



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
Institute for Development Studies (IDS)

RARE
Rights and Resilience in Kenya



Supporting
pastoralist adaptation to
CLIMATE CHANGE IN KENYA:
Beyond a “one-size-fits all” approach



Policy Brief

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WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

To address pastoralists adaptation pathways, there is a need to understand the heterogeneity of pastoralists and unpack their needs in order to strengthen their adaptation pathways during drought periods.

Policy approaches to meet this goal:

There is need to align adaptation policies to conform and support pastoralists own adaptation strategies and needs.

Adaptation plans can be developed through bottom-up processes at county and community level considering the heterogeneity of wealth categories and land tenure systems of pastoralists.

Local adaptation planning should consider the composite nature of adaptation strategies pursued by pastoralists.

Pastoralists adaptation in the context of wider changes in livelihoods and land tenure rights

Environmental and social-economic dynamics continue to threaten pastoralist adaptation, particularly in Africa. Despite the heterogeneity of pastoral groups, informed by context-specific ecological, geographical, ethnic, and social-political dynamics, policymakers, academics, and practitioners have the tendency to view pastoralism as a homogeneous entity. This assumption has informed policy and practice on adaptation strategies in the past. Little attention has been made, if any, to the existing socio-economic stratification and changing land tenure rights among pastoral groups. Pastoral groups in Kenya, such as those in Kajiado County present a case study of the deep-seated heterogeneity between pastoralist households in terms of land tenure (referring to access, use, and ownership of land and its associated resources). Policies on pastoralist adaptation to climate change seldom pay attention to these disparities, yet these are fundamental to ensuring the resilience of pastoral society in the future. The socio-economic heterogeneities influence pastoralists' access, use, and ownership of resources and their adaptive capacity towards climate variability, as witnessed in Kajiado County.

Tenure changes in Kajiado County, home to the pastoral Maasai community, have a deep historical basis. Prior to the late 19th century, pastoralists used these and other spaces in open-access tenure arrangements. From the late 1800s until the mid-1950s, these range-lands were under colonial control, which paved the way for communal ownership and access in the 1960s. Between the 1970s and 1990s, the majority of the land, including Kajiado County, was used under group ranch tenure arrangements that rapidly became subdivided into individual properties, which heralded the influx of increasing land demands amongst non-Maasai individuals, corporations, and land-buying companies, taking advantage of the lucrative land market thanks to a rapidly expanding Nairobi Metropolis. Notably, therefore, the last 150 years have witnessed massive land tenure changes that, coupled with the increasing effects of climate change on the Kajiado pastoral society, present both challenges and opportunities for adaptation. Nowadays, at least in the last two decades, pastoralists in Kajiado County have varying mechanisms of accessing and using land, as mediated by differences in wealth as well as cultural norms that influence gendered resource ownership and entitlement. Privatization and the land market in Kajiado County have left poorer households with little space for pasture, while richer families (with large land holdings) use the proceeds from land sales, leases or crop cultivation to support their livestock adaptation. Evidently, wealth, in whatever form, also influences resource accumulation and diverse adaptation trajectories. Support for climate change adaptation therefore, must take these factors into account rather than addressing pastoralist adaptation as an isolated action. There is a need for climate change adaptation interventions to be understood in the context of wider changes in land tenure and local livelihood dynamics.





Image: www.pexels.com

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Contextualizing Pastoralists' Land rights and adaptation opportunities

Although access to and use of land is key for pastoralist adaptation, such access is mediated via existing land tenure rights – formal or informal. Different land tenure systems offer different opportunities for pastoralists to adapt to climatic conditions. On the one hand, whereas communal tenure allows pastoralists to freely graze their livestock around during the dry and wet periods, private tenure enables pastoralists to explore other adaptation options, such as paddocking and harvesting hay for use during the drought periods. On the other hand, communal tenure is becoming more beneficial to the richer livestock owners, leaving the poorer livestock owners to suffer most as the droughts persist and as they maximize their smaller parcels of land holdings. On the other hand, private tenure curtails adaptive free-range mobility during dry periods and leads to the marketization of resources during periods of drought.

Need for differentiated support for different types of strategies are needed, rather than “one-size fits all”.

For successful implementation of any choice of climate adaptation strategy, pastoralists need access to and use of resources. Mediated by existing social-economic and cultural norms, access, however, influences pastoralists' adaptive capacity. In this context, tenure systems and associated rights present different opportunities for pastoralists to access resources for adaptation. Understanding the mechanisms used by different groups to access and use resources is useful in developing the

most targeted adaptation interventions. To achieve this, climate change adaptation actors and policymakers need to establish more targeted interventions that accommodate the varying needs of pastoralists. When resources are gendered and wealth is differentiated, pastoralists' needs and mechanisms of resource access and adaptation interventions vary. Currently, adaptation policies and practices tend to be aggregated with an assumption of one size-fits-all, which has little consideration of the existing socio-economic heterogeneity and tenure disparities as experienced by pastoralists in Kajiado.

