

New perspectives on climate resilient drylands development

Refining the arguments



Workshop Report

Lake Elementaita Lodge, Kenya
26th to 28th September 2012



MINISTRY OF STATE FOR
DEVELOPMENT OF
NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER
ARID LANDS.



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Introduction

IIED, in partnership with University of Peking in China, the Revitalizing Rainfed Agriculture Network and Rainfed Livestock Network in India, and the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands Secretariat of the Ministry of State for Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid lands in Kenya, is implementing a 1-year project entitled ***New perspectives on climate resilient drylands development***. Funded by the Ford Foundation, the project aims to formulate a more progressive narrative of the drylands, to those currently articulated by many global and public institutions, based on sound scientific evidence and traditional local knowledge and experience.

In order that a reframed discourse on climate resilient drylands development might resonate with key decision-makers at global and national levels, public policy and media analysis is being carried out in China, India, Kenya and at the global level to better understand its content and the knowledge and information systems, the premises and evidence used in its support. These research findings were presented and discussed at a workshop in Kenya between the 26th and 28th September.

Sixteen participants from China, India, Kenya and Europe attended the three-day workshop to review the research findings and identify the key components of an overarching narrative and set of arguments to articulate a new perspective of climate resilient drylands development. Annex 1 provides the list of participants.

This document presents the findings from the workshop. Annexe 2 presents the workshop agenda.

Workshop proceedings

Session 1: Opening the workshop

After a few words of welcome from the representative of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands Secretariat of the Ministry of State for Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid lands in Kenya, participants' used proverbs to pair up with, interview and present each other (see Annex3). The workshop context and objectives were then presented – see Box 1.

Box 1: Workshop Objectives

- Analyse the premises underpinning existing dryland policy narratives and media coverage of the drylands.
- Identify the key arguments and evidence in support of a counter narrative.
- Discuss and agree a process for delivering the remaining project outputs.

Three issues were raised with respect to the workshop objectives – see below – which, following discussion, were accepted as being valid concerns that needed to be addressed by participants in workshop deliberations:

- What about where the narratives lead to? Narratives are tools for action, and we should talk about what the narratives are used for – the action.
- There seems to be an assumption that the current narratives are wrong and the counter narratives are good – need for more analysis – narratives not necessarily right or wrong, they reflect some truth.
- Are the counter-narratives not in fact part of the dominant narratives?

Session 2: Country and global level group work to analyse research findings

Rather than ask the lead authors of the commissioned policy and media review papers to present their findings (see Box 2) through more conventional means such as a PowerPoint presentation, they were asked to use their research findings to facilitate a discussion in their respective country and global groups around the following questions:

- How are the drylands described, depicted, presented, portrayed or perceived in policy (i.e. the content of the narratives?). Any by whom?
- What are the premises, assumptions, theories and hypotheses that underpin these narratives?
- What evidence is used or provided to support the premises, assumptions, theories etc.?
- How have other emerging issues or narratives (e.g. climate change) changed, modified, amplified or diminished the way in which the drylands are now portrayed?

Group work report back

a) Global¹

At the global level, narratives continue to portray the drylands as degraded, fragile zones characterised by resource scarcity, underdevelopment and poverty.² This perspective is characteristic of when pastoralists are seen as difficult, traditional, backward and resistant to change (the 'old view'). However, the same perspective can also blend with the 'newer view' of pastoralists as rational and well-adapted producers. Narratives at times describe pastoralism as 'neglected' and 'marginalised', but do so only to justify a new breed of old-style policies, where pastoralists recognised as historically neglected are 'saved' from those who would like to keep them in the past (traditional) and finally brought into the present modern world through sedentarisation, compulsory formal education, and planned transition to 'modern' mixed farming. At the national level, the drylands are seen as unreliable and untaxable, and sometimes as a potential threat to national security (see Figure 1 overleaf).

Box 2: Draft research reports

- *A review of rangeland management policy and possibility of re-frame policy narratives in a context of climate change, China* by Li Wenjun, Gongbuzeren, Li Yanbo and Zang Cheng Cheng, Dept of Environmental Management, Peking University.
- *Persistence of dominant norms: policy discourse analysis of rainfed agriculture in India*, by the Revitalizing Rainfed Agriculture Network, India.
- *The unrelenting persistence of certain narratives: an analysis of changing policy narratives about ASALs in Kenya*, by Michael Ochieng Odhiambo, Resource Conflict Institute, Kenya.
- *A review of global public policy narratives on the drylands*, by Saverio Krätli and Sarah Jane Enson.
- *Problematic portray of pastoralists: media perceptions and a newspaper content analysis in Kenya, China and India*, by Mike Shanahan, IIED.UK.

Key assumptions underpinning these views were identified:

¹ Composed of Saverio Krätli, Jeremy Swift, Mike Shanahan and Ced Hesse

² Read Mike Shanahan's blog on "*What's in a narrative?*" in Annex 4.

- i. Mobility is perceived as driven by lack of resources (e.g. a response to a constraint, a coping strategy vis-à-vis environmental instability) and being a problem in itself (e.g. inhibiting productivity, causing or exacerbating insecurity or livestock disease).
- ii. Understanding mobility as the undesirable consequence of environmental instability, makes stability (and by extension sedentarisation) appealing and rational.
- iii. Efficiency and increased productivity in agriculture are understood as necessarily dependent on generating and capturing economies of scale - leading to see large-scale investments and a shift to progressively larger business are the 'natural' route of rural development.
- iv. The incorporation of every aspect of pastoral economy into the commodities market (e.g. not only livestock and its products, but labour, land, fodder, water, etc. is seen as the only appropriate development pathway.
- v. Small- scale family farming or livestock keeping are believed to be less productive because they do not exploit economies of scale and are not sufficiently capitalized (although there are growing important exceptions to this position in the narratives).



Figure 1: Global narratives, their premises and the use of evidence

The evidence base in support of these narratives (and their assumptions) is in many cases conceptually flawed and lacking an empirical foundation. Statistical data is wanting and of poor quality. Part of the problem is that the methodological and statistical tools used to collect evidence, based on relatively short-term data sets in a few sites from which average and total figures are extrapolated, are not appropriate for the drylands characterised by very high coefficients of variation and high diversity. Evidence, such as it is, is often drawn from alternative sources such as the media who use testimonies of pastoral 'drop-outs' or co-opted pastoral leaders to perpetuate common perceptions and images of the drylands as failed areas. There are few success stories of pastoralism in the media partly because journalists do not or are unable to visit distant rangelands where successful pastoralists live, and those that do appear generally celebrate the change of pastoralists from their 'traditional' mobile livelihood systems to become sedentary, modern farmers or livestock keepers and 'honest' citizens.³ Comparisons with wetter areas and reference to the perceived increase in the frequency and severity of drought due to climate change are also commonly used as evidence to argue that pastoralism, in particular, is no longer a viable livelihood and economic system.

Comments and questions

The following questions and comments were made:

³ Annex 4 presents a blog by Mike Shanahan on how the media in Kenya perceive and report on pastoralists and pastoralism.

- If we use the term 'drylands' to frame the scope of the work we are involved in, then we need to include production systems other than pastoralism such as rain-fed crop farming. The term 'rain-fed' livestock systems only really apply to India, where there is no rain-fed *cultivation* of fodder.
- It might be useful to categorise these global narratives according to whether or not they hold an element of truth, are complete rubbish or are a result of methodological limitations.
- Would it be possible to identify and harness a few positive images to make progress towards positive change?
- It is important we recognise that while the dominant discourse is negative, there are also some positive representations of pastoralism (e.g. the African Union's pastoral policy framework). Sometimes, however, these positive images are embedded within a broader negative narrative (plain contradiction) or, more recently, we are seeing some policies that are ultimately about dismantling pastoral production systems, but are wrapped into 'pro-pastoralists' arguments such as: let's put an end to the historical injustice and neglect towards pastoral groups and the drylands and finally 'include them into mainstream society'.
- By insisting the dominant narrative is negative, do we constrain our ability to change it?

b) China⁴

China's rangeland policy narratives apply to the 'pastoral areas' in the arid and semi-arid north-western regions of the country rather than to all 'dryland' areas where crop farming and pastoralism are practised. Contrary to other 'dryland' areas, the north-western regions of China are only suitable for pastoralism.

