



Good Practices and Innovations from the Regional Pastoral Livelihoods Resilience Project (RPLRP)

LAIKIPIA COUNTY

COMMUNITY GRAZING AGREEMENTS FOR RESOURCE SHARING AND PEACE BUILDING

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts in Laikipia County are a seasonal occurrence. In periods of drought, pastoral conditions deteriorate dramatically. Pasture land becomes denuded, and water pans and wells dry up. Drought affects the well-being of herders to the extent that the condition of their livestock becomes poor, with high levels of mortality. The consequence of this is lowered purchasing power, food insecurity, child malnutrition, social exclusion and conflicts.

Faced with this catastrophic situation, herders sell off their weak and dying animals to 'opportunistic' butchers. On the flip side, almost 50 percent of Laikipia County is occupied by conservancies. The conservancies border group ranches where community members own many heads of livestock. Further more, Laikipia County is surrounded by Baringo, Samburu and Isiolo, where pastoralists also own large herds of cattle. The conservancies often have sufficient pasture for their animals and water, as they maintain stocking capacity for wild game and the neighbouring conservancies often being well managed.

The herders' perception was that the land owned by the ranchers is lying idle. Therefore, in desperation, they would invade these conservancies. Sometimes, they would restock their animals by taking animals kept in the conservancies. Consequently, conflicts were common, and often resulted in the loss of human life.

In response to these heavy losses, herders and ranchers entered into emergency grazing agreements in an effort to mitigate forage deficits, conflicts and loss of livestock. Grazing agreements ensure mobility, access rights and access to the limited resources and thus, they are a coping strategy that increases resilience to impacts of drought and climate change. This strategy is meant to help reduce heavy livestock losses and protect the core breeding herd, reduce conflicts in Laikipia County between the conservancies and the pastoralist communities, and protect against livelihood losses. The reduction of conflicts directly benefits women and the elderly, who are the most vulnerable when conflicts occur.



Rangeland management in Laikipia. Credit: Laikipia Forum.

The concept was initiated by the Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT), which was conceptualized in 2004 to support conservancies, set up democratic management structures and attract funds for conservation and development. NRT's highest governing body is the Council of Elders, which consists of up to 30 members. The democratically elected chairs of the conservancies make up the majority and are joined by institutional members representing county councils, local wildlife forums, Kenya Wildlife Service and the private sector. Their strategy entails addressing insecurity, meetings between elders and young people and the conservancies, grazing agreements. NRT advocates for a mixed model conservancies where livestock and wildlife use resources together.

Members of the group ranches agree with the ranchers to keep a given number of animals on behalf of the community at a fee. Bulls are separated from cows. All managerial practices are handled by the ranchers. After a defined period, the pastoralists can either take their animals back, or authorise the ranchers to sell the animals on their behalf. The ranchers and the pastoralists agree on the weight of the animal before entry into the ranches and the weight gain within the ranch. The profit is shared based on the weight gained at the ranch.

The grazing agreements do not cover all livestock husbandry practices, and it is upon the communities to get these services elsewhere. It is within this

context that the RPLRP started providing services like vaccination to reduce livestock disease incidences. This service can be provided efficiently, because animals are gathered in one place, and the availability of crush pens in the ranches makes it easier to vaccinate.

The practice has been implemented for over three years in some conservancies, and is being replicated in various ranches spread across the county.

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Laikipia North

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

- Over 700 households have already benefitted from this practice. The target group are pastoralists and agro-pastoralists living in Laikipia and its environs, particularly the Maasai of Laikipia, Yaaku, Turkana, Pokot and Samburu communities.
- The users of the practice are the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), the Laikipia County Government, the Kenya Food Security Steering Group and other development partners, such as FAO, USAID, World Vision and the community.
- The County Government provides human and material capacity support, while other development partners such as FAO, USAID, World Vision and the community provide or reinforce capacity and resources for implementing some of the activities.
- Women and men represent other community members in the participatory management of committees formed by the practice.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Step 1: Mobilisation and sensitisation of communities to identify and prioritise specific areas of dialogue, determine the objective of the dialogue and develop the format that the dialogue will follow.

Step 2: Establishment of core working groups consisting of people with a clear understanding of the community and existing resources.

