



# Ramat



**Indigenous Women Reclaiming Power,  
Restoring Landscapes, and Leading  
Climate Justice in ASAL Communities**



**SGP** The GEF  
Small Grants  
Programme



# Preamble

Indigenous women are the protectors of the environment - not by title, but by practice. For generations, we have safeguarded land, culture, and life itself. Today, that wisdom is not only relevant - it is essential to the future of our planet.

Across the arid and semi-arid lands of Samburu, where climate change continues to disrupt ecosystems, livelihoods, and ways of life, Indigenous women stand at the frontline - not as victims, but as protectors, knowledge holders, and architects of resilience.

For generations, Samburu Indigenous women have been the unseen custodians of land, culture, and biodiversity. They are traditional healers, seed keepers, water stewards, and caregivers - holding deep ecological knowledge passed down through generations. Their relationship with nature is not extractive, but reciprocal - grounded in respect, balance, and sustainability.

Today, as climate shocks intensify, Indigenous women are drawing on their knowledge and lived experiences to offer locally rooted, nature-based solutions. From restoring degraded lands and preserving indigenous plant species, to strengthening food systems and diversifying livelihoods, they are leading transformative climate actions that build resilience from the ground up.

This newsletter is a call to partners, allies, and funders to recognize, invest in, and stand with Indigenous women's leadership. The solutions are already here - grounded in culture, driven by community, and proven in practice. What is needed now is sustained support to scale, learn, and amplify these efforts.

Because when Indigenous women lead, communities thrive, ecosystems recover, and the future is protected.

**JANE MERIWAS**  
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This newsletter positions Indigenous pastoralist women not as passive recipients of development, humanitarian aid, or climate interventions, but as political actors, ecological knowledge holders, and frontline architects of climate justice.

It centers their lived realities as legitimate sites of theory-making, their everyday practices as forms of innovation, and their collective action as a transformative force reshaping both ecosystems and systems of power.

**From a feminist perspective, this framing deliberately disrupts dominant development narratives that have historically positioned Indigenous women through the lens of vulnerability, scarcity, and need. Such narratives have often erased women's agency while simultaneously depending on their unpaid and under-recognised labor to sustain households, livestock economies, and entire ecological systems.**

RAMAT challenges this contradiction directly.

It asserts that Indigenous pastoralist women are not emerging actors in climate solutions - they have always been central to them. In the most climate-stressed and resource-scarce environments, they have sustained life through deep ecological intelligence: reading landscapes, managing water sources, preserving seeds, caring for livestock, and maintaining fragile socio-ecological systems under constant environmental and economic pressure.

Yet despite this central role, their contributions have largely existed outside formal recognition systems. Indigenous women remain excluded from land governance, climate policy design, resource allocation, and key decision-making institutions. Their knowledge is practiced daily, but rarely legitimised; their labor is essential, but rarely valued as leadership or expertise.



RAMAT seeks to shift this paradigm.

It reframes Indigenous women as knowledge authorities whose lived experience is not anecdotal, but epistemic - capable of shaping climate governance, ecological restoration, and sustainable livelihood systems. Their everyday practices are not framed as coping strategies alone, but as sophisticated systems of adaptation, resilience, and environmental stewardship developed over generations.

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**AT ITS CORE, RAMAT IS A FEMINIST INTERVENTION INTO CLIMATE JUSTICE DISCOURSE.**

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It insists that climate change is not only an environmental crisis, but also a crisis of power - rooted in unequal access to land, resources, decision-making, and recognition. In ASAL contexts, climate vulnerability is deeply gendered, shaped by historical dispossession, patriarchal norms, and structural exclusion that limit women's control over the very systems they sustain.

From this perspective, climate justice cannot be achieved through technical solutions alone. It requires a fundamental redistribution of power - economic, political, and epistemic.

This includes:

- **Recognising Indigenous women as producers of knowledge**, not only recipients of services or beneficiaries of interventions
- **Rebalancing access to and control over land, water, and natural resources**, ensuring women's rights are protected and operationalised in practice
- **Expanding women's authority in governance and decision-making spaces**, including customary institutions, climate platforms, and community leadership structures
- **Valuing care work, ecological labour, and community stewardship as central to resilience**, rather than invisible or informal contributions

Ultimately, RAMAT advances a vision of climate justice that is grounded in Indigenous women's realities, knowledge systems, and leadership. It is a call to recognise that restoring landscapes and transforming climate systems is inseparable from restoring dignity, voice, and power to the women who have always sustained them.



# A STORY OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN TRANSFORMING LAND DEGRADATION INTO A LIVING TESTIMONY



**Before RAMAT, the land was changing - but the power to respond to that change did not rest with those who understood it most.**

Across the vast rangelands, Indigenous pastoralist women carried entire ecosystems in their memory. Their knowledge was not written in reports or maps, but in lived experience passed through generations. They could read the language of the land with precision - when the rains were delayed, when certain grasses began to disappear, when livestock began to weaken, and when water sources quietly receded beyond reach. They knew how to respond before crisis fully arrived.

They adapted continuously, often invisibly. Stretching food through lean seasons. Walking longer and harsher distances in search of water. Protecting children and elders through cycles of uncertainty. Holding households together when systems around them were breaking down. Their resilience was not occasional - it was structural, daily, and deeply embedded in survival.

Yet even with this depth of ecological intelligence, their voices rarely shaped the decisions that governed land, livestock, and livelihoods.

Decisions about grazing patterns, land use, mobility routes, and resource allocation were made in formal and informal spaces where women were

often absent - or present, but unheard. Governance systems recognized authority in ways that did not reflect the lived realities of those most affected by environmental change.

At the same time, economic power remained uneven. Women worked tirelessly within pastoralist economies - herding, milking, caring for animals, managing households, and sustaining community well-being - but control over income and productive assets remained largely out of their hands. Their labor sustained entire systems, yet their agency in shaping how resources were distributed or invested was limited.

As climate shocks intensified - longer and more severe droughts, shrinking pasturelands, unpredictable rainfall, and rising food insecurity - the weight on women grew heavier. They became the first responders to environmental collapse and the last to be acknowledged in formal response systems. Every drought season deepened their responsibility, but not their recognition.

Their knowledge, though essential to survival, was too often dismissed as informal or traditional - treated as secondary to external technical solutions that frequently overlooked the realities of arid and semi-arid lands.

Alongside these environmental and economic pressures, deeply rooted patriarchal structures continued to restrict women's voice, mobility, and leadership. Speaking in community forums required negotiation of cultural norms. Leading required courage that often came at a personal cost. Yet even in silence or exclusion, women found ways to influence outcomes - through networks of care, shared survival strategies, and quiet forms of leadership that sustained social cohesion.

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**AND STILL, THEY DID NOT STOP HOLDING THEIR COMMUNITIES TOGETHER.**

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This "before" is not a story of absence or passivity. It is a story of **unrecognized power** - of knowledge systems that sustained life but were not centered in decision-making; of leadership that existed in practice but not in recognition; of resilience that was relied upon but rarely resourced.

It is from this place - where knowledge is rich but unheard, where labor is immense but undervalued, where leadership exists but is constrained - that transformation begins. And it is here that RAMAT emerges, not as an introduction of new power, but as a recognition and re-centering of the power that has always existed.

