

## **Enclosing the Commons: A new paradigm in the management of East African drylands**

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There is a consensus that drylands are the 'next frontiers' in Kenya's development. The contribution of these vast areas which cover approximately 82% of the country's landmass is enormous. Traditionally, these areas are and continue to be prominent in livestock production and tourism sectors. However, with the discovery of various minerals and key resources such as water, oil, coal and valuable gems in diverse counties such as Turkana, Baringo, Kitui and Kwale, it is a fact that these areas will be prominent in our country's development going forward. The serenity, aesthetic beauty and wildlife found in these areas is unmatched, globally.

Land degradation, desertification and drought (LDDD) and deforestations are recognized as key issues facing drylands in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Their effect on the quality of life is catastrophic. As a result, international, regional, sub-regional and national measures have been put in place to address these global issues at different levels. More essentially, the adoption of glocal (acting locally while thinking globally) approaches has been highly advocated for in dealing with LDDD in rangelands globally.

In the wake of land degradation and drought in Kenyan rangelands, enclosing the commons (communal land) through the establishment of enclosure has gained prominence. Enclosure denotes areas fenced off from animal and human use or interference for a specific period to allow natural or artificial regeneration of plants or pasture (Behnke, 1986). There are basically two types of enclosures namely: private and communal based on ownership which can then be broken down further based on the modes of regeneration – natural or artificial (reseeded) as is the case in West Pokot and the Lake Baringo Basin, respectively (de Groot et al., 1992; Verdoodt et al., 2009; 2010; Mureithi et al., 2014a & b). While the drivers and incentives for their establishment vary across case studies; it is certain that enclosures signify the de facto privatization of pastoral commons by either allocating grazing commons to individual private owners or groups (Gaani, 2002). In both cases, the adjudication of communal land is believed to foster a more responsible use of the land and is therefore, prevalent where communal use of rangelands has led to range degradation (McCarthy, Kamara & Kirk, 2003; Keene, 2008).

Studies on enclosures in West Pokot (Makokha et al., 1999; Wernersson, 2013; Wairore et al., 2014), Baringo (Meyerhoff, 1991; de Groot, 1992; RAE, 2004; Verdoodt et al., 2010; Wasonga et al., 2011; Mureithi et al., 2014), south-eastern Kenya (Macharia & Ekaya, 2005; Opiyo et al., 2011), Tanzania (Mwilawa et al., 2008) and in northern and southern Ethiopia (Angassa and Oba, 2008; Bayene, 2009; Desta et al., 2013; WOCAT, 2013) have clearly demonstrated that enclosures are facilitating improved livelihoods and living standards among pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Improved household or societal welfare are manifested from diverse tangible benefits and environmental services generated from enclosures (Bayene, 2009; Mureithi et al., 2014; Wairore et al.,

2014). In the face of climate change, enclosures are helping pastoral and agropastoral communities cope with climate change through the provision of grazing reserves, reduced animal losses, improved health and animal productivity, easier livestock management and livelihood diversification through various income generating activities (Makokha et al., 1999; Wairore et al., 2014).

Enclosures are necessary at household and communal levels to cushion rangeland or dryland communities against sporadic climate and market shocks (Mureithi et al., 2014). Freedom on land use allows individuals to effectively manage, exercise and explore diverse benefits at household level (Saxer, 2014). This provides the foundations for affordable coping and adaptive mechanisms, beneficial income generating activities and resilient dryland communities. The exclusivity of rangeland enclosure benefits is likely to drive more people to enclose part of the wider grazing commons for exclusive use (Bayene, 2009). Consequently, enclosures are likely to be adopted in more rangelands across Sub-Saharan Africa.

While enclosures provide 'the elusive triple win' benefits and lay the foundations for other beneficial interventions such as Climate-smart and EverGreen agriculture (Wairore, 2014); this glocal approach has the capacity to erode the common or communal property resource tenure we have previously known and elicit a new paradigm in social fabric. This may have various consequences such as conflicts, income differentiation and reduced communal land (Mureithi, 2006; Keene, 2008; Mureithi et al., 2010; Wernersson, 2013; Saxer, 2014). In this regard, there is need for clear policies on rangeland enclosures, a detailed cost-benefit analysis of this intervention (short and long run) and the development of a cost-effective enclosure management strategy to guiding the up scaling of areas under enclosure management in Kenyan rangelands.

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