



WOLTS Champions' Perspectives No.7

People are hungry for this knowledge

By Peter Sangeyon

Peter Sangeyon is a traditional leader from Mundarara village in Longido district, Arusha region, in northern Tanzania. He 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.

From 1995 to 2005 I was the village chairman, and I was a ward councillor for ten years after that. I was very pleased when the community selected me to be a **WOLTS** gender and land champion.

I have always supported the rights of all people, not just men, and I especially supported girls' rights to education. It has not been easy. Some men used to accuse me of being weak and questioned my right to receive the Oringa, or black stick, which is our traditional Maasai symbol of leadership.

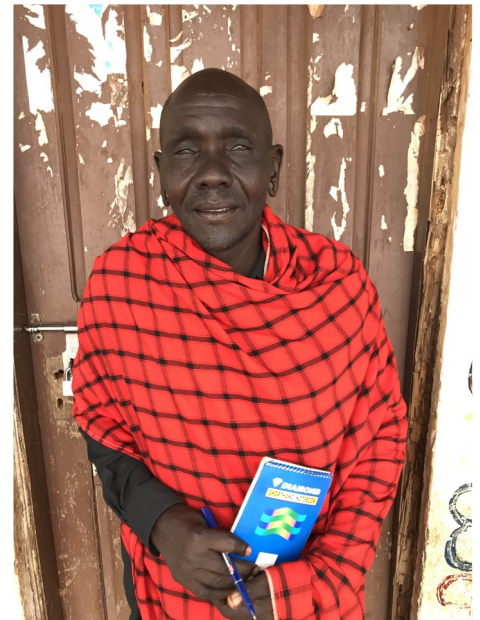
It was difficult to change things, especially when I wanted people to vote for me. But since that time the WOLTS training has given me more knowledge and confidence and now that I am retired, I can speak freely.

For example, now I am not afraid to speak about difficult issues such as gender-based violence, which most other men will not talk about. I talk to other traditional leaders about the need to support women's income-generation and respect their right to own and control resources. I have seen that when women have their own income, it benefits the whole family.

I also bring women into men's meetings. They have valuable perspectives and I insist that at least five women speak in every meeting. I have learned more about mistreatment of women, and the dangers of forced and early marriage. And I am supporting women to compete for leadership positions and to vote for the leaders they want.

These days, those who attack me are few. Many men support what I am doing, especially the younger generation. Women are also more confident, refusing early marriages and telling their families that they will marry when and whom they choose.

Sometimes I feel that I am like a lawyer, but without the law degree. I have learnt about the laws of Tanzania, and I can quote sections of the law when I need to. WOLTS has also taken me to other communities to share these messages and I really hope that this programme can continue to grow and spread. People are hungry for this knowledge – they need it.



Peter Sangeyon, gender and land champion

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