Two prominent statements regularly appear in the policy narratives describing the pastoral areas of China. First, they are considered poor and vulnerable. Before the 1990s, pastoralists were considered to be richer than the farmers in the agriculture areas. However, since the 1990s, income per capita in pastoral regions has declined and the gap between rich and poor has expanded rapidly. Furthermore, as agro-pastoralists or crop farmers who raise livestock shift into more intensive production systems, they receive increased attention and support from government and development agencies. Given these economic shifts over time, herders have gradually been perceived to become poorer thereby justifying the argument they adopt a different way of raising livestock or become farmers. Secondly, since the severe dust storms that struck Beijing in 2000s, there is a perception that grassland degradation is occurring on a large scale in the pastoral areas. Herders' irrational desire to accumulate livestock combined with a backward production system is portrayed as the major cause of rangeland degradation through over-grazing. Consequently, it is believed that external political intervention is needed to clearly define land property rights to prevent rangeland degradation, and to roll-out the rangeland household contract system on a large scale.

⁴ Composed of Li Wenjun, Gongbuzeren, Hu Jinping and Lila Buckley

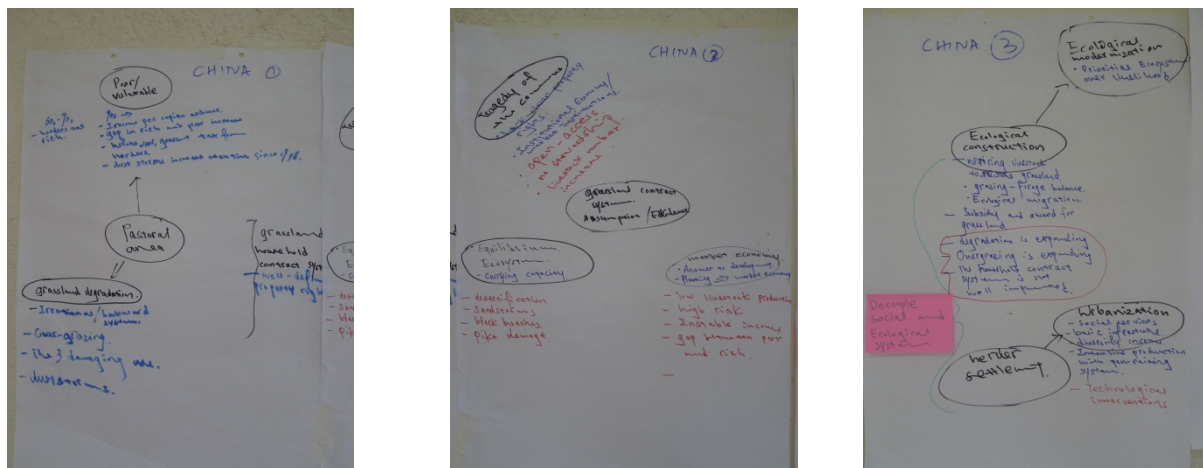


Figure 2: Policy narratives in China, their premises and the use of evidence

Three major premises support the initiation of the rangeland household contract system in policy narratives. First, the argument that inappropriate institutional arrangements for the management of land are creating a ‘tragedy of the commons’ scenario in the rangelands due to herders rapidly increasing their stocking levels yet grazing their animals on public pastures. Secondly, the concept of equilibrium is used to understand the characteristics of rangeland ecosystems. Therefore, land divisions with fences are believed to be necessary to limit mobility and control the number of animals grazing on the grasslands (i.e. controlling carrying capacity). Thirdly, at the macroeconomic scale, China is shifting from a planning economy into a market economy. This directly affects the pastoral development and rangeland management system where the policy narratives state that market institutions will facilitate market-oriented interactions among individual herders to improve their use of the scarce rangeland resources. At the same time, the market economy encourages herders to implement intensive livestock production and marketing for both subsistence and commercial profit.

Since 2003, there is growing evidence from empirical research findings, echoed in government narratives, that rangeland degradation is intensifying and expanding at a larger scale than before despite almost 20 years’ experience of the rangeland contract system. In response to the belief that the problem is due to the poor implementation of the rangeland contract system, the government initiated another major rangeland policy promoting large-scale ecological construction projects that seek to focus on the social and ecological systems of pastoralism separately for their conservation and development.

The ecological construction projects broadly consist of two approaches: “retiring grazing to restore grasslands” and the provision of “subsidy and award for grassland conservation”. The policy discourse maintains that rangeland degradation will only be reversed through a total ban on grazing and ecological migration. At the same time, the government has initiated herder settlement schemes to improve their livelihoods.

Comments and questions

- Increased settlement with intensive sedentary livestock keeping will surely result in even greater environment degradation. Can we not demonstrate this through research?

- Herder settlement not a new concept even if the policy started using it in 2007. Initially, the concept was driven by the belief that it was necessary for people to be settled to benefit from social services even if livestock remained mobile. But now, herder settlement is also associated with intensive livestock production as a means not only to increase incomes and improve livelihoods but also to limit resource or environmental degradation.
- Are there examples of complementary exchanges between pastoral and farming areas? *We use the 400mm isohyet to divide the pastoral and agro-pastoral or farming areas. Pure herders in Tibetan and Inner Mongolian move vertically between pastures with no contact with farming communities. But in other areas where farming is practised and farmers raise livestock, they purchase young animals from pure pastoralists. What about breeds – do livestock reared in pure pastoral areas produce well in farming areas? On the Tibetan plateau we have yaks and sheep, but the location of these vary depending on the location on the plateau. But if you move to intensive production, will you have to change the breeds to adapt to the changed situation? The policy is still very new so we don't know, but the herders are discussing this and see that there will be a need for a change in the breeds and species (e.g. yaks need to be reared in open rangelands, some sheep breeds have big horns which not appropriate in intensive livestock keeping situations.*

c) India⁵

In India, both the rain-fed and pastoral areas are commonly described in public policy as being low productivity 'wastelands' with too many unproductive livestock that contribute to environmental degradation. They are perceived as drought prone, high-risk and backward regions with high levels of poverty.

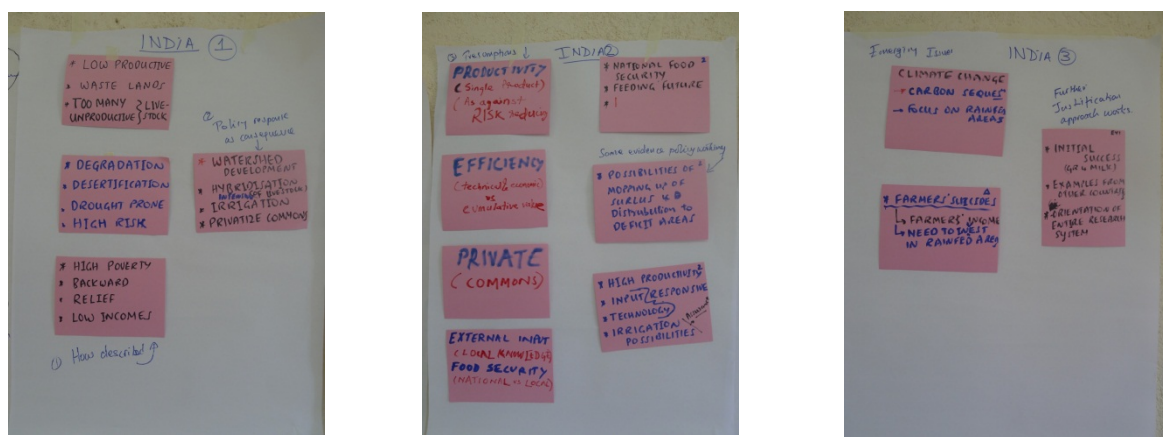


Figure 3: Policy narratives in India, their premises and the use of evidence

These views are underpinned by the belief that increased agricultural productivity is best achieved by focusing on single, high-performing (in terms of yields per unit) products and where efficiency is measured in terms of narrow technical and economic criteria rather than wider social or environmental benefits. To achieve this, the privatisation of the commons is deemed to be necessary as well as the provision of external inputs rather than valorising local knowledge and experience. Food security is perceived as a national rather than local issue where a key policy concern is to supply food at subsidised prices to the poor in rural areas of India and to feed a rapidly expanding

⁵ Composed of Ravindra Adusumilli, Srijit Mishra, Kamal Kishore and Ilse Koehler-Rollefson.

urban population. Government also points to the relative success of the ‘white revolution’ including in some rainfed areas whereby livestock keepers have followed a similar intensive approach and succeeded in raising milk productivity to meet a growing urban demand for dairy-products. The expansion of support systems designed for intensive irrigated agriculture and livestock rearing into rainfed (i.e. dryland) areas despite evidence of its limitations, is the dominant policy being followed by the government.

