



Isiolo, Kenya ~ Photo credits: Mercy Corps

The Resilient Approaches in Natural Rangeland Ecosystems (RANGE) Programme

Gender Analysis Report Summary

Contents

Abbreviations	2
Executive summary	3
Background, Purpose and Methodology	5
Overview of Gender Issues	8
Past and Present Roles of Women and Men in Pastoralist Communities: Catalysts of Transformation	11
Decisions Making Over Community Resources	15
Gender and Climate Change	17
Gender and Conflict	19
Gender and Vulnerability	21
Gender and Energy Landscape	23
Gender and Biodiversity	24
Common Trends, Conclusions and Recommendations	25

Abbreviations

ASALs	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
BDS	Business Development Service
FGDs	Focus group discussions
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
KII	Key Informant Interviews
IDIs	In-depth Interviews
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PWDS	Persons With Disabilities
RANGE	Resilient Approaches in Natural Rangeland Ecosystems
SGBV	Sexual Gender-Based Violence
VSLAs	Village Savings and Loans Associations

Executive summary

The Gender Analysis is carried out within the Mercy Corps Inception Assessments for its recently launched Resilient Approaches in Natural Rangeland Ecosystems (RANGE) programme. This 5-year initiative is centered on the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) counties of Marsabit, Isiolo, and Samburu in Kenya.

This assessment employed a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, integrating diverse qualitative data collection techniques. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted separately for women, men, and youth, while Key Informant Interviews (KIs) were held with women, men, and youth leaders, as well as County officials. Additionally, desk reviews were carried out to obtain a holistic understanding of the intricate gender dynamics within the three counties.

The following are the key findings:

Information gathered from this field assessment indicates that historically, women were systematically marginalized from the decision-making processes due to cultural and social norms. Females possessed limited influence and authority over livestock-related resources, which are crucial for pastoralist households. Gender disparities in livestock asset management have been deeply ingrained in traditional customs. In all the communities across the three counties, women are primarily responsible for milking animals, while the commercialization aspect is predominantly overseen by men.

Over the past decade, shifts in gender roles within pastoralist communities have had significant implications for nutrition and food security. Women, who traditionally had more limited roles, are now increasingly taking on greater responsibility in providing for their households as the dynamics of male-dominated livelihoods evolve. For instance, in some pastoralist communities met, women are now actively involved in livestock management, previously seen as a predominantly male domain. This shift has not only empowered women but has also diversified household income sources, contributing to improved food security. By recognizing and supporting the evolving roles of women in pastoralist communities, the RANGE Programme can further promote sustainable development and enhance food security for all community members.

One notable transformation is the escalating engagement of women in income-generating activities beyond the confines of their households. Women are now actively involved in small-scale enterprises, artisanal crafts, and assuming roles in community leadership positions. This shift can be attributed to factors such as the increased accessibility of education for women, enabling them to pursue economic prospects beyond traditional spheres. Evolving market dynamics and the imperative for diversified income streams



Over the past decade, women are increasingly taking on greater responsibility in providing for their HH as the dynamics of male-dominated livelihoods evolve.

have revolutionized pastoralist societies, leading to men and women sharing responsibilities and contributing equitably to the economic welfare of their families, thus shaping the redefinition of gender roles within these communities.

The erratic weather patterns disproportionately affect women fulfilling their productive and reproductive roles, resulting in heightened workloads, health hazards, and scarce resources. Conversely, men encounter distinct challenges such as livestock depletion and financial burdens stemming from climate change. The heightened conflicts in the vicinity, including incidents like cattle rustling and banditry, have led to the loss of numerous lives and the displacement of diverse population segments. Women and children seem to have borne the brunt of these emerging forms of violence. Families have been dispersed and dislodged from their accustomed environments, causing a disruption in their accustomed way of life.

One major conclusion is that women are increasingly owning livestock alongside men. Animals are inherited, acquired, or purchased. Women have possession and control, making decisions and caring for their herds. Understanding livestock ownership among household members is crucial to safeguard women's rights.

One significant observation is the increasing trend of women owning livestock in conjunction with men. Particularly in Isiolo and Samburu, it is becoming more prevalent to witness women actively participating in livestock management beyond mere feeding and milking tasks. Livestock are either inherited, acquired, or purchased, and in various communities across the three counties, the tradition of passing down livestock from one generation to the next is slowly evolving to recognize women as rightful inheritors.

Moreover, women are proactively involved in the procurement and sale of livestock to expand their herds and elevate their economic status within their households. With possession and authority, women are responsible for making decisions and tending to their herds. Consequently, women are not only contributing to the household economy but also acquiring valuable expertise in animal husbandry. Understanding livestock ownership among household members is crucial for safeguarding women's rights and enhancing household resilience and financial stability. The RANGE Programme should advocate for more women's involvement across the livestock value chain as they are already involved in ownership.

It is recommended that the Range Programme should: support the enactment and enforcement of gender-proactive policies and legislation that advance gender equality at the county level; Conduct 'Gender Livestock Value Chain Analysis Studies' to determine the participation of men, women, and youth for targeted intervention; and collaborate with allies and stakeholders to facilitate income-generating activities (such as skill training, value addition, enterprise development) and establish market connections - marketing livestock, forage, aromatic and medicinal plants, and eco-tourism products.

Enhancing pastoralist women's socio-economic position and empowering them to take a greater role in the community is crucial for overall development. This can be achieved through a comprehensive programme that not only focuses on women but also considers gender as a crosscutting theme. By incorporating specific activities that target women and the youth, the RANGE Programme can address key issues more effectively, ensure sustainability and create a sense of intergenerational support.



The heightened conflicts in the vicinity have led to the loss of numerous lives and the displacement of diverse population segments.

Background, Purpose and Methodology

The Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) of Northern Kenya, encompassing the three counties of Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu, represent a critical ecological and socio-economic region. Covering over 80% of Kenya's landmass, these areas are home to approximately 16 million people, roughly 30% of Kenya's population. Characterized by low annual rainfall, these regions are particularly vulnerable to droughts, flooding, and the increasing impacts of climate change, which pose significant risks of desertification (UNEP, 2021).

Mercy Corps has initiated Inception Assessments for its newly launched Resilient Approaches in Natural Rangeland Ecosystems (RANGE) programme. This

5-year initiative focuses on the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) counties of Marsabit, Isiolo, and Samburu in Kenya. The assessments aim to evaluate the initial conditions and context as the program begins its implementation.

This report is part of the Inception Assessments and provides a detailed analysis of the current state of gender in the ASAL counties of Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu. The findings aim to inform evidence-based programming for the RANGE programme and guide sustainable development initiatives that address the unique needs of the targeted communities.

Background of Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu ASAL counties

Isiolo County, covering an area of approximately 25,336 square kilometers, is strategically positioned at the center of Kenya. It borders Marsabit County to the north, Samburu and Laikipia counties to the west, Garissa County to the southeast, and Wajir and Meru counties to the east and south respectively. The county has a population of about 268,002 (139,510 males and 128,483 females) according to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census.¹ Isiolo's climate is predominantly arid and semi-arid, characterized by hot and dry conditions with two main rainy seasons. The county's geography features expansive plains and significant water bodies such as the Ewaso Ng'iro River, which is vital for local livelihoods and wildlife.

Marsabit County, the second-largest county in Kenya, spans an impressive 70,961 square kilometers. It shares borders with Ethiopia to the north, making it a key frontier region. The county's population was approximately 459,785 (243,548 males and 216,219 females)² as of the 2019 census. Marsabit is known for its diverse ethnic communities, including the Rendille, Gabra, Borana, and Samburu. The county's terrain is varied, featuring mountainous areas like Mount Marsabit, vast plains, and notable water bodies including Lake Turkana. Marsabit experiences erratic and unevenly distributed rainfall, leading to frequent droughts that significantly impact its predominantly pastoralist population.

