



# Empowering women through participatory rangeland management

## Women in pastoral societies

In traditional pastoralist societies, women have clear, well-delineated roles and make valuable contributions to the well-being of the group. The men are responsible for taking livestock to grazing areas while women look after the young, sick and pregnant animals. Women are also responsible for childcare, food preparation, managing the household vegetable plot and numerous chores such as cutting grass for thatching roofs and collecting firewood.

Women have also been the keepers of deep local knowledge of rangeland ecosystems. They know the medicinal properties and household and economic uses of local flora and fauna, which is especially important during times of drought or hardship.

Now, as change sweeps through pastoral communities, the role of women is changing—for better and for worse.





Women can be formally excluded from community-level decision-making processes, which are dominated by men and elders. Where customary institutions are strong and functioning well, women access resources as part of the pastoral group according to customary rules and practices. Access and use rights usually need to be negotiated through a husband, a male relative or the clan. Nonetheless, it is in the group's best interests that women have access to land and resources to feed the family and prosper economically. Although women may not have **individual rights** to land and resources, they do have **collective rights** under group tenure and governance systems —as long as the group remains strong.

## Women and participatory rangeland management

In the *Piloting of Participatory Rangeland Management Project (PRMP)*, a key objective was to support the empowerment of women. Following the conceptualization of empowerment by Kabeer (1999), the project aimed to:

- » improve access to material, human and social **resources**,
- » enable women to have greater **control** over setting goals and taking action to achieve them, and
- » improve women's well-being and **capacity** to make decisions based on their choices.

The project aimed to do this by providing opportunities to value and use women's knowledge and their roles in rangeland management through an expansion of livelihood activities, improving their understanding of natural resource management challenges and potential solutions, and increasing participation in decision-making processes.

*“This committee used to be male elders only. Through PRM, we learned the importance of inclusion. Now, elders value representation from youth and women. PRM helped us improve a system that was already in place without creating new management structures.”*

Rev. Yusuf Lotule, Chairperson, Paka Hills Rangeland Management Committee

## Improving access to resources

The Project contributed to improved access and tenure security over community land and resources, and women have benefited as members of the community as well as individuals in their own right. Through a resource mapping exercise, roles were clarified by classifying the day-to-day tasks handled by different members of the community. **Practical interventions have reduced women's workloads and improved men's contributions to tasks that were previously carried out mainly or only by women.** For example, some men now cut grass and fodder and take it to the homestead to feed young or weak animals, whereas previously this was considered “*women's work*”.

**Women have been introduced to new livelihood activities such as beekeeping.** Previously, beekeeping in Irong community in Baringo was only done by men, however, during project discussions women showed an interest in getting involved and the community agreed to support them. Through the project's community rangeland investment fund (CRIF), women were provided with hives and the training they needed to start in the honey business.



From the outset, the project encouraged women to participate in PRM activities, to attend meetings and become actively involved in the discussions. Women like participating in discussions about rangeland problems with fellow community members and receiving information in planning meetings they can share with others. Training sessions were delivered on a range of topics such as institutional strengthening and resource mobilization, financial management and reporting, community land registration and developing rangeland or grazing land management plans. **Over more than 20 training sessions, the average attendance was 35% women and 65% men. In some sessions, the number of women was more, for example, women made up 50% of the participants in the training on financial management and reporting.**

At the start of the project in Kenya, women did not play a strong role in customary or newly-established conservancy management institutions. Neither the *Paka Hills Rangeland Management Committee* nor the *Kabarion Conservancy Committee* had a single woman member. In the case of the latter, some said this was due to the prevailing conflict. Women were concerned about their safety and did not want to get involved in planning grazing, management of watering points or even peace meetings owing to the trauma from past conflicts.

Discussions between project staff and community members led to a better understanding of the importance and value of inclusive, more gender-equitable resource management and governance. This led to **restructuring the rangeland management committees with more strongly defined roles and saw the increased election of women in all governing bodies and management positions.** Leadership training helped build women's capacity and confidence to take on these new responsibilities.

**In Kenya, by the end of 2020, over 1,593 people directly participated in PRM activities including 419 women (26.3%).** Newly constituted committees are now working closely with youths, elders and women to manage grazing patterns and ensure grazing is rested as needed. In the Paka Hills revived traditional grazing patterns have helped reverse rangeland degradation.