A number of emerging issues are brought out to justify the need to expand and extend the policy frame approach developed for intensive irrigated systems to rainfed areas. These are a spate of farmers’ suicides since the mid-1990s that along with indebtedness has been identified as symptoms of a larger agricultural crisis, increasing uncertainty due to climate variability, and a growing shortage of pulses and other food. These concerns are rekindling a deliberation on future food security among others. The climate change mitigation potential of actions in rainfed areas is also being discussed.

Comments and questions

- How is food security perceived in India? *It is perceived in terms of major cereals produced in surplus at a national level with an emphasis on calories and not much focus on protein and other nutritional requirements and the role of local foods in ameliorating these. The agriculture-nutrition disconnect in the Indian context is a matter of serious concern.*
- What role does the livestock play in the green revolution? *Alongside the green revolution was a white revolution (milk) which has been quite successful in certain areas due to well-developed collection and marketing infrastructure and not necessarily the higher milk yields. But now the government wants to extend this perceived success in one area to other areas that may not necessarily have the same conditions. Future growth in the livestock sector is seen in terms of poultry and milk. In the latter case, the focus is on rearing high milk yielding exotic breeds and sedentarising other livestock species. The potential benefits to be had from other species (camels, goats, sheep, pigs) and local breeds are not considered.*
- What is the land tenure status of land rights in pastoral areas? *There are three forms – land under the forestry department, lands under the revenue department and land classified as village commons under the village. Grazing rights in forests is regulated.*

d) Kenya⁶

Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) rather than drylands is the term that is widely used in policy debate and formulation in Kenya. According to the group, the narratives on the ASALs are composed of statements some of which are true (e.g. low and highly variable rainfall), some incorrect (e.g. ASALs are fragile environments) but ultimately gaining currency. The following major narratives have been identified as informing policy actions and priorities in the ASALs since independence together with the major factors behind them:

⁶Composed of Victor Orindi, Michael Ochieng Odhiambo, Rose Ochieng and Izzy Birch (from the 2nd day).

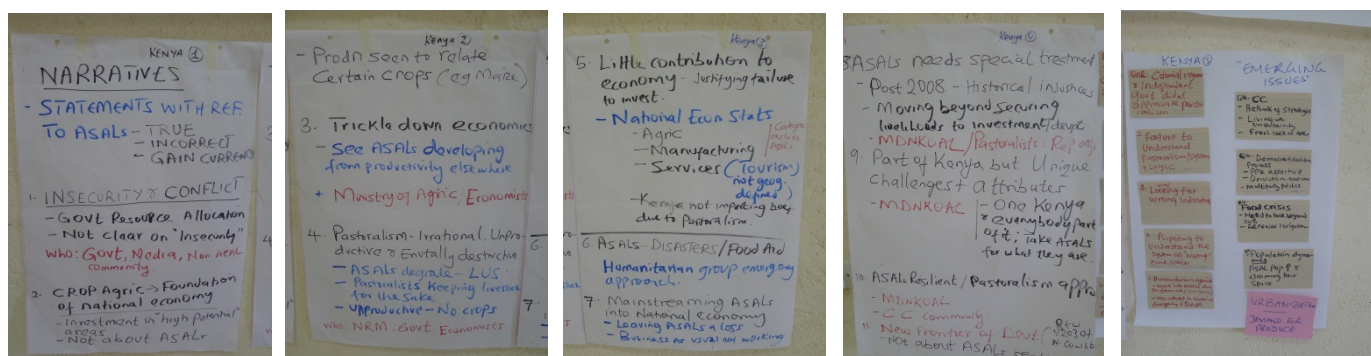


Figure 4: Policy narratives in Kenya, their premises and the use of evidence

- i. **Security/insecurity and conflict narrative:** by virtue of which government resources into the ASALs are focused on dealing with security, and which depicts local people as conflict prone and these areas as embroiled in pervasive conflict that leaves little opportunity for development. This is largely driven by people in **Government, Media and Non-ASAL communities**.
- ii. **Crop agriculture is the foundation of the national economy:** which justified government focusing investments in crop producing areas, characterized as high potential, and paying little or no attention to livestock production. The problem here is that this narrative is not about ASALs but other areas. The other challenge is the focus on specific crops (e.g. maize) so that when maize production goes down, it is equated to famine even when other food products are plenty.
- iii. **Narrative of trickle-down economics:** by which government justified investing in the so-called high potential areas, arguing that the high returns on such investments would be used to subsidize ASALs which were deemed to be non-productive and thus not worthy of investment. This sees ASALs developing from productivity elsewhere. Sessional Paper No.1 of 1965 that called for investment in areas of high return largely contributed to this narrative.
- iv. **Mobile pastoralism is irrational, unproductive and environmentally destructive (or ASALs are degraded and pastoralism is the cause of it all):** which justified the drive to transform pastoralists into crop producers and convert rangelands into crop farms through irrigation. Natural resource managers and certain part of government (i.e. economists) have largely been arguing that ASALs are degraded because of the dominant land use system and that pastoralists keep animals for the sake of it, and view the region as unproductive because there is no crop production.
- v. **ASALs, pastoralism and pastoralists contribute little to the national economy:** this narrative justified the failure to invest in promoting the economies of the ASALs in the same manner as was done with crop production. The National Economic Statistics for a long time focused on agriculture, manufacturing and service sectors which to a large extent did not capture ASALs' contribution to the wider economy correctly. Additionally, areas where ASALs contributes like tourism are lumped under service sector which is not geographically defined. Benefits, like Kenya not importing beef due to pastoralism, are not captured.
- vi. **Narrative of ASALs as areas characterized by disasters and always in need of food aid:** which justified a project-oriented emergency response approach by government and humanitarian

organizations in the ASALs. Most of the humanitarian NGOs came into the region during a period of food crisis and have failed to move beyond relief. They are also not keen on combining emergency with development.

- vii. **Narrative of mainstreaming the ASALs into the national economy** as a means of promoting national integration, which also suggested that the failure to do so amounted to a lost opportunity for the entire national economy. This is a more recent development due to the realisation that *business as usual* cannot take us far, but also that leaving the ASALs as they are will mean a loss to the national economy. This is largely promoted by the Ministry of State for Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands (MDNKOAL) and their partners.
- viii. **ASALs are an integral part of the national economy, but require special treatment in order to play their rightful role in national development:** which acknowledges and pushes for affirmative action to reduce the developmental gap between the ASALs and the rest of the country arising from historical marginalization. This is largely after 2008 and part of *Agenda 4 outcomes* (part of agreements made following the post-election violence) which calls for addressing historical injustices. MDNKOAL is convinced that it is time we move beyond *securing livelihoods* to *investing in foundations of development*.
- ix. **ASALs are part and parcel of Kenya, but they have unique constraints and attributes** by reason of history and ecology that must be taken into account in designing strategies and interventions for their development. This is the narrative fronted by MDNKOAL and which has now been entrenched in the Constitution of Kenya, 2010. The main argument here is that we take ASALs for what they are and not comparing them with other areas.
- x. **ASALs are resilient and mobile pastoralism the most appropriate livelihood and land use system there:** which is the narrative being used by MDNKOAL and the climate change community to push for appropriate climate change adaptation strategies for the ASALs.
- xi. **ASALs being new frontier for development:** this narrative gained currency in 2007 when the Vision 2030 Strategy became the development blue print for Kenya until 2010 when the new constitution was promulgated. However, this is negative as it is about other people investing there and not about ASAL population themselves. It seems that people who have undermined other areas now want to go to ASALs because it is the remaining places.

