

How pastoralist communities secure their livelihoods through collective land and grazing rights

A large number of pastoralist communities (also known as pastoralists) live in northern Kenya. The pastoralist communities there use flexible grazing routes with their herds. Their mixed herds consist of cattle, sheep and goats, and many of them also keep dromedaries (one-humped camels). In the rangelands of this dry natural area, nutritious grasses and water are often only available for short periods of time and are spatially scattered. Thanks to their mobility, pastoralists and their herds utilise these resources in a very productive way that is adapted to the natural environment. More than 80% of the meat consumed in Kenya is produced by pastoralists. The production of meat and dairy products from pastoralist animals contributes significantly to the country's gross domestic product (GDP). Moreover, the products provide the entire population of Kenya with protein and generate additional profits through their export (live animals, hides and skins).



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In the last decade, Kenya's arid north has become the centre of interest for many actors. Investors in mining, wind energy, irrigated agriculture, nature conservation and tourism as well as the Kenyan military and stakeholders of mega-development projects (such as the LAPPSET project) and other infrastructural programmes appropriated large areas of land. Important grazing areas, strategically located water resources and dry season pasture reserve areas, which are needed in times of drought, have therefore been lost and the stark rise in conflicting land use demands continue to undermine the relationship of pastoralists with their land. The large number of colonial fences in Laikipia also make it difficult for the herders and their flocks to access the remaining pastures and water points.



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Misereor partner strengthens pastoralist communities

The Misereor partner "Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation" (IMPACT) supports pastoralist communities in the districts of Marsabit, Laikipia, Samburu and Isiolo in maintaining their close-to-nature way of life despite their loss of land. IMPACT supports the pastoralist communities in:

- improving water supply for community members and livestock;
- diversifying their herds;
- optimising their pasture management;
- rehabilitating their pastureland, e.g. eradicating invasive plant species;
- advocating for their interests at a political level;
- securing their rights to grazing land.

For decades, Kenya's government has considered Kenya's arid north as unproductive land and regarded pastoralism as a backward and archaic practice. It was not until 2012 that a paradigm shift took place, with the Kenyan government officially recognising pastoralism as an economic activity that is part of Kenya's cultural identity. In 2016, new Kenyan land legislation (Community Land Act) was passed by parliament that provided the recognition, protection and registration of community land rights and enabled pastoralists to secure their land rights.

Background:

- There are around 9 million people (1.73 million households) in Kenya who consider themselves pastoralists.

- Of these, 4 million people (0.8 million households) are directly dependent on herding.
- They keep the majority of the country's livestock: around 70% of cattle, 87% of sheep, 81% of goats, 100% of camels, 88% of donkeys and 74% of beehives.
- Pastoralism has generated a value of 1.13 billion US dollars in 2019 with the livestock sector accounting for 92% and the non-livestock-sector for 8% (e.g. products such as milk, hides, skins, etc.).

IMPACT assists pastoralist communities in securing their land rights through obtaining community titles. However, experience shows that this is a complex and lengthy process and that local administration often lacks the political will needed to implement this process. In addition, pastoralists have not been granted the right to use the land in protected areas. The former migration routes of pastoralists are now controlled by wealthy individuals and the pastoralists who already had to navigate a difficult terrain before, are left alone with this new, even more difficult situation. The government continues to consider northern Kenya as idle lands and justifies its authorisation of further investment with the argument that it is necessary to make the land productive again. IMPACT strengthens the advocacy work of pastoralists to secure their livelihoods through collective land and grazing rights.

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