*“I feel accomplished and honored to sit on this committee. Men committee members ask for and respect our opinions. Now people insist on including women on key decision-making platforms because we just don't add numbers, we add value.”*

Monica Rono,  
Irong Conservancy Committee

*At the start of the project in Kenya, women did not play a strong role in customary or newly-established conservancy management institutions. Newly constituted committees are now working closely with youths, elders and women to manage grazing patterns and ensure grazing is rested as needed.*



*Women spearheaded a drive to raise funds from members with the group collecting over 10 million Tanzanian shillings (approximately 4,325 US dollars).*

## Taking control

**In Tanzania**, PRM built on previous interventions that encouraged gender equity in decision-making processes and women already have a good presence on the boards of the *Livestock Keeper Associations* responsible for the management of grazing lands. All the Treasurers are women, and women hold positions of either Chair or Vice-Chair in the low-level committees. In all four *Livestock Keeper Associations in Kiteto District*, **52% of the officials are women. In two committees in Ruvuremit and Lesingita in Simanjiro and Longido Districts, 30% of committee members are women.** This has given women more scope to voice their concerns and contribute to decisions made about management and rangeland governance. **Women have also helped mobilize the community** to support resolutions of the Board, including encouraging more members to join associations and pay membership fees. For instance, in OLENGAPA (the shared grazing land of villages *Orkitikiti, Lerug, Engong'are* and *Ngapapa*), women spearheaded a drive to raise funds from members with the group collecting over 10 million Tanzanian shillings (approximately 4,325 US dollars).

The plan was that by the end of the project in 2021, at least 10 rangeland management committees would be established, with at least 30% women's representation. **To date, there are eight fully functional rangelands management institutions in Tanzania and Kenya with almost 45% women members.** Other examples include the appointment of women to water subcommittees where they were previously absent. Obstacles to women's participation are heavy workloads, long distances to meetings and cultural barriers such as perceptions that women have no capacity for management.

## Men and women in rangeland management committees in Baringo, Kenya March 2021

CONSERVACY	COMMITTEE	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	% WOMEN
<i>Irong</i>	Irong Conservancy management committee	10	7	17	41
<i>Kabarion</i>	Karbarion Conservancy committee	11	4	15	27
<i>Koitegan</i>	Koitegan community forest association executive committee	7	6	13	46
<i>Paka</i>	Paka Hills rangeland management committee	12	5	17	29
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>36%</b>

## Men and women in livestock associations in Kiteto District, Tanzania

CONSERVACY	COMMITTEE	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	% WOMEN
<i>OLENGAPA</i>	OLENGAPA Livestock Keepers Association (OLKA) Board	12	9	21	43
<i>ALLOLE</i>	ALLOLE Livestock Keepers Association (ALKA) Board	9	12	21	57
<i>NAPALAI</i>	NAPALAI Livestock Keepers Association (NALKA) Board	9	12	21	57
<i>KIMBO</i>	KIMBO Livestock Keepers Association (KILKA) Board	10	11	21	52
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>52%</b>



## Improving women's well-being, choice and capacity to make decisions

In general, women express satisfaction with their participation in PRM processes. The **positive role of women in rangeland management** has been demonstrated through the election of women to rangeland management committees, and this has changed men's ideas about the role of women in management. They now treat women with greater respect.

*"I was elected as the treasurer of Koitegan Community Forest Association. I feel appreciated. I believe that I have gained the trust of both men and women who elected me. This is a good opportunity to improve on my leadership skills and build confidence in other women who aspire to lead."*

Everline Kibet, Treasurer, Koitegan CFA

Another win for women was their engagement in implementing CRIF (Community Rangeland Investment Fund) activities. **Women got the opportunity to take casual jobs** like clearing invasive species and bush thinning. They were paid 300 Kenyan shillings (nearly three US dollars) per day for seven days. They say this helped them set up small businesses like selling groceries and revolving credit schemes. They had money to buy school uniforms for their children and pay school fees. They felt good about being better able to feed their families and contribute to other family needs.

**Improving water supplies was one area that women highlighted as a priority** in rangeland management planning processes. In Irong, the project provided the community with funds from the CRIF to rehabilitate a borehole pump in a well that serves up to 800 households. The water supply had slowed so much that it took women twenty minutes to fill a 20 litre jerry can. With a solar pumping unit, women can now fill a 20 liter can in two minutes. The solar pump is managed by a woman who ensures there is water for domestic use and livestock. In Tanzania, a borehole drilled in OLENGAPA cluster funded by CRIF serving about 1,500 households is being managed by a women's subcommittee. This ensures every household gets access to water. Similar results were reported for a dam renovation improving access to water for people and livestock.

## References

- » Kabeer, N. (1999) "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment." Development and Change Vol. 30 (3): 435–464.

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<https://rangelandsinitiative.org/piloting-use-participatory-rangeland-management-prm-kenya-and-tanzania>

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## Reflections

*There is some way to go to fully empower women* before they can enjoy the same opportunities as men in terms of access to resources, control over their lives and making decisions.

*PRM has opened up space for reflection on these issues* in the pastoral communities of Baringo, Kenya and Kiteto, Tanzania by securing incremental change through consensus in rural areas where patriarchy still prevails, initiating livelihoods activities specifically targeting women and increasing the participation of women in rangeland management institutions.

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