



MVIWATA News

Monthly Bulletin of MVIWATA

Issue Number 33 July 2013

Editorial

In July 2013, MVIWATA celebrated its 20th Anniversary and this issue highlights this event.

20 years in the life of an institution is not a long time, yet it is a reasonable time to reflect the past, the present and the future.

Looking back, one will realise that the 20 year journey has not been easy and this made the celebration sensible.

The organisation has grown step by step from a small membership to reach nearly 150,000 and have actions, whose benefits reach nearly 2 million persons; from the voiceless to the voiceful as a result of vast voice platform it has created and thus leading to recognition of the small-holder farmers.

The milestones achieved so far are worth cherishing although there is a long way to go.

The context has changed so much since MVIWATA was formed leaving small holder farmers more uncertain.

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Joy and jubilation as MVIWATA celebrates its 20th anniversary in kind

By a Staff Writer

Morogoro. We all have birthdays! Days that mark certain definite period of time of our existence. And so it was for Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania (MVIWATA) this July on 23rd through 26th, 2013, when it was turning 20 years since its establishment.

It was a storm of both joy and jubilation seeing what started as a 22-small farmers' organisation bringing together hundreds of its devoted members from across the country to mark this special day that was well attended with



Board of directors and Senior officials of MVIWATA receiving the Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Dr Garib Billal who was the guest of honour to the last day of MVIWATA's 20th Anniversary ceremony in Morogoro

—far reaching impact.

If it was for a human being, twenty years would mean a full matured person. To MVIWATA, this year's annual general meeting and the 20th anniversary has suitably depicted its maturity and perseverance by not only gathering and networking hundreds of participants but also

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...editorial

The orientation of the current agricultural policies most of which has become non-friendly to smallholder farmers pose a huge challenge to smallholder farmers.

Increasing competition over land and water resources, which has often led to displacement of smallholder farmers and pastoralists; lack of proper and adapted system to finance smallholder farmers; inadequate services, marketing policies are a few examples of the challenges, whose answers are yet to be found.

Therefore, with such context the role of MVIWATA becomes even more crucial than before since the unity of stallholders farmers is more vital now.

It is thus the aspiration of MVIWATA to become even stronger, expand its membership and its capacity to serve the members and respond promptly to issues in question that relate to the welfare of smallholder farmers.

That is, indeed, our vision and mission.

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...MVIWATA marks 20th anniversary

- conducting a series of informative workshops on topics of smallholder farmers' interests. The event drew over 1500 participants, mainly representatives of the government, partners, development organisations and members .

The occasion kicked off on 23rd July, as the initiation of the anniversary and the day for the 18 annual general meeting, whereby the former Prime Minister, Frederick Sumaye graced the event here in Morogoro.

Among other things, Hon. Sumaye insisted that if the country was serious with the agriculture sector, it was necessary that small farmers are involved in all process of drafting agricultural programmes and policies for them to have tangible results.

Regarding the prevailing land conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, the guest of honour urged them to end their disputes by following proper channels and shun all people that were fueling conflicts knowing that such fights would hinder farmers from attaining green revolution and alleviating poverty in their communities. He reminded the government to take such disputes very seriously together with other challenges facing farmers and guaranteeing them conducive producing

environment while ensuring country's food security. Mr.Sumaye further urged that it was important for the on-going constitutional review process to take account of the small-holder farmers' suggestions through their apex body-MVIWATA, since farmers comprise large part of this country population and thus they were not a group to ignore. Earlier, the MVIWATA Board Chairman Habibu Simbamkuti, explained that farmers were delighted seeing their organ that was established two decades ago sailing through enormous challenges but significantly making changes to small-scale famers as individual and in their groups. Giving a thanking remarks to the guest of honour, the Executive Director Me. Stephen Ruvuga said that the big worry among smallholder farmers in the country was the trend of current agricultural policies that seems to embrace and prefer foreign investors while fueling land grabbing. After the opening of the 18th Annual General Meeting of MVIWATA, members went through the minutes of last year's meeting and endorsed it. They also went through organisation's Annual and audited-financial reports for the year 2012.