# LAND REGENERATION AND A STORY OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN RECLAMATION AND LEADERSHIP

**With RAMAT, what was once unrecognized is now visible, valued, and actively shaping pathways of change.**

Indigenous pastoralist women are no longer positioned at the margins of climate action - they are at the center of it. The shift is not symbolic; it is structural. Women are not only participating in adaptation processes, they are designing and leading solutions rooted in the realities of their landscapes, lived experiences, and ancestral knowledge systems. Their leadership bridges Indigenous wisdom with collective innovation, creating responses that are both locally grounded and forward-looking.

Across ASAL communities, women are actively reshaping what climate adaptation looks like in practice. On land that was once seen as degraded or exhausted, they are restoring ecological balance. Through regeneration of rangelands, soil restoration practices, water conservation, and sustainable grazing management, they are bringing life back to ecosystems that had been under severe stress.



At the household and community level, they are strengthening food systems in ways that are adaptive and resilient. Kitchen gardens are diversifying diets and improving nutrition. Fodder production is stabilizing livestock health during drought periods. Beekeeping and agroecological practices are creating alternative livelihood pathways that are less vulnerable to climate shocks. In this way, climate response is no longer external or imposed - it is embedded in daily practice, led by women who understand the rhythms of the land.

Economic power is also beginning to shift in tangible ways. Through apiary initiatives, fodder enterprises, small-scale agriculture, and collective production systems, women are increasingly controlling income streams rooted in their own labor, skills, and ecological knowledge. This economic agency is not only changing access to resources - it is transforming how value is defined within households and communities.

As income becomes more direct and reliable, influence follows. Women are increasingly participating in household decision-making processes, shaping how food is allocated, how children's needs are prioritized, how savings are used, and how crises are managed. Decisions that were once made without them are now increasingly negotiated with them.

At the community level, their presence in decision-making spaces is also growing. Women are speaking in forums where they were previously absent or silent, contributing to conversations on land use, resource management, and development priorities. Their voices are gradually shifting from the margins toward the center of community governance.

Alongside these economic and social shifts is a powerful revival of Indigenous ecological knowledge. Practices that were once dismissed as informal or outdated

are being re-centered as essential systems of survival and regeneration. Women are reclaiming their roles as custodians of knowledge about rainfall patterns, pasture cycles, animal health, seed preservation, and ecosystem balance. This is not a return to the past - it is a reactivation of knowledge that has always been present but under-recognized.

Perhaps most significantly, women are organizing collectively in new and transformative ways. Through women's groups, savings associations, community networks, and peer learning spaces, they are building solidarity and strengthening collective agency. These spaces are nurturing confidence, leadership, and shared strategy. They are also creating platforms for women's voices to be amplified beyond individual households into broader community and institutional spaces.

This collective power is reshaping more than individual livelihoods - it is gradually transforming systems of leadership, accountability, and participation within pastoralist societies.

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## WHAT IS EMERGING IS NOT SIMPLY INCREMENTAL CHANGE - IT IS A REBALANCING OF POWER.

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It is the restoration of women as central actors in ecological stewardship, economic systems, and community governance. It is the recognition that climate resilience is not achieved without them, and that regeneration is not possible without their knowledge, labor, and leadership.

This is the emergence of Indigenous pastoralist women as climate leaders, economic actors, and decision-makers in their own right - not as beneficiaries of change, but as architects of it.

# FROM SURVIVAL TO REGENERATION AND POWER SHIFT

## From environmental degradation to ecological regeneration

At the heart of RAMAT is a regenerative ethic led by Indigenous women whose everyday actions are reshaping both landscapes and livelihoods. This ethic begins with a clear recognition: environmental degradation in rangeland and pastoral ecosystems is not only an ecological crisis, but also a social and historical one - shaped by dispossession, climate pressures, weakened customary governance systems, and gendered inequalities in access to land and resources.

Rather than positioning themselves as passive victims of environmental change, Indigenous women are actively responding as ecological stewards and system rebuilders. Their work is grounded in lived knowledge of ecosystems - reading seasons, understanding animal behavior, knowing soil health, and tracking water patterns - knowledge that has been refined across generations but often undervalued in formal environmental policy spaces.

Through community-led restoration practices, women are rebuilding the ecological foundations of resilience. Kitchen gardens are diversifying household nutrition while reducing pressure on fragile rangelands. Fodder production is strengthening livestock survival during drought periods, reducing overgrazing and improving herd resilience.



Beekeeping is restoring biodiversity through pollination while also creating alternative, climate-resilient income streams. Sustainable livestock management practices - such as rotational grazing, herd diversification, and collective grazing agreements - are helping to restore degraded land while maintaining pastoral livelihoods.

This work is not isolated interventions; it is a living system of ecological repair. Each practice reinforces the other, creating a cycle of regeneration where land recovery, food security, and economic resilience are mutually reinforcing rather than competing goals.

Importantly, this is feminist practice in action. It is grounded in care for land, animals, and community rather than extraction. It prioritizes interdependence over individual accumulation, and long-term ecological balance over short-term gain. Women's leadership in these processes challenges dominant development models that often separate environmental restoration from social justice, instead demonstrating that the two are inseparable.

Ecological restoration in RAMAT is therefore also social restoration. As women restore degraded soils, revive indigenous seeds, and rebuild vegetation cover, they are simultaneously restoring social fabrics weakened by climate stress and inequality. Collective work strengthens solidarity networks, shared labor systems, and community

decision-making structures. Income from regenerative activities increases women's economic autonomy, shifting household and community power dynamics in subtle but significant ways.

In this sense, regeneration is not only about recovering what was lost - it is about transforming the conditions that produced degradation in the first place. It is about rebuilding systems of care, governance, and knowledge that allow both people and ecosystems to thrive together.

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**WOMEN ARE NOT ONLY HEALING THE LAND; THEY ARE ALSO RESTORING DIGNITY, STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE, AND REDEFINING WHAT SUSTAINABLE SURVIVAL LOOKS LIKE IN ARID AND SEMI-ARID LANDSCAPES.**

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# FROM SURVIVAL ECONOMIES TO REGENERATIVE FUTURES



Indigenous women's worldview reframes survival not as an endpoint or a condition of limitation, but as a site of political and economic possibility. In this framing, survival is not simply about enduring hardship; it is about exercising agency within constrained systems, and gradually transforming those systems from within. What external narratives often describe as "coping strategies" are, in reality, sophisticated systems of knowledge, adaptation, and collective organization that have long sustained communities in ecologically fragile and politically marginalised regions.

What were once labelled "survival economies" are now being consciously transformed into regenerative systems - systems in which ecological restoration, economic empowerment, and social transformation are not separate agendas, but interconnected outcomes of the same practices. This shift is not accidental; it is driven by Indigenous women who are reimagining what livelihoods can be when rooted in care for land, community, and future generations.

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**IN THESE REGENERATIVE FUTURES, LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION IS NOT JUST A STRATEGY FOR INCOME STABILITY - IT IS A DELIBERATE ECOLOGICAL INTERVENTION.**

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Women are moving beyond dependency on single, climate-vulnerable income sources and building layered economies that include kitchen gardens, beekeeping, fodder production, seed preservation, small livestock enterprises, and value addition of natural products. Each of these activities is designed not only to generate income, but also to restore ecological balance, improve soil health, enhance biodiversity, and reduce pressure on degraded rangelands.

