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How climate information services (CIS) can help pastoralists in the Horn of Africa

This policy brief explores the challenges pastoralists face when using climate information services (CIS). It outlines key considerations for scaling up effective CIS in drylands.

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Despite the growing availability of climate information services (CIS), which could help pastoralists adapt to climate change, their use remains limited among pastoralists in the Horn of Africa.

Why is this the case? Why do pastoralists not make more use of CIS? How can we make CIS more relevant and accessible to them?

In this policy brief, we review the context of CIS for pastoralists in the Horn of Africa and draw on case studies from Ethiopia and Kenya of CIS initiatives in pastoral areas. The brief looks at the specific needs of pastoralists for climate information, the barriers they face to use such information, and how to develop and deliver CIS tailored for pastoralists.

Our findings show that:

- Pastoralists face barriers to access and use CIS, including mobility, remoteness, weak telecommunications infrastructure, low mobile phone ownership, low literacy, and gender disparities;
- Pastoralists will use climate information if, and when, it is timely, localised, context-specific, includes traditional knowledge, and is shared through trusted social networks;
- Digital services may not always effectively reach pastoralists. Using multiple dissemination channels, combining digital tools with channels pastoralists already use, is beneficial; and
- Compared to men, women have different needs for climate information, often have less access to mobile phones, and use different channels to receive information.

The results emphasise several key considerations when designing and delivering tailored CIS for pastoralists:

- To tailor CIS for pastoralists, we need better understanding of the local context, social networks, language, infrastructure, technology and literacy levels. This is best done

jointly with pastoralists leading;

- Using CIS is only one way pastoralists adapt to climate change. CIS should be integrated into broader adaptation;
- Pastoralists' access to land, inputs and finance needs to be stronger if pastoralists are to make good use of climate information; and
- Initiatives should be sensitive to gender: we need specific measures to help women pastoralists.



Mobile phone users in Ethiopia
Credit Image by S. Sheridan / Mercy Corps

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