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Building on Local Pastoralists' Knowledge for Effective Management of the Arid and Semi-Arid Areas

Author(s): Deborah Namayi Muricho¹, David Jakinda Otieno², Willis Oluoch-Kosura³, Magnus Jirstrom⁴

Affiliation: ^{1,2,3}Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nairobi, Kenya; ⁴Department of Human Geography, Lund University, Sweden

Corresponding author's email address: deborahmuricho@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Pastoralists' Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and practices enables them to make good use of resources within the rangelands for livestock production.

In order to preserve and incorporate IK into development interventions, there is need to understand the critical role that IK plays in the overall process of sustainable development.

This study documents indigenous knowledge and practices and their role in effective management of commonly shared resources in the semi-arid West Pokot County in Kenya.

MATERIALS | METHODS

Data was collected from:

- Key informants' interviews,
- Focus group discussion (FGD)
- Individual surveys of 191 households.
- Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data.



Figure 1: Traditional Forage Conservation



Figure 2: Indigenous Ballanites spp fodder tree

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RESULTS

IK helps pastoralists adapt to shocks such as droughts and livestock diseases

	Manifestation of IK	% of households practicing the IK (n=191)	Usefulness in Promoting Sustainability
Rangeland Management	Transhumant movement	49%	- Enables extensive utilization of seasonal vegetation found in the rangelands during drought.
	Enclosing grazing land	92%	- Allows revegetation, halting soil erosion and reversing land degradation. - Conserves standing pasture for use during dry season
Herd Management	Herd Splitting	50%	- Reduces competition reducing overgrazing and land degradation
	Seasonal altering herd composition of grazers and browsers	91%	- Reduces risk of livestock mortality due to pasture scarcity during droughts
Livestock Feeding	Traditional pasture conservation (Figure 1)	42%	- Smoothens livestock feed availability all year round
	Indigenous browse trees as feed supplement (Figure 2)	92%	- Maintain livestock productivity due to their high nutritive value
Ethno veterinary management	Feeding livestock with wild medicinal herbs	89%	- Prevents mortality due to livestock diseases
	Taking livestock to naturally occurring salt licks	81%	- Enhances livestock health by providing the needed minerals

CONCLUSIONS

- IK is an important asset to pastoralists in the management of drylands and mitigate effects of shocks such as drought.
- Interventions aimed at mitigating losses during drought can build on IK practices of herd management to promote off-take before droughts and restocking during normal conditions.
- IK can be strengthened through capacity building in areas such as fodder production and conservation. Documenting and integrating IK in formal training curricula is critical.
- There is need to recognize and formalize customary institutions that define access and use of land and other resources in the rangelands.

LITERATURE CITED

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