At the same time, land restoration is becoming an economic and social strategy. Degraded landscapes are being revived through indigenous knowledge systems such as rotational grazing, seasonal mobility practices, water harvesting techniques, and communal resource governance. These are not merely environmental actions; they are economic decisions that increase productivity over time while strengthening ecological resilience.

Land is no longer seen as a depleted resource to be extracted from, but as a living system capable of recovery when cared for collectively.

This transformation also extends deeply into social relations. As women engage in regenerative livelihoods, they are reshaping household economies, strengthening collective labor systems, and expanding their role in community decision-making. Income generated through these activities is often reinvested in education, health, and community wellbeing, creating ripple effects that extend far beyond individual households. Economic empowerment, in this sense, is not just about income generation - it is about shifting who has power over resources, decisions, and futures.

Crucially, this shift from survival to regeneration is not framed as external "development intervention," but as an internally driven reorganisation of life systems. It challenges the assumption that pastoral and Indigenous communities are simply adapting to climate change. Instead, it highlights how they are actively reshaping the conditions that produce vulnerability in the first place - whether those are ecological degradation, gender inequality, or exclusion from governance systems.

This is why the work is not adaptation alone. Adaptation implies adjustment to an existing system; regeneration implies transforming that system. Regenerative futures are rooted in justice, because they address historical inequalities in land access, resource control, and political voice. They are rooted in collective agency, because they depend on shared knowledge, shared labour, and shared responsibility for ecological and social wellbeing.

In this vision, Indigenous women are not positioned at the margins of resilience - they are at the centre of designing new economic and ecological pathways. Their work is not only about surviving climate shocks, but about reshaping the systems that generate those shocks into systems that sustain life, dignity, and intergenerational continuity.

# INDIGENOUS WOMEN

## From invisible labor to collective power



**Indigenous women's work has long been the invisible backbone of pastoralist and rangeland economies.**

Their labour - tending livestock, fetching water, managing household nutrition, caring for children and elders, preserving seeds, maintaining social cohesion, and responding to climate stress - has historically been essential to community survival, yet rarely recognized as "productive" within formal economic systems.

***This invisibility has not meant absence of power; rather, it reflects how dominant systems have failed to value forms of labour rooted in care, ecology, and social reproduction.***

Indigenous women make this hidden economy visible. They are naming, organising, and transforming what was previously fragmented and unrecognized into structured systems of collective action. In doing so, they are shifting from being seen as individual survival actors to being recognized as coordinated political and economic agents whose work sustains entire ecosystems and livelihoods.

Across pastoralist landscapes, women are forming collective structures that function simultaneously as economic, ecological, and political units. These groups are not informal gatherings; they are emerging governance and resilience systems.

Through them, women pool labour, share financial resources, manage community savings, and coordinate livelihood activities such as fodder production, beekeeping, seed banking, and small-scale trade.

This pooling of resources reduces individual vulnerability and strengthens collective capacity to respond to shocks such as drought, livestock disease, and market disruptions. But their function goes beyond economic cooperation. These collective structures are actively engaged in ecological restoration.

Women organize group-based rangeland rehabilitation efforts, manage communal tree nurseries, restore degraded grazing areas, and coordinate water access and conservation practices. In doing so, they are not only restoring land but also restoring the social systems that govern how that land is used and protected. Ecological stewardship becomes a shared responsibility rather than an individual burden.

This shift from isolated survival strategies to coordinated collective power is significant. It transforms women's work from fragmented acts of coping into intentional systems of resilience and influence. Where survival strategies once operated quietly within households, they now operate as visible, organized, and strategic forms of community leadership.

As these collective structures grow stronger, women's influence is extending into formal and informal governance spaces. They are increasingly participating in water management committees, rangeland governance forums, climate adaptation planning processes, and local peacebuilding structures. In these spaces, women are not only present - they are shaping agendas, influencing resource allocation, and redefining priorities for community development and environmental management.

This is not symbolic inclusion. It is a substantive shift in authority. Women's lived experience of managing scarcity, responding to environmental change, and sustaining household and community wellbeing is increasingly recognized as critical knowledge for decision-making. Their expertise - grounded in daily interaction with land, livestock, and community systems - is becoming central to how resilience is understood and planned.

Importantly, this transformation challenges long-standing power hierarchies. It redefines what counts as leadership, what counts as expertise, and what counts as governance. Leadership is no longer confined to formal positions or institutional titles; it is embedded in the ability to sustain life under conditions of uncertainty.

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**EXPERTISE IS NO LONGER LIMITED TO TECHNICAL TRAINING; IT INCLUDES INDIGENOUS ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE, CAREGIVING SYSTEMS, AND COLLECTIVE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.**

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In this way, Indigenous women are moving from the margins of recognition to the centre of decision-making. Their collective power is not only redistributing resources but also reshaping governance itself - making it more grounded in lived reality, more responsive to ecological conditions, and more accountable to community wellbeing.



## INDIGENOUS WOMEN AS KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS AND INNOVATORS

At the heart of RAMAT is a critical shift in how knowledge is understood, valued, and applied. For too long, Indigenous women's knowledge systems have been extracted, simplified, and repackaged without recognition, while the women themselves have remained positioned as "beneficiaries" rather than experts. This framing is being fundamentally challenged.

Indigenous women within RAMAT are not passive recipients of development interventions - they are knowledge holders, ecological experts, and system designers. Their knowledge, deeply rooted in pastoralist lifeways, must be protected, respected, and formally recognized as legitimate expertise in shaping development policy, climate action, and land governance.

This shift reclaims authority over epistemology - the right to define what counts as knowledge, whose knowledge matters, and what solutions are considered valid. It moves away from external validation and toward Indigenous self-determination in knowledge production.

Indigenous knowledge systems are therefore not treated as supplementary or "traditional add-ons" to scientific approaches. Instead, they are recognized as dynamic, adaptive, and highly sophisticated systems of ecological governance that have evolved over centuries in response to fragile and variable arid and semi-arid ecosystems.

Within this framework, Indigenous women are actively applying and advancing practices such as rotational grazing systems that allow rangeland recovery, community-based water conservation and

harvesting techniques that ensure survival in drought cycles, seed preservation practices that protect biodiversity and food sovereignty, and climate-responsive land stewardship strategies that balance mobility, ecosystem health, and livestock productivity.

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**THESE ARE NOT STATIC TRADITIONS. THEY ARE LIVING SYSTEMS OF INNOVATION - CONSTANTLY TESTED, REFINED, AND ADAPTED THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE AND INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING.**

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This is not nostalgia for a disappearing past. It is innovation grounded in continuity. It demonstrates that Indigenous women are not only custodians of ecological memory but also architects of resilient futures, offering proven, context-specific solutions to today's climate and development challenges.

By recognizing Indigenous women as experts in their own right, RAMAT repositions them at the center of policy, practice, and decision-making - where their knowledge is not extracted and dismissed, but elevated, protected, and integrated as foundational to sustainable development.