Samburu County, covering about 21,000 square kilometers, is situated in north-central Kenya. It borders Marsabit County to the north, Isiolo County to the east, and other counties including Laikipia, Baringo, and Turkana. As of the 2019 census, Samburu had



Women and children seem to have borne the brunt of these emerging forms of violence. Families have been dispersed and dislodged from their accustomed environments, causing a disruption in their accustomed way of life.

1 KNBS 2019 Census in Kenya Population and Housing Census Vol II: Distribution of Population by

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

a population of approximately 310,327(156,774 males and 153,546 females)³. The county is home to diverse ethnic communities, with the Samburu people being predominant, alongside Turkana and Rendille communities. Like its neighbors, Samburu experiences an arid and semi-arid climate with hot and dry conditions punctuated by two rainy seasons. The county's landscape includes vast plains, hills, and important water sources like the

Ewaso Ng'iro River.

In all three counties, pastoralism forms the backbone of the local economy, with livestock rearing being the primary livelihood for many residents. However, these regions face numerous challenges, including frequent droughts, limited access to basic services, poor infrastructure, and periodic conflicts often driven by competition over scarce resources.

Methodology and Research Questions

This assessment employed a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, combining various qualitative data collection techniques and desk reviews to gain a holistic understanding of the complex dynamics in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties. The methodology was designed to capture the multifaceted nature of the challenges and opportunities in these arid and semi-arid regions, with a particular focus on Gender.

The research process began with an extensive literature review, drawing from academic journals, government reports, NGO publications, and other relevant sources. This desk-based research provided a solid foundation of existing knowledge across all thematic areas, helping to identify key trends, gaps, and best practices in current programming.

Primary data collection was conducted through a combination of in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs). These qualitative methods allowed for a nuanced exploration of the complex interrelationships between the various thematic areas in the target counties. In-depth interviews were conducted with household heads or senior

female members, with a quota system ensuring at least 40% female respondents to capture gender-specific perspectives. Focus group discussions were organized separately for men and women, including youth representation, to encourage open dialogue and capture diverse viewpoints. Key informant interviews targeted individuals with specialized knowledge or unique perspectives on the research topics, including government officials, community leaders, and subject matter experts.

The sampling strategy employed a purposive, non-probability approach to ensure the selection of information-rich cases across all thematic areas. This approach allowed for the capture of diverse perspectives and experiences relevant to the study's objectives. Participants were selected based on their relevance to the research questions and thematic areas, with efforts made to ensure diversity among participants in terms of demographic groups, socio-economic backgrounds, and roles within the community.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, facilitated by qualitative data analysis software.

The research questions guiding this study included:

1. How inclusive are the sector (livestock) policies and institutional practices in the current formal and informal governance systems of land management, protection, and restoration, including community/user/business associations? How can RANGE promote gender equality and social inclusion within these governance systems?
2. How are decisions made in community associations and private sector associations, and what is the current state of women's leadership and engagement in these? How can RANGE facilitate the shift in power dynamics to promote women and other marginalized groups' leadership in the community and private sector?
3. How are women and other marginalized groups represented in the livestock value chain? What successful specific interventions need to be in place to ensure women and other marginalized groups can meaningfully participate and benefit from activities under RANGE, such as capacity building and access to resources and technologies?
4. Do women and other marginalized groups have access to fodder resources, rangelands, green technologies, alternative livelihoods, financial services, product offerings, and markets? What barriers impact their access to these, and how can RANGE mitigate those barriers?
5. Do private and public sector actors within the livestock sector design products and services to cater to the diverse needs of the community, particularly women and other marginalized groups? If so, how? If not, why? How can RANGE further strengthen their ability to reach the last-mile communities?
6. How do social and cultural norms influence women and other marginalized groups' participation in the livestock sector as owners, BDS providers, and customers? How can RANGE influence these norms to ensure women and other marginalized groups benefit from the interventions?

These inquiries directed the data collection, analysis, and framework of this report, guaranteeing a thorough assessment of the gender issues in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties. Although the Gender Analysis Report is presented as a stand-alone document, gender issues are addressed as overarching themes within each specific topic, namely Stakeholder Vulnerability, Climate Change, Energy Landscape, Conflict, and Biodiversity.

Pasture Production site in Samburu County, Kenya ~ Photo Credit: Omar Saruni Letiwa, (Mercy Corps).



Overview of Gender Issues

Isiolo

Isiolo County is characterized by its rich cultural and ethnic diversity, encompassing a blend of traditions from the Turkana, Borana, Meru, and Somali communities. While the Meru are mainly agriculturalists, the remaining communities share a common pastoralist lifestyle and adhere to patriarchal norms. The main challenges identified in the current county plan are: gender inequality and discrimination against persons with disability; high rates of unemployment among the youth; and the prevalent issue of substance abuse, particularly among young people⁴.

Isiolo is one of the counties that has undergone significant climatic changes, with severe droughts impacting people's livelihoods and well-being. While men, women, girls and boys are affected by these changes, the adverse effects are particularly pronounced among women. According to information gathered from KII and FDG, women and men with severe disability across all ages, older women and also older men are most affected by drought and climate-related disasters, especially as a result of loss of livelihood and resources. Exposure to Harmful practices, separation from family, severe health conditions, malnutrition and loss of economic opportunities were mentioned as affecting more women than men in group discussions⁵.

Isiolo is currently facing high levels of food insecurity. Women, in particular, bear the brunt of drought-related food insecurity due to their limited access to resources and the strict gender roles that exacerbate their social vulnerability. Power disparities, gender inequities, and

prejudice often result in disproportionate impacts during times of crisis. This frequently manifests in heightened levels of domestic violence, sexual assault and exploitation sometimes perpetrated by those in positions of authority⁶, early and forced marriages, resource deprivation, proliferation of Female Genital mutilation (FGM), a harmful cultural practices that is prevalent in Isiolo. The aftermath of such crises typically leads to restricted access to resources, increased gender and disability-based discrimination, heightened levels of hunger and malnutrition, elevated conflict and insecurity, and a lack of adequate infrastructure and mechanisms to address gender equality issues.

The youth in Isiolo County are majorly engaged in farming, trade and boda boda for their livelihoods. The young people are facing challenges due to lack of employment opportunities, lack of capital, insecurity, boda-boda accidents, drug and substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), insecurity, cattle rustling and lack of youth involvement in projects⁷.

However, interventions by structures have been in place to handle GBV cases through the help of local administration like chiefs, nyumba kumi and area manage⁸. Isiolo Gender Watch among other similar organizations that are bestowing empowerment upon women and educating them on issues concerning gender inequality and gender-based violence. Furthermore, these initiatives persist in offering their assistance to the community by providing a toll-free service that can be utilized by community members in the event of such incidents of gender-based violence⁹.

4 GOK/County Government of Isiolo, CIDP 2023-2027

5 KII/FDGs Field work carried out in Isiolo 8-9/7/2024

6 Mid-P, Gender and Protection Mainstreaming Manual, Prepared by CLEAR Consultants 2023

7 Republic of Kenya, 2015 National ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH SURVEY (NAYS), Isiolo County, January 2017

8 Nyumba Kumi - is a strategy of anchoring Community Policing at the household level to bring security to the level of the household by creating clusters of ten houses, nyumba kumi -as the name implies in Kiswahili, nyumba (house) and kumi (ten) -run by local residents and stakeholders. An area Community Policing committee elect a manager in charge of the area.

9 Isiolo Gender Watch

Samburu

Samburu people constitute the majority of the local population. Nevertheless, there exist substantial communities of other ethnic groups, notably the Turkana, Rendille, Borana, and Pokot.

Similarly, Samburu county has been severely impacted by an enduring drought, lasting across four seasons devoid of rain. The pastoral communities, whose livelihoods heavily rely on livestock, have borne the brunt of this dire situation. As a consequence, a multitude of children have discontinued their education, there has been a surge in teenage pregnancies, and families are grappling with profound distress. Women and girls have borne the brunt of these hardships, unable to pursue education and struggling to fulfil their household responsibilities.

