

Community conversations to support equitable and locally-led adaptation in rangelands

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Key Messages

- ▶ **Community conversations** can catalyze and support equitable participation and decision-making in locally-led adaptation processes.
- ▶ **Adaptation opportunities** include climate finance, synergies with existing projects and scaling local practices. These can serve as starting points for communities to prioritise and develop action plans.
- ▶ **Working with community-based committees** in the creation and planning of conversations and gender transformation can mitigate harmful effects of gender-based violence.

Introduction

Climate change impacts severely affect livestock production systems in East Africa and elsewhere. Efforts to enhance resilience and capacities to anticipate, cope with, and recover from climate impacts will be essential to sustain livestock-dependent communities.

Climate change adaptation practices refer to behaviours or actions that reduce exposure or vulnerability to climate risks. Adaptation practices in pastoral areas may include livestock and livelihood diversification strategies such as choosing breeds that are tolerant to heat stress or engaging in off-farm work such as casual labour or migrating to urban areas.

Adaptation interventions are often driven by international and national decision-makers. Financing opportunities seldom reach local actors, who are on the frontlines of coping with climate change impacts. Local actors are, however, often better placed to identify adaptation solutions (Coger et al. 2022).

Locally-led adaptation (LLA) refers to those processes that local people and their communities have individual and collective agency over in terms of their adaptation priorities and how adaptation takes place (Coger et al. 2022). LLA is a process *“controlled by local people, grounded in local realities, ensures equity and inclusivity, and is facilitated by local networks and institutions”* (Westoby et al. 2021).



Figure 1: women across generations talk to each other, Paka Hills, Baringo County, Kenya. **Photo:** G. Smith.

Socially inclusive and equitable adaptation

Climate change vulnerability can be exacerbated through national and community planning processes that exclude certain communities or groups within communities. Rural, remote pastoral communities with little access to services and limited, contested or unrecognized land rights may experience increased vulnerability to climate variability (Rao et al. 2019), such as droughts, erratic rainfall, and extreme temperatures that lead to reduced water availability, degraded pastures, and increased competition for resources. Within communities, structural inequalities may marginalize or limit certain groups, such as women, youth and internally displaced people from participating in or articulating their priorities for adaptation planning, programming, and household decision-making processes (Tye et al. 2023; Rahman et al. 2023).

Social position influences who, why and how individual actors may take up new adaptation practices (Ng'ang'a and Crane 2020). There are often gender-differentiated adaptation capacities because of gendered access to and control over key assets and decision-making, such as livestock management and benefit distribution, including income. For example, gender, age and education shape access to key productive resources that underpin diversification in pastoral areas and have significant implications for who is included and excluded in adaptation processes (Marty et al. 2022).

While gender features as an important factor in shaping adaptation strategies, poverty and gender often intersect in ways that exacerbate poor women's vulnerabilities to climate change (Djoudi and Brockhaus 2011).

If power relations are ignored, climate adaptation interventions may undermine LLA and *"inadvertently reinforce, redistribute or create new sources of vulnerability"* (Eriksen et al. 2021). It is, therefore, essential to address the norms and institutions that exclude certain groups from decision-making spaces to support long-term transformation (Tye, Mukasa et al. 2023; Coger, Dinshaw et al. 2022).

Gender-transformative LLA can be used to ensure that less powerful or often marginalized groups' priorities and realities are reflected in adaptation planning, thus enabling longer-term climate resilience and gender equity (Tye et al. 2023). This innovation employs community conversations to support socially inclusive locally-led adaptation in rangelands. Gender-transformative approaches are incorporated to address systemic forms of exclusion and to specifically support i) equitable decision-making community prioritisation activities; ii) increase technical adaptation capacities; and iii) address and discuss gender relations and practices associated with adaptation.

Adaptation opportunities

Adaptation opportunities include finance mechanisms, project synergies and local practices. These serve as important starting points for communities to prioritise and plan subsequent activities and topics for conversations.

Kenya has multiple policy frameworks, legislative acts and action plans that can help the government realize its adaptation targets. These include funding mechanisms to support LLA and ongoing projects, some of which are supported by ILRI, and scaling existing local practices. Community conversations aim to build on these mechanisms to support women and diverse community members' participation in adaptation planning and negotiation processes.

Conversation priorities and courses of action are set through facilitated iterative discussions that draw on Lemma (2020) and are adapted to the unique rangelands contexts in Baringo.

In the following section, some opportunities are described. These include financing mechanisms, ILRI supported projects and baseline results that highlight existing practices that support adaptation. This information will serve as a starting point for discussions with communities to share knowledge about opportunities and develop action plans.