The assumption and theories that have and continue to underpin these narratives include:

- Both the colonial and independent government did not appreciate pastoralism. The colonial government annexed the fertile lands and displaced the pastoral groups. The government was not interested in what they did so long as they remained in the areas designed for them. Pastoralists were seen as people to be controlled and contained.
- Failure to understand pastoral systems and their logic has contributed a lot to some of the negative narratives as people make sweeping statements on ASALs without any scientific basis or understanding. Additionally, purporting to understand the system at the wrong spatial-temporal scales (e.g. somebody being in ASALs in one season and coming up with inadequately informed recommendations) has contributed to the negative narratives.
- Use of wrong indicators to capture the ASALs' inputs to the economy has led to the underestimation of this contribution. National economic statistics have for a long time used agriculture, manufacturing and services as their major indicators which are not appropriate to ASALs. Sectors like tourism which ASALs contributes to significantly are put under services

which are not geographically referenced. No attempt has been made to capture benefits like the savings Kenya make by not importing beef as a result of pastoralism.

Recently the narratives have changed or are being modified largely due to climate change, the democratisation process and the food crisis.

Climate change has pushed the government to re-think its strategies of engaging with ASALs. The government and other actors are using the climate change lens to look at ASAL development differently and those involved in climate change processes appreciate that ASAL populations are the 'masters of adaptation' who live in environments of uncertainty could offer important lessons for adaptation.

The democratisation process since early 1990s has enabled citizens, and especially those from the ASAL regions, to be more assertive and engage strongly with the decision making processes. Devolution as a result of the new constitution has allowed local people and their issues to take centre stage. These together with multiparty politics have changed the position towards smaller or minority groups in politics as politicians from bigger ethnic groups need their support in order to win as they tilt the balance.

The food crisis around 2008 changed how government/policy makers view ASALs. There was the realisation that the country needed to look beyond the *high potential* areas and this partly explains the renewed interest in irrigation in ASALs as a way of addressing food insecurity. Partly linked to the food crisis is the issue of demographic change –ASAL population is increasing rapidly increasing claims on and competition for land. The increasing urbanization across the country is also creating increased demand for livestock products.

Comments and questions

- Investments in ASAL – in what areas are investments being made? *There are other ASAL products such as gums, value addition of livestock products. But given the importance of livestock in the ASALs a key area of investment is in getting value addition to the sector (e.g. better marketing).*
- To what degree is government supporting an approach that will promote appropriate investment in the ASALs rather than giving it 'special' treatment? *There is growing awareness but it is still superficial in many parts of government. Also there are elites within the ASAL areas that are pushing their own agendas such as intensive livestock keeping, conservancies or irrigated farming.*
- Why is India investing in agriculture in Kenya if they have resolved food security, as they claim? *Not necessarily government but private investors investing not so much in agriculture but other products such as biofuels.*
- The rapid growth of urbanisation potentially means a rapidly growing market for pastoral products.

Session 3: Summary analysis of common and divergent issues

The table below summarises common elements of public policy and media discourse for pastoral areas and pastoralists across the three countries and at the global level with suggestions of what might consist of an alternative line of argument. Although focused on pastoralism, many of the points raised are of equal relevance for rain-fed agriculture.

	Dominant discourse	Alternatives
Pastoral areas	- Degraded, characterised by scarcity, unproductive, low-potential - Variability is an ecological disturbance - Variability is an obstacle to production	- Variability is a structural part of the ecology of pastoral ecosystems, - Structural variability can be an asset for production
Pastoral ecology	- Fragile, threatened	- Resilient, manages variability
Pastoral society	- Traditional, archaic, backwards, not modern, different/alien, resistant to change, very unequal	- Innovative, specialised, welcome relevant change
Pastoral economy	- Irrational, wasteful, unproductive, underdeveloped, low-potential, don't sell animals, pastoralism does not contribute to the fiscal economy	- Rational, efficient, produces with resources with low opportunity-cost, - Pastoralism is already a significant economic player and can become key growth sector for national economy, pastoralism could respond to new types of demand for urbanisation, - Pastoralism can provide models for dealing with instability introduced by climate change
Mobility	- Causes problems, random movement, causes conflict and disease, makes service delivery impossible, reduces productivity, undermines civic obligations and national unity	- Resolves problems, part of a rational economic strategy and follows well defined patterns, avoids concentrations and minimises diseases, successful mobile service delivery models available, ensures higher productivity than sedentary husbandry
Pastoralists	- Lazy, poor, raiders, invaders, trespassers, unreliable, large gender inequality	- Victims of agricultural encroachment
Politics	- Ungovernable, impossible to tax, threat to national security, dangerous, armed conflict	- Victims of conflict

Session 4: Policy opportunities to reframe policy narratives and discourse

Building on the results of Sessions 2 and 3, participants continued to work in their country and global level groups to identify the major development challenges currently facing policy makers in China, India, Kenya and at global levels that might provide the 'hook' or 'entry-point' on or through which to develop an alternative (more positive) 'narrative' that makes the case about how the drylands (ASALs, pastoral areas, rainfed areas) can contribute to addressing these challenges.

Group report back

a) Global group

At the global level a possible line of argument that would chime with many governments' concerns and views of the drylands could run as follows:

The drylands are globally **significant** in terms of their surface area, population levels and economy. However, due to a **historical legacy of under-investment** their full **potential is under-valued**. The need to harness this potential is made more **urgent by climate change**. Two development pathways or options are possible:



Figure 5: Line of argument for reframed global discourse

- i. A **'business-as-usual'** approach where existing production/livelihood systems in the drylands, and especially pastoralism, are replaced with alternatives.
- ii. An **'innovative'** approach where existing production/livelihood systems in the drylands, and especially pastoralism, are understood, supported and strengthened as such (i.e. on their own terms).

So far, with some important exceptions, 'external input' (investments) has conflated with the first option, while 'refraining from replacing pastoralism' has been understood as 'refraining from modernising the drylands' and therefore equal to low external input (beside humanitarian aid). Nevertheless, **both options can support either high or low external input**. 'Modernising' the drylands, for example, can and should start from **investing in pastoralism as such**, using the opportunities offered by cutting edge scientific research and technological development to understand, support and improve pastoral production systems on their own terms.

To make the argument for the 'innovative' approach versus 'business as usual', evidence needs to be marshalled against the following criteria: equity, efficiency, resilience and sustainability.

Comments and questions

- It is not just a case of marshalling evidence in support of an alternative narrative, but also how do you get consensus on the validity of that evidence. It will be necessary to get alliances to support your position.
- Not all past interventions have focussed on 'replacing pastoralism'; quite a lot of investment has been channelled to 'secure' it - e.g. through water development in pastoral areas or the creation of pastoral associations.
- What timeframe do we construct an argument around at the global level – if it is 2050 then we will all be eating artificially processed meat which makes all this irrelevant!
- Do we have evidence of undervalued evidence? *Yes, partly in methodological issues.*

- What is the significance of drylands? *In addition to surface area and population there are the links to other ecosystems and economies. This will make policy makers sit up.*
- Need to show the alternative is superior to what exists. *Yes that is the purpose of marshalling evidence against a set of criteria.*
- In some dryland areas in India (Rajasthan), rainfall is increasing due to climate change – this will increase productivity of drylands. But this is not everywhere and is not prevalent in the global CC debate. However, because pastoralists can exploit variability, if CC leads to greater variability then here too productivity can increase, which is another argument we might use.

b) China Group

Do we need pastoralism? This is the question that policy makers in China are asking given their perception of its low contribution to the economy, the relatively few number of people involved (less than 1% of the total population), and its perceived negative impacts on the environment. Three answers could be made to make the argument that China does need pastoralism:

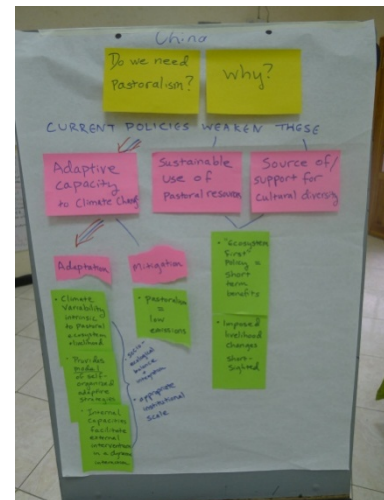


Figure 6: Line of argument for reframed narrative in China

- **Adaptive capacity to climate change:**
 - o Adaptation: because climate variability is intrinsic to pastoral ecosystems and livelihoods pastoralists have greater capacity to respond to climate change than other land users and as such can provide a model for self-organised adaptive strategies. This is all the more important because current government interventions are not able to address existing variability while simultaneously recognising that pastoralists do have capacity to thrive in variability environments. In China, there is a need to consider the relative emphasis on the ecological and social balance and integration, and to consider the appropriate institutional scale.
 - o Mitigation: because pastoralism produces lower emissions than intensive livestock keeping.
- **Sustainable use of pastoral resources and support for cultural diversity:**
 - o In the longer-term, pastoralism will benefit the ecosystem.
 - o While settlement of pastoralists may provide short-term economic benefits, in the longer term greater harm than good will be done (e.g. environmental degradation, loss of cultural identity, etc.).