Regrettably, the prolonged drought has also exposed young girls and women to the alarming dangers of female genital mutilation (FGM) and early/child marriages. Alarming, in Samburu County, girls as young as six years old are coerced into marriage and subjected to FGM¹⁰. In the Samburu community, the prevalence of child marriage stands at approximately seventeen (17%) percent¹¹. This deeply ingrained practice not only infringes upon the rights of women and girls but also impedes the educational opportunities of girls on a national scale.

These harmful practices of early and forced marriage is exacerbated by the belief prevalent in certain communities that girls are a source of wealth. Moreover, the vulnerable segments of society, plagued by poverty, often succumb to this pervasive issue. FGM does not only deprives young girls of their childhood but also perpetuates

cycles of impoverishment and inequity within these communities. It is imperative to implement comprehensive educational initiatives that raise awareness about the adverse effects of early marriage and FGM. By equipping young girls with knowledge and resources, they can make enlightened decisions regarding their own bodies and futures. Furthermore, legal reforms and enforcement mechanisms must be fortified to safeguard the rights of these vulnerable girls and hold perpetrators of such practices culpable. Community involvement and assistance are vital in transforming deeply ingrained cultural norms that sustain these detrimental traditions. Only through collective efforts made towards a future where every girl has the opportunity to flourish and realize her full potential.

Among the Samburu community, the husband assumes the role of the patriarch within the household and wields authority in making decisions pertaining to family affairs. Moreover, polygamy is a prevalent practice, affording men the liberty to enter into marriages with multiple wives.

Major issues for young people in Samburu County are complex and impactful, including land disputes due to unclear boundaries. Inter-ethnic clashes threaten the youth due to historical tensions escalating into violence. Human-wildlife conflict is a pressing challenge, intensifying competition for resources and exacerbating livelihood insecurities for young people. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes conflict resolution, accountability, and sustainable resource management to secure a brighter future for the next generation¹².

Marsabit

Marsabit is located southeast of the Chalbi Desert. The town is mainly inhabited by the Cushitic-speaking Rendille, as well as the Borana, Gabra, Sakuye Oromo, Dasenach and Burji who are mostly traders and farmers with settlements in urban centres.

The prolonged dry spell, coupled with food and nutrition insecurity, as well as water scarcity, continues to exacerbate the situation in Marsabit, exacerbated by four consecutive failed rain seasons. The persistent drought has depleted grazing lands and vegetation, leading to livestock

10 UNICEF FGM/Cutting and Child Marriage. <https://www.unicef.org/kenya/media/531/file/Kenya-0000074.pdf>. pdf accessed 30/7/2024

11 Ibid.

12 Republic of Kenya, 2015 National ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH SURVEY (NAYS), Samburu County, January 2017

fatalities, reduced milk yields, and a surge in malnutrition within the communities. Vulnerable groups such as women, children, individuals with disabilities, and the elderly are often left stranded in remote villages, while men venture out in search of water and fodder. Disturbingly, there has been a marked increase in incidents of sexual violence, including rape, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), early and forced marriages, and sexual harassment.

Gender roles and the burden of care have shifted from men to women, with an increasing number of women shouldering the predominant responsibility for assuming productive roles in caring for their families and meeting their essential needs. Information from FGD held in Laisamis revealed that, during drought when men migrate in search of pasture and water, women and girls are always left behind without financial and family support leading to social isolation, anxiety and psychosocial challenges. They are also left responsible for children, the old and persons with disabilities. To cope, they may resort to consuming wild fruits which is harmful to their health and

those under their care. During this period women reported that their domestic burden increases, when seeking alternative means of sustaining their lives, tending to young livestock, embarking on long journeys in search of domestic water, and dedicating additional time to reach humanitarian assistance to support their families¹³.

Marsabit County's young people face various health problems with the most commonly mentioned being drug and substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and long distances to health facilities. The youth involve themselves mainly in trade (livestock and charcoal) and boda boda for their livelihoods. However, these economic pursuits are hindered by the absence of a robust livestock market, inadequate road infrastructure, and prevalent insecurity. The primary obstacles faced include security threats and incidents of cattle rustling, among other issues. The resolution of these dilemmas primarily falls within the purview of the council of elders and religious authorities, who unfortunately lack the requisite legal expertise. For governance to improve in the county, there is need to promote skills in solving cases



When men migrate in search of pasture and water, women and girls are always left behind without financial and family support leading to social isolation, anxiety and psychosocial challenges.

Past and Present Roles of Women and Men in Pastoralist Communities: Catalysts of Transformation

As illustrated in Table 1, derived from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KII) conducted in Samburu, Isiolo, and Marsabit, societal norms have distinct roles for females, males, girls and boys within the pastoralists communities¹⁴.

- i. Women's traditional duties included fetching water and firewood, preparing meals, tending to small livestock, gathering grass for the non-migratory livestock, constructing/repairing houses and looking after children, the elderly, and the sick, as well as milking. Women and girls look after pregnant stock, and then their calves, kids and lambs, and take care of sick animals that cannot keep up with the main herd. In Samburu, some women in FFGD called such activities 'moving up and down till night hours', to show the labour and time intensity of these tasks. Across the 3 counties, women's assigned traditional roles largely remain the same today. They continue to play vital roles in their communities, often responsible for tasks related to livestock care, household management, and supporting family livelihoods.
- ii. As reported in an only male, FGD, 'Livestock remains the Samburu people's lifeblood'. Men spend their lives grazing their herds looking for pastures and water for their animals. In the three counties, men primarily undertook the responsibility of supervising livestock management, which involved tasks such as constructing Livestock Boma in Marsabit and handling livestock diseases, livestock marketing, and protecting against cattle raiders who were prevalent in these regions. Men convened gatherings and held authority over all decisions concerning the well-being of their households, pastures, water sources and the broader community.

Changes in gender and generational roles are having important implications in the management of nutrition and food security at the household level. One area of visible change is in decision-making and income generation, with women becoming increasingly responsible for providing for their households as livestock-based livelihoods — traditionally male controlled — evolve and erode. According to KII/FGD conducted among the Turkana communities living in both Isiolo and Samburu counties, women are increasingly involved in income-generation activities and decision - making including what to buy and eat at home. Women's income from these sources often exists outside traditional patriarchal structures, and may be leading to a shift in the balance of power between women and men at the household level¹⁵. Nevertheless, according to FGDs conducted in Kinna, Isiolo:

"Some men felt that the changing in roles will make women more powerful than them and therefore feel insecure. Others feel change in role is good as they share family urdens and responsibilities. Several women and men felt that the changing roles brings unity at household and in sharing - 'when husband cater for food the wife pays school fees for children and when the wife engage in farming the husband does trading'"¹⁶.

Over the past decade, there have been noticeable shifts in the traditional roles of men and women within pastoralist communities across the study counties. Changes in gender and generational roles are having important implications in the management of nutrition and food security at the household level. One area of visible change is in decision-making and income generation, with women becoming increasingly responsible for providing for their households as livestock-based livelihoods—traditionally male controlled—evolve and erode.

14 FGD conducted in Isiolo, Marsabit and Samburu 10-18 July 2024

15 Ibid.

16 FDG Conducted in Kinna, Isiolo 14/7/2024

Table 1: Traditional/Current Roles of Pastoralists Women and Men¹⁷

Traditional Roles

Isiolo:

Men:	Women:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock management • Grazing • Fending for the Family • Community Security • Livestock Trading • Community Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic chores • Fetching water and firewood and cooking for the family. • Constructing Houses • Taking care of calves, sick & pregnant animals • Milking • Turkana Women bring food home¹⁸ • Sun-drying meat (nyirinyiri)

Samburu:

Men:	Women:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock management. • Pasturing and watering livestock • Providing security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household chores • Fetching water and firewood and cooking for the family.