## INDIGENOUS WOMEN SHAPING DECISION-MAKING SPACES

**A defining transformation under RAMAT is the visible shift of Indigenous women from the margins of consultation to the center of governance authority.**

This is not simply about inclusion or representation - it is about power, influence, and decision-making rights in systems that determine land, water, livelihoods, and climate futures.

For decades, Indigenous women have been positioned at the edges of formal governance structures, often invited into spaces as symbolic participants rather than recognized decision-makers. Their presence was acknowledged, but their authority was not. RAMAT challenges this structural exclusion by advancing a different model - one where Indigenous women are recognized as political actors and governance leaders in their own right.

Across rangeland management committees, water governance structures, peacebuilding forums, and climate adaptation platforms, Indigenous women are increasingly shaping how decisions are made. They are influencing grazing calendars, negotiating access to water points, guiding drought response strategies, and redefining what resilience looks like in practice.

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**THEIR LEADERSHIP IS NOT SUPPLEMENTARY - IT IS DIRECTIVE AND FOUNDATIONAL TO COMMUNITY SURVIVAL SYSTEMS.**

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This shift fundamentally challenges the outdated and artificial separation between the “private” and “public” spheres. In pastoralist and Indigenous contexts, the household is not isolated from governance; it is a core unit of economic production, ecological management, and social organization. Care work, water collection, food preparation, livestock management, and seed preservation are not invisible domestic tasks - they are governance functions that sustain entire systems of life.

By bringing these realities into formal governance discourse, RAMAT reframes what counts as political and what counts as leadership. It recognizes that decisions made at household and community levels are deeply political, shaping resource distribution, ecological balance, and community resilience.

As a result, Indigenous women are not only participants in governance - they are redefining governance itself. They are expanding its boundaries to include care economies, ecological knowledge, and lived survival strategies that have historically been excluded from formal policy frameworks.

This transformation signals a deeper shift in power: from tokenistic participation to substantive authority; from consultation to co-decision-making; and from invisibility to recognition as key architects of climate resilience and community governance systems.

# A STORY OF POWER

## Indigenous women's voices at the center

Across the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), where droughts stretch longer, rains become less predictable, and ecological uncertainty is part of daily life, RAMAT is not just a programme or framework - it is a shift in how power itself is understood, lived, and narrated. At its core, it is about who gets to tell the story of survival, and who gets to define what comes after survival.

For too long, Indigenous women have been written about in the language of vulnerability - "affected by climate change," "coping with drought," or "dependent on aid." But within RAMAT, Indigenous women are reclaiming the narrative voice. They are not objects of development stories; they are authors of their own histories, analysts of their realities, and designers of their futures.

As one pastoralist woman might say:

***"We are not waiting for rescue. We have always known how to live with the land. What we are asking for now is not survival - but respect for the systems we already built."***

This shift begins by dismantling long-standing assumptions about knowledge and authority. Knowledge is no longer monopolized by formal institutions, external experts, or centralized systems. Instead, it is recognized as something embedded in everyday practice - in the movement of herds, the reading of clouds, the management of water points, the protection of seeds, and the negotiation of peace across grazing landscapes.



Leadership is also being redefined. It is no longer confined to inherited or formal authority structures alone, but expands to include women's ecological intelligence, caregiving economies, and community coordination systems. In many pastoralist communities, women are already leading quietly and consistently - organizing food systems, managing household resilience, mediating resource conflicts, and sustaining social cohesion during crises.

Another Indigenous woman's voice might say:

***"They used to say leadership is in offices. But when the drought comes, it is our decisions that keep families alive. We are already leaders - we are just now being seen."***

Within this reframed reality, resilience is no longer understood only as endurance or the ability to "withstand shocks." Instead, resilience becomes the capacity to transform the very systems that produce vulnerability in the first place. It is about changing how resources are accessed, how land is managed, how decisions are made, and how power is shared.

RAMAT therefore marks a shift from survival to self-determined futures. This is not about helping Indigenous women adjust to crisis conditions - it is about recognizing their role in reshaping the conditions themselves.

Control over resources becomes central: access to water points, grazing land, livestock markets, and financial systems is not just economic - it is political. Participation in governance is no longer symbolic attendance; it is meaningful influence over decisions that shape ecological and community futures. And the ability to define community priorities ensures that solutions are not externally imposed but emerge from lived realities, cultural knowledge, and collective vision.

As one-woman leader might express it:

***"We are tired of being included in decisions already made. We want to sit where decisions begin - not where they end."***

In this reimagined story, Indigenous women are not at the margins of climate action - they are at the center of systems redesign. They are not merely responding to climate change; they are actively shaping adaptation pathways, restoring ecological balance, and redefining governance itself.

This is the power of RAMAT: a story rewritten not from the outside looking in, but from within - spoken in Indigenous women's voices, grounded in their knowledge, and oriented toward futures they are already building.



# THE POWER SHIFT

## Reclaiming agency and leadership



In the communities where RAMAT is taking root, power is no longer a distant structure reserved for a few - it is becoming something lived, practiced, and reshaped in everyday life. It is showing up in how women speak in community meetings, how resources are shared within households, how land is restored, and how collective decisions are made in response to climate stress.

What is emerging is not symbolic inclusion, nor a temporary recognition of women's roles. It is a **real redistribution of agency across economic, social, cultural, and political spaces**, grounded in everyday practice and collective action.

Indigenous pastoralist women are stepping into visibility through action. They are organizing themselves into strong groups, managing climate-smart enterprises, and rebuilding ecological systems that support both people and livestock. In doing so, they are redefining what leadership looks like in ASAL contexts - rooted not in hierarchy, but in service, knowledge, and responsibility to community and land.

Economically, women are shifting from dependency to control. Income generated through apiary systems, fodder production, kitchen gardens, and agroecological practices is not only improving household welfare - it is changing bargaining power within homes and communities.

Politically, women are stepping into governance structures that determine the future of their communities. They are serving in committees, participating in local forums, and representing group interests in decision-making spaces. This presence is gradually reshaping leadership norms in ways that make women's participation expected rather than exceptional.

Culturally, something deeper is shifting: the perception of women's authority. Knowledge that was once undervalued is being re-centered. Indigenous ecological knowledge held by women - on seeds, rainfall patterns, livestock care, and land regeneration - is now recognized as essential for survival and adaptation in a changing climate.

This is also reshaping relationships within households and communities. As women's economic and leadership roles grow, conversations around respect, shared responsibility, and joint decision-making are becoming more common. Men and elders are increasingly witnessing that when women lead, households become more stable and communities more resilient.

At its core, this transformation is not about replacing one form of power with another. It is about **restructuring power itself** - making it more distributed, more inclusive, and more responsive to lived realities of climate vulnerability and resilience.

Women are not waiting for permission to participate. They are actively defining the terms of participation, leadership, and accountability in their communities.

And in doing so, they are not only changing their own lives - they are reshaping the future of ASAL landscapes and governance systems.

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**WOMEN ARE INCREASINGLY DECIDING HOW MONEY IS USED, HOW SAVINGS ARE INVESTED, AND HOW RESOURCES ARE PRIORITIZED FOR FOOD SECURITY, EDUCATION, AND HEALTH.**

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Socially, their roles are expanding beyond the household into public and collective spaces. Women are now active contributors in community dialogues on drought response, land restoration, and resource governance. Their perspectives - once considered secondary - are now shaping priorities and influencing community action plans.