Climate finance

Funding mechanisms to advance locally-led adaptation include the Kenya County Climate Change Fund, initially piloted in Isiolo County and subsequently scaled out to facilitate the flow of climate finance to other county governments and empower local communities by strengthening public participation in the management and use of their funds (Crick et al. 2019). The Government of Kenya has also received funds from the World Bank for the Financing Locally-Led Climate Action Program. In Baringo County, workplans have been developed that emphasize capacity building, such as climate change education and raising public awareness using community sensitization and participatory climate risk assessments. Community conversations can shed light on existing and potential links to county processes that warrant further action.

Project synergies

Numerous projects support community participation in adaptation planning in pastoral communities (Flintan, et al. 2019; Ojango et al. 2023). In Baringo County, participatory rangeland management (PRM) provides a framework for securing state-recognized rights to resources for pastoralists and improving land management (Flintan and Eba 2023). PRM supports community leadership and inclusiveness in rangeland use, planning, policy and practice and considers the interests, positions and needs of all rangeland users in a pastoral area and offers opportunities for negotiations among stakeholders (ibid). Historically, women have been excluded or had limited roles in traditional management institutions.



Figure 2: most households own goats and women are most often the caretakers, Paka Hills, Baringo, Kenya. **Photo:** G. Smith

In PRM, efforts are made to include them and strengthen their formal participation in decision-making about rangeland use and management (Bullock et al. 2022). In the planned community conversations, a review of projects and the potential to build on these efforts will be discussed.

Local practices and technical expertise

Locally-led adaptation builds on existing solutions that may include community and household actions and activities that require additional technical capacity building. Existing solutions may significantly support household adaptation efforts. A baseline survey (115 women and 67 men) in the two intervention sites in Baringo County provided detailed information about adaptation practices and gender dimensions specific to existing household practices, such as roles, attitudes and perceptions about changes in roles¹.

Practices and gender-transformative approaches to enhancing equity in access to training and income benefits are potential action areas that communities may prioritise and pursue over the course of the intervention. Some insights from field visits and the survey are described next.

These baseline findings, including the gender dimensions of specific activities, will be presented during the initial community conversations and will provide information that community members will then use to prioritise activities.

Adaptation practices

Overall, there were few reports about practices. While more than 90% of the respondents reported owning goats and, to a lesser extent, sheep (40%), practices such as selective breeding and castration were low (54%). Most respondents reported owning chickens. Beekeeping and horticultural activities were also reported.



Figure 3: women are responsible for harvesting water for the household, Paka Hills, Baringo County, Kenya. **Photo:** G. Smith

If community members were to select beekeeping as a priority, this practice could be scaled up using grassroots approaches and some technical capacity building (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Reported adaptation practices in the intervention sites.

Activity	Percentage Reported (n= 182)
Goat breeding and castration	54%
Planting vegetables	42%
Planting fodder	36%
Beekeeping	35%
Vertical kitchens	33%
Planting drought-tolerant varieties	18%
Selling vegetables	12%

Source: Baseline survey, December 2023.

Access to water is a major constraint. Practices such as creating farm ponds and implementing water conservation practices would reduce the energy spent collecting and harvesting water. Reports of water harvesting and conservation practices were low. Twenty per cent of the respondents reported collecting water at their homestead using methods such as farm ponds and gutters. Women are responsible for collecting water for home use and men seldom help. Over 90% of the respondents said water collection is a woman's responsibility. Men and women did agree (60%) that men should help in water collection tasks.

Technical capacities

Technical and formal capacity-building opportunities are also low. Group membership and attendance in training events were reported by less than 5% of the respondents.

Gender dimensions

Women's and men's roles in nearly all activities are differentiated by gender, age and other social factors that negatively impact women's potential to learn and benefit from income-generating enterprises.

Women's ownership of livestock, including goats, is generally low (25% compared to men). Fewer than 50% of all survey respondents reported that they would agree with changes in gendered practices, specifically, increases in women's ownership and management of income from the sale of goats. There are significant differences between the acceptance of changes in gendered roles and practices between the two sites selected for the intervention. In the Paka Hills site, women were 20–30% more likely than men to support changes in practices that would increase their agency across asset ownership and management of benefits. This difference was consistent across multiple practices and serves as an insight that guides community conversation design, especially since gender transformation is the main aim of the approach.

Another significant finding concerns mobility and has implications for all future interventions. Women and men agreed that women are not allowed to travel when they want. Men travel where and when they want. Structuring conversations will, therefore, require working closely with a community-based committee that includes women and provides guidance about how to ensure their participation in conversations.

The survey revealed multiple potential entry points as well as challenges. Women's participation and potential to benefit from some practices is relatively easy (e.g. poultry and vegetable production and sales). Community conversations may yield gender-differentiated priorities.

Women and men also agree on certain gendered practices that appear to restrict women's potential to benefit, such as discussions about the income from sales or businesses that women manage. The women's responses suggest greater willingness or interest to change practices and move towards greater equity. Navigating these gendered preferences to support action plans that support equitable LLA requires careful planning with a community-based committee before attempting any new practice.

Community conversations



Community conversations aim to advance equitable participation and decision-making in locally-led adaptation processes to strengthen resilience in Baringo County, Kenya.