Marsabit

Men:	Women:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herding • Branding Livestock • Construct Livestock Boma • Manage Livestock Disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Chores - cook • Fetch Water • Pick ticks from Livestock • Herding sheep & goats • Milk goats & carmels

Current Roles

Isiolo:

Men:	Women:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour paid work in construction industry in urban/per- urban centres. • Male Youth Construction and Motor Cycle/ boda Boda and transporting milk & meat from interior • Charcoal Burning • Turkana men now bring food home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income-generating activities • Trading I.e. selling, MILK, livestock & (nyirinyiri), owning butcheries • Peace building • Group Activities • VSLA • Education • Charcoal Burning

Samburu:

Men:	Women:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment • Constructing dams during dry seasons • Trading • Involve in irrigation activities • Planting grass for hey • Search for pasture to feed livestock (including cutting tree leaves) during dry spell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of table banking groups • Attending Village Meetings

17 FDG conducted in Isiolo, and Samburu counties 10-18 July 2024

18 FDG conducted in Isiolo, and Samburu counties 10-18 July 2024

Marsabit

Men:

The culturally assigned roles are changing and male members of HHs are sharing roles with women counterparts in farming HHs

Women:

- The traditional assigned roles are still being done by women but also shared by male members of HHs especially among farming communities

According to KII/FDG conducted among the Turkana communities living in both Isiolo and Samburu counties, women are increasingly involved in income-generation activities and decision - making including what to buy and eat at home. Women's income from these sources often exists outside traditional patriarchal structures, and may be leading to a shift in the balance of power between women and men at the household level¹⁹.

Traditionally, women's ownership of livestock, including small-ruminants was limited to raising them. Selling and buying was mostly done by men. However, this is changing, with a growing trend of women selling livestock. According to Anab, 'Gender roles were so strict that men often forbid their wives from handling money or even saying their husbands' names out loud. However, this is changing as women are now owning livestock herds inherited from their fathers in their own right. They also trade in animals and are the majority butcheries owners in Isiolo town'²⁰. Information from an FGD in Samburu as one of the income generating activities being done by women.

Information from and FGDs held in Samburu indicated that interventions by development agencies have resulted in an increased participation of women in income- generating activities and the emergence of women collectives, that collectively own small ruminants. These small ruminants are acquired at a young age and sold after a period of six months. This approach has proven to be an effective method of safeguarding assets in a deeply patriarchal society where men traditionally hold authority over women's possessions²¹.

With the traditional way of life now unsustainable, Samburu women have picked up jobs once reserved for men, such as trading in livestock. According to one member in the focus group discussion "Getting into this business, we have

control of what to sell and what not to sell." "Previously, it was only men who decided"²².

One significant change is the increasing involvement of women in income-generating activities outside the household. For instance, women may now participate in small-scale businesses, craft-making, or even take up roles in community leadership positions. This change can be attributed to various factors, including increased access to education for women, which has empowered them to pursue economic opportunities beyond their traditional roles. Additionally, changing market dynamics and the need for diversified income sources have gradually but noticeably transformed the dynamics of pastoralist communities with men and women now sharing more responsibilities and contributing equally to the economic well-being of their families, and also influencing the shift in gender roles within pastoralist communities.

Both FDGs conducted exclusively for women and men are articulated as follows:

'In the past, women in our community were primarily responsible for tending to livestock and producing charcoal. The earnings from these activities were used to procure food for our families, yet we often found ourselves undervalued in comparison to men. However, the landscape has since evolved, with women engaging in various entrepreneurial endeavors such as goat trading, operating small shops, engaging in agricultural practices, and marketing farm goods. This newfound independence has liberated us from relying solely on men for financial support, granting us the freedom to voice our opinions candidly during community meetings.

Through our participation in savings groups, we have been able to contribute significantly to the welfare of our families. Not only have we gained equal rights, but we have also demonstrated

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ KII Interview with Anab Kasim (Women Leader of Somali Community) Isiolo 8/7/2024

²¹ FDG in Samburu held on 10/2024

²² Ibid



these increased workloads often result in women in pastoralist communities encountering difficulties in managing their productive and reproductive roles which largely remain intact, and subsequently impacts their overall well-being and quality of life.

our capability to undertake tasks traditionally reserved for men, such as manual labor at construction sites and excavation work. Historically, women were deprived of the authority to sell livestock; nevertheless, the present scenario paints a different picture where a substantial portion of the village's goat population is owned by women. The funds accumulated through our Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) have empowered us to acquire goats independently and market them at our discretion. Conversely, the male response to these transformations was largely affirmative, with expressions of gratitude towards women for their diligent efforts in assuming shared family responsibilities²³.

All the same, these increased workloads often result in women in pastoralist communities encountering difficulties in managing their productive and reproductive roles which largely remain intact, and subsequently impacts their overall well-being and quality of life. For instance, in some pastoralist communities, women are not only responsible for household chores but also for tending to livestock and ensuring their well-being. This dual role can be physically demanding and mentally exhausting, leading to fatigue and stress among women.

Moreover, in certain communities, it was found that in some of the communities, women are still restricted from traveling independently and engaging with men who are not immediate relatives. This limitation tended to isolate women from accessing resources and opportunities outside their immediate circles. They remained confined to their homes by domestic obligations, further limiting their social interactions and personal growth. It is therefore noted, that this lack of mobility and autonomy can contribute to feelings of dependency and powerlessness among women. When women's efforts are undervalued and overlooked, it reinforces traditional gender roles and expectations, in turn, hinders the empowerment of women and prevents them from fully participating in decision-making processes in their households and community development initiatives.

Decisions Making Over Community Resources

Many pastoralist societies are often characterized by their strong egalitarian values, where decisions are intricately woven through collective negotiations rather than being dictated by a select few leaders²⁴. Consequently, in pastoral communities, the elders or community leaders typically oversee decision-making processes concerning animals, land, water and pastoral resources. Culture and traditions are still very vibrant, responsibilities and tasks are often assigned to women and men on the basis of traditional gender roles, defined as those behaviours and responsibilities that a society considers appropriate for men, women, boys and girls. They are a key determinant of the distribution of resources and responsibilities between men and women, thus significantly influencing powers over decision-making processes²⁵. Among the Samburu power of decision making is appropriated by men as they go through a series of age and generation sets. Junior age sets lead decision making in the bomas, but the leader of the older age set lead the process of decision-making²⁶.

Women reported making significant decisions regarding the utilization of specific natural resources: 'Women typically gather raw materials for construction and fuel, manage livestock within the homestead, possess expertise in plant identification for medicinal or culinary purposes, and harvest valuable products for household use'²⁷.

Information from field study shows that deeply ingrained cultural and social norms often lead to the marginalization of women from active participation in decision-making processes. The subordinate status of women, along with their limited influence in household affairs, significantly restricts their authority and decision-making autonomy regarding resources, such as the sale of livestock, and the income derived from livestock-related activities at both the household and community

levels. Livestock is a key asset for pastoralist households and a primary livelihood resource. Women and men experience different challenges when accessing, managing and controlling livestock assets. The gender differences in roles and activities arise mainly from customary rules that tend to view certain tasks or activities as "male" or "female". For example, among communities living in Samburu, Isiolo and Marsabit, milking animals has traditionally been women's responsibility, whilst the commercialization and the slaughter of animals has traditionally been undertaken mainly by men²⁸.

Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) conducted across the three counties unanimously confirm that men predominantly possessed ownership of land livestock, and other significant assets. This trend is particularly conspicuous when examining inheritance practices, where exclusive entitlement to shares of the family assets is reserved for sons. This customary practice often originates from deeply ingrained cultural beliefs and historical norms that prioritize male lineage and inheritance rights. Such traditions not only reinforced the patriarchal hierarchy within families but also perpetuate gender disparities in property ownership and economic opportunities²⁹. Women only FGD observed that exclusion of daughters from inheritance rights has far-reaching consequences, limiting their financial independence and perpetuating their dependence on male relatives:

'Uneven distribution of assets based on gender perpetuates societal norms that devalue women's contributions to both the household and the community. Limiting inheritance rights solely to sons reinforces gender disparities and upholds entrenched traditional gender roles within our homes. These deeply ingrained beliefs that

24 WISP/GEF/ IUCN Power, equity, gender and decision-making in pastoralist natural resource management https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/import/downloads/power_equity_and_gender_in_natural_resource_management.pdf accessed 6/8/2024

25 FAO, Sustainable Development <https://sdgs.un.org/un-system-sdg-implementation/food-and-agriculture-organization-fao-44217> accessed 6/8/2024

26 Men only FDG in Samburu held on 10/7/2024

27 Women only FDG in Isiolo conducted on 9/7/2024

28 KII conducted in Isiolo, Marsabit and Samburu 10-18 July 2024

29 Ibid.

impact women must be addressed in accordance with the principles outlined in the Constitution. Already, numerous fathers are evolving by bequeathing their daughters not only livestock but also, at times, land³⁰.

On the contrary, according to Key Informant Interviews conducted in Isiolo and FDG in Marsabit, women are increasingly taking ownership of livestock such as cattle, sheep, goats, and camels. Some of these animals are passed down to women as inheritance from their families, acquired as widows, or purchased. Consequently, women have rightful possession and control over a diverse range of livestock and livestock assets, often shouldering the sole responsibility for decision-making regarding their herds. Nevertheless, choices related to the sale of livestock are typically made in collaboration with their male spouses³¹.

Nevertheless, leadership in key decision-making structures are still male dominated. For example, in Isiolo, and Samburu the Grazing and Water Conservation Committees are mainly composed of men, despite the fact that the majority of women are livestock keepers and owners. This imbalance in committee composition raises concerns about gender representation and inclusivity in decision-making processes related to grazing and water conservation. Their under-representation in committees limits their ability to actively participate in shaping policies and initiatives that directly impact their livelihoods.

Moreover, the exclusion of women from these decision-making bodies disregards the unique perspectives and priorities they bring to the table. Women's experiences as livestock keepers and owners provide insights into the specific

challenges they encounter, such as access to grazing lands and water sources. By incorporating a greater number of women into the committees, a more thorough and all-encompassing approach to addressing these issues can be attained. To advance gender equality and empower women, it is imperative to actively engage them in the Grazing and Water Conservation Committees. This can be done through targeted outreach efforts, capacity-building programmes that empowers women to effectively participate by bringing out their voices and needs on issues being addressed, and creating a supportive environment that values diverse voices and contributions. Ultimately, by ensuring that women are adequately represented in decision-making processes, the committees can make more informed and effective decisions that benefit the entire community.

It was also reported in the three counties that, despite their major role in the management of livestock assets, women frequently have poorer access to markets than men, and play a limited role in the commercialization of livestock products. This tendency often arises from poor marketing skills, low levels of literacy and customary practices that prevent women from freely leaving the house premises. As a consequence, there is frequently a marked imbalance between women and men in the benefits accrued from livestock-related income³².

Overall, while women hold an indispensable role in pastoralism and range land management, decision-making processes continue to be governed by patriarchal norms and traditions. As a result, men maintain authority over crucial resources such as livestock, water, energy, biodiversity, and land, thus impeding women's opportunities to invest in the sector.



Under-representation of women in committees limits their ability to actively participate in shaping policies and initiatives that directly impact their livelihoods.

30 Ibid.

31 KII conducted in Isiolo on 8/7/24 and FGD held in Marsabit on 10/7/24

32 FGD conducted in Isiolo, Marsabit and Samburu 10-18 July 2024

Gender and Climate Change

This study shows that; climate change and environmental pressures have had profound impact on both men and women within the communities, albeit in varying ways. According to FDG conducted in Samburu the women expressed:

'We devote a significant amount of time tending to livestock, seeking out water sources, and collecting firewood and other forms of fuel at increasingly greater distances from our residences, which also poses heightened safety risks. Additionally, we find ourselves relocating our homes more frequently during periods of flooding and drought, seeking proximity to pastures and water sources. These activities consume the majority of our time, preventing our children from attending school and limiting our access to healthcare services when we fall ill, thus compelling us to rely on traditional remedies. Our responsibilities have grown exponentially, resulting in the loss of a substantial portion of our livestock. The male members of our community are compelled to seek alternative means of sustenance in urban areas³³.'

Thus, the fluctuations in weather patterns have disproportionately impacted women due to their predominant reproductive roles, resulting in escalated workloads, heightened health hazards, and constrained access to vital resources. Conversely, men residing in the same communities have reported encountering unique challenges arising from environmental stressors, such as widespread livestock mortality, limited pastures and water resources, and the responsibility to financially support their families amidst changing conditions or natural disasters triggered by climate change that disrupt traditional sources of livelihood.

The climate crisis has also altered gender dynamics, rendering the traditional way of life unsustainable. In response, Samburu, Somali, and Borana women have embraced occupations previously dominated by men, such as engaging in livestock trade. Despite the devastating impact of droughts, numerous women in the FGD across the three counties have expressed a preference for earning income. Consequently, they are embracing roles that were once prohibited, as a significant number of men have migrated to urban centers in search of employment, leaving their homes behind³⁴.

Development agencies, including county governments across the region, perceive these cultural shifts as a promising opportunity to promote women's economic empowerment. Nonprofit organizations



According to FDG conducted in Samburu the women expressed: 'We devote a significant amount of time tending to livestock, seeking out water sources, and collecting firewood and other forms of fuel at increasingly greater distances from our residences, which also poses heightened safety risks.'

33 Women only FDG in Baawa, Samburu County conducted on 10/7/2024

34 FGD conducted in Isiolo, Marsabit and Samburu 10-18 July 2024

35 WISP/GEF/ IUCN Power, equity, gender and decision-making in pastoralist natural resource management https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/import/downloads/power_equity_and_gender_in_natural_resource_management.pdf accessed 6/8/2024

36 FGD conducted in Isiolo, and Samburu 10-18 July 2024



Due to the decreasing livestock population caused by climate change, some have turned to providing manual labor in construction or engaging in motorcycle taxi services, while others have resorted to consuming substances like the herbal stimulant known as miraa or even delving into criminal activities.

dedicated to equipping women with business acumen and practical skills have thrived in recent years, providing them with grants, access to credit, and various other resources³⁵. Furthermore, women's empowerment can present a dual challenge: While achieving economic and social empowerment, women reported finding themselves overwhelmed by the demands of managing both a household and a business without any assistance³⁶.

While instrumental in advancing gender equality, the support tailored towards women often leaves many men devoid of similar opportunities. As women assert their independence, some men struggle with the realization that their traditional role as primary breadwinners has been destabilized. Field research conducted among the male youth exposed that, due to the decreasing livestock population caused by climate change, some have turned to providing manual labor in construction or engaging in motorcycle taxi services, while others have resorted to consuming substances like the herbal stimulant known as miraa or even delving into criminal activities³⁷.

The impact of men facing challenges in adapting to changing societal expectations has been profound. With the decline in livestock numbers affecting livelihoods, many men have had to explore alternative means of income, often leading to risky or unsustainable choices. This shift not only affects individual men but also ripples through families and communities, altering the social fabric. The reliance on substances like miraa as a coping mechanism can have detrimental effects on physical and mental health, further exacerbating the challenges faced by the youth in this changing landscape. Additionally, engaging in criminal behaviors not only jeopardizes individual well-being but also contributes to community safety concerns and social instability. The need for targeted support and resources to assist men in navigating these changes is evident to mitigate adverse outcomes and foster healthier, more resilient communities.

Gender and Conflict

This assessment aimed to explore the primary drivers of conflicts among communities in the three counties of Samburu, Isiolo, and Marsabit, as well as the distinct impacts these conflicts have on women, girls, boys, and men, while also delving into the roles they play in such conflict scenarios.

