

Picture Power

**Capturing Stories of Change in Kenya
through Participatory Photography**

2015



Introduction

In March 2015, as part of an impact assessment process for Christian Aid's DFID PPA resilience programme in Kenya, we decided to give communities the opportunity and tools to capture and tell their own stories of change.

As part of the process, Christian Aid's photographer Matt Gonzalez-Noda visited seven communities - four in Makueni County, lower eastern Kenya and three in Marsabit County in northern Kenya - where he trained 23 community members as photo evaluators. This report features incredible stories of changes and challenges that the communities captured in photos that they took in their communities as well as data gathered as part of the wider outcome assessment activities.

Christian Aid's resilience work in Kenya.

Christian Aid has worked on secure livelihoods and humanitarian programmes in Kenya for many years. In 2011, thanks to new strategic funds available through Christian Aid's DFID PPA programme, Kenya began to pilot new approaches that blend both humanitarian and development work in what we call the 'thriving, resilient livelihoods' approach.

Why this approach? And what does this mean?

As we have seen over the years, parts of Kenya have become increasingly affected by environmental degradation, climate change, political turmoil, violence, and disasters like resource scarcity, livestock deaths and food shortages related to drought. These areas are inhabited by some of the most marginalized and poorest groups among the population. As their environment has become more complex and the crises more frequent, so people have become more vulnerable to them, not to say extremely dependent on emergency relief and aid. This is not sustainable, nor is it just. What's more, these more complex and frequent crises threaten to set back, if not wipe out all the progress we have achieved in our development work over the years.

It's not enough in today's complex development climate, therefore, to simply address people's needs. This only perpetuates a form of subsistence and basic survival and such a focus in the past has often led to dependency whilst undermining the agency and dignity of poor populations. Now more than ever, people living in these highly complex environments need to gain the ability not only to fight their way out of poverty, but also to cope with the many predictable and unpredictable challenges that frequently come their way like drought, floods, conflict, disease or loss of crops and livestock for example.

Christian Aid's thriving resilient livelihoods approach aims to enable marginalized communities do just that. Rather than providing for people's needs, Christian Aid believes that tackling poverty starts with putting people in charge of their own development - empowering them first to understand and find their own solutions to the risks they face and then bringing in or enabling support from outside where necessary.

Our thriving resilient livelihoods approach grew out of our years of experience working on disaster risk reduction, secure livelihoods, water projects and climate change adaptation, but rather than addressing these as separate issues, our resilience approach aims to empower communities to address all of these things and more based on the risks, disasters and opportunities specific to their environment.