Former Prime Minister, Hon. Frederick Sumaye

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MVIWATA holds AGM & a two-day workshop at its 20th anniversary

Later in the day, the Executive Director unveiled to members the MVIWATA Annual work plan for 2013/14, which was the final plan from the organisation's Strategic Plan ending next year. The annual work plan entails to strengthening farmers' groups and networks, enhancing lobbying and advocacy activities, empowering farmers economically and on cross-cutting issues as well as to strengthening MVIWATA as a recognisable farmers' organisation.

On 24-25 July 2013 there was a series of workshops in which a number of prominent speakers were invited. The speakers, presentations followed by questions and answers centered around small holder producers,



The MVIWATA Head of Finance and Administration Ms Mercy Kingu making a point on audited financial report of 2012 before members during recent Annual General Meeting



policies and the place and roles of small holder producers in the national economy.

Place of small holder farmers in decision making process was the first topic of discussion on the first day of workshop, whereby it was raised that farmers were not involved full in processes of drafting different policies and programmes concerning agriculture despite the negative impacts they will have to them.

"It is obvious that agriculture is sole and core business of farmers, thus any new policy drafted by the government should either improve agriculture or at least have zero effect to farmers....They must be consulted and empowered to analyse pros and cons of any policy before it's enacted," said Prof. Amon Mattee of Sokoine University of Agriculture in his presentation.

In his presentation, Mr Bashiru Ally, a lecturer at University of Dar es Salaam urged farmers to keep the momentum of struggling for their rights until their voices are heard. He said that the country was yet to attain substantial economic growth just because farmers making 80 percent of the population have been forgotten in the process. At the workshop, former Rukwa Regional Commissioner Daniel Ole Njoolay got an opportunity to share his experience as both a leader and a farmer and challenged farmers to embrace technology so as the can boost productivity. As a way to enhancing collaboration between workers and farmers in the country, the Trade Union Congress of Tanzania (Tucta) Secretary General Nicholas Mgaya got chance to salute farmers and motivated them to continue standing for their rights knowing that no one else will do that for them.



The Trade Union Congress of Tanzania (Tucta) secretary General

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.....Experts and prominent speakers engage smallholder farmers on topical issues

Among other key speakers on workshops, was the Chairman of the Tanzania Constitutional Forum- Deus Kibamba, who faulted the current Constitution Draft for having forgotten farmers and for not being clear on matters of high importance to small holder farmers.

"Going through this constitution draft, there is a section stipulating rights of different groups in the society but there is no single section specifically stating farmers rights, this is wrong," he said.

On his part, Executive Director of HakiArdhi, Yefred Myenzi talked about necessity of ensuring security to farmers so as they can do their daily activities without worrying to be evacuated from their land.

Summing up of matters raised during a two day-workshop, Mr Ruvuga said that it was high time that farmers stood up together strongly and stay organised and through their organisation, they won't be shaken or exposed to any injustice such as land grabbing and the like.

"It is upon us to get a desire and seek to be involved in all the on-going national processes such as constitutional review and other economic development instead of sitting back and lament for having been left in these processes."

He insisted on farmers to increase collaboration among themselves and enhance relation with other stakeholders. Farmers should also protect their arable land and water sources and that they should participate fully in the councils to review the constitution and voice out their views.



FROM TOP LEFT 1. Mr Harold Sungusia, Director of Advocacy and Reforms at Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) **2.** Prof.Amon Mattee of SUA **3.**Ms Agnes Lukanga of TGNP and **4.** Mr.Deus Kibamba, Chairman of Tanzania

How MVIWATA demonstrations rocked Morogoro central business district



The Marching Day

The fourth day, the 26th July was the peak of celebrations in which there were number of social events including sports, voluntary testing arranged. But they were preceded by the marching toward Jamhuri Stadium, where by his excellence Vice President of United Republic of Tanzania received the participants.



