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Targeting individuals or communities? Learnings from AfriScout on improving pastoralists' well-being

This brief highlights key learnings for policymakers from research that explores the causal impact of two intervention models designed to support pastoralists in Ethiopia and Kenya.

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Rapid changes in East Africa's arid and semi-arid regions, caused by climate-related disasters, armed conflict, livestock diseases, macroeconomic shocks, and increasing population, are making pastoralism an increasingly precarious livelihood. There is a critical need for innovations that enhance pastoralists' resilience and adaptability.

To this end, Global Communities' AfriScout programme supports pastoralists through two intervention models: AfriScout Regen (implemented in Ethiopia), providing intensive, localized grazing support at a community level following an adaptive multi-paddock approach; and AfriScout Steward (implemented in Kenya), an app providing satellite and crowd-sourced information on rangeland conditions to inform grazing and migration decisions.

To better understand the causal impacts of the two AfriScout models, SPARC partner Causal Design conducted a two-year, mixed-methods impact evaluation. The evaluation sought to identify the attributable outcomes of AfriScout on pastoralist decision-making and subsequent impacts on rangeland conditions and herd conditions. This policy brief summarises key findings of the study and highlights learnings from each model for future program design and policymakers.

Research findings are:

- AfriScout Regen: AfriScout Regen had a large and statistically significant impact on almost all outcomes in targeted communities. There were significant shifts in rangeland management, with the establishment of shared grazing plans, rotational

grazing, and communal grazing. Adherence to grazing plans led to significant improvements in rangeland conditions, and subsequent improvements in herd condition and other aspects of financial and non-financial wellbeing.

- AfriScout Steward: Pastoralists value the AfriScout app and incorporate app information into migration decisions. Though not substantiated by statistically significant findings, in qualitative interviews, app users reflected positively on using app information to guide migration decisions. They attributed using the app to positive outcomes on herd condition, and subsequent effects on financial and non-financial wellbeing. High levels of awareness of and use of the app further illustrate AfriScout Steward's relevance for pastoralists.

Policy implications are:

- This study found that both AfriScout models have strengths that may be leveraged in different contexts, and their success depends on specific design and contextual pre-conditions as facilitating factors.
- AfriScout Regen illustrates the efficacy of collective action on regenerating grazelands. However, given its intensive, localised nature, this approach is more costly and may not be easily scalable. Furthermore, AfriScout Regen's success stems from leveraging and building on pre-existing traditional rangeland management systems in southern Ethiopia.
- AfriScout Steward demonstrates the effectiveness of digital platforms for information sharing, particularly when information is co-created and relevant to users. Strong spillover in app awareness and use, due to information relevance and a culture of information sharing, suggests cost-effective scaling. While digital dissemination is easy and low-cost, existing digital infrastructures may limit accessibility.

These findings indicate that intervention design and funding must consider the cost-benefit analysis of each approach (information sharing vs localised advisory support).

Consideration should be made in particular to local conditions (such as digital infrastructure and existing decision-making processes) in order to best tailor approaches to meet desired objectives.

Find out more about innovations for pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in drylands on the SPARC [Innovation Dashboard](#).



AfriScout Steward training in Mosiro, Kajiado County, Kenya, 2025 - Photo by Brian Odhiambo

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