Tracing the historical trajectory of conflicts impacting communities in the three counties, we discovered that due to the reliance of these communities on livestock for sustenance, the temporal and climatic fluctuations over the years have led to an inequitable distribution of resources³⁸. One participant in the focus group discussion held in Burat recounted:

Traditionally, cattle rustling often involved small-scale violence and theft of the best livestock or replacement of animals lost through drought or disease. Loss of human lives was rare, and when this occurred, compensation in the form of cattle was paid by the killers' families to the victims or their families in case of death. However, in recent years, due to proliferation of small arms and commercialization of cattle rustling, there is an emergence of large-scale violence during cattle raiding between neighbouring pastoral communities in Kenya³⁹.

Thus, the underlying causes of the large-scale conflicts being experienced in the three counties and their neighboring regions in the North-Rift of Kenya stem from the heightened trade in cattle rustling, the escalating proliferation of small arms, and the deteriorating living conditions faced by pastoral communities as a result of adverse weather patterns, drought, and floods, leading to substantial livestock losses. These changes have impacted the traditional roles and responsibilities of men and women within the affected communities. The society is in a state of flux as the gender roles and responsibilities continue to evolve. As counted by the the KII conducted in the three counties:

Cattle rustling and banditry have led to the loss of many human lives and the displacement of various population groups. Women and children seem to have

borne the brunt of these new forms of violence. Families have been scattered and displaced from what they called 'home' and lifestyles have been disrupted. Many families so destabilized and are now accommodated as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The results have led to a lot of psychological trauma meted on couples that are affected pain, bitterness and suspicion⁴⁰.

Men exclusive focused group discussions conducted in the three counties described the impact of escalated conflicts in this manner:

'Majority of those killed or maimed in conflicts are men. This has left many families without a breadwinner and in abject poverty. Livestock in these communities is not only a source of wealth but is also a status symbol. A man who loses this livestock in conflicts suffers indignity as they put it due to the "shame of begging when you used to be rich". A man without cattle is poor and since this is the currency for paying bride-wealth, it means he cannot marry. For married men, loss of cattle means "Death" especially if they now have to be fed by the wife(s). In some polygamous homes, wife(s) have ran away because the man lost his wealth in conflicts. Many men have turned to alcoholism and now idle about all day since they have nothing to do. The consequences have been increased domestic violence and break-up of marriages⁴¹'.

Gender significantly influences susceptibility and resilience to conflicts within these pastoralist communities, with women often bearing an unequal burden due to their responsibilities in caregiving and managing household affairs. For instance, in times of heightened tension or displacement, women encountered difficulties in accessing vital resources such as sustenance, water, and healthcare, consequently exposing them to heightened risks of physical and emotional harm. Women participating in the focus group discussions exclusively recounted how the escalating conflicts:

'...have deprived us (women) of our partners and a means of sustenance, disrupting our way of life as we were relocated to settlement centres with our

38 FGD/KII conducted in Isiolo (Burat), Marsabit (Laisamis), and Samburu (Bawa) 10-18 July 2024

39 FDG in Burat Isiolo conducted on 10/7/24

40 KII conducted in Isiolo (Burat), Marsabit (Laisamis), and Samburu (Bawa) 10-18 July 2024

41 Male only FGDs conducted in Isiolo (Burat), Marsabit (Laisamis), and Samburu (Bawa) 10-18 July 2024

children for security reasons. In these centres, we strive to support our families by engaging in small-scale enterprises, street vending, or producing and selling charcoal.

While pursuing these economic activities, many of us have been vulnerable to contracting HIV. Some women have even resorted to alcoholism, others have been sent back to their parental homes if they belonged to a different ethnic group, and the instances of sexual assault and abduction of women have increased⁴².

Further, numerous children have been left orphaned, with a notable increase in child-headed households. Conflicts have forcibly separated children from their parents, leading to their accommodation by alternative families. Many youths are deprived of education opportunities due to the financial constraints stemming from heightened poverty exacerbated by the escalating conflicts in the region. Moreover, there has been a surge in instances of underage marriages.⁴³

Thus, women are impacted by conflicts in diverse ways as recounted by them. Many of them experience the loss of their spouses and livestock, resulting in a dual hardship where they not only lose their means of sustenance but also their primary provider. Consequently, they find themselves in a precarious position, having to rebuild their lives from the ground up and shoulder the responsibility of raising their families single-handedly as widows. Conflicts also affects young girls and boys who are left orphaned, deprived of their fathers and the family's economic support.

Finding the extent of the involvement of young men in these conflicts, they recounted: 'We are heavily involved in the conflict usually as warriors/Morans. Many of us have lost their lives and majority have maimed for life, disabled physically and emotionally and are now a bitter, suspicious lot. Many of us have never gone to school, and therefore have nothing to do except take part in the conflicts. A few of us are employed as police reservists albeit with no training and therefore end up being the first casualties of the conflicts. Our being idle is forcing some of us to engage in anti-social activities like thuggery, drug peddling and such⁴⁴.'

Many of the male youth are slowly being de-alienated from their communities because elders no longer have control over them. Many are married to teenage girls and have large families (6 -7 children) to take care of with no sustainable income⁴⁵.

On roles both women and men play in peace building; men within these communities reported encountering distinct obstacles pertaining to conflict, such as assuming a more direct role in conflict resolution or safeguarding activities. Given their responsibility to protect their communities from external threats or negotiate peace accords with adversary factions, they are exposed to physical perils and psychological strain, which in turn affect their well-being and capacity to contribute effectively to peace-building efforts. On the contrary, women expressed a diminished level of influence and authority in comparison to their male counterparts. The under-representation and lack of substantive involvement in peace committees across the three counties were notable⁴⁶.

It is anticipated by key informants that as women take on increasing responsibilities, they will also step into leadership positions, including mediating the resource-related conflicts afflicting their communities due to drought and other adverse impacts. In Isiolo for example⁴⁷, women have united to disseminate the message of peace through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) and conduct campaigns advocating for peace from one household to another, encouraging communities to cease the conflicts. A local organization, Isiolo Peace Link, is endeavoring to engage more women in promoting peace. The initiative will be led by a group of eighty women, with forty hailing from Isiolo County and the other forty from Samburu County. These women have undergone extensive training in peace-building and mediation⁴⁸. Marsabit County has developed an action plan on women, peace and security in line with the government's commitment to United Nations security council resolutions which focus on the negative impacts of conflicts on women and recognized the undervalued contribution of women to conflict prevention, peace-building and conflict resolutions⁴⁹.

44 Male Youth FDGs carried out in Isiolo, Marsabit and Samburu 10-18 July 2024

45 Ibid.

46 KII conducted in Isiolo (Burat), Marsabit (Laisamis), and Samburu (Bawa) 10-18 July 2024

47 KII with Abdirizak Guyo (Assistant County Gender Officer, Isiolo) conducted on 8/7/24

48 Indigenous Women Vow to Jointly Preach Peace in Isiolo and Samburu. <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/gender/indigenous-women-vow-to-jointly-preach-peace-in-isiolo-samburu-40890>. Accessed on 16/12/24

49 Marsabit County Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2022-11-26-marsabit-county-launches-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security/>. Accessed on 16/12/24

Gender and Vulnerability

The pastoralist communities in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties rely on highly fluctuating arid landscapes that are susceptible to capricious climatic conditions, socio-political unrest such as frequent conflicts, animal ailments, and land-use competition.

During these challenging times, the access to livelihood resources becomes crucial for various marginalized groups, highlighting the intricate relationship between gender and vulnerability. This connection significantly influences the experiences of these groups, shaping their daily realities in profound ways. For instance, when we consider pastoralists, we see a clear stratification based on resource access. The divide between wealthier and poorer pastoralists creates a stark contrast in opportunities and living conditions. Similarly, the gender disparity within pastoral communities further exacerbates this divide, with men often having more access to resources compared to women. Additionally, age plays a role in this stratification, as younger individuals may face different challenges and opportunities compared to older members of the community. Understanding these dynamics is essential in addressing the inequalities that exist within marginalized groups⁵⁰.

