

FACTSHEET: WEST POKOT COUNTY, KENYA

Shifting Power: How Male Allyship Transforms Women's Land Rights and Justice



1. OVERVIEW

The **Women Empowerment for Resilient Rural Areas (WE4R)** project, led by CARE Kenya with support from GIZ, advances women's land rights, access to productive resources and voice in decision-making through the **3Rs: Rights, Resources and Representation**.

In West Pokot County, CARE Kenya partners with the **Pokot Women Empowerment Organization (POWEO)** to address social and cultural barriers limiting women's **ownership, inheritance and decision-making over land**. Central to the approach is **male allyship - engaging men, elders, chiefs and local institutions as partners in transforming the systems that shape women's land rights and justice**.

2. THE CHALLENGE

In West Pokot, land represents **livelihood, identity, security and social power**. Yet despite constitutional protections, many women's land rights remain constrained by **patriarchal customs, male-dominated inheritance systems and customary decision-making structures**.

Women often access land through **husbands, fathers or brothers**, leaving them vulnerable to dispossession during widowhood, family disputes and succession. Limited legal awareness, weak land documentation, costly formal justice processes and male-dominated decision-making further restrict women's ability to **own, inherit and exercise control over land**.

THE POWER GAP

"Women are so much oppressed... they cannot say anything. In many areas, they still have no equal rights."

— Local administrator

3. TURNING TRADITION INTO TRANSFORMATION

Through WE4R, **POWEO recognised that sustainable change required engaging the people and institutions that shape land decisions.** Rather than working around traditional structures, the intervention worked with **men, the Pokot Council of Elders, chiefs and assistant chiefs, Land Control Boards and community mediators** as partners in advancing women's land rights.

With mentorship and evidence-based advocacy support through WE4R, POWEO strengthened its capacity to **document women's experiences, facilitate difficult conversations and engage traditional institutions strategically.** This approach sought to transform existing systems from within - forming the foundation of the **male allyship model**.

"In our culture, land belonged to men. Women could use it but not own it."
— Pokot elder

3.1 HOW CHANGE HAPPENED

A pathway of male allyship that transforms attitudes, strengthens institutions and advances women's land rights.



4. FROM GATEKEEPERS TO ALLIES

The Pokot Council of Elders

For generations, the **Pokot Council of Elders** has played an influential role in land allocation, inheritance and conflict resolution. While these customary systems have historically reinforced women's exclusion, engagement with POWEO through WE4R is helping transform traditional authority into **an ally for women's land justice**.

Elders are increasingly **including women's voices in mediation, supporting inheritance justice, referring women's cases for further assistance and using community platforms - including local radio - to promote women's land rights.**

THE SHIFT

The same structures that once reinforced women's exclusion are increasingly becoming platforms for advancing their rights and justice.

"Now we ensure that a woman's voice is heard in the decision-making process."

— Pokot elder



5. IMPACT & RESULTS

Shifting Power at Multiple Levels

- **WOMEN | GREATER VOICE & AGENCY**

Greater awareness of inheritance rights, increased confidence to report land disputes and stronger participation in mediation processes.

- **COMMUNITIES | SHIFTING SOCIAL NORMS**

More open dialogue on women's land rights is reducing stigma around women claiming inheritance and strengthening acceptance of women's voices in family and community decisions.

- **INSTITUTIONS | STRONGER JUSTICE PATHWAYS**

Stronger collaboration between POWEO, chiefs, elders and Land Control Boards, alongside improved referrals between customary and formal justice systems.

"Before, I thought I had no right to land... but now I know I can speak up and claim it."

— Woman participating in a community session

From Social Legitimacy To Sustainable Change

Change is becoming embedded within community systems people already trust - strengthening mediation pathways, collaboration between customary and formal institutions, and recognition of women's rights within traditional structures.

6. THREE LESSONS FROM WEST POKOT

Key takeaways for advancing women's land rights and justice through male allyship and community transformation.

01



TRANSFORMING NORMS REQUIRES ENGAGING THOSE WHO HOLD POWER

Women's empowerment is essential, but deeply rooted land norms cannot shift without engaging men and the traditional actors who influence inheritance, land allocation and community decision-making.

02



TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS CAN BECOME ALLIES FOR JUSTICE

Customary structures are not necessarily fixed. When engaged respectfully and strategically, elders, chiefs and community justice actors can help strengthen women's voice, inheritance rights and access to justice.

03



LEGAL RIGHTS ARE STRONGER WHEN THEY HAVE LOCAL LEGITIMACY

Formal protections alone are not enough. Women are better able to exercise their rights when community norms and trusted local institutions recognise and reinforce those rights.



FROM GATEKEEPERS TO ALLIES

West Pokot shows that changing systems also means changing the people and institutions that hold power within them.

7. PARTNERS

GIZ, Care Kenya, Pokoto Women Empowerment Organisation (POWEO), Pokot Council of Elders, chiefs and assistant chiefs, Land Control Boards and community mediators.

