



News 4th December 2025

The Conversation: Africa's drylands need the right kind of support - listening to the pastoralists who live there

In this article, SPARC researchers reflect on pastoralists and farmers' finely tuned strategies for living with variability - and how external interventions would do better to build on what works.

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Africa's drylands are often imagined as vast, empty spaces. Romantic wilderness on the one hand. Zones of hunger, conflict and poverty on the other. Media stories tend to emphasise crises and scarcity, portraying these regions as peripheral and fragile.

But this narrative obscures a more complex and hopeful reality. Across these landscapes, millions of pastoralists and dryland farmers are constantly adapting, innovating, and building livelihoods in some of the continent's most variable environments.

In [an article](#) for *The Conversation*, SPARC researcher Claire Bedelian and Executive Director Guy Jobbins share key reflections from six years of SPARC about the most effective external support for drylands communities - and why past efforts have often fallen short.

Read the full piece in [The Conversation](#).



Fish market in Bor, Jonglei state, South Sudan. Credit: Elphas Ngugi / Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC)

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