Comments and questions

- Maybe re-frame the opening question away from ‘do we need pastoralism?’ towards ‘what is wrong with having pastoralism?’ *The question is framed so as to directly mirror the question posed by government. It also is not that different from the way in which the question at the global level has been framed, though more starkly. Current policies are undermining and changing the pastoral system leading to poverty and ecological damage and loss of cultural identity. This is pushing the youth away from pastoralism. There are few*

water in a more extensive manner (diversified crops requiring low water inputs and takes care of livestock requirements) where its use is reduced and shared across farms and across farmers providing basic livelihood security against rainfall failures.

- **Inclusiveness.** Extra effort is needed to make the high input intensive system inclusive because it is expensive to support the costs for everyone. It will require permanent subsidies if everyone is to benefit (the EU is an example). But traditional systems are intrinsically inclusive, do not require huge subsidies and are thus less costly and more sustainable.
- **Fiscal.** The high input system requires subsidies to function, which is very costly. But the alternative is to have public infrastructural one time investments in the existing system to strengthen it. Traditional systems do not need constant subsidies.
- **Growth.** The country wants growth. In the high input system growth is distorted by the market – e.g. wheat quotas are given but subsidies are needed to meet these quotas so the costs of producing wheat is constantly going up. This distortion is also driven by specific political and economic interests. Traditional systems are creative and entrepreneurial.
- **Democratisation.** The high input system is top-down (seeds provided, energy provided, etc.) and if subsidies stop the system stops. Traditional systems are intrinsically participative and sustainable.

Comments and questions

- Yes local systems make sense, but will they feed the big cities? *The farmers have been feeding the cities so far! And with proper support they can produce more.*

d) Kenya

The key issues facing government include:

- **Governance.** With the enactment of the new Constitution in 2010, there is a lot of excitement; citizens are demanding for their rights. While this provides opportunities, it also creates threats with some people believing that a devolved system means there is no role for central government. Opportunities: multiparty politics has allowed ASAL issues to be debated at national level. New constitution looks at addressing the historical injustices in the ASALs.
- **Coordination.** This is a major issue due to so many actors involved in the implementation of development. Better coordination is needed across government sectors, between central government and the Counties, between government and civil society and within civil society. Opportunities: Devolution means that counties can plan according to their priorities and the ASALs can secure national borders.
- **Economic development.** Globalisation and liberalisation of the market are in many cases contributing to the collapse of small and medium business enterprises. There is also the issue of economic integration and the free movement across the border, which while it can bring economic benefits is also bringing concerns about terrorism. Opportunities: since past economic

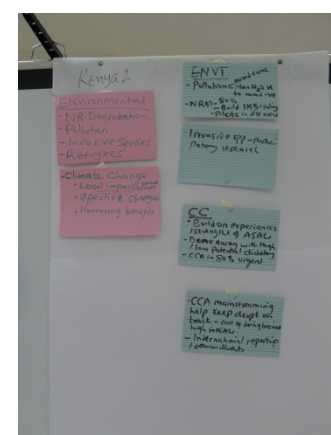
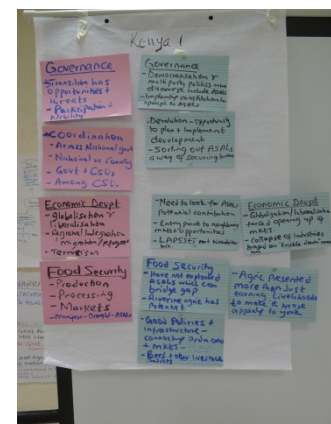


Figure 8: Line of argument for reframed narrative in Kenya

model didn't work can now argue that the ASALs have something to contribute to the economy.

- **Food security.** Kenya is a food insecure country and has to import food. It is also vulnerable to famine from drought. Opportunities: make the argument that the ASALs have a role in contributing to food security through livestock products and riverine agriculture. It is important however, to present agriculture as more than livelihoods to attract the youth.
- **Changing demography.** Population numbers are rising rapidly especially in the ASALs. Opportunities: there is a growing domestic market for ASAL products.
- **Environmental.** Degradation, loss of forests, pollution, invasive species such as *Prosopis* and large refugee camps in the ASAL areas are all realities. Opportunities: Building on indigenous systems of ASAL communities to sustainably manage natural resources A lot of work going on in dealing with invasive species – e.g. *Prosopis* being turned into charcoal. Further piloting and participatory research in ASAL areas key in informing the most sustainable way of dealing with invasive species.
- **Climate change.** Kenyans recognise that they are vulnerable to climate change. Large parts of Kenya are already experiencing high temperatures and any further increase will have serious implications on crops and the tourism industry. Opportunity: ASAL residents are masters of adaptation and so we need to build on their strategies. Climate change has done away with the high versus low potential dichotomy as crops are now failing in the high potential areas. Mainstreaming climate change adaptation will keep development on track.

Comments and questions

- Are there cropping issues in ASAL areas? *Yes, a key area is linking the farming areas with the ASALs so that there is greater complementarity.*

Session 5: Project outputs

Within the context of the Ford Foundation project there are funds to produce the following outputs: four policy briefs, one media brief, a position paper, two academic articles and support the attendance of partners at two global events at which these products can be presented and debated. After a brief discussion on the audience, context, content and format of the written outputs, the following points were agreed:

- Recognition that 'audience' includes two categories of actor or institution – those whose views, perceptions and policies we wish to influence and those whose support we require to back up and use the material (i.e. allies).
- Policy briefs should be country focused with examples from other countries. A set of purely global briefs would not have an appropriate level of detail to be used in national level debates. The briefs should be targeted at senior policy makers, researcher and policy advisors and advocates. They should be relatively short (2,000 to 3,000 words) and typically consist of a problem statement/analysis, a presentation of an alternative position or argument backed by evidence with references and conclude with a set of policy recommendations.
- A global policy brief highlighting the limitations of current methodologies to assess the values of the drylands, ASALs and pastoral or rainfed areas would be of value not only to global debates (see below) but also to national audiences and initiatives.

- Over the next 6-7 months, key global events that would be worth targeting include:
 - o the FAO led Global Agenda for Action that will be holding a global conference in 22nd January 2013 in Nairobi;
 - o the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference in February 2013 in Brazil ; and
 - o the 11th International Conference on Dry Lands Development, with the theme *Sustainable Development in Dry Lands in the Face of Global Climate Change* in March in China.

Further discussion on national level audience, product and events was deferred to the next session.

Session 6: Further developing the arguments for an alternative narrative

Taking the findings from Sessions 4 and 5, mixed groups worked to further develop the key elements, components, arguments of a 'counter narrative' in support of drylands (ASAL, pastoral, rainfed area) to be articulated through a set of policy and media briefs at both global and country levels.

Group report back

a) Global

Arguments

The most common argument at global level seems to be that pastoral systems are a reservoir and source of important lessons on using environmental instability as an asset at a time when global instability is expected to be on the rise due to global climate change (GCC), and thus become routine also outside the drylands. As a rare example of an agricultural system that developed to exploit characteristically unstable environments, mobile pastoralism appears to be well placed not only to handle GCC but also to show an alternative approach to instability by harnessing it as a resource for food production, rather than by suppressing it as an obstacle. This core argument could be combined with available data on the economic importance of the drylands and the ecological sustainability of pastoralism. Figures recently published by the FAO indicate that human-edible protein from livestock is produced much more efficiently in countries where the sector is dominated by pastoralism. Critical studies also highlight the comparative advantage for livestock production in pastoral systems over intensive systems with regard to a dependence on fossil fuels (as pastoralism is a low-carbon production system) and the limited use of cultivated fodder or competition with food crops.⁷ Therefore, pastoral systems have an important role to play in the mitigation of GHG emission as well as in the rehabilitation of degraded areas.



