that seeks to fill the gap left by decades of neglect. Conceived at the dawn of devolution, the newspaper has anchored its content on issue-based journalism to tell the untold Turkana story from the local context and perspective. The content also captures relevant cross-border issues that are of interest to locals and those in the Diaspora.

The newspaper is divided into various sections including art & culture, sports, business, education, development, lifestyle, and opinion where a section on your voice where people write articles on pressing issues that needs to be addressed.

The news are also available in electronic form through the website- www.turkanatimes.co.ke.

Generally, the media has helped to improve information barrier in the County and made the public informed of the progress and challenges faced as citizens are actively involved in their own development through the right institutions. The publications have opened up for comments and contributions from various stakeholders enhancing information sharing in the county. TUBAE in partnership with Akicha radio engages the county government through press conference on quarterly basis where both the Governor and his executives address the county on current status of key county affairs, achievements, challenges encountered, mitigate measures deployed and plans for the next quarter.

Internet

The youth mainly also use social media to form groups, especially Facebook group pages such as Turkana Professionals Association, Turkana County, Turkana County legislative assembly among others, as the main channels of information which only benefits the learned/educated and those can access internet phones or computers. Membership is a requirement to get or share information. Overtime however, these group pages become political as the youth become manipulated by the politicians, especially as elections period nears. This limits personal freedom of expression which tends to constrain many members from contributing to status updates.

Most educated people have been forced to stay in urban centers like Lokichar, Kainuk, Lodwar, Kakuma and Lokichogio because information circulates faster within these centers and also job advertisements may only be pinned at these centers making only those who are in other small centers without mobile phones and road networks get difficulties in accessing employment opportunities and vital information.

Traditional Institutions

Traditionally the institutions did not exist as they were informal associations with no clear set up or formal structures. However with civic education, citizen participation and involvement we attest the rise of various formal institutions and associations guarded by common interests and clear targets. There are numerous women groups for example Nawoitorong women's group- Its broad objective is to improve the welfare of the community and to assist women and children to lead lives of higher quality. Others include Kamugengiro women group, Handicraft women group et al. Teachers' Sacco include Elimu Sacco and Kapenguria teachers Sacco.

Local CSOs and CBOs

Some community based organizations like the Turkana Women Advocacy and Development Organization (TWADO) through partnership with Transparency International have been able to form social audit groups in few centers to follow up initiated projects at the community level in Turkana County, as well as act as a source of information to the community. *'Uwajibikaji Pamoja'* is a platform initiated by Transparency International that aims to improve service delivery to the residents of Turkana County and to facilitate the referral of complaints from one service provider to another. By giving citizens a voice, key developmental issues are followed up on and information is enhanced at the grassroots level.

While CBOs are on the rise in Turkana County, it is difficult to pinpoint what most of them have achieved, despite claiming to be working for the community. Many of them are not sustainable and do not have the capacity to mobilize resources. Some have been formed with the aim of implementing projects on behalf of INGOs, but die immediately the projects end.

Some CBOs are doing a great job, a case in point is the Turkana Bio Aloe Organization currently known as TUBAE African Development Trust which has promoted diversification of livelihoods in

its advocacy strategies to address poverty and improve living standards of the Turkana people. It has also done media advocacy and building capacities and supporting vulnerable groups on sustainable exploration and conservation of endangered environment.

TWADO is a network of CBOs that provides legal advice to assist women facing domestic violence, rape, and divorce. It advocates against early marriages, which is common in Turkana community, and women's lack of rights in property inheritance with the aim of reducing these harmful cultural traditions and improving the visibility of women in the society.

Centre for Advocacy, Relief and Development (CARD) was established as an oversight body aimed to improve social and economic status of Turkana people. There are others advocating on various issues ranging from development such as Turkana Development Organization Forum (TUDOF) while others focus on promoting peace, natural resource management, among others.

Generally Turkana County does not have clear ways of gathering and disseminating information since most of it is done through informal social sites like Facebook, local newspapers and radio stations and also through area chiefs who do not reach everybody. Advocacy is also not well established. At the same time, community has reaped little social and economic benefits. Hopefully with time, advocacy will hit base as the County is at the point of interest of many developers.

According to Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) programme during data support program workshop on July in Lodwar, it was noted that the local authorities are not always willing to provide organizations and also the community with data¹. A case in point is the CIDP (County Integrated Development Plan) as an example of data the county government has perpetually delayed or turned down. Without this data, these organizations would find it difficult to carry out their advocacy mission.

¹ See <http://openinstitute.com/engaging-civil-society-turkana-county-open-data/>

All the above development issues will not be met if information does not trickle down to the communities and back to the authorities, and if advocacy cannot be the main agenda of individuals and groups in the entire county.

Recommendations

Turkana County is made up of six sub-Counties and thirty wards, for proper information sharing there must be a linkage between all these areas within the County. Thirty community members may come together to form a committee at the community level to represent every ward and one major committee to be formed and located in the County headquarters (Lodwar). The major committee will be responsible for collecting and gathering information from all over the County main offices and authority and from specific areas where information may be hard to get; after which the information may be sent to the ward committees to reach the communities. This may be very effective way of sharing information and to improve community voice.

For advocacy issues the main committee will be responsible for selecting an agenda to advocate for, since this will be the lead committee comprising of elites. The committee can also oversee on the activities of the various advocacy organizations by ensuring proper monitoring and evaluation of the projects geared at. After an agenda for advocacy has been set then all committees will now be responsible for the advocacy campaign.

Lastly, the ways of disseminating information should be improved. For instance through the set-up of notice boards in the sub counties and facilitating forums as they are the immediate avenues to the communities. Having the information in local language will help the community to understand on government policies and development issues. Those educated will also get the feedback from the community and do a follow up on uprising issues.