

STRUCTURED SUMMARY

COLLECTIVE TENURE OF PASTORAL LAND IN SUDAN

Evidence from North Kordofan

Hussein M. Sulieman, Yahia Omar Adam and Saada Naile

Motivation

Insecurity of land tenure is a problem for pastoralists in Sudan. Land acquisition has historically triggered regional conflict and injustice. Pastoralists also grapple with pervasive insecurity from diverse conflicts; the blockage or disappearance of livestock routes; limited mobility owing to inadequate access to water; poorly designed routes and degradation of resting places. These problems severely restrict the spatial and temporal mobility of livestock in pastoral areas.

Purpose

We review the significance of pastoralism in Sudan, formal tenure systems and their governance, and tribal systems.

Method

We read the relevant literature. In one village of Jabrat Elsheikh, North Kordofan State we studied land tenure and governance through interviews with key informants and nine focus group discussions in March 2023.

Findings

Tenure for dry-season grazing land is collective, based on unwritten customary rules and regulations, governed by tribal authorities. Tribes occupy large areas termed *dar*; with hierarchical governance from the *nazir* down through to *sheikhs* in villages. Formal state land laws are neither evident nor enforced in the area: pastoralists are generally unaware of the country's tenure laws.

Existing tenure gives equal access to all (male) group members. It also allows individuals from outside the group to access and use the grazing — although management, exclusion and transfer rights remain with the group and its members. This system, part of their tribal heritage, allows the group to maintain their natural resources, and prevent their overexploitation. Disputes over land are resolved by traditional mechanisms.

Pastoralists, both as a group and as individuals, feel highly secure in their rights to collective grazing, both during their own lives and for those of future generations. On the other hand, tenure and management privileges men: women are marginalised in decision-making, and in their access, use and management of dry season grazing.

Pastoralists foresee challenges from increasing human and livestock populations with more competition for resources. They expect individual interests to take precedence over group interests. Rising interest in farming and more people may see cultivated land expanded at the expense of dry season grazing.

Funded by



This material has been funded by UK aid from the UK government; however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.