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THEME: Strengthening Research and Innovations for Climate Adaptation and Sustainable Development

Birthday celebrations with tree planting and impact on participants' attitudes towards climate change: The case of ACK Initiative in Taita, Kenya

Jaxon Shako Mtoto[1] & Daniel M Nzengya[2]
1, Master of Development Studies Student, St Paul's University,
2, Senior Lecturer, St Paul's University,
P. O. Private Bag, Limuru, 00217, Kenya.
Corresponding Email: dnzengya@yahoo.com

Abstract
Coastal areas are most vulnerable the effects of climate change, particularly sea level rise which has far reaching implications on urban areas and livelihoods, salt water inundation of freshwater sources, loss of coastal wetlands, and livelihoods. Environmental degradation exacerbates vulnerability and impacts. Kenya's costal area is no exception. In the recent decades, several religious institutions have begun to sensitize communities about global climate change and ways to build resilience and adaptation. However, few studies in Kenya have evaluated the impacts of interventions by the church. The purpose of this research was to compare knowledge about climate change, causes and potential adaptation strategies in Taita Taveta County. The target population were ACK parents and children who have adopted tree planting as part of their ways of celebrating birth days versus non-ACK participants who are not involved with any institutionalized tree planting activities. Data were collected using self-administered questions. Data were collected using questionnaires from 20 ACK members and 20 non-ACK participants. Preliminary results showed that compared to non-ACK participants, households involved in the birth day celebrations that involve tree planting were more aware and knowledgeable about global climate change, its causes, ways to mitigate the phenomenon and measures to adapt and minimize impacts. The results suggest that birth days with tree planting seem to enhance participants' environmental stewardship, with favorable consequences on adaptation and resilience. This bodes well with Kenya's policies aimed at promoting environmental stewardship in citizens. Further research is needed to understand what inspires knowledge and awareness about climate change, whether it is efforts on the parts of the participants to self-educate on benefits of trees, or it is the awareness from any form of educational ACK provides to participants. The Taita County environmental departments may also wish to partner with ACK to support participants to ensure trees planted are sustained. Deforestation is a huge challenge in Taita Taveta and other parts of Kenya's coastal areas, hence these findings demonstrate potential for ways non-state actors can mobilize communities towards efforts to undertake activities that enhance the country's efforts to mitigate climate change, but also ensure adaptation of livelihoods, particularly where impacts will be felt most.

Key words: Climate change knowledge, adaptation awareness and practices, green birth days, Taita Taveta County, Kenya