Step 3. Inter-community meetings with representatives of the conservancies to decide on the number of animals the ranches can take without degrading the land. Special focus is given to the identification of grazing areas with unused or under-used pasture and water resources, as well as the zoning of existing resources for potential sharing.

Step 4: Strategic planning by the teams: The elements are put into a systematic framework that can be monitored, and which forms the terms and conditions under which resources are used. The plans

consist of an Agreement Framework Matrix, setting out what has been agreed, who is responsible for the agreement, how it is going to be implemented and the penalties for transgression.

Step 5: Ratification and validation of the proposed plan.

Step 6: Final signing of the agreement: Once the agreement is approved or endorsed by community members, it is signed by the representatives of the conservancies and communities. The inclusion of government representatives in the plans is particularly important.

Step 7: Implementation by the communities with outreach at community leaders meetings and forums to increase publicity and awareness of the agreements' terms and conditions.

COMMUNITY CONSERVANCY

A community conservancy is established by a community on its own land. The community members are the dominant decision makers and enforcers. They democratically elect a representative board from the community. Ex-officio board members from KWS, conservation and tourism partners also hold a seat in the board. Sub-committees on finance, grazing and tourism may be established to drive strategic plans and oversight. The Board elected during AGMs determine benefit-sharing mechanisms, drive strategic development of the conservancy and oversee operational management.

GROUP CONSERVANCY

It is created through the pooling of land by private land owners who share a common border for the purpose of wildlife conservation. It follows similar arrangements to private conservancies and is commonly registered as a private land-holding company co-owned by all landowners. The management of the conservancy is determined by the registered private land-holding company or through joint management company with a tourism investor or a contracted management company. Board members within each tier are democratically selected and a representative population of each stakeholder group nominated with benefits often flowing through a trust to maintain transparency and equity.

PRIVATE CONSERVANCY

This is a conservancy set up on private land by a private individual or corporate body for the purpose of wildlife conservation. Private conservancies own or manage land under leasehold or freehold. The area under control may be run by single individuals or families, non-profit organisations or corporates. The more popular avenues of governing private conservancies in Kenya include leasing the land to conservation NGOs, non-profit private companies or for-profit private companies. Some are managed by the owners themselves. Each conservancy determines its board structures, staff employment, fundraising, financial sustainability, transparency, costs and political lobbying power. It should be highlighted that the governance approach is contextual and determined by various other factors.

Step 8: Monitoring of the Agreements: Community committees and other partners are responsible for monitoring the implementation process through scheduled meetings.

Step 9: Implementation of activities is undertaken. Where necessary, communities seek the assistance of other stakeholders to implement certain activities.

RESULTS

- Grazing agreements have helped to establish positive relations and stronger socio-economic cohesion between communities and ranchers. The two groups now hold regular meetings to discuss development issues within the county.
- Communities are increasingly taking a lead in decision-making about issues and problems associated with the drought. There is improved technical and operational capacity of grassroots organisations / associations to pursue the interests of the community.
- Stakeholders are collaborating with each other to coordinate their activities better and provide complementary services to the pastoralist communities. For example, the coordinated migratory movements have enabled better disease surveillance, animal health services and planned grazing. The combination of services are a proven way to link pastoralists with formal service provision, thereby improving the livelihood of the community.
- Grazing agreements have alleviated the root causes of tensions to allow for a durable peace and non-violent coexistence. Sustainable conflict resolution mechanisms through a community-owned process has reduced raids on the ranches and improved the security situation. There is increased collaboration in the recovery of stolen animals.
- Communities' access to natural resources has improved. The pasture and water resources are shared, and there is increased access to markets as a result of collaboration with the ranches.
- Better livestock health and products and improved inter-community trade has helped to improve household income and food security. The increased resilience of communities reduced the impact of the dry spell that affected the Laikipia County in 2019.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Factors that contribute to the success of this practice include:

- Clear understanding of the community's socio-cultural characteristics;

- Land tenure systems (i.e. individual or community) that allow and enable collective efforts of land management;
- Availability of good negotiators to come up with mutually satisfactory agreements;
- Group cohesion and active participation by groups in activities;
- Proper timing.

