

SUMMARY

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING IN KENYA'S DRYLANDS: THE WARD DEVELOPMENT PLANNING MODEL

Understanding the potential of Ward Development Planning for inclusive resilience-oriented development for pastoralists

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Motivation

Pastoralists barely participate in public planning in Kenya's drylands. As a consequence, development interventions are often misguided: they undermine livelihoods and increase vulnerability. Would a bottom-up approach improve matters?

Purpose

Mercy Corps, through the Livestock Marketing Systems (LMS) programme, trialled Ward Development Planning (WDP) in five counties in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands with the aim to empower pastoralists in development planning and support community resilience. What has been learned?

Approach and methods

We interviewed key informants in the counties of Garissa, Isiolo and Turkana in October and November 2021 and reviewed WDP programme documents and impact reports.

Findings

The WDP model deepens Kenya's devolution to the ward level. It has the potential to connect the community to county-level planning and to empower pastoralists to engage in local planning. We found effective representation and accountable decision-making through inclusive public selection of Ward Planning Committees (WPCs). These committees have a broad membership across villages, gender and age groups. Ward Development Plans integrate local knowledge and community priorities into planning and public goods investments. The WDP model enhances local governance, reduces conflict and supports community development that builds resilience to climate and other shocks.

Policy implications

The WDP model can be scaled across Kenya and beyond. Replication will require tailoring during implementation to match local contexts, above all to ensure that WDP complements existing governance approaches. It will also require a focus on process, to ensure the representative and inclusive selection of WPC members. Finally, much of the model's success relies on empowering and motivating ground-level implementers to use their discretion in navigating local contexts.

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