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Understanding and characterising collective tenure and tenure security in pastoral systems: Kenya, Sudan and Burkina Faso

This consolidated study explores pastoral collective tenure and degrees of tenure security in pastoral systems in Kenya, Sudan and Burkina Faso.

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Par { "@context": "https://schema.org", "author": { "@context": "https://schema.org", "@type": "Person", "name": "Magda Nassef", "url": "https://www.sparc-knowledge.org/about-us/contributors/authors/magda-nassef" } } [Magda Nassef](#) { "@context": "https://schema.org", "author": { "@context": "https://schema.org", "@type": "Person", "name": "Ken Otieno", "url": "https://www.sparc-knowledge.org/about-us/contributors/authors/ken-otieno" } } [Ken Otieno](#) { "@context": "https://schema.org", "author": { "@context": "https://schema.org", "@type": "Person", "name": "Hussein Sulieman", "url": "https://www.sparc-knowledge.org/about-us/contributors/authors/hussein-sulieman" } } [Hussein Sulieman](#) { "@context": "https://schema.org", "author": { "@context": "https://schema.org", "@type": "Person", "name": "Issa Sawadogo", "url": "https://www.sparc-knowledge.org/about-us/contributors/authors/issa-sawadogo" } } [Issa Sawadogo](#) { "@context": "https://schema.org", "author": { "@context": "https://schema.org", "@type": "Person", "name": "Anna Locke", "url": "https://www.sparc-knowledge.org/about-us/contributors/authors/anna-locke" } } [Anna Locke](#) { "@context": "https://schema.org", "author": { "@context": "https://schema.org", "@type": "Person", "name": "Ian Langdown", "url": "https://www.sparc-knowledge.org/about-us/contributors/authors/ian-langdown" } } [Ian Langdown](#) { "@context": "https://schema.org", "author": { "@context": "https://schema.org", "@type": "Person", "name": "Fiona Flintan", "url": "https://www.sparc-knowledge.org/about-us/contributors/authors/fiona-flintan" } } [Fiona Flintan](#)
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Land-tenure insecurity has been highlighted as a main factor in farmer–herder conflict. While tenure and tenure security for settled land users has been well documented, pastoral collective tenure and degrees of tenure security in pastoral systems are not as well understood.

To explore this issue, we considered two layers of tenure and tenure security in Burkina Faso, Sudan and Kenya: that of the group, and that of individuals within the group. None of the pastoral communities in the study held any formal documentation for their land but do consider themselves rightful landholders.

Our results highlight the multiplicity of factors affecting conflict but that conflict over resources is more likely to become violent as available lands shrink and competition increases. The causes of conflict are multiple, interacting and highly complex, with pastoral land-tenure insecurity highlighted as a main factor.

Moving forward may include formalising pastoral communal tenure and rights in rangelands. States are increasingly willing to formally recognise pastoralists' communal land rights, which is a welcome development since legal recognition can be a crucial source of legitimacy and also increases the likelihood that these rights are enforceable if threatened.

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