# ECONOMIC POWER

## From survival to self-determination



**In many of the communities where RAMAT is rooted, economic life is undergoing a quiet but profound transformation. What was once primarily a struggle for survival is increasingly becoming a pathway toward autonomy, dignity, and long-term self-determination.**

Women are no longer engaging in livelihoods only to meet immediate household needs; they are beginning to shape economic activities that reflect their priorities, knowledge systems, and visions for the future.

Across climate-linked and nature-based enterprises, women are building diverse and adaptive livelihood portfolios. Apiary production, fodder enterprises, kitchen gardens, small livestock rearing, and agroecological farming are not isolated activities - they are interconnected strategies of resilience. These practices are deeply grounded in local ecological knowledge and responsive to increasingly unpredictable climate conditions.

They allow women to work with nature rather than against it, turning environmental challenges into opportunities for sustainable income generation.

However, the most significant shift is not simply the presence of income - it is what income enables. For many women, the first layer of change is survival: the ability to feed families, pay for basic needs, and reduce vulnerability during droughts or economic shocks.

But as these livelihoods stabilize, a deeper transformation emerges. Income begins to translate into choice.

Choice is expressed in multiple ways. Women are deciding how earnings are used within households, moving from exclusion in financial decisions to active participation in budgeting and planning. They are prioritizing investments in children's education, healthcare, food security, and productive assets. In many cases, they are also challenging long-standing norms around financial control and resource allocation.

At the collective level, women's groups are becoming important economic actors in their own right. Through savings groups, cooperatives, and informal associations, women are pooling resources, accessing credit, and reinvesting in shared enterprises. These collective financial systems are not only strengthening economic resilience but also building trust, solidarity, and accountability among members. Money is no longer an individual resource alone - it is increasingly a shared instrument for collective advancement.

This shift also reflects a growing capacity for long-term thinking. Where economic activity was once dictated by immediate need, women are now engaging in planning and investment that extends beyond seasonal cycles. They are thinking in terms of sustainability - how to maintain livelihoods during drought, how to diversify income sources, and how to protect their families from future shocks.

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**ECONOMIC DECISIONS ARE BECOMING MORE STRATEGIC, MORE FORWARD-LOOKING, AND MORE GROUNDED IN RESILIENCE.**

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Importantly, this economic transformation is closely tied to dignity. Earning income through one's own labor and knowledge changes how women are perceived and how they perceive themselves. It strengthens confidence, voice, and bargaining power within households and communities. Economic contribution becomes a foundation for social recognition and influence.

Yet, this is not simply an economic story - it is a story of power. As women gain control over income and resources, they are also gaining control over decisions that shape their lives. Economic agency is expanding into social and political agency, enabling women to participate more actively in community governance, negotiate more equitable relationships, and advocate for their rights.

Ultimately, what is emerging is not just improved livelihoods, but a redefinition of economic life itself. It is shifting from a model of survival under constraint to one of self-determined growth rooted in local knowledge, collective action, and ecological sustainability. Through this transition, women are not only generating income - they are shaping new economies of care, resilience, and possibility.

# DECISION-MAKING POWER

## From consultation to influence

Across the communities where RAMAT is taking root, decision-making is undergoing a subtle but significant reordering. Authority is no longer concentrated in fixed, male-dominated spaces, nor is it experienced as something external to household and community life. Instead, decision-making is becoming more distributed, relational, and negotiated - shifting from token consultation toward meaningful influence.

At the household level, this change is particularly visible in everyday choices that shape wellbeing and survival. Decisions around food consumption, children's education, healthcare access, and livelihood investments are increasingly being made through shared discussion rather than unilateral authority. While this shift may appear incremental, it represents a profound reconfiguration of gender relations within domestic spaces. Women's voices are not only being heard - they are increasingly shaping outcomes.



This evolution reflects more than inclusion in discussion; it signals a growing recognition of women as knowledge holders and economic contributors whose perspectives are essential for household stability. In contexts of climate stress and economic uncertainty, lived experience has become a critical source of decision-making insight. Women's proximity to food systems, caregiving responsibilities, and resource management positions them as central actors in assessing needs and priorities.

As a result, decision-making is becoming more collaborative. What was once "decided elsewhere" is now being negotiated within shared spaces of responsibility. This does not mean conflict has disappeared; rather, it reflects a shift toward dialogue, bargaining, and mutual accountability within households. Authority is increasingly exercised through engagement rather than imposition.

At the community level, this transformation becomes even more visible. Women are moving from peripheral consultation roles to active participation in shaping collective priorities. Their voices are influencing decisions on water access, rangeland management, livestock survival strategies, and climate adaptation planning. These are not marginal concerns - they are central to the survival and resilience of pastoralist and rural livelihoods.

In community forums, women are increasingly raising issues that were previously under-prioritized or overlooked, such as distance to water points, the sustainability of grazing areas, and the impact of environmental degradation on household economies. Their contributions are reshaping how problems are defined and how solutions are designed.

Importantly, this is not only about participation in existing structures. It is also about reshaping those structures themselves. As women engage more consistently in decision-making spaces, expectations of who speaks, who leads, and whose knowledge counts are gradually shifting. Community planning processes are becoming more inclusive, and in some cases, more responsive to lived realities.

This growing influence is also linked to collective organization. Through women's groups, cooperatives, and local networks, women are strengthening their ability to articulate shared priorities and engage with local leadership from a position of coordination rather than isolation. Collective voice amplifies individual experience, making it harder for women's perspectives to be ignored or sidelined.

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**OVER TIME, THIS SHIFT IS REDEFINING WHAT INFLUENCE LOOKS LIKE. IT IS NO LONGER LIMITED TO FORMAL AUTHORITY OR VISIBLE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS. INSTEAD, INFLUENCE IS BEING EXPRESSED THROUGH PARTICIPATION, NEGOTIATION, PERSISTENCE, AND THE ABILITY TO SHAPE CONSENSUS WITHIN BOTH HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY SPHERES.**

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Ultimately, the movement from consultation to influence reflects a deeper transformation in power relations. Women are no longer positioned as passive recipients of decisions made by others. They are becoming active co-authors of those decisions - shaping not only what is decided, but how decisions are made, whose knowledge is valued, and what priorities define collective wellbeing.

# LEADERSHIP

## From participation to governance

In the communities where RAMAT is taking root, leadership is undergoing a fundamental redefinition. What was once framed as participation - often limited, symbolic, or advisory - is evolving into something far more substantive: governance. Women are no longer positioned at the edges of decision-making structures; they are increasingly embedded within the systems that shape priorities, allocate resources, and determine collective direction.



This shift is not simply about presence in leadership spaces. It is about the nature and quality of influence exercised within those spaces. Women are stepping into roles within savings groups, water committees, rangeland management forums, peace structures, and local development bodies where real decisions are made. These are not ceremonial positions. They are functional governance spaces where budgets are discussed, disputes are resolved, and community strategies are defined.

What distinguishes this transformation is that leadership is becoming practiced, not granted. Women are not waiting for formal recognition to lead; they are actively constructing legitimacy through consistent engagement, accountability, and results. Leadership is being earned through action - through organizing groups, managing resources transparently, resolving conflicts, and responding to community needs in real time.