Figure 9: Further developing the reframed global narrative

⁷ For example Steinfeld H., Gerber P., Wassenaar T., Castel V., Rosales M. and de Haan C. 2006. Livestock's long shadow. Environmental issues and options, Livestock, Environment and Development (LEAD) and Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Rome; and Steinfeld H., Mooney H.A., Schneider F. and Neville L.E. (eds) 2010. Livestock in a changing landscape: Drivers, consequences, and responses (Volume 1), Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE), Island Press, Washington D.C.

The group also discussed two ‘baseline arguments’ identified as important in policy-making circles at national level that could make the core argument stronger if woven into the policy brief.

- i. Whatever the recommendations made in the brief, there should be attention to the expected relative costs of policy implementation: transaction costs and monitoring; distribution of costs across different levels of governance (e.g. central government, local governments, and communities in China); and the costs in production of the impact of the policy.
- ii. In recommending investment policies, there should be attention to the generation of value-adding *at the local level*, with a focus on existing social-economic contexts (i.e. support existing production and livelihood systems rather than alternatives or the secondary industry).

Audiences

In addition to the global events identified in Session 5 (GAA, UNCCD scientific conference, international conference on drylands development), other global events could also include the Science Forum, an annual gathering of all the CGIAR institutions that usually takes place in January.

In terms of ‘allies’, the people and institutions we would want to back up the policy brief will include the scientific community (e.g. all pastoral scholars such as the editorial board of the journals *Nomadic Peoples* and *Pastoralism*, the China Academy of Social Science, RUFORUM, IUCN), the donor and civil society community (e.g. AU/IBAR, CELEP, Ford Foundation, IGAD), the media (BBC, Wikipedia) as well as pastoralists themselves through pastoral networks, radio and television.

Products

Three categories of product can be developed:

- Policy brief, and its translation and dissemination amongst pastoral groups for validation.
- Amendments to the Wikipedia definition of pastoralism, pastoralist, drylands, rain-fed agricultural areas, arid and semi-arid lands.
- Production of a paper on methodology, analysing methodologies presently used in comparative evaluations of ecological efficiency and relative potential of food production systems, highlighting the inadequacy of their fundamental assumptions when it comes to atypical operating conditions and production principles of pastoral systems.

b) Kenya

Kenya already has positive narratives on the ASALs. The challenge is build the capacity of policy makers to articulate these narratives across government and implement policies consistent with the positive discourse.

The over-arching message is appropriate investment in the ASALs will contribute to an **Inclusive Kenya, and resilient ASALs** – see Figure 10. The ASALs have huge potential with assets that include natural resource wealth and extraordinary biodiversity, the resilience and productivity of pastoralism and small-scale farming, the wisdom and experience of traditional institutions, the opportunities for greater regional integration and positive feed-back linkages with non-ASAL areas

[illegible]

The forthcoming elections in March 2013 to establish a new governance framework (elected County governments) coupled with supportive policies such as Vision 2030 provide a strong institutional environment to enable the ASALs to contribute delivering the objectives of the new Constitution - inclusiveness, self-determination, devolved governance and equal citizenship – and thereby to over-coming these ‘barriers’. But there are also threats to consider including elite capture of the devolution process, particularly at local level, citizens lack of capacity to engage with and drive the process for self-determination, the dominance and intransigence of governance mind-sets, inward looking agendas and constitutional contestation by political leaders.

Key products to produce to engage with the constitutional implementation process over the next 6 to 12 months include a policy brief, a media spread, an info-graphic based on Figure xx and fact sheets on the ASALs.

- I wonder to what extent we are being too optimistic that there is a good policy environment in Kenya; how widespread is this across government? *We are not saying there is an all-encompassing positive policy environment across the whole of government, but the Constitution is there, and there are institutions and resources in place. And this gives leverage. It is also no longer politically convenient or acceptable to ignore the ASALs.*

- I wonder if there would be any future in creating informal networks in government – e.g. a senior person in a number of key ministries who receives key papers, is invited to strategic meetings, etc. Form a sort of ASAL network? *This is being tried in Kenya.*

c) India

An overall message that would resonate with the key issues facing policy makers in India would be that **Prosperous, productive and secure rainfed agriculture is critical for inclusive, climate resilient growth.**

The line of argument in support of this 'message' would run as follows:

- **IMPORTANCE.** Ensuring appropriate investments in rainfed areas is important because:
 - o They cover the largest area of India, have the largest proportion of the population and have a diverse agro-ecology – these characteristics offer huge potential.
 - o Inappropriate investment is highly risky due to unpredictable and variable climate conditions.
- **URGENCY.** Ensuring that India's rainfed areas are prosperous, productive and secure is urgent because of:
 - o Resource limits with respect to energy, water, land, finances, etc.
 - o Rising demand for food from a growing population.

Increasing climate variability as a result of **climate change** brings added importance and urgency to the situation.

- **Failure to fulfil potential.** However, because of a lack of appropriate investment the potential of India's rainfed areas is not fulfilled and the area remains a burden on the State.

There are three options for galvanizing the potential of the rain-fed areas:

- **Option 1:** Transfer approaches developed in the irrigated areas to the rain-fed areas– this is the approach currently promoted by government. These approaches are characterised by high inputs, high costs, high energy use and low diversity with the following consequences:
 - o Less inclusion
 - o Fewer multiplier effects
 - o High dependence on external actors and inputs; thus less in control of the factors of production and thus ultimately more vulnerable.
- **Option 2:** Strengthen existing production systems that are more in tune with the ecological dynamics of rain-fed areas where variability and diversity are pro-actively exploited for productivity. Existing systems are characterised by low external but high internal inputs, multiple land use at farm and landscape scale and synergies with other land uses with the following consequences:
 - o Local multiplier effects
 - o More inclusion



Figure 12: Further developing the reframed narrative for India

- o Greater agro-ecological efficiency
 - o Less dependence on external actors and inputs and thus more in control of the factors of production and thus ultimately more resilient.
- **Option 3:** A potential third option that is not mutually exclusive is the promotion of organic agriculture. But since this is relatively small and niche enterprise

In order to make the argument for Option 2, evidence will be provided against a set of criteria to compare the relative benefits and costs of Options 1 and 2 with respect to the over-arching message (Prosperous, productive and secure rainfed agriculture is critical for inclusive, climate resilient growth) and that directly address the government's concerns over resource use, energy, rising demands for food etc. These criteria include: resource use efficiency, inclusiveness, climate resilience, productivity and contribution to growth.

Audiences in India will include Federal and State government ministries and departments (agriculture, rural development, National Development Council, Planning Commission), MPs, research bodies, religious organisations, CSOs, farmers' and pastoralists' unions and the media. For each category the central message will need to be tailored. For example: For the media the message could be along the lines of *a new development paradigm is emerging for rain-fed areas that will affects millions of people* giving a sense of breaking news of great importance; whereas for farmers' unions the message might be *you are exposed to high risk in pursuit of Option 1*.

In terms of products, the following are useful: a briefing or summary paper making the argument, a press briefing or release, a refined development agenda for the RRA network, articles in academic journals, opinion pieces in the national or state media and a communications strategy for the RRA network.

d) China

Line of argument

In China climate change can provide an opportunity to develop a new narrative for pastoral areas. It will be important to ensure the new narrative addresses pastoral areas not just in terms of their natural assets but also people's livelihoods and culture. The arguments that can be made include:

- The necessity for cooperation between production systems and people in order to cope with climatic events, which in some cases will require more mobility.
- The importance of using traditional knowledge in preparing for disasters given herders' rich experience of how to deal with disaster. Thus we need policies to enhance traditional knowledge and not to undermine it.
- The policy of exclusion that pushes people off the land has to be changed – retiring or removing livestock from the land to restore the environment needs to be changed. This is copied from Western countries and is not appropriate for China.
- It is important that policies are not top-down.
- Enhance the freedom and choice for pastoralists to decide on their on their development pathways.

We also need to include success stories from other countries showing how herders through mobility and reciprocity are coping with climate change as evidence to support our arguments.

Audience

- State Council and then three departments: Ethnic Affairs Commission, Ministry of Agriculture, and the Commission for Development and Reform.
- NGOs – though quite new they could be a link between government and local people.
- Local government.
- Chinese academic community.

Policy opportunities

We can target the Chinese Academy of Sciences Conference on desertification in March 2013.

