

# RECOGNIZING LAND RIGHTS FOR THE COMMUNITY TO CONSERVE AND DEVELOP LOCAL RESOURCES

By Kim Assaël

Edward Loure has won the [2016 Goldman Environmental Prize](#) for the extraordinary work of having recognized land rights for a whole indigenous community in Tanzania.



With his non-profit [Ujamaa Community Resource Team](#) (UCRT) he discovered they could repurpose the Tanzanian Village Land Act which contained the legal basis to recognize land rights on behalf of the community. Taking advantage of this legal basis, the concrete work for the recognition of this right began with the indigenous Hadzabe community who live in the region around the lake Eyasi in the [Serengeti](#) Plateau, in northern Tanzania.



In 2016 they achieved that 1200 people would carry out their activities in 200,000 acres of land. The success of the UCRT encouraged other communities to take the same path and in 2017 it is expected to achieve the recognition of the Community rights over other 800,000 acres of land.



The land surroundings the Tarangire National Park is [known for its vast concentrations of wildlife](#), the spectacular annual migrations of its elephants, wildebeest and zebra, and its majestic old baobab trees. The establishment of national parks, in addition to providing benefits for the protection of wildlife and related tourism, led to disruption of customary land tenure and traditional land management practices.



The increased competition for the land use has not only altered the balance of the ecosystem, but also generated a large displacement of the indigenous population, whose existence and livelihoods had played a key role in protecting the wildlife and environment.

In this region of Tanzania, communities of pastoralists and hunter-gatherers have sustainably lived off the land for generations, with a sustainable use of land resources, in coexistence with the migrations of native



wildlife. Maasai communities move their herds according to the seasons, taking care not to overgraze the savannahs and share resources of space and pasture with the wild animals. They are renowned keeping the ecosystem in balance and their traditional know-how in burning and grazing rangelands whilst preventing cultivation across large areas has shaped the Serengeti landscape over the course of the last centuries.

The UCRT has started the work to obtain the first recognition of land community customary rights in the which allows a stable recovery of the eco-system services of human, animal, natural resources management that characterizes traditional indigenous know-how. The Masai and Hadzabe communities can apply their system of balanced management of pastures and crops and effectively protect large tracts of land, free from human use for most of the year, in order to help conserving wildlife population. Assuring this balance, a more responsible tourism is enhanced and a sustainable development in rural Tanzania can be stimulated.

Thanks to this recognition the tribes can continue to live sustainably on their ancestral lands where Certificates of Customary Right of Occupancy (CCROs) have been established for the entire community allowing the management of their ancient lands, and to be in charge of managing conservation projects. Some Hadzabe communities have also formed successful partnerships with the [Carbon Tanzania](#) mission, for community-based conservation activities, receiving carbon credits to help pay for schools and medical care to protect and conserve their lands.

The use of the legal framework for the community land recognition implemented by Edward Loure and its organisation in northern Tanzania achieved a great interest in the country and internationally, as proven by the *Goldman environmental award* and the wide coverage in the international press.

In different countries still exist legal frameworks to ensure community land rights and other basic goods and the northern Tanzanian experience has proven to be an outstanding example of community environmental stewardship to inspire recovering similar practices, to obtain a sustainable management of natural resources, to reduce poverty and safeguarding biodiversity.

#### To know more

[Ujamaa press release](#)

[Case study in Ujamaa-crt.org website](#)

[Goldman Environmental Prize ceremony](#)



[Godman Prize Winners](#)

[Goldmanenvironmentalprize in Facebook](#)

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[Article in voicesnationalgeographic.com](#)

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