Within these spaces, collective organization plays a critical role. Women are building leadership capacity not in isolation, but through shared structures that distribute responsibility and strengthen confidence. Group-based leadership models allow women to learn by doing - rotating roles, mentoring one another, and developing practical governance skills such as facilitation, negotiation, financial oversight, and community mobilization.

As these capacities grow, so does recognition. Women leaders are increasingly acknowledged by their communities not as symbolic representatives, but as effective decision-makers and problem-solvers. Their authority is grounded in trust - trust built through visible contribution, consistency, and responsiveness to community priorities.

This emerging leadership is also reshaping governance itself. Decision-making processes are becoming more inclusive and more accountable. Women are introducing new perspectives into local forums, particularly around issues that directly affect survival and wellbeing - water governance, livestock management, climate adaptation, food security, and household resilience. In doing so, they are broadening the agenda of governance beyond traditional or narrow concerns.



Importantly, this is not a linear or uncontested process. Leadership spaces are still shaped by existing power relations, cultural expectations, and structural inequalities. However, what is changing is the persistence and visibility of women within these systems. Over time, their continued presence is normalizing the idea that leadership is not gendered or exceptional - it is functional, shared, and necessary.

At the same time, women's leadership is increasingly collective rather than individual. Instead of isolated figures, leadership is emerging through networks of women who support, reinforce, and hold each other accountable. This collective dimension strengthens resilience and reduces the vulnerability of individual leaders to exclusion or backlash. It also ensures that leadership is rooted in shared priorities rather than personal advancement.

As a result, leadership is no longer being understood as a rare achievement for a few, but as a growing social norm within communities. More women are stepping forward, more spaces are opening, and more decisions are being influenced by women's perspectives and lived realities.



Ultimately, this transition from participation to governance represents a deeper structural shift. It is not just about women being included in leadership systems - it is about redefining what leadership is, how it is practiced, and who is recognized as a legitimate authority.

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**IN THIS EVOLVING LANDSCAPE, LEADERSHIP BECOMES LESS ABOUT POSITION AND MORE ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY, LESS ABOUT HIERARCHY AND MORE ABOUT COLLECTIVE STEWARDSHIP, AND LESS ABOUT EXCEPTION AND MORE ABOUT EVERYDAY GOVERNANCE GROUNDED IN COMMUNITY LIFE.**

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# SOCIAL NORMS

## Shifting the architecture of power

Perhaps the most profound transformation emerging through RAMAT is not only economic or political - it is deeply cultural. It is unfolding in the invisible but powerful architecture of social norms: the beliefs, expectations, and everyday practices that define who holds authority, whose work is valued, and who is seen as a legitimate decision-maker. These norms have long structured gender relations, often assigning leadership, mobility, and public authority to men while positioning women within private, supportive, or informal roles.



What is now shifting is not the immediate disappearance of patriarchal norms, but their increasing contestation in practice. In many cases, tradition still exists, but it is no longer unchallenged or unquestioned. Lived realities are creating new forms of legitimacy that coexist with, and gradually reshape, older cultural expectations.

A key driver of this shift is visibility. As women's contributions become more tangible and publicly recognized - through income generation, leadership in community groups, climate adaptation work, and household resilience strategies - the social perception of women's roles is changing. Economic participation, in particular, has a strong normative effect. When women contribute visibly to household survival and community wellbeing, the assumption that authority is exclusively male begins to weaken.

This does not happen in a linear or uniform way. Rather, it is negotiated daily within households and communities. Men, elders, and wider society are gradually confronted with evidence that women are not only participants in survival systems but central actors in shaping them. This lived evidence challenges long-standing assumptions about capability, authority, and dependence.

As a result, respect is increasingly being recalibrated. Where authority was once largely derived from age, gender, or tradition alone, it is increasingly being linked to demonstrated contribution, responsibility, and shared benefit. This does not erase cultural identity, but it does expand the criteria through which legitimacy is constructed. Women who contribute economically, lead groups, or manage community resources are increasingly recognized as legitimate voices in decision-making spaces.

Importantly, this shift is also relational. It is not only about women gaining recognition, but about how gender relations are being renegotiated. In some contexts, men are adapting by sharing decision-making space, supporting women's economic activities, or participating in more collaborative household arrangements. In others, resistance remains, reflecting the uneven and contested nature of norm change. Both dynamics are part of the same transformation process.

At the household level, gender norms around authority, labor, and decision-making are slowly being reworked. The assumption that men are sole decision-makers is being challenged by the reality of women's economic contribution and organizational leadership. This is creating new forms of negotiation within relationships, where decisions are increasingly made through discussion rather than unilateral control.

At the community level, norms around leadership and public voice are also shifting. Women speaking in public forums, managing collective resources, or representing groups in decision-making spaces is becoming more visible and, in some contexts, more accepted. While barriers remain, the presence of women in these spaces is gradually normalizing their participation as part of everyday governance rather than an exception to tradition.

This transformation is particularly significant because social norms are often the most resilient form of power - they are learned early, reinforced socially, and embedded in identity. Yet they are also adaptive. As new practices take root and demonstrate effectiveness, norms begin to evolve to reflect lived realities.

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**WHAT IS EMERGING, THEREFORE, IS NOT A SUDDEN REVERSAL OF GENDER RELATIONS, BUT A SLOW AND CUMULATIVE EXPANSION OF WHAT IS CONSIDERED SOCIALLY POSSIBLE. THE IDEA OF WHO CAN LEAD, WHO CAN DECIDE, AND WHO CAN SHAPE THE FUTURE IS BROADENING. AUTHORITY IS NO LONGER AUTOMATICALLY ASSUMED; IT IS INCREASINGLY BEING NEGOTIATED, EARNED, AND SHARED.**

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Ultimately, this shift in social norms represents a deeper restructuring of power itself. It signals a movement from inherited authority to demonstrated legitimacy, from rigid gender roles to more fluid and negotiated identities, and from exclusionary traditions to more inclusive and responsive social systems. In this evolving landscape, change is not only institutional - it is cultural, relational, and deeply human.



# INDIGENOUS WOMEN AS CLIMATE SOLUTION PROVIDERS

Across Indigenous and pastoralist landscapes, climate change is often described in global policy spaces as an external shock - an environmental disruption that arrives from outside local systems and demands technical adaptation. Yet within these same landscapes, the lived reality is fundamentally different.

For Indigenous women, climate change is not a distant phenomenon; it is **embedded in everyday life as a continuous negotiation with ecological variability, historical marginalisation, and increasingly constrained access to land, water, and livelihoods.**

This lived experience is not passive. It is generative. It produces knowledge, systems, and practices that are continuously refined through observation, labour, and intergenerational learning. In this sense, climate change becomes not only a condition of stress, but also a **space of innovation, adaptation, and ecological stewardship led by Indigenous women.**

Indigenous women are not simply experiencing climate impacts - they are actively **managing, reorganising, and rebuilding entire socio-ecological systems in response to them.**

Rather than viewing climate change as an external disruption alone, Indigenous women operate within it as system navigators - continuously adjusting food production, livestock management, water use, and community organisation to maintain balance in highly variable environments.

Their responses are not reactive in a narrow sense. They are strategic, relational, and embedded in deep ecological knowledge systems that have evolved over generations of living with uncertainty.