Across the three counties (Marsabit, Isiolo and Samburu), this assessment identifies the vulnerable as: women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), widows and orphans, the impoverished, and unemployed youth, who often face unique challenges and limited access to resources⁵¹. In Marsabit, women are considered vulnerable because of negative cultural practices and beliefs leading to; Early Marriages, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) gender based violence making them susceptible to economic, social, and health-related vulnerabilities. In Isiolo and Samburu counties, it was also affirmed through group discussions involving both men and women that women's susceptibility is exacerbated by the deeply ingrained traditional gender norms. These norms, they articulated, frequently constrain women's involvement in decision-making processes, curbing their access to social, economic, political opportunities educational and healthcare services, thereby perpetuating disparities⁵².

For the elderly, it was reported that they are physically frail and lack the capacity to engage in employment to sustain themselves. Consequently, they must depend on their families, who, in certain instances, are also facing financial constraints and therefore incapable of adequately meeting the needs of these elderly individuals. On the other hand, orphans encounter difficulties in accessing sustenance and other fundamental necessities similar to the elderly, as they depend on others for provision⁵³. A member of an exclusively female Forum Discussion Group (FDG) in Samburu County expressed sorrow:



The divide between wealthier and poorer pastoralists creates a stark contrast in opportunities and living conditions. Similarly, the gender disparity within pastoral communities further exacerbates this divide, with men often having more access to resources compared to women.

50 Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, 2023. Local Forms of Resilience in Pastoral Areas: A Scoping Study in Northern Kenya - extension://kdpelmjpfafjppnhbloffcjpeomlnpah/https://www.aciar.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-07/ls-2022-167-final-report_0.pdf. Accessed 16/8/24

51 FGD/KII conducted in Isiolo (Burat), Marsabit (Laisamis), and Samburu (Bawa) 10-18 July 2024

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

Although I have taken in several orphaned children under my care, I often find myself lacking the means to provide both my own children and the orphans with adequate food and basic necessities⁵⁴.

Widows and single women were reported to encounter challenges both socially and economically. Socially, they are stigmatised and excluded from their families, exacerbating their existing stress and mental health issues as they strive to provide for their families independently. Economically, they are hindered by their inability to secure employment⁵⁵. A widow from the FDG lamented: 'I struggles to support myself and my children after the death of my husband, but lack the necessary skills or resources to engage in any income-generating activities'⁵⁶. Additionally, it was observed during the discussions that young individuals are susceptible due to the fact that a majority of them are school dropouts. However, those who did attend school encounter challenges in securing employment

opportunities, consequently leading to financial instability and social marginalization. These instances underscore the intricate nature of vulnerability in pastoralist environments, where various factors such as gender, socio-economic standing, and resource accessibility profoundly affect the overall well-being of individuals⁵⁷.

Moreover, the intersection of gender and vulnerability underscores the need for targeted interventions and support systems to address the specific needs of the identified vulnerable groups. By recognizing and addressing these intersecting challenges, stakeholders can work towards creating more inclusive and equitable environments where all individuals have equal opportunities to thrive and access essential services. In essence, understanding the complexities of gender and vulnerability in pastoralist contexts is essential for promoting sustainable development and fostering resilience among marginalized populations.



It was observed during the discussions that young individuals are susceptible due to the fact that a majority of them are school dropouts.

54 Female only FDGs carried out Samburu 10/7/2024

55 Female only FDG in Marsabit, 11/7/2024

56 Ibid.

57 FGD/KII in Isiolo (Burat), Marsabit (Laisamis), and Samburu (Bawa) 10-18 July 2024

Gender and Energy Landscape

Gender plays a significant role in the energy landscape in all the three study counties (e.g. Marsabit, Isiolo and Samburu). Traditional energy sources, such as firewood and charcoal, have historically served as the primary means of energy consumption in these counties. However, the utilization of these traditional energy sources is not always without its challenges. According to only women FDGs, they enumerated these challenges as not only time-consuming and labor-intensive, but also subject them (women and girls) to vulnerabilities related to sex and gender-based violence. Additionally, they face other risks such as hijack from hostile neighboring communities while venturing long distances to gather firewood. The utilization of firewood and charcoal contributes to health risks stemming from indoor air pollution during the preparation of family meals. Moreover, respiratory issues and other health problems are prevalent in many of the households that still use these energy sources extensively⁵⁸. In Samburu one women reported that:

During periods of rainfall, the acquisition of firewood becomes challenging due to floods and swollen rivers impeding access. This not only consumes more time but also exposes them to safety risks, such as encounters with wild animals or attacks from strangers⁵⁹.

Other discussions reveal other challenges faced by women is the escalating scarcity of firewood as a consequence of deforestation and environmental degradation. It was noted that the Kenya Forest Service have implemented stringent regulations and substantial penalties for individuals involved in tree felling, with monitoring camps established in forests to deter such activities. Consequently, women reported the arduous task of traversing great distances to collect firewood. If apprehended by forest rangers while in the woods, they are subjected to arrest and hefty fines for their release. In cases where the husband is unable to procure the necessary funds, or in situations of widowhood or being single, they may endure prolonged periods of incarceration⁶⁰.

To address these formidable challenges, initiatives promoting the adoption of clean and sustainable energy alternatives, such as solar power or biogas, have been implemented in select communities across the three counties, notably introduced through women's associations. These environmentally friendly energy sources not only alleviate the burden on women in gathering firewood from distant locations, mitigating the associated risks and insecurities, but also enhance the well-being of women and children by reducing exposure to air pollution during meal preparation for their families.

In conclusion, understanding the gender dynamics and obstacles faced in the energy landscape of pastoralists in Northern Kenya is crucial for implementing effective and sustainable solutions that benefit the entire community. By diversifying energy sources and promoting gender-inclusive approaches, the resilience and livelihoods of these communities can be strengthened for a more sustainable future.



The divide between wealthier and poorer pastoralists creates a stark contrast in opportunities and living conditions. Similarly, the gender disparity within pastoral communities further exacerbates this divide, with men often having more access to resources compared to women.

58 FGD conducted in Isiolo (Burat), Marsabit (Laisamis), and Samburu (Bawa) 10-18 July 2024

59 Women only FDG held in Samburu (Bawa) on 10/7/24

60 FGD conducted in Burat, Marsabit Laisamis, and Bawa 10-18 July 2024

Gender and Biodiversity

Women play a crucial role in the preservation and promotion of biodiversity. They are not only stewards but also beneficiaries of the natural resources. Both male and female FGD in the three counties agreed that women contribute to the sustainable utilization of resources that are essential for their households' livelihoods and overall well-being of the family. For instance, "Women are actively involved in collecting diverse food items such as fruits, vegetables, gums, resins and nuts from forests and fields. They also play a significant role in collecting fodder for livestock under their care while, propagating medicinal plants and seeds that are vital for traditional healthcare practices⁶¹.

Moreover, it was enumerated that women engage in the production and distribution of essential goods like fuel, fodder, and construction materials sourced from nature. Their involvement in these activities not only supports their families but also fosters a deep

connection with the environment. The male on FGD confirmed that, women's knowledge of local ecosystems and their sustainable use of resources are invaluable for conservation efforts. By actively participating in conservation projects, women contribute to preserving biodiversity and promoting ecological balance⁶².

In conclusion, women's multifaceted roles in biodiversity conservation encompass various tasks, from collecting and preparing natural resources to advocating for sustainable practices. Their engagement in these activities not only empowers them economically but also highlights their importance in maintaining the delicate balance between human needs and environmental protection. It is essential to recognize and support women's contributions to biodiversity conservation for a more sustainable and harmonious relationship with nature.



Women are actively involved in collecting diverse food items such as fruits, vegetables, gums, resins and nuts from forests and fields, while also play a significant role in collecting fodder for livestock under their care while, propagating medicinal plants and seeds that are vital for traditional healthcare practices.