CONSTRAINTS

- Communities that do not border the ranches are often not party to the agreements.
- A political environment which is not enabling: non-structural mitigation such as lobby and advocacy work can have more confrontational approaches than consensus building.
- Sometimes, the management teams are not inclusive and do not sufficiently represent all community groups.
- There is no clear link between the natural resources managed by the community and those that are managed by conservancies, which limits replication and scaling up through ecosystem-based planning.
- Not all components of the agreement may be successful. Therefore, they need to be reviewed and reinforced whenever necessary, as a process of learning and growth.

LESSONS LEARNT

The selection process must be participatory and should use a clear set of selection criteria. The composition of the team should be inclusive and representative. There must be clear rules and regulations, objectives, and clear tasks, outlined in an action plan that will be implemented and monitored. The teams should have structured linkages from community level to conservancies.

- Link teams with appropriate capacity building (Do-No-Harm participatory planning approaches, conflict resolution, leadership and governance trainings);
- Proper institutional capacity;
- Simple and clear plans with monitoring systems;
- Network with other external services and support institutions such as RPLRP, NDMA;
- Community negotiations and dialogue are important in addressing community needs;
- Organisations that are close to the affected communities that have appropriate operational capabilities are readily accepted;

- The lack of space for dialogue reinforces the climate of mistrust within communities and perpetuates conflicts;
- In any negotiation initiative it is essential to ensure the engagement of all actors, including the government to allow for multifaceted interventions;
- The community negotiation process is delicate and needs to be carried out professionally and with care in order to avoid reopening wounds and generating renewed conflict.

SUSTAINABILITY

Key elements for the sustainability of grazing agreements in Arid and Semi-arid Lands (ASALs) include:

- Partnerships to guarantee buy-in of government and other organisations, ensure sustainability of the strategy and build capacity of community members;
- Promotion, development and implementation of the practice;
- Community acceptance and ownership;
- Cost-effectiveness to ensure that pastoralists continue applying the practice;
- Equitable sharing of benefits from the practices and activities among male and female group members;
- Building on local knowledge and instead of completely new practices;
- Establishment and maintenance of links between herders and conservancies.

REPLICABILITY AND UPSCALING

The return on investment of the practice is very high. Resources and in this case, the only required costs are the costs of meetings and herding the animals. Additional costs and time will vary according to the scope of the sub project that is being intervened on. The practice is applicable in all areas with continuous and proactive application of the practice important.

To scale up, 300 acres have been identified and reseeded. In this process, RPLRP has facilitated provision of seed (*Cenchrus ciliaris*, and *ropogon*, *Eragrostis superba*) for reseeding with 300 acres. RPLRP has also supported surveying of the requisite areas to establish boundaries.

To generate an enabling environment for these agreements requires the following:

- Mobilisation and sensitisation of communities – self-reflection and own discovery for access and access rights to water and pasture resources;
- Establishment of a core working group. Creation of a team to link communities and ranchers;
- Empowering the communities with mediators;
- Training of committees in adequate conflict management and prevention skills, leadership and governance, planning and support fund;
- Supporting communities to develop and implement their own plans for adaptation to climate change;
- Continuing to support pastoralist with assisted natural regeneration;
- Rehabilitation and development of degraded land, and securing assets;
- Integration of the process within different approaches.

The main actors are the community leaders and the owners of the ranches. The community leaders negotiate on behalf of the community grazing committees. Improved livestock livelihood asset protection through increased access to dry season grazing reserves (pasture and water).

Other relevant organisations should continue to assist the counties in enhancing capacities and mobilising resources necessary for establishment and for strengthening implementation of the practice.

For replicability:

1. Ensure deep and meaningful participation of pastoralists at all stages of project design.
2. Adopt an innovative and adaptive approach.
3. Ensure cultural sensitivity.
4. Ensure cost-effectiveness and impact.

Testimony

Tianamut group ranch is located in mkogodo west location. They entered into a grazing agreement with Loisaba group ranch. Over 4,000 animals were accepted by the conservancy for three months during the drought period. Aware of the gains achieved by the agreements and keen to reduce incidences of diseases, RPLRP using the community leaders and the conservancies supported the vaccination of the community animals.