Indigenous women's climate leadership operates at the intersection of multiple systems. Their work cannot be neatly separated into sectors such as agriculture, environment, or social protection, because these domains are deeply interconnected in lived reality.

Their innovations simultaneously address:

- Ecological restoration (rangelands, soil, water systems)
- Food sovereignty (nutrition, seed systems, dietary diversity)
- Livelihood resilience (livestock systems, income generation, trade)
- Social organisation (collective labour, mutual aid, governance systems)
- Cultural continuity (language, knowledge transmission, Indigenous identity)

This integrated approach reflects a fundamentally different understanding of development - one that is **holistic, relational, and ecosystem-based rather than fragmented and sectoral.**

A central pillar of Indigenous women's climate leadership is their role as custodians and practitioners of **Indigenous ecological knowledge systems**, which function as living climate sciences.

This knowledge is:

- Observational, based on long-term interaction with ecosystems
- Adaptive, responding to shifting environmental conditions
- Intergenerational, transmitted through practice and storytelling
- Context-specific, deeply rooted in local ecological realities

It includes sophisticated understanding of:

- Seasonal cycles and weather forecasting
- Soil regeneration and land restoration techniques
- Animal behaviour as indicators of ecological change
- Seed selection and crop resilience strategies

Far from being static traditions, these knowledge systems are **dynamic, evidence-based, and**

**continuously tested through lived environmental engagement.**

Recognising Indigenous women as climate solution providers requires a fundamental shift in how climate leadership is understood.

It moves the narrative:

- From vulnerability > to ecological authority
- From participation > to system design
- From project implementation > to knowledge governance
- From external solutions > to Indigenous innovation systems

This is not symbolic recognition. It is a necessary correction in climate discourse that restores visibility to the **existing leadership, intelligence, and innovation already embedded in Indigenous women's daily practices.** Indigenous women are not peripheral actors in climate action - they are central architects of ecological continuity in some of the world's most climate-sensitive regions.

Through their daily labour, knowledge systems, and collective organisation, they are actively sustaining the conditions that make life possible under environmental stress. Their work is not fragmented into projects or sectors; it is a continuous system of **ecological care, food sovereignty, and climate resilience building.**

In recognising Indigenous women as climate solution providers, we shift from viewing them as recipients of change to acknowledging them as primary designers and custodians of living climate systems - systems that continue to sustain both people and ecosystems in the face of accelerating climate uncertainty.



## A) kitchen gardens: from scarcity to nourishment and sovereignty

Kitchen gardens are not simply household food plots - they are micro ecological restoration systems and feminist food sovereignty spaces led by Indigenous women.

From scarcity to nutrition and dignity

In arid and semi-arid lands, women are transforming limited water and land access into productive, climate-adaptive food systems that improve household nutrition and reduce dependence

on external food aid. These gardens directly address malnutrition while restoring dignity through self-reliance.

### Reclaiming control over food systems

Kitchen gardens are a quiet but powerful form of resistance to food insecurity. Women are:

- Regaining control over what is grown, eaten, and shared
- Reducing household vulnerability to market shocks and drought-induced scarcity
- Building localized food sovereignty systems grounded in community control

### Revitalizing Indigenous crops and ecological knowledge

Women are reintroducing drought-resistant Indigenous crops, seeds, and cultivation practices that are adapted to local ecosystems. This includes:

- Seed saving and exchange systems
- Intercropping techniques that preserve soil moisture
- Traditional water harvesting and soil regeneration practices

**Through this, kitchen gardens become sites of climate resilience, biodiversity protection, and cultural restoration.**



## B) fodder banks: restoring land, restoring livelihoods

Fodder banks represent a strategic innovation by Indigenous women in strengthening pastoralist resilience systems under increasing climate stress.

Women as rangeland regeneration leaders

Indigenous women are actively leading the restoration of degraded grazing lands through:

- Cultivation and storage of drought-resilient fodder species
- Strategic land management practices that reduce overgrazing pressure
- Community coordination of grazing reserves and seasonal fodder access

This positions women as rangeland managers and ecological planners, not just livestock caretakers.

### Reducing livestock loss during drought

Fodder banks act as climate shock absorbers. During drought periods, they:

- Prevent livestock starvation and distress sales
- Stabilize household income and food security
- Reduce conflict over scarce grazing resources

**This directly strengthens the economic foundation of pastoralist livelihoods.**

Strengthening pastoralist systems and mobility

Fodder banks reinforce traditional pastoral mobility by ensuring that livestock can survive seasonal and climatic variability. Women's leadership in this system ensures:

- Strategic planning of grazing cycles
- Reduced pressure on **fragile ecosystems**
- Strengthened community **resilience and cooperation**

Fodder systems are therefore not only agricultural innovations - they are climate governance tools rooted in **Indigenous pastoral knowledge**.

## c) Apiary Initiative: Culture, Income, and Biodiversity Restoration

Beekeeping is emerging as a powerful intersection of economic empowerment, ecological restoration, and cultural revival, led by Indigenous women.

Beekeeping as ecological and economic innovation

Apiary systems contribute simultaneously to:

- Household income generation through honey and wax production
- Pollination and restoration of local biodiversity
- Strengthening of ecosystem health and regeneration cycles

This positions women as bio-economy innovators within fragile ecosystems.

Reviving Indigenous ecological knowledge

Beekeeping is deeply embedded in Indigenous knowledge systems. Women are reviving:

- Traditional understanding of **flowering cycles and ecosystem signals**
- Indigenous bee-keeping practices using local materials
- Cultural meanings of bees as ecological indicators and life-givers

This reconnects climate solutions with cultural identity and ecological memory.

**Income generation linked to biodiversity protection**

Unlike extractive income systems, apiary initiatives create a **restorative economy**, where:

- The more ecosystems are protected, the higher the productivity
- Pollinators strengthen agricultural and wild biodiversity
- Women earn income while actively improving ecological conditions

This makes beekeeping a **regenerative livelihood system**, not just a market activity.

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**FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN, THE LAND IS NOT A RESOURCE - IT IS IDENTITY, MEMORY, AND SURVIVAL.**

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## BEHAVIOURAL AND SOCIAL NORM CHANGE



This outcome is central to the gender-transformative impact of the programme, as it addresses the underlying norms and attitudes that shape women's agency and participation in society. Change is expected to occur gradually across households, communities, and local institutions.

Key shifts include:

- **Growing support from men for women's leadership**, including increased recognition of women as decision-makers, public leaders, and contributors to community development.
- **Households transitioning toward more shared decision-making**, where women participate meaningfully in decisions related to income use, livestock, education, and family wellbeing.
- **Increased community recognition and value of women's knowledge and contributions**, particularly Indigenous and pastoralist women's ecological, economic, and social expertise, which has historically been undervalued.
- **Reduced resistance to women's economic independence**, including improved acceptance of women owning assets, engaging in income-generating activities, and controlling their own earnings.

Together, these shifts contribute to a gradual dismantling of restrictive gender norms and create an enabling environment where women's leadership, autonomy, and economic participation are normalized rather than contested.

# COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE AND COLLECTIVE POWER



This outcome focuses on strengthening inclusive, community-led governance systems where Indigenous women are not only participants but central actors in decision-making, accountability, and collective leadership.



