

## STRUCTURED SUMMARY

# FORECASTS FOR PASTORALISTS

Increasing demand for weather forecasts to support adaptation in northern Kenya

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### Motivation

A technological revolution in forecasting, expansive observation networks and collaboration have brought better weather forecasts to the Horn of Africa. Better forecasts, especially seasonal forecasts, could potentially help pastoralists plan and manage their herding — particularly given global heating and changing climate. Currently, however, pastoralists show little demand for forecasts.

### Purpose

Why do pastoralists in northern Kenya not demand better weather information? How can weather information providers better design forecasts and forecast delivery to pastoralists in northern Kenya?

### Approach and methods

We asked specialists on meteorology, livestock and pastoralism about weather forecasts and their use by pastoralists. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Nairobi in May 2024 with 18 researchers and technical specialists from Mercy Corps, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Kenya Meteorological Department (KMD) and Indigenous Women and Girls Initiative (IWGI), Pastoralist Girls Initiative (PGI), and the Center for Research and Development in Drylands (CRDD).

### Findings

Low demand for formal weather forecasts by pastoralists was seen to be the result of a mismatch between the information needs and systems of pastoralists, and how weather information is translated and transferred to them in northern Kenya.

Particular problems included: how the certainty of forecasts was conveyed to potential pastoralist users; recognition of the diversity of pastoralists, especially women versus men pastoralists, with different needs for weather information and different favoured channels of communication; and the potential for forecasts to increase competition among pastoralists for scarce water, graze and fodder.

Formal providers of forecasts should recognise that pastoralists have longstanding ways in which they predict the weather. Formal forecasts should not necessarily supplant such knowledge; rather, they should be delivered to forums

where herd managers can consider all sources of information relevant to their livelihood.

## Policy implications

To make better use of formal weather information, forecasts need to be co-designed with pastoralists to better meet their needs. Specifically:

- Work through traditional information channels, and seek to deliver forecasts to existing forums that pastoralist communities already use for information on weather and resources to inform pastoral planning.
- Link weather information to the types of decisions and trade-offs that end users are making, ones that revolve around the expected availability of water, graze and fodder.
- Improve forecast literacy among potential pastoralist users; the terms and language used by scientific forecasters may not be readily understandable to them.
- Appreciate and consider the information needs, and information channels, of pastoralist women.

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