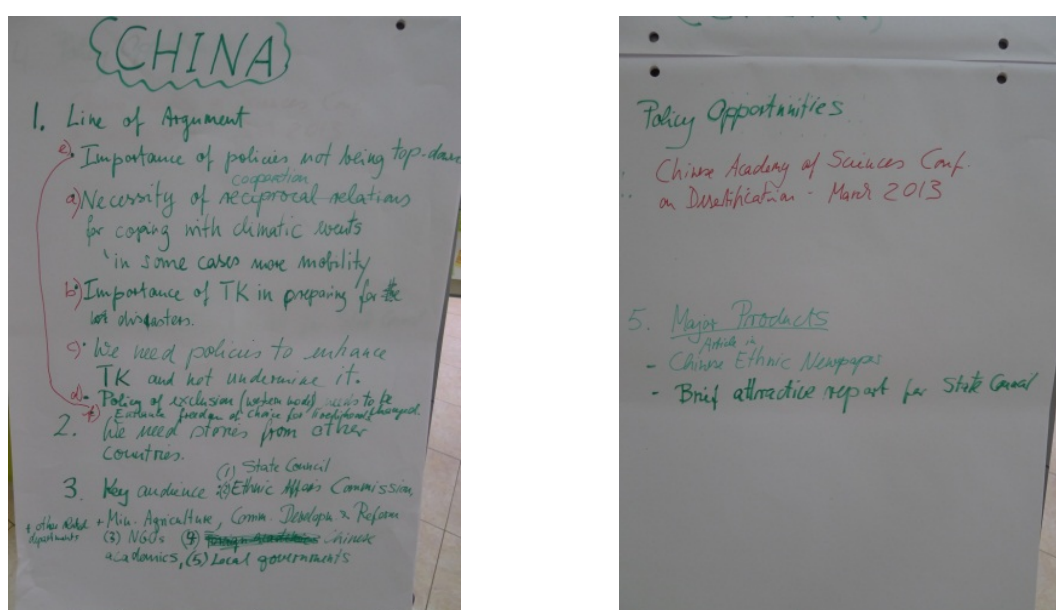


Figure 13: Further developing the reframed narrative for China

Products

- An article in Chinese for ethnic newspapers – but only if we have some new things to say.
- A brief attractive report for the State Council.

Comments and questions

- This is really good content, but I think we need to find a powerful hook on which to hang it. Maybe emphasise that modernisation and development can be achieved within the context of mobility and use climate change as an entrance point making the point that pastoralists can not only adapt but can also contribute to growth and development. Traditional knowledge is important but need to harness it to a bigger picture that it can be used to modernise. *Yes, you're right. And can demonstrate how pastoralists don't reject new technology (solar panels).*
- Are you saying that pastoralism is currently seen by government through a conceptual framework of farming rather than pastoral? *Yes. There is an assumption that to be modern you have to be settled.*

- There are two arguments that can be made – there is the adaptive capacity argument (coping with increased climate variability and extreme events), but there is also the argument that pastoralists actually harness variability to enhance productivity, and I think this second argument is potentially more powerful because the government can decide to make pastoralists climate resilient by, for example, settling them in towns and giving them jobs that are less sensitive to the climate. If, however, you can also argue that pastoralism can use variability as a positive resource, then to remove pastoralism would have certain opportunity costs such as loss of potential revenue. *Yes, I agree.*
- The government in addition to seeing pastoralists and poor and vulnerable, are also seen as degraders of the environment. So this issue will also need to be addressed. *Yes.*

Session 7: Next steps

In this final session, the following decisions were taken.

Produce four ‘briefing’ papers

Three country and one global briefing paper will be produced that captures the key elements of the new narrative in support of the drylands, rain-fed agriculture and pastoral areas from which other products can be produced. The briefing papers will build on the results of Session 6 above. The process and timeframe will consist of the following:

- IIED to draft a generic structure and circulate to ‘lead authors’ for comment by the end of October.
- Lead authors to prepare draft text and circulate for comment with other lead authors and others as necessary with a view to completing text ideally by the end of December (if possible) but certainly by the end of January.

Develop a communications and media strategy

With support from IIED, produce a communications and media strategy at country and global levels.

Finalise the policy review papers

To complete the global and country policy reviews and the media analysis, all participants agreed to send written comments to the lead authors by the end of October. IIED in discussion with the lead authors and their institutions will agree how best to disseminate the findings from this research – e.g. special edition of a peer-reviewed journal, a stand-alone collection published jointly by all concerned institutions.

Attend two global events

IIED in consultation with the partners in this project will track the following events to decide how best to ensure the project’s findings and outputs are used to contribute to promoting a new and more positive narrative on the drylands at the global level.

- Global Agenda for Action in Kenya in January 2013 – need to get information on dates, format, etc. and discuss how we might engage.
- 2nd Scientific Conference of the UNCCD, Brazil in February 2013
- The 11th International Conference on Dry Lands Development, in March in China.

Close of the workshop

Annex 1: Workshop participants

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Annex 2: Workshop Agenda

Day 1: Wednesday 26th September	
Time	Activity
9h00– 10h30	Session 1: Opening the workshop - Welcome address - Introductions - Context - Workshop objectives and timetable - Housekeeping + departure times
10h30 – 11h00	Tea break
11h00 – 13h00	Session 2: Group work by county and at global level to analyse research findings - 3 County groups - 1 Global group
13h00 – 14h30	Lunch break
14h30 – 15h30	Session 3: Groups report back
15h30 – 16h00	Tea break
16h00 – 17h30	Session 4: Plenary / Group work to summarise analysis
17h30 – 18h30	Steering group meeting to structure Day 2
20h00 – 21h00	Post-dinner information sharing (China)
Day 2: Focus on Objective 2	
9h00– 10h30	Session 5: Identify policy opportunities to reframe discourse on drylands, ASALs, pastoral and rainfed areas
10h30 – 11h00	Tea break
11h00 – 13h00	Session 6: Group report back
13h00 – 14h30	Lunch break
14h30 – 16h00	Session 7: Project outputs: Discussion on the project's immediate outputs
16h00 – 16h30	Tea break
20h00 – 21h00	Post-dinner information sharing (media analysis, resource mapping Tanzania)
Day 3: Friday 28 th September 2012	
9h00– 10h30	Session 8: Further developing narrative and lines of argument
10h30 – 11h00	Tea break
11h00 – 13h00	Session 8: Continued and report back
13h00 – 14h30	Lunch break
14h30 – 16h00	Session 9: Next steps Close of workshop Introduction to the field trip

Annex 3: Pairing of proverbs to introduce your partner

In order to break the ice and get the participants from China, India, Kenya and Europe talking to someone from another country, participants were asked to play a variant of a well-known 'introductions game'. The objective of the game was to pair participants by different country and, once paired up, to get them to interview their partner and then present him or her to the rest of the workshop.

To do this, seven proverbs from the three countries were collected and then divided into two phrases with each phrase written on a separate card – see below. Participants then randomly chose a card and found the person with the other half of their proverb.

From China:

- *The black head relies on black fur.....the black fur relies on green leaves.*
- *Looking from outside it looks like a pool.....looking from inside it looks like a baby and a mother.*

From India:

- *When the peacock sings....the buffaloes are happy.*
- *Too much water destroys life.....too little water destroys life.*

From Kenya:

- *A fool looks for dung where.....a cow has never grazed.*
- *A camel never sees....its own hump.*
- *A cow has.....no owner.*

Annex 4: Blog post -- What's in a narrative? In policy, everything or nothing

First published [on the IIED blog](#) on 1 October 2012

Narrative means story, right? But not if you work on development policy, where narrative means something quite different: a framework for action, but one that can create problems if left to roll like a stone down a hill on its own.

I discussed narratives this week with my IIED colleague Ced Hesse and two other experts on land, livestock and livelihoods: Saverio Krätli and Jeremy Swift.

We wanted to understand the policy narratives that describe pastoralism in Kenya, India and China, three countries where policies work against the mobility that herding communities use to take advantage of water and pasture that are patchily distributed in space and time.

The dominant policy narrative casts pastoralism as a backward, irrational livelihood that takes place in fragile unproductive ecosystems and creates a catalogue of problems for non-pastoralists. The narrative frames pastoralism as something that should be replaced. The pastoralists themselves would of course disagree, and research suggests that they will have a critical role to play – if allowed to – as our climate changes.