AT THE TOP: Joyful MVIWATA members demonstrating along the Morogoro town roads heading to Jamhuri Stadium

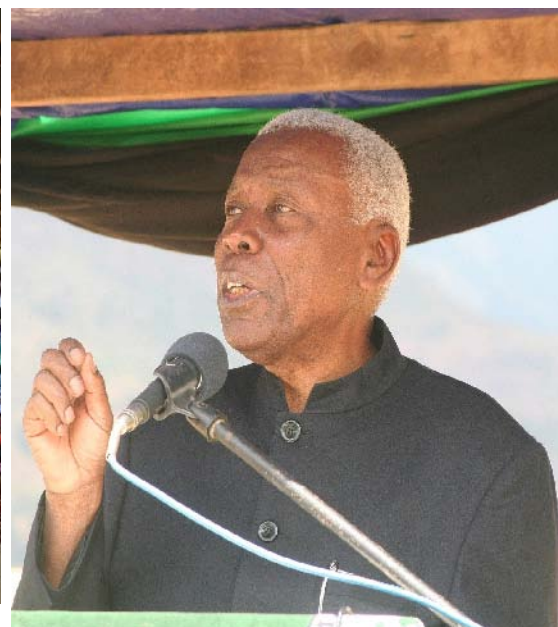
BELOW: Section of MVIWATA members keenly listening to speech of guest of honour-Vice President of United Republic of Tanzania, Dr Gharib Billal

Dressed in white t-shirts, caps and women wrapped in green *Vitenge* with MVIWATA logo and words expressing the 20th anniversary, farmers gathered at the MVIWATA headquarter premises from early morning of the last day to get prepared for the event. And at exactly 10 am, well-dressed, cheerful and energetic farmers holding placards written different key messages flocked the Station Road ready for demonstration toward the stadium.

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.....Peak of MVIWATA 20th anniversary ceremony; The Day that was!

They sang harmoniously as they marched behind a blast-band along the Mwere-Masika-Down Town roads in a friday scorching sun heading to the stadium, where the event would come to an end. The lines were long and thus overwhelming the central business district. Actually, businesses and people along the roads of Morogoro town came to standstill as everyone sought to recognise what the huge joyful crowd was before they could join them for marching. After entering the Jamhuri Stadium, demonstrators walked majestically with their well-written placards in front of the guest of honour as they took a U-turn and climbed the stages to occupy seats.



In his speech, His Excellence Dr Mohamed Gharib Billal commended MVIWATA for organising such ceremony as it was also a day to celebrate its landmark achievement since its establishment.

"Today is a special day for MVIWATA and you have every reason to celebrate. Organising a series of events like this, shows how well you are positioned to unify and defend small holder farmers' rights in the country," he said.

He said, the government was aware that for the past two decades, MVIWATA has done a lot to support farmers in the country,



TOP: His excellency Dr. Gharib Billal addressing MVIWATA members looking on at Jamhuri Stadium.

BELLOW: Dodoma traditional dancers performing during ceremony

.....The Day that was!

....By doing so, it is obvious that you are participating fully and adding to government endeavours to eradicate poverty in the country. Agriculture remains to be a large sector by employing many Tanzanians despite the fact that it was still crammed full with numerous challenges," he said.

Earlier, the MVIWATA Executive Director, Stephen Ruvuga, reading the speech of MVIWATA to the guest of honour, expressed his gratitude for him accepting request to grace the event adding such was a demonstration of great nobility that the government had to farmers. He said that smallholder farmers were happy the fact that the President of United Republic of Tanzania allowed the initiation of constitutional review process however, he said, there were fears among them that their positions in forming the Constitution Parliament could be taken by individuals who are not smallholder farmers.

Lastly, the occasion was concluded by series of different sports such as football, rope-pulling, chicken-chasing in the stadium. The games involved MVIWATA staff, board of directors and teams of members from across the country.

TOP DOWN: 1. Executive Director inspects MVIWATA members football teams before the tournament

2. Some of MVIWATA Board Members in a rope-pulling challenge

3. We thank you for walking with us!

