

STRUCTURED SUMMARY

GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES IN PASTORAL AREAS

A review of current trends and key issues

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Motivation

Pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in Africa are often characterised by gendered labour divisions, unequal resource access and decision-making power, differentially impacting women's and men's well-being and resilience. Gender transformative approaches (GTAs) address structural inequities by aiming to change harmful and restrictive norms to more equitably reach, benefit, empower and support more inclusive and resilient pastoral development.

Purpose

We identified gender-transformative interventions in pastoralist communities, to learn how to shape them for dryland communities.

Approach and methods

We reviewed primary and secondary sources to understand GTAs in pastoral contexts in Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC) countries in Africa – in large part the Sahel from Mauritania to Somalia. Data collected covered the aims of GTAs, target groups, mechanisms used to implement GTAs, metrics used to assess impact, and impact itself. The 'Reach, Benefit, Empower, Transform' (RBET) framework was used to identify projects that had explicit transformative aims, and to evaluate project data. A total of 18 interventions were reviewed, 5 of which targeted adolescents.

Findings

Most gender-transformative interventions that we reviewed aimed to improve livelihoods, enhance resilience, reduce harmful practices, improve health and better govern land and other resources. GTAs were often embedded in other sectoral or cross-sectoral programmes; rather than being stand-alone interventions. Existing in multiple and diverse forms, GTAs can amplify grassroots and community-led efforts that are already happening.

GTAs were implemented unevenly across the countries that were considered and were more commonly found in East Africa than in West Africa.

Collective action in groups and community dialogues were the most frequent mechanisms used to implement GTAs. Impacts were commonly seen in decision-making, resource management and reduced harmful practices.

Robust methods to assess the impact of GTAs were an exception, although more common in large-scale interventions spanning regions within or across countries.

Policy implications

GTAs should be tailored to address the particular circumstances of gender relations in pastoralist societies; above all, to ensure that interventions do not unintentionally reproduce inequalities through exclusion.

Partnerships with local civil society organisations (CSOs) and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should be developed and deepened. Partnerships should link to wider platforms and networks to strengthen locally-embedded and locally-led social change.

More practically oriented materials and guidelines on best practices are needed to support equitable pastoral development. Easy-to-use and accurate metrics would also improve understanding of what works, where and for whom, as well as generate systematic, comparable sets of data on GTAs in pastoralist contexts.

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