



Guiding questions for
facilitating community-
based rangeland
management interventions
in open landscapes



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Taking Successes in Land Restoration
to Scale project



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International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)

May 2020

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ILRI thanks all donors and organizations which globally support its work through their contributions to the [CGIAR Trust Fund](#)



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Editing, design and layout—ILRI Editorial and Publishing Services, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Cover photo—PRIME/Kelley Lynch

Citation: Nganga, I. and Robinson, L. 2020. *Guiding questions for facilitating community-based rangeland management interventions in open landscapes. Taking Successes in Land Restoration to Scale project.* Nairobi, Kenya: ILRI.

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Acknowledgements and disclaimer

This work was undertaken as part of the project “Restoration of degraded land for food security and poverty reduction in East Africa and the Sahel: taking successes in land restoration to scale”. The project is led by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) with support from the European Union. ILRI’s work on the project is also supported by CGIAR Research Program on Livestock. CGIAR is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food-secure future.

This tool has not gone through peer review. The opinions expressed here belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of ICRAF, IFAD, ILRI or CGIAR Research Program on Livestock.

About the tool

Who the tool is for: organizations and people who are designing projects and programs to support rangeland management by pastoralist communities.

What the tool does: presents a series of questions to help you think about how to prepare for intercommunity herd migration, sharing of resources and prevention of conflict in your project or program.

Background

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) approaches are usually based on the idea that a clearly defined community should have clearly defined rights over a clearly defined community resource. In CBNRM, communities create rules for themselves to manage and limit how many trees a community member can fell, how much fish they can catch, or how much grass their livestock can eat. Clear communal property rights are needed so that the community is enabled to enforce their rules, exclude non-members and generate collective benefits for community members.

However, creating and implementing these kinds of clear property rights in pastoralist settings is notoriously difficult. Often, territorial boundaries either do not exist, are not widely known, or are treated flexibly. Where they do exist, they are imposed by the state and not necessarily accepted by all people living in the region. Cultural norms typically emphasize the right of livestock owners to access feed for their livestock over and above any rights to own or manage land.

There are legitimate reasons that traditional pastoralist systems tend to operate in this way. Pastoralist rangelands are among the most variable types of climates. Rainfall varies greatly from year to year and from place to place and as rainfall varies so too does the availability of forage—where you find grazing this year is often not where you will find it next year. Mobility, and all of the cultural norms, institutions and practices that go along with mobility are at the heart of how pastoralist cultures create livelihoods under these conditions. This is particularly true in large, open range landscapes that lack physical barriers and obvious borders between communities.

In situations of high climatic variability, open borderless landscapes and traditions of mobility and flexible access to resources, not only is it difficult to create a system in which members of each community graze their livestock within the boundaries of their own territory only, but also undesirable, creating a situation in which many livestock owners sooner or later will face the problem of not having access to the resources they need to maintain and grow their herds.

For designing and implementing a participatory program that supports rangeland management by pastoralist communities, it is usually safe to assume two things:

1. in some years, members of your target community will need to access pastures in other communities; and
2. in some years, livestock owners from other places will be seeking to access pastures in your target community.

The design of your CBNRM interventions should take this into account.

Some notes on terminology

Rangeland unit: in this document, the term “rangeland unit” refers to a territory that is managed by a community. It is the main level at which rangeland management decisions are made.

Community: we use the word “community” to refer to the group of people who collectively manage the rangeland unit. A “community” in this sense is not necessarily a single village or settlement.

Landscape: this refers to a larger area which contains communities that are likely to interact with each other.

Guiding questions

Understanding the local situation, flexibility and context-based planning are key when designing an effective program for supporting communities to manage their rangelands. What may work in one area might not be applicable in another where different challenges exist and where mechanisms for conflict management and use of resources differ. To this end, the following are some guiding questions that are useful for understanding the context and planning at a landscape level in order to facilitate productive intercommunity relations and prepare your target communities to navigate matters of resource use, access and sharing while minimising conflict.

In preparation for designing your rangeland management project or program, investigate and try to answer the following questions.

Context

Physical openness of the landscape and herd mobility

Approximately what percentage of the outer boundary of the rangeland unit is bordering on other places that are also rangelands where livestock could potentially graze?

Approximately what percentage of the outer boundary of the rangeland unit has physical features that create significant barriers to livestock movement (e.g. large rivers, fences, heavily forested or dense bush areas, steep hills, etc.)?

How often do livestock owners in the rangeland unit move their herds to pastures beyond the rangeland unit? Never? Only during droughts? At some point almost every year? What proportion of the herds in the rangeland unit have this kind of mobility?

How often do livestock owners from outside the rangeland unit move their herds to pastures in this rangeland unit? Never? Only during droughts? At some point almost every year? How many livestock does this kind of in-migration normally involve?

How often do livestock owners in the rangeland unit move their herds to access other resources such as water points and mineral licks outside the rangeland unit?

How often do livestock owners from outside the rangeland unit move their herds to access other resources such as water points and mineral licks in this rangeland unit?

How are key resources, settlements and services distributed in the area? How might access to these affect mobility and resource use?

Intercommunity relations, sharing of resources and conflict

Among the communities that access resources in each other's territories, do the people on both sides recognize some form of reciprocity (e.g. "We accept that they come to graze in our area because we know that sometimes we will need to go there")?

Are there areas in the larger landscape where livestock from different places often converge during droughts?

How commonly is intercommunity livestock migration accompanied by violent conflict?

Do the different livestock owning communities in the larger landscape have similar institutions and management systems that govern access to grazing?

How accustomed are herders from the wider landscape to having their grazing directed by some kind of grazing plan or rotational grazing system? Are fines or other kinds of sanctions common?

Are there conflict resolution mechanisms already in place? How well are they working?

Answering the above sorts of questions will help you understand something about livestock migration patterns, the degree to which the wider landscape where you are working is open or contained and the potential for conflict. In very open, large rangeland landscapes with more than one pastoralist community, some kind of intercommunity planning and consensus building will be needed. Where the institutions and management systems of different communities differ, agreeing on how intercommunity access to resources will be managed will tend to be more complicated.

Interventions

Note: most of the following questions are questions primarily for the communities, not you, to decide on. Your role as someone supporting rangeland management by pastoralist communities is to help the communities you work with, and neighbouring communities, to think and deliberate about these kinds of questions.

Your answers to the questions in the previous section will help guide how you and the community members think about and answer the following questions.

If the rangeland management and rehabilitation activities implemented by the communities you work with are successful, and pastures are improved and the availability of forage increased, livestock owners from other locations may be attracted to the area. How will the local community handle this?

How porous will the borders of the rangeland unit(s) be?

Will pastures be shared, and if so, how?

Will all pastures be open to herders from elsewhere, or only some?

How will communities from across the larger landscape meet and dialogue with each other?

Are there existing forums or planning processes that could help address some of the large landscape, intercommunity resource sharing issues? These might include forums, networks, land use planning processes, etc.

What will your role be in connecting your communities and their neighbours to these processes?

Do you need to help create some new planning and negotiation processes at the large landscape, intercommunity scale?

What will these be? A landscape planning process? A regular forum? Will there be some kind of permanent institution?

Aside from community representatives, what other key stakeholders, government authorities, opinion leaders and others should be involved?

What communication channels will there be across the various levels of management committees from community and intercommunity levels, all the way up to management levels beyond the landscape?

What will be your role in supporting such activities and processes?

Further reading

The following publications provide further information on the topics covered in this tool.

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