

Press release

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## **New research programme to build resilience for drylands communities from east to west Africa**

A new six-year research programme, Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC), is generating knowledge to build the resilience of millions of people living in agricultural, pastoral and transitional communities in the drylands stretching from east to west Africa.

In the run-up to November's international climate conference, COP26, in Glasgow, UK, and the Global Landscapes Forum (2-3 June 2021), SPARC is highlighting the concerns facing some of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries – which among them face more erratic rainfall, and temperature increases, on top of desertification and the urgent need for more secure, sustainable livelihoods.

The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)-funded programme is partnering with local researchers and organisations, as well as drawing on the expertise of its core partners: Canadian-headquartered international development consulting company Cowater International, London-based think tank ODI, global NGO Mercy Corps and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI).

The research and evidence SPARC is generating will enable a wide range of drylands' stakeholders, including development partners, donors, NGOs, local and national governments and civil society, to better support and empower communities living in the context of climate change and recurrent crises.

"This is a region facing real environmental, social and economic challenges in the coming decades but also a region of incredible potential and opportunities for communities, ecosystems and sustainable development," said Emmanuel Seck, Regional Advisor, SPARC.

"Within SPARC we recognise that gender, (dis)ability and other aspects of social identity lead to differentiated risk, and we are committed to make visible the causes and consequences of inequality, and to propose solutions that are equitable and inclusive," said Katharine Vincent, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Advisor, SPARC.

SPARC is carrying out research and seeking to convene policy-relevant debates around some of the issues that are fundamental to peaceful, thriving, environmentally secure societies in this region, including:

- How to provide climate-resilient, stable, secure job opportunities for people of working age today and prepare opportunities for decent work for the approximately half of the population under the age of 18;
- How to foster greater cooperation across borders to manage transboundary climate risks, such as reduced flows of water, changes in commodities trade and movements of people influenced by climate and other shocks;
- How to improve the quantity and quality of climate finance flows to the region and especially to countries and zones considered conflict-affected or politically fragile;
- Covid-19's impact on livelihoods in drylands and conflict-affected areas.



“SPARC recognises that millions of people are living and working in conflict affected countries. Many are pastoralists and farmers that contribute to food security and can play an important role in preserving dryland environments. Together with our local and international partners, our research is helping improve the effectiveness of development programmes to support the effort towards sustainable jobs, security and environmental preservation,” said Mark Redwood, Executive Director, SPARC.

**For more information please contact:**

SPARC Executive Director Mark Redwood: [Mark.Redwood@cowater.com](mailto:Mark.Redwood@cowater.com)

**Media queries:**

SPARC Senior Communications Officer Josie Emanuel: [j.emanuel@odi.org.uk](mailto:j.emanuel@odi.org.uk)

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**Notes to Editor**

The SPARC programme runs from 2020-2025. The team includes more than 100 experts specialising in research on agriculture, climate change, social protection, disaster risk management and financing, economics, livelihoods, gender and social inclusion, conflict and peacebuilding and operational activities including research management, procurement, knowledge brokering and communications. The evidence and information we generate will be used to better understand which programmes are most effective to deliver in semi-arid regions and fragile and conflict-affected areas. SPARC will also assess if, and how, projects can be replicated at scale given the complexity of dynamic development contexts.

**About Cowater International**

Founded in 1985, Cowater International is a leading global development consulting company. Headquartered in Ottawa and with corporate hubs in Brussels, London (UK), Montreal and Nairobi, Cowater International has successfully delivered a portfolio of over 2500 projects and assignments in more than 95 countries. We work with governments, private sector actors and communities implementing projects that support socio-economic development, institutional strengthening, environmental improvements and advance equal opportunities for all.

**About ODI**

ODI is a leading global affairs think tank. We inspire people to act on injustice and inequality. We focus on research, convening and influencing, to generate ideas that matter for people and planet.

**About Mercy Corps**

Mercy Corps is a global team of humanitarian experts, working to alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression in more than 40 countries around the world. Mercy Corps works with people living through poverty, disaster, violent conflict and the acute impacts of climate change.

**About ILRI**

ILRI works with communities in developing countries to ensure better lives through livestock. The institute's vision is to improve food and nutritional security, and reduce poverty, in developing countries through research into the efficient, safe and sustainable use of livestock. ILRI is a CGIAR research centre, part of a global research partnership for a food-secure future.