



WOLTS Champions' Perspectives No.5

People listen to me now

By Rosa Olokweni

Rosa Olokweni is a herder from Mundarara village in Longido district, Arusha region, in northern Tanzania. She has been a gender and land champion since 2018, having participated in the local champions training programme led by Mokoro's WOLTS project with our Tanzanian NGO partners, HakiMadini – first in 2018-19 and then as a mentor to a new cohort of champions from 2020.

WOLTS Champions' Perspectives is a blog series in which community members share how they are supporting more inclusive, participatory and gender-equitable land governance in their local communities after taking part in the WOLTS champions training programme.

Before [HakiMadini](#) and [WOLTS](#) came to Mundarara, it was as though women in our village were sleeping. None of us was aware of our rights to land, many of us were mistreated by our husbands and we never spoke in meetings.

[Today women are much more confident to speak up and defend their rights.](#) Because we know our rights, men can no longer mistreat us. I know women who have been able to get land to work and take care of themselves after being left by their husbands, because they know their rights. And in my community, I am proud to say that people now listen to me.

For example, just a few months ago our village was in a difficult dispute with a neighbouring village, Olgira. People from Olgira who were living in an area that floods regularly wanted to move onto pastureland belonging to our village.

For many weeks there were meetings between the leaders of the two villages who were all men. They could not come to an agreement. Finally, the District Commissioner came, and women were also invited to attend.

This meeting also went on for a long time, but near the end the District Commissioner asked me and another woman to speak. I stood up and said that I understood the problem that our neighbours faced, but this is a problem that all villages face, and if we allowed them to move onto our land, the same would have to be done for all villages. We have a village land use plan, and we should stick to it. I felt sorry for the people living in the flooded areas, but we could not give them our land.

The District Commissioner immediately agreed with me, and that was the end of the matter. I think if they called on us women earlier, we could have saved a lot of time!



Rosa Olokweni, gender and land champion

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