

Tanzania

'Tuungane' - Let us Unite



Zainabou John with her children harvesting crops. Credit: Maren Vespia

The Greater Mahale Ecosystem is home to one of the world's natural treasures—Lake Tanganyika. The lake holds nearly one-fifth of the world's fresh water and more than 250 native species of fish. But communities and their environment have suffered from the convergence of several factors: extreme poverty, rapid population growth, and isolation. With few options for earning a living, most people in the Greater Mahale have relied on the lake for fishing and land for farming, putting strain on natural resources. At the same time, many in local villages have had misconceptions about contraception, and women had been delivering their babies at home—sometimes dying without medical care.

Pathfinder's Tuungane program—Swahili for “Let us Unite”—has created integrated solutions that support healthier families, fisheries, and forests. Tuungane engages women to address the intersecting challenges of climate and food security through three primary approaches: climate-smart agriculture, access to local finances, and access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Access to local finances

Access to local finances and capacity building of Community Conservation Banks (COCOBAs) allows women and other community members to start environmentally businesses that reduce pressure on natural resources.

Approaches:

Formation and capacity building of COCOBAs, which give small loans to community members who are starting small businesses and diversifying their incomes.

Entrepreneurship training on income diversification, including rice farming, maize farming, vegetable gardening, and bee keeping.

TUUNGANE

Location: Greater Mahale Ecosystem (Kigoma & Katavi Regions)

Project Partners: The Nature Conservancy

Dates: 2011- Present

Climate-smart agriculture

Climate-smart agriculture allows farmers to produce higher yields and reduce waste run-off into Lake Tanganyika and local rivers.

Approaches:

Selecting appropriate locations for farming, and specific crops and seeds for cultivation. Beach Management Units enact and enforce sustainable fishing regulations.

Timely harvesting of crops and affordable post-harvest storage technologies. Integrated pest management, both physical and chemical.

Sexual and reproductive health

Outreach programs integrate sexual and reproductive health education, services, and resource distribution with women-led climate information sessions.

Approaches:

Community health workers distribute integrated resilience information and voluntary sexual and reproductive health counseling and services.

Mobile outreach events and support to public health facilities.



Tuongane's Impact

Access to finances led to increased food availability

Access to local finances has reduced the high dependency of women and youth on natural resources for survival. Businesses have boosted households' incomes and helped them become more resilient to climate shocks.

Outcomes:

155 COCOBAs established with a total of 4,070 members; 67% are women.

Women report increased ability to purchase food items (3 meals per day for the entire family).

Majority of women participants have used funds generated through these projects to purchase health insurance for family members.

Environmental conservation

Before Tuungane, farmers were not using ridges in their plots, causing soil erosion which carried sediments into Lake Tanganyika and other water bodies.

Outcomes:

The number of farmers farming close to Lake Tanganyika has been reduced by 40%, reducing the amount of sediment directly entering the water.

Farmers have improved their farming locations to beyond 100 meters from Lake Tanganyika and 60 meters from local rivers.

Farmers on steep slopes have been using ridges to impede rainwater runoff, reducing the amount of sediment carried by soil erosion into Lake Tanganyika and local rivers.

Increased food security

Since 2016, we have trained 8,556 women on climate-smart agriculture.

Outcomes:

Farmers have improved their maize yields by 35% on average over the last five years.

Farmers operating demonstration plots have increased maize yields by more than double, from 10-12 bags to 24-28 bags/acre.

Increases of up to 40% in yields have been achieved in horticultural crops (e.g., tomato and cabbages).

Increased knowledge and uptake of sexual and reproductive health information and services

Health outreach programs have integrated sexual and reproductive health education, services, and resource distribution with women-led climate information sessions.

Outcomes:

Through community health workers, 84,491 community members received condoms and contraceptive pills, and participated in integrated women-led climate resilience information sessions and voluntary sexual and reproductive health counseling and services.

The project conducted a total of 761 integrated mobile outreach events.

56 project-supported public health facilities have served 30,656 clients with voluntary family planning methods of their choice.

Pathfinder International is driven by the conviction that all people, regardless of where they live, have the right to decide whether and when to have children, to exist free from fear and stigma, and to lead the lives they choose. As a global health organization with locally led, community-driven programs, we support women to make their own reproductive health decisions. We work with local partners to advance contraceptive services, comprehensive abortion care, and young people's sexual and reproductive rights in communities around the world—including those affected by poverty, conflict, climate change, and natural disasters. Taken together, our programs enable millions of people to choose their own paths forward.

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