

STRUCTURED SUMMARY

SUPPORTING PASTORALISTS THROUGH AFRISCOUT STEWARD AND REGEN: IMPACT EVALUATION

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Motivation

Rapid changes in East Africa's arid and semi-arid regions, caused by climate-related disasters, armed conflict, livestock diseases, macroeconomic shocks and increasing population, are making pastoralism increasingly precarious. Innovations to enhance pastoralists' resilience are needed.

To this end, Global Communities' AfriScout programme supports pastoralists through two interventions. AfriScout Steward (in Kenya) provides satellite and crowd-sourced information on rangeland conditions through a mobile phone app, to inform grazing and migration decisions. AfriScout Regen (in Ethiopia) provides direct technical support to communities. This support builds on and improves traditional grazing practices so that livestock movement promotes vegetation regeneration.

Purpose

To understand the causal impacts of the two AfriScout models, Causal Design conducted a two-year, mixed-methods impact evaluation to identify the attributable outcomes of AfriScout on pastoralist decision-making and subsequent impacts on rangeland and herd conditions.

Approach and methods

A cluster-randomised control trial compared outcomes between treatment and control groups, with baseline data collected in January–February 2023 and endline data in February–March 2025. Qualitative inquiry provided information on key mechanisms and causal pathways.

Findings

AfriScout Regen had a large and statistically significant impact on almost all outcomes in targeted communities. There were significant shifts in rangeland management, with the establishment of shared grazing plans, rotational and communal grazing. Adherence to such plans led to significant improvements in rangeland conditions, subsequent improvements in herd condition, and other aspects of financial and non-financial well-being (e.g. confidence in decision-making, less stress, equitable access to information).

For **AfriScout Steward**, pastoralists expressed how they valued the AfriScout app and incorporated information from it into migration decisions. Findings on outcomes, however, were inconclusive. When interviewed, respondents reported positive outcomes on herd condition, and subsequent effects on financial and non-financial well-being, which they attributed to use of the AfriScout app.

Quantitative findings, however, did not confirm these reports. Lack of quantitative evidence may have been caused by contamination in the survey owing to the spread of app information from treated to control groups through word of mouth; as well by uncharacteristically plentiful rain during the study.

Policy implications

Our findings contribute novel insights into the effectiveness of digital tools for migration decisions and the impact of regenerative grazing practices in developing countries, while also highlighting critical implementation challenges such as information spillovers.

Our findings show the importance of tailoring interventions to local context and – above all – to how pastoralists share information.

For **AfriScout Regen**, we recommend further expanding the model to other areas, both to share the intervention's positive effects with other communities, and to safeguard existing regenerative grazing units. Further investigation should be undertaken into access to water and veterinary services; and the effects of Regen on gendered outcomes and livestock disease.

For **AfriScout Steward**, we recommend additional app features or functionality, such as incorporating market information, and increased offline capabilities. Other recommendations include improving the user interface and incorporating additional training materials onto the app and in-built support such as video tutorials for use in the absence of field agents to provide troubleshooting support. Finally, we recommend identifying strategies to overcome constraints to real-time data sharing.

Policy-makers should consider local context, tailoring interventions to ensure their success. They should also consider trade-offs between impact, scalability and budget when designing interventions for pastoralists.

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