Key shifts include:

- **Women's groups evolving into recognised centres of decision-making and accountability**, where priorities are identified, resources are managed collectively, and community action plans are shaped and monitored by women themselves.
- **Strengthened and more responsive community governance structures with women at the core**, including increased representation and influence of women in customary institutions, village committees, and local development forums.
- **More inclusive Indigenous governance systems**, where traditional leadership structures increasingly integrate women's voices, knowledge, and leadership roles in ways that reinforce legitimacy, equity, and community cohesion.

Overall, these changes reflect a shift from exclusionary or male-dominated governance toward more collective, participatory, and gender-responsive systems rooted in Indigenous values of shared responsibility and care.



# KEY OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

This section captures the broader, long-term transformations generated through the programme, demonstrating how ecological restoration, livelihoods, food systems, and governance are deeply interconnected through a gender-transformative and Indigenous knowledge lens.



The impacts reflect not only improved material conditions, but also strengthened social systems, resilience, and collective agency within pastoralist and Indigenous communities.

## a) Climate & Environment

The programme contributes to visible and sustained ecological regeneration in fragile rangeland ecosystems, reversing long-term degradation while strengthening climate adaptation capacities rooted in Indigenous stewardship practices.

- **Regenerated landscapes**, reflected in the recovery of degraded rangelands, restoration of grazing corridors 18 acres of land (7.43hectares), and revival of communal ecosystems through Indigenous knowledge systems such as rotational grazing, seasonal mobility planning, and sacred ecological stewardship practices. These regenerated landscapes improve productivity while restoring ecological balance.
- **Improved water retention and soil health**, achieved through community-led rangeland management, indigenous water harvesting techniques, soil conservation practices, and restoration of vegetation cover. These interventions reduce runoff and erosion, enhance groundwater recharge, and increase land resilience during drought periods.
- **Increased biodiversity**, demonstrated through the return and regeneration of native grasses, medicinal plants, pollinator species, and wildlife. This reflects improved ecosystem functionality and reduced pressure on natural resources through more sustainable and collectively governed land use systems.

## b) Food Security & Health

Strengthened food systems enhance nutritional outcomes, household resilience, and community health, particularly benefiting women, children, and vulnerable groups.

- **More diverse and nutritious diets through kitchen gardens and agroecological practices**, increasing year-round access to vegetables, legumes, herbs, and traditional Indigenous foods. This reduces reliance on market-based or relief-dependent food sources while strengthening cultural food sovereignty.
- **Reduced hunger and malnutrition**, especially among children and vulnerable households, driven by improved food availability, dietary diversity, and women's increased control over food production, preparation, and distribution within households.
- **Improved household and community health outcomes**, as better nutrition reduces susceptibility to disease, improves maternal and child health, and strengthens overall wellbeing. The revival of traditional foods and medicinal plants also supports Indigenous health knowledge systems.



**18** Acres of restored grazing land corridors



### c) Livelihoods & Economic Resilience

The programme supports inclusive economic transformation that reduces vulnerability to climate shocks, expands livelihood options, and strengthens women's economic agency.

- **Increased household income**, generated through women-led and community-based enterprises such as beadwork cooperatives, small-scale trade, poultry keeping, beekeeping, dairy value addition, and eco-enterprises. These income streams enhance financial stability and autonomy.
- **Diversified livelihoods beyond livestock dependence**, enabling households to reduce risk exposure during droughts and market disruptions. This diversification strengthens adaptive capacity and reduces economic vulnerability in climate-affected contexts.
- **Stronger local economic resilience and reinvestment cycles**, as women reinvest earnings into education, health, food security, and productive assets. This creates intergenerational benefits and strengthens community-level economic circulation.



### d) Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment is expressed through deep shifts in agency, leadership, visibility, and collective power, moving beyond participation toward transformative leadership.

- **Shift from participation to leadership**, where women transition from being passive recipients of development interventions to active decision-makers, innovators, and custodians of community wellbeing, natural resources, and social cohesion.
- **Increased confidence, voice, and visibility**, as women increasingly speak in public forums, negotiate household and community decisions, and influence development priorities. This visibility challenges long-standing norms that have excluded women from public leadership spaces.
- **Strengthened collective identity and solidarity among women**, enabling them to organise into strong groups and networks that advocate for rights, access resources, and collectively respond to social, economic, and environmental challenges.



### e) Governance

The programme strengthens inclusive, accountable, and culturally grounded governance systems where women's leadership is embedded and recognised as essential to community wellbeing and sustainability.

- **Women increasingly influencing local decision-making spaces**, including customary governance systems, natural resource management committees, peacebuilding structures, and community development forums. Their participation shapes more equitable and responsive decision outcomes.
- **More inclusive and accountable governance systems**, where women's voices contribute to fairer allocation of resources, improved conflict resolution, and more transparent community planning processes. This enhances trust between institutions and communities.
- **Enhanced legitimacy and resilience of Indigenous governance systems**, as the integration of women's leadership strengthens social cohesion, cultural continuity, and adaptive governance. Inclusive systems are better able to respond to environmental change and community needs.

### f) Scalability (Post-GEF Sustainability Pathway)

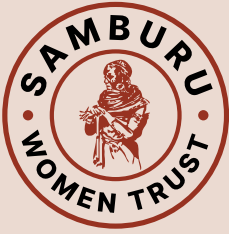
The programme is designed with long-term sustainability and scalability at its core, ensuring that impacts continue beyond the GEF funding period. Sustainability is anchored in community ownership, Indigenous financing mechanisms, and locally adaptable solutions that can be expanded across pastoralist and ASAL landscapes.

A key innovation for post-funding continuity is the role of the **Naapu Indigenous Women Fund**, which will be hosted and supported by Samburu Women Trust (SWT). This flexible and accessible financing mechanism enables women to independently initiate and sustain livelihood and climate resilience actions without restrictive application procedures, allowing them to present ideas and receive catalytic support. This approach shifts power directly to women as decision-makers and innovators.

Key dimensions of scalability include:

- **Strong community ownership ensuring sustainability**, as interventions are designed, led, and managed by community members themselves. This fosters long-term stewardship of natural resources, social accountability, and continuity beyond external funding cycles.
- **Low-cost, locally adaptable solutions**, grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems and existing community structures. These solutions require minimal external inputs and can be easily maintained, replicated, and adjusted according to local ecological and cultural contexts.
- **The Naapu Indigenous Women Fund as a sustainability and innovation engine**, providing flexible, trust-based financing for women-led ideas in climate adaptation, livelihoods, food systems, and social protection. By removing bureaucratic barriers, the fund enables rapid response, experimentation, and grassroots innovation.
- **Potential for replication across ASAL regions and Indigenous territories**, as the model is inherently adaptable to similar ecological and socio-cultural contexts. The integration of Indigenous knowledge, women-led governance, and flexible financing makes the approach highly transferable across pastoralist regions in Kenya and beyond.
- **Pathway for scaling impact through networks and peer learning**, where successful women-led initiatives are documented, shared, and adapted across communities, strengthening horizontal learning and collective advancement.

Overall, scalability is achieved not through expansion of external systems, but through strengthening Indigenous governance, women's economic agency, and community-led financing mechanisms that sustain and multiply impact over time.



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