Common Trends, Conclusions and Recommendations

Common Trends and Conclusions

Although the Gender Analysis has been conducted in the three counties inhabited by various communities (e.g. Turkana, Borana, Meru, Somali, Turkana, Rendille, Borana, Pokot, Rendille, Gabra, Sakuye Oromo, Dasenach, and Burji), not all of them were encompassed in this assessment. With the exception of the communities residing in Marsabit - the Dasenac and Burji, who primarily engage in trade and agriculture in urban settings, pastoralism and livestock rearing serve as the cornerstone of the local economy and the primary source of livelihood in the other communities across these regions.

Therefore, it is evident that there are more similarities than differences when it comes to how common trends impact pastoral communities in light of climate change. These communities often face similar challenges such as dwindling water sources, diminishing grazing lands, and increased frequency of extreme weather events. In the three counties, pastoralists are experiencing prolonged droughts that are decimating their livestock herds and threatening their way of life. Moreover, these challenges have led to heightened conflicts within the communities. As resources become scarcer, competition among herders escalates, resulting in conflicts over grazing rights and water access. This not only disrupts the social fabric of these communities but also poses a threat to their traditional way of resolving disputes through mediation and consensus-building. In some cases, these conflicts have spiraled into violence, exacerbating the already precarious situation.

Due to the adverse effects of climate variability, men have been forced to migrate to places far away from their families for better access to livelihood options, grazing resources and other socioeconomic benefits, hence impacting their role as heads of families. This assessment reveals that roles assigned to gender as per the pastoral have overlapped. Especially during extreme climate conditions women are left behind to assume the roles of men. Analysis also indicated that during climate extremes, especially drought, robs women of precious time by necessitating long-distance travel in search of water and firewood, hence negatively impacting their role as caregivers for household members. Thus, women's empowerment is critical for greater decision-making on climate adaptation in the absence of men. In the past, men were usually decision-makers in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, which, in the face of climate variability, is no longer the case.

The heightened large-scale conflicts currently unfolding in the three counties are a direct consequence of adverse weather patterns, encompassing droughts and floods, resulting in significant livestock casualties. Gender significantly influences susceptibility and resilience to conflicts within these pastoralist communities, with women often bearing an unequal burden due to their responsibilities in managing household affairs. Therefore, women are impacted by conflicts in various ways. Many of them endure the loss of their spouses and livestock, leading to a dual hardship where they not only lose their means of sustenance but also their primary provider. Additionally, numerous children have been left orphaned, contributing to a notable increase in child-headed households. The majority of those killed or maimed in conflicts are



The divide between wealthier and poorer pastoralists creates a stark contrast in opportunities and living conditions. Similarly, the gender disparity within pastoral communities further exacerbates this divide, with men often having more access to resources compared to women.

young men. These conflicts also witness escalated sexual and gender-based violence, as well as the dissolution and fragmentation of families. The interplay between climate change, conflicts, and development interventions in pastoral communities underscores the need for holistic and sustainable approaches that address the interconnected challenges faced by these vulnerable populations. Only through collaborative efforts that recognize the nuances of these issues can meaningful progress be made towards building resilient and thriving pastoral communities.

One significant trend is the increasing involvement of women in income-generating activities beyond the household, such as small-scale businesses, craft-making, and community leadership. By providing women with training in alternative income-generating activities such as handicrafts or small-scale agriculture, these interventions aim to diversify their sources of income and reduce their dependence on traditional livestock husbandry. This not only enhances the financial stability of women but also contributes to the overall resilience of the of households and community in the face of climate change-induced shocks. Other factors include women's increased access to education empowering them to pursue economic opportunities. Changing market dynamics and the need for diversified income sources have transformed pastoralist communities with men and women beginning to share responsibilities thus, influencing gender roles within these communities.

Contrary to the belief that livestock are solely owned by men, this analysis found that women are increasingly taking ownership of cattle, sheep, goats, and camels. Some animals are inherited, acquired as widows, or purchased. Women have possession and control over their livestock, shouldering decision-making and are responsibility for their herds. The intricacies and

functionality of livestock ownership and access (actual, usufruct, and nominal) among various household members must be comprehensively understood to safeguard women's rights from being subverted or disregarded.

This assessment also affirms that the distinct roles of women and men endow them with complementary expertise in livestock management, particularly in the aspects where the animals are under their direct supervision. For instance, as the responsibility of milking typically falls within women's control, they have devised sophisticated marketing strategies to ensure the distribution of milk and its by-products to the market. Initiatives aimed at value-addition in the milk industry should prioritize women, enabling them to attain greater financial independence within their sphere of influence. Likewise women tasked with milking and caring for small/young and unwell animals, hence their expertise should be pivotal in decision-making processes. Recognizing and valuing women's expertise in this area will not only lead to an enhanced livestock/milk production system, but also foster increased self-esteem and confidence among pastoral women.

The processing and marketing of livestock products offer women and youth suitable vehicle for increasing their economic and social empowerment, and are often regarded as culturally acceptable occupations for the female gender. Agro-business trainings already being offered at Isiolo Youth Centre under the County Government offers the youth opportunities as entrepreneurs linked to livestock value chains. However there may be constraints to overcome, if men are not included in these initiatives to provide support, since they may feel marginalized as women and youth gain more power.

Recommendations

Based on this assessment we recommend the following for the Range Programme:

- i. Support the enactment and enforcement of gender-proactive policies and legislation that promote gender equity at the county level. This should ease pressure on gender roles by creating awareness and empowerment for both genders. This should also allow both women and men involved in decision-making at the county level equally through appointments to critical committees. RANGE can promote gender equality and social inclusion within the governance systems (i.e. formal and informal land management, protection, and restoration, including community/user/business associations).
- ii. There is a necessity to implement community support training programmes tailored for women and youth, focusing on leadership, decision-making, and communication. These programmes will empower pastoralist women and youth to actively engage in negotiations concerning all aspects impacting their livelihoods amidst the shifting climatic conditions, peace and conflict management taking into account gender roles.
- iii. Range should commission a 'Gender Livestock Value Chain Analysis Study' to determine the representation of men, women, and youth in the value chain, and to identify specific interventions that would facilitate the meaningful participation and benefit of women, youth, and other marginalized groups in the livestock value chain activities; enabling them to become more market-oriented. This could include supporting market access and pro-poor livestock value chains through enhanced livestock marketing services.
- iv. Support income-generating activities (i.e. Training, market connections) – processing and selling of livestock, forage, aromatic and medicinal plants, and eco-tourism products – as a way of enhancing pastoralist women's socio-economic position in their households and of empowering them to take a greater role in the community. Link-up with local partners and stakeholders already working with women's group in this area and find a niche for support.
- v. Gender equality and equity is key to rangeland rehabilitation, conservation effectiveness and sustainability. Given gender-differentiated roles and responsibilities in natural resource management, sustainable rangeland management must address the specific needs and opportunities of women and men across the programmes thematic areas (i.e. climate change, conflict management, vulnerability, energy and bio-diversity) in order to reduce inequalities, stimulate growth and reverse environmental degradation.
- vi. RANGE Programme should consider integrating gender as crosscutting (with targeted initiatives for women and the youth) rather than treating it as a separate theme. Employ Transformative methodologies woven into the programme outcomes, activities, and indicators (LogFrame).
- vii. RANGE should train all Programme Staff on Gender and equip them with tools for gender mainstreaming and transformative approaches across the thematic areas.

Pasture Production site in Samburu County, Kenya ~ Photo Credit: Omar Saruni Letiwa, (Mercy Corps).





Contacts:

WILLIAM BARON
Country Director,
Mercy Corps Kenya.
wbaron@mercycorps.org

NELSON OWANGE
Director of Programs,
Mercy Corps Kenya
nowange@mercycorps.org

BONFACE KABERIA
Program Director, RANGE
Mercy Corps Kenya
bkaberia@mercycorps.org



UNIVERSITY
OF TWENTE.