Further, access to land and pasture (and associated resources) is differentiated by existing land tenure systems, which adaptation interventions should take into consideration. For instance, the use of reseeded and fodder management will be useful for the pastoralists in private tenure, while ecosystem management interventions such as group ranch zonation for use during different seasons may work for the pastoralists in the group ranch system. Paddocking of land, supply of grass seeds, and fodder management are ideal for pastoralists in private land tenure systems. Supporting market structures might be ideal for male pastoralists since livestock ownership is gendered, whereas livestock products remain female-dominated. Therefore, establishing the marketing and value chain of livestock products like milk might be helpful and more targeted to the women pastoralists. Table 1 summarizes pastoralist adaptation choices in the context of varying wealth categories and tenure systems.



Photo: Mikkel Funder and Sylvia Rotich



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Table 1. Distribution wealth differentiated adaptation strategies.

Adaptation strategy	Key aspects of adaptation among poor pastoralists	Key aspects of adaptation among Middle-wealth pastoralists	Key aspects of adaptation among rich pastoralists	Key notables and possible policy implications
Diversification	Bead making and selling, Selling manure, Crop farming, Casual labor	Fattening of cattle, Businesses, Professional jobs, Irrigation farming (drilling boreholes)	Fattening, Real-estate investments, Professional jobs, Irrigation farming	Although livelihood and livestock diversification are undertaken by all categories of pastoralists, the level of diversification varies with wealth status. Whereas the wealthy pastoralists invest in high-capital-intensive projects such as real estate, the poorer livestock owners diversify into low-capital projects such as bead work and casual labor. Policy responses can be differentiated to meet the needs of various wealth groups across pastoralists.
Mobility and herd splitting	Move livestock within their homestead or take their livestock to friends and relatives	Split their herds, Use trucks to ferry their livestock	Use of trucks, Hiring of labor, Leasing of grazing spaces	Mobility is economical for large herders, but it disadvantages the small herders, forcing them to move their livestock to friends and relatives. Policy interventions can deliberately build capacity of the poor pastoralist (who are mostly small herders) while creating a conducive environment for the rich pastoralist to thrive.
Storage	Plant remnants, Acacia and Prosopis Juliflora pods, Water (using water tanks), Food/ cereals	Plant remnants (maize stalks), Hay/fodder, Water storage using constructed water pans, Food stuffs	Hay and fodder, Water using constructed water pans/ drilled boreholes Paddocked land parcels for hay, Food stuffs	Whereas the rich and middle-class livestock herders store hay and pasture, most poor pastoralists are limited to the storage of plant remnants and pods. Also, the structures for storage are differentiated by wealth; rich owners use water pans, while the less wealthy use storage tanks. Interventions can raise the capacities of poor owners to undertake storage activities that promote stronger adaptation.
Market exchange	Manure and livestock produce, Grazing areas for livestock, Livestock for cash	Livestock for grazing areas, Livestock for cash	Livestock for grazing areas, Cash for livestock	Market exchange is differentiated by wealth; different categories of pastoralists exchange different materials for adaptation purposes. In various cases of Kajiado, market exchange takes a transboundary dimension meaning that interventions that go beyond national boundaries (e.g. within the East African Community framework) may be necessary.
Communal pooling	Resources for hiring grazing areas	Pooling of storage materials, Finances for hiring labor, and to hire trucks for transport	Hiring labor	Whereas large-herder pastoralists are concerned with the hiring of labor and transport of materials, the poor pastoralists can communally pool resources to store pasture and temporarily hire grazing areas. With individualization of land, the value of pooling resources continues to decline and interventions may need to refocus on enabling poor pastoralists to transition into a cooperative movement with adaptation objectives.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Government adaptation policies tend to assume that “one size fits all”, i.e. that support to pastoralists’ adaptation can be done in the same way everywhere. However, our research reveals that:

- Pastoralist adaptation strategies are heterogeneous and dependent on the resources accessible in particular locations.
- Pastoralist adaptation strategies differ across land tenure systems, i.e. in areas with communal land ownership pastoralist adaptation strategies may be different from areas with individual land ownership.
- Pastoralist adaptation choices furthermore vary depending on a household’s wealth. Women and men also often have different adaptation strategies.

KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is a need to develop adaptation policies that support pastoralists own adaptations strategies and -needs, rather than implementing the same universal top-down solutions across the country. Adaptation policies and plans to support pastoralist adaptation should be more localized and suited to the particular strategies and challenges of pastoralists in a given area.
2. These plans can be developed through bottom-up processes at county and community level, with inclusion of pastoralist groups from different areas and from different types of different wealth groups and genders.
3. Local adaptation planning should consider the composite nature of adaptation strategies, i.e. that households are often pursuing several types of adaptation at the same time (e.g. mixing improved livestock breeds with more crop farming and off-farm incomes).
4. Further, there is a need for both the county and national government to address the differentiated concerns, such as the land use planning needs to consider land and water access infrastructure, marketing, and hay and fodder distribution centres to support pastoralists’ adaptation pathways.