With funding from the Ford Foundation, we had gathered with specialists from the three countries to consider how modified narratives could help policymakers see the benefits of mobile pastoralism and how the sector can support climate-resilient development. But first we had to be sure we all understood narratives.

A scholar called Emery Roe developed [the concept of development policy narratives](#) in 1991, and it was his work that we drew on in our conversation.

According to Roe, such narratives are strategic simplifications that help policymaking in the face of situations whose complexity can instil policy paralysis. They generate consensus around major policies and make political action possible.

As simplifications, narratives are fundamentally different from scientific theories. Science, like narratives, needs to spread to become accepted, but science operates within a formal system that validates its findings, through publication of evidence, peer-review and replication.

“Scientific facts are falsifiable,” said Jeremy Swift. “Narratives are not. They escape the checks and balances of science.”

Narratives need the support of scientific authority but at the same time need to avoid the complexity and conditional nature of scientific knowledge and this is why they exist. As Krätli pointed out: “scientific knowledge could never be as convincing as a good narrative.”

Narratives can be fairly relevant representations of the situation they are designed to address. But like wide-angle camera lenses that capture a huge range of variety, the scenarios they produce are increasingly distorted at the edges.

“For those parts of reality that happen to be at the edges of the narrative – like nomadic pastoralism in global narratives about agricultural development, food security, climate change — the distortion

can be so strong that the simplifying power of the narrative can be turned on its head,” said Krätli. “It generates order at the centre of its focus but disorder at the edge.”

The idea that economies of scale are always good, for instance, might be true for agriculture in a uniform and stable environment. But when resources such as water and pasture become available in unpredictable concentrations — as in the rangelands where pastoralists herd their livestock — then investments designed to capture economies of scale and static production systems can be a bad idea.

For pastoralists though, mobility is what solves problems. It is part of a rational, well-defined economic strategy that ensures higher productivity than static herding.

The media have a big role to play in correcting the many misconceptions that policymakers have about mobile pastoralism. But there is also a need for a modified policy narrative, which is what the project underway now hopes to develop.

This modified narrative might show how governments can make sensible decisions in the face of climate change and population growth by investing in pastoralism and, critically, in pastoralists on their own terms. Its true test will be if it creates a positive outcome to the more conventional narrative — the story of how pastoralists fare in the future.

Annex 5: Blog post -- Why following the herd can be good for journalists

First published [on the IIED blog](#) on 11 October 2012

“Banditry, robberies, infiltration of small arms, poaching in the region’s game reserves and national parks and frequent outbreak of livestock diseases are now being attributed to the uncontrolled movement of pastoralists and their animals.”

This sentence, from a 2006 article in Kenya’s *The Nation* newspaper, encapsulates the way the country’s nomadic herders have been — and continue to be — portrayed in the media there. It echoes [the dominant policy narrative](#), which says pastoralism is a backward system that takes place in a harsh, unproductive environment and that when herders move to seek water and pasture they create problems for other people.

But this, [say researchers](#), is a dangerous narrative, one that is blind to the true nature of the lands the pastoralists move across and to the knowledge they draw upon to take advantage of resources that are distributed there in an unpredictable way.

Today, the meat and milk pastoralists provide help to feed a nation. As the climate grows more variable, these people could become even more important cornerstones of Kenya’s economy and food security.

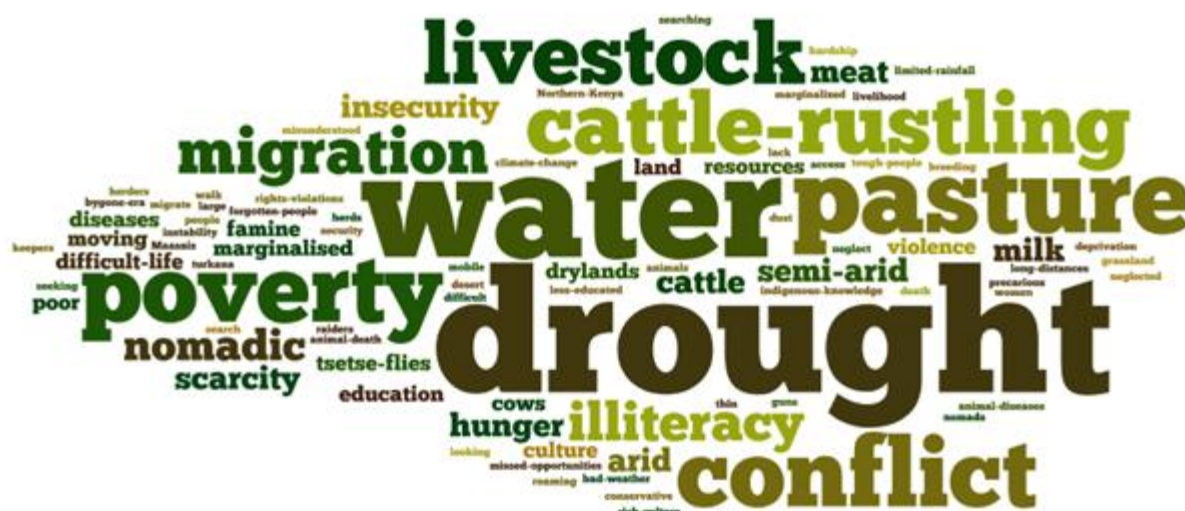
But, in the pages of newspapers there, the herders are not heroes — they are harbingers of conflict and other problems. In short, Kenya’s pastoralists have an image problem. This much became clear when I analysed 100 stories about pastoralists that Kenyan newspapers published between 2000 and 2012.

My study, which will also examine articles from India and China, is part of a larger Ford Foundation funded project. It aims to promote more progressive narratives, and policies that support mobile pastoralism as a rational, productive livelihood in lands where water and vegetation vary in space and time. Some patterns soon emerged:

- In Kenya, pastoralists tend to feature only in ‘bad-news’ stories – 93% of the media reports referred to conflict or drought.
- While 51% of stories that mention conflict presented pastoralists as a cause of problems, only 5.7% suggested that pastoralists might be the victims of the actions (or inactions) of others (e.g. farmers or government policies).
- An astonishing 22% of all articles referred to pastoralists as “invaders” or as having “invaded” land.
- Pastoralists have little voice. They were quoted in only 41% of the stories journalists wrote about them.

I supplemented my content analysis with an online survey that 42 Kenyan journalists completed. “The media only gives special attention to pastoralists when there is a crisis, like a major drought or famine where large numbers of people and animals have died,” said one. Another said: “Pastoralism is generally ignored. It only makes headlines when there is cattle-rustling and scores of people are killed.”

I asked the journalists to state five words they associated with pastoralists. The figure below shows the words they chose, with word-size reflecting how often a journalist used it.



It's a problematic portrait. Yet when asked more specific questions, the journalists revealed knowledge and opinions that seem to contradict the dominant media narrative.

Most (91 per cent) of the journalists acknowledge, for instance, the importance of pastoralism to Kenya's economy, with more than half of them stating that this is major. This surprised me, given that this was invisible in the stories I analysed. Only 4 per cent of them mentioned it, and not one published a figure such as a shilling, dollar or GDP value.

Other things the journalists said suggest that there is an opportunity for a new narrative to emerge in the Kenyan media, one that does not ignore the social, economic and environmental benefits pastoralists provide.

"The media has neglected pastoralism, since it takes place in far flung areas of northern Kenya which the government has neglected for years," said one journalist. Another noted that: "Pastoralism has a chance to become a key growth sector for Kenya's economy if supported by media and policy makers alike."

A 2011 article, by Peter Mutai for China's Xinhua news agency, shows another narrative is possible. It manages to overturn much of the prevailing one in just its opening sentence:

"As hunger spreads among more than 12 million people in the Horn of Africa, a new study finds that investments aimed at increasing the mobility of livestock herders, a way of life often viewed as "backward" despite being the most economical and productive use of Kenya's drylands, could be the key to averting future food crises in arid lands."

Mobility is the key that pastoralists use to unlock the scattered riches of Kenya's drylands. The landscape may appear barren, extreme and risky to city-based journalists but the pastoralists have the knowledge and skills to take advantage of the land's variability and diversity.

The old proverb that says "a fool looks for dung where a cow has never grazed" can perhaps be turned on its head to serve as a reminder of the riches – of stories and more – that a reporter can find if they follow the herd.