

TANZANIA

MBWENI CITIZENS ARMED WITH KNOWLEDGE:

Finding Hope in the Face of Climate Disasters. by Ellen Baragon



"We lost many possessions. Our house and walls were destroyed, and even our gates no longer worked, so we couldn't enter."

THOSE ARE SOME OF THE MEMORIES OF HARAJ BAKAI ALI, WHOSE FAMILY MOVED to the mbweni coastal community in Dar es Salaam when she was just eleven. Since then, she has witnessed the worsening effects of climate change, including multiple floods between 2014 and 2018 that devastated her home and community.

With support from EnviroCare and partner CUSO International, Haraj recently took part in climate and disaster mitigation training in Dar es Salaam. The sessions introduced her to the Participatory Assessment of Climate and Disaster Risks (PACDR) model — a tool that helps communities assess vulnerabilities and develop strategies to adapt to climate-related disasters.

"I only knew about flooding before," Haraj explains. "I had no idea other climate disasters could affect our community. This program opened my eyes to many challenges and solutions."

Now 19 and pursuing university studies, Haraj hopes to remain in Mbweni despite the risks, believing she can help her community adapt and thrive. "Through this training, I believe I can stand strong and help my community build a better and stronger Mbweni," she says.

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COMMUNITY LEADERS URGING ACTION

MR. HAMADI MUSA BAKARI, THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE Mbweni ward government. Mr. Bakari speaks frankly about the problems his community has experienced.

"The environmental challenges facing our village are floods, drought, and destruction of infrastructure," says Mr. Bakari, who explained the history of his area.

"Here we have a large coastal area and beaches, but the mangroves have already died. Rainwater and floodwater have been flowing into the sea, which has caused environmental destruction, damage to infrastructure, and even reduced the income of fishermen and the community.

"And the damage also included destruction of crops. The El Niño rains caused flooding, and some citizens who were engaged in vegetable farming saw their crops swept away by the water. Unfortunately, they fell into poverty.

"We are trying to find ways to protect ourselves," he says, "although we are weak. Because of poverty, we cannot manage everything by ourselves. Inside the community there are needs. We must organize at the neighborhood level. We must come together for support."



SAKINA MAIKO MGUNGURA, ANOTHER LOCAL Government representative from the Maputo neighborhood, also attended the PACDR training, and knows all too well the impacts of climate change in her community.

"Floods wash away crops, halt business, and disrupt transport and sometimes homes are destroyed." Tragically, she knows of at least one child who died from the impacts of flooding.

"This training had taught us how to educate and prepare our community to prevent future disasters."

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

The PACDR training equips communities with practical tools to adapt to climate change. Participants learned to identify resources, assess risks, and plan for safer, more resilient neighborhoods. They also gained skills in sharing knowledge with others, strengthening networks, and preparing for future disasters

"Education shouldn't stop here," Sakina adds "Leaders and teachers must continue raising awareness so our communities understand the causes of floods and how to respond effectively."

Through programs like this, communities like Mbweni are finding hope in the face of climate disasters — armed with knowledge, strategies, and a shared commitment to resilience.
