

WATERED HOPE

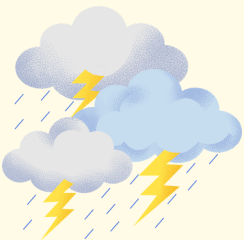
Yaralima Domokwang: The Man Who Carved Hope from Limestone



Yaralima Domokwang

In the quiet hills of Mochowon Village, West Pokot, the year 2019 is remembered not for the harvest, but for the day the earth moved. Weeks of relentless rain turned the familiar slopes into a chaotic tide of mud and debris. Landslides and floods tore through the valley, burying the lush trees and fertile farmlands that the community had relied on for generations. When the waters finally receded, they left behind a landscape of despair. Livelihoods were gone, and the few remaining water sources were choked with silt and rocks. For the families of Mochowon, the future looked as barren as the mud-slicked fields.

Triggered by an intense, twelve-hour downpour on November 22 and 23, massive landslides and mudslides swept down the steep hillsides of Pokot Central and Pokot South. This extreme rainfall was driven by an exceptionally strong positive Indian Ocean Dipole, a climate phenomenon that made the late 2019 rainy season one of the wettest recorded in East Africa in 40 years, with rainfall totals reaching up to 400% of the seasonal average.

The Crisis	Local Action	Water Restored	Community Resilience	Lasting Impact
				

The Scale of the Crisis

According to humanitarian assessments compiled by the Kenya Red Cross Society and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, known as UN OCHA, the impact was catastrophic. Nationwide, the floods and landslides affected over 160,000 people, leaving nearly 18,000 individuals displaced across thirty-one of Kenya's forty-seven counties. At the epicenter in West Pokot, the disaster was particularly severe. Landslides buried entire residential structures, claiming the lives of 72 residents and displacing over ten thousand people across the county. The worst-affected villages spanned Nyarkulian, Parua, Sebit, Tamkal, Muino, and Batei.

The vulnerability of West Pokot to these events is heavily exacerbated by geographical and environmental factors. As a semi-arid land characterized by high altitudes and steep mountain slopes, the area is naturally susceptible to soil instability. Severe soil erosion and progressive deforestation have stripped the hillsides of root structures, meaning that when torrential rains hit, the soil quickly liquefies and collapses. For the subsistence farming community of Mochowon Village, located within the Sebit area, the 2019 disaster washed away vital topsoil, destroyed residential dwellings, and completely choked local water sources with mud and heavy boulders, plunging families into an acute humanitarian crisis.

A Personal Sacrifice

As the village struggled to find its footing, one elder, Yaralima Domokwang, refused to wait for a miracle. Yaralima had spent years working hard, selling limestone to build up a small nest egg of KES 200,000. While others might have used that money to secure their own family's comfort during the crisis, Yaralima saw a deeper need.

"I saw my people suffering, and I knew I had to do something," he recalls. "I didn't have much, but I believed that if we could bring water back to our farms, we could grow food again".

Armed with his savings and a vision, he gathered a small team of neighbors. Together, they began the grueling work of hand-digging a furrow to channel water from a distant river back to the parched village. It was a heroic effort, but the path was difficult. Without proper reinforcement, the handmade channel was fragile, vulnerable to the next heavy rain and constantly blocked by debris.

Yaralima's determination eventually caught the eye of Leah Psiya, the Executive Director of the Pokot Women Empowerment Organization (POWEO). Inspired by his grit, POWEO supported by the ASAL Humanitarian Network (AHN) and funded by Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP) stepped in to turn his vision into a permanent reality.

With a grant of KES 250,000, the project shifted gears. What began as a hand-dug trench was transformed with concrete lining and reinforced intake points to withstand the elements. The furrow was extended, reaching further into the village, the local market, and the schools. But the most important change wasn't made of concrete; it was made of knowledge. The community was trained in climate-smart farming and established a collective savings fund to ensure they would never have to rely on a single man's savings again.

Green Fields and New Beginnings

Today, the dust of the 2019 landslides is a fading memory, replaced by the vibrant green of thriving farms. The transformation has been profound.

Water Access



Harvests Return



Community at the Heart



"Before this project, we had nothing," one community member shares. "Now, we have enough to eat and even sell. Our children can afford to go to school".

The Power of the Local Voice

Yaralima's story is a powerful reminder of Supporting Community-Led Response (sclr) philosophy. It proves that the most effective humanitarian solutions don't come from the outside, they are often already there, waiting in the heart of a local elder or a women's group.

In Mochowon, what started as one man's sacrifice has grown into a community-led movement. It is a story of how a village turned a crisis into an opportunity, proving that while external support can provide the tools, true change always starts from within.

Contact

For feedback, partnerships, or further information, please feel free to contact us at info@asalnetwork.org.

ASAL Humanitarian Network supports locally led humanitarian action and community resilience across Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, working with 30 local organisations and communities in 10 ASAL counties in Kenya (Baringo, Samburu, Westpokot, Isiolo, Marsabit, Wajir, Mandera, Garissa, Tana River and Turkana) to strengthen sustainable responses to crises.

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