Community conversations engage community members to collaborate, learn, reflect and solve problems using social learning and peer influence. (Lemma et al., 2021). This can be achieved by bringing together community members in social learning processes to explore, discuss and develop action plans to address local development issues (ibid). Conversations are facilitated by a trained team that includes local service providers and possibly community members. This training uses visual aids, role play and storytelling to stimulate discussions around gender roles and norms and men's and women's positions in the community (ibid).

Lemma et al. (2020: 6) explain how community conversations involve using the action learning cycle (act, reflect, analyse, plan):

- ▶ exploring and analysing existing community knowledge and practices;
- ▶ introducing new knowledge to address community knowledge and practice gaps;
- ▶ integrate and reinforce knowledge through action messages; and
- ▶ community actions and mentoring support.

The approach is guided by the principles of locally-led adaptation (Global Commission on Adaptation 2021; Appendix 1) and gender-transformative approaches to implement socially inclusive adaptation planning processes.

Conversations aim to establish socially inclusive processes that support the following:

- ▶ Community-led selection and prioritisation of what practices to scale, some of which may already exist in the community;
- ▶ Co-create action plans that guide investments and capacity building, and;
- ▶ Explore and discuss gender norms and practices to support increased equity in decision-making, including benefit-sharing in households.

Step-by-step Implementation²

Conceptualization and planning: Actions before the first conversation

Phase 1 of the community conversation process is a set of activities that must be completed before the first conversation. The main tasks are:

- ▶ Conduct a situational analysis to identify adaptation funding mechanisms and existing solutions.
- ▶ Engage with and gather information from county and community stakeholders.
- ▶ Survey the community to understand existing adaptation practices, both successful and unsuccessful.

Create a community committee

Given the sensitivity and the intention for sustainable positive changes in gender relations, it is imperative that community members, especially leaders support the process. The committee contributes to and supports program development with an explicit focus on ensuring that gender transformation does not exacerbate or reinforce gender-based violence, a recognized issue in the area (Fieldnotes 2021; 2023 unpublished report)

- ▶ Invite five to 10 community members to help plan the conversation process.
- ▶ Members should be diverse and include women and men of different ages and holding different positions in the community (e.g. leadership roles in local institutions such as elder committees).
- ▶ Roles are assigned collectively, and a committee is nominated to support the conversations in terms of facilitating, monitoring, selecting the location and inviting participants.

2 Some of the following is adapted from: Lemma et al. 2020.



Figure 4: young men and women may need youth-specific approaches. **Photo:** G. Smith.

Prepare a facilitation guide to start the community conversation process

- ▶ Prepare a module to guide the first conversation.
- ▶ Train a facilitation team in participatory methods and documentation.
- ▶ Subsequent modules will be developed based on collective prioritisation in the action planning process (see below).

Delivery and action planning

Phase 2 of the process includes guidance on facilitating conversations using socially inclusive techniques and developing action and monitoring strategies.

Note: *Much of the content in the following sections is drawn directly from Lemma and Mulema (2020).*

- ▶ **Explain the purpose of the community conversations** and clarify the expectations and roles of participants and facilitators. It is important to introduce the main issues to be explored in the conversations. Why are the issues important to the community? What will happen if the issues are not addressed? What do you hope to achieve by the end of the community conversations?

- ▶ **Encourage community members to attend all rounds of the conversations.** Continuity makes it easier to monitor and capture changes and experiences of participants throughout the process.
- ▶ After this introductory and warm-up conversation, **break the participants into men, women and youth discussion groups** and assign group facilitators and notetakers. Women-only groups, men-only groups or other specified groups are used in community conversations as a platform for participants to speak freely and without fear.
- ▶ **Bring separate discussion groups together** and have them share their main points, emerging issues and insights. Further facilitate conversations among community members to address issues arising from separate groups, introduce new knowledge and communicate main messages.
- ▶ **Have a separate discussion with adult household members.** Discussion topics may include intra-household interactions, relationships, sharing information, collective household decision-making and action and family harmony. This increases women's access to knowledge and information in male-headed households and enhances their ability to share knowledge and information within the household and beyond.
- ▶ **Summarize main messages and identify action plans.** Finally, ask participants to identify actions they can take individually and as a group to apply new knowledge and information from the conversation. Encourage community members to agree on simple indicators of change and follow-up and monitoring strategies.
- ▶ **Encourage community members to develop action plans** and commit to implementation. Encourage them to form an action and learning group which will oversee the implementation of the community action plans.
- ▶ **Encourage community members to identify change indicators** and simple tools for monitoring and documenting early signs of change (e.g. Most Significant Change Stories).
- ▶ **Set an agenda for the next meeting.** Introduce the topic and agree on the date for the next community conversation.

Next steps

In 2024, **four to six conversations will be launched** in two villages to identify community priorities and develop action plans.

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