

Land Policies in Communal Rangelands

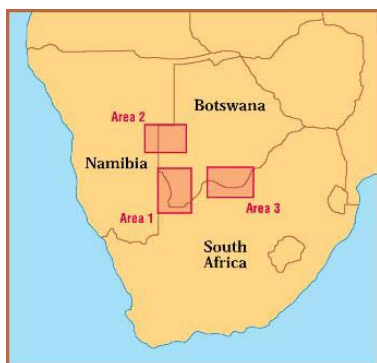
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Key points

- The historical context of policies has a significant impact on present day livelihoods
- Understanding people's responses to changes is essential if the full impact of policies on rural livelihoods and their sustainability is to be achieved
- Dryland people are resourceful and can adapt flexibly to policies to secure livelihoods



Research areas:

1. Arid southwest:
 - a) Mier, South Africa
 - b) SW Kgalagadi, Botswana
2. Semiarid northwest:
 - a) Ghanzi Dist, Botswana
 - b) Omaheke, Namibia
3. Dry sub-humid southeast:
 - a) NW Province South Africa,
 - b) Barolong, Botswana

This briefing compares the impact of different land policies on communal rangelands across dryland southern Africa. Privatisation of the communal range is now occurring across the region, both legally, illegally, and by individuals and communities. This poses important questions surrounding the sustainability of these actions, the consequences for those marginalised by this process and the future landscape of 'communal' rangelands. Land policies, past and present, have shaped rural people's natural resource and land use and thus exerted a major impact on their livelihoods. PANRUSA research into land policies in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa demonstrates common themes and distinct differences in how national land policies can directly influence issues of livelihood security, poverty and environmental change.

Land Policies in Southern Africa

In **Namibia** current policies are directed at redressing the imbalances of past 'apartheid' land policies while at the same time ensuring commercial production continues to contribute effectively to the national economy. New policies such as the **Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act (1995)** and the **Communal Land Bill (2000)** have set forth new agendas (including fencing, individual leasehold tenure) likely to radically alter the landscape of communal rangelands and associated rural livelihoods, with both positive and negative consequences for the rural poor.

In **South Africa** post-apartheid land policy has been dominated by the **Land Reform Programme** which aims to restore land and provide other means of compensation for people dispossessed by racially discriminatory legislation and practice. There have been notable and successful cases, but many claims are still being processed. Questions have also been raised as to the viability and environmental sustainability of livelihoods in resettled areas.

In **Botswana** the expansion of commercial pastoralism into the Kalahari through the **Tribal Grazing Lands Policy (1975)** and the progressive privatisation of the communal lands through fencing from the **National Policy on Agricultural Development (1991)**, has placed increasing pressure on some communal areas and increased movement to service centres by the most marginalised.

How do people respond?

PANRUSA has identified a diverse range of community and farmer responses to land policies in communal areas.

Privatisation of the range

In Namibia (2b) some individuals and communities are fencing areas of communal land to secure exclusive access to key natural resources for livestock production. Though these actions will be reviewed by the new Land Boards, excluded people are placing increased pressure on remaining communal resources. Botswana (2a) has adopted a more formal policy approach, setting aside designated communal areas for fencing. Unlike TGLP, groups of people will choose whether to fence their allocated areas, will finance this themselves and will relinquish their dual rights to communal areas. Details are yet to be finalised in practice, but livestock owners in Botswana's communal areas are keen to start fencing. However, the different views on management practices displayed even within one ranch suggest that ecological sustainability may not be guaranteed.

Sustainability of actions

In South Africa (3a) land reform is posing new problems as resettled communities are re-establishing livelihoods under new policy frameworks. Farmers themselves are questioning the viability of small scale agriculture, citing lack of access to micro-credit schemes and inflexibility of loan systems in drought years as major constraints. There is evidence to suggest that some farming practices are changing nutrient balances in the soils, with increasing acidification through the use of inorganic fertilisers being a major problem for larger producers. Farmers operating at a smaller scale, incorporating inorganic and organic fertilisers (e.g. kraal manure) tend to have both more secure livelihoods and more environmentally sustainable farming practices (see BN6). Opportunities for new farming households must be viewed in terms of both livelihood security and environmental sustainability.

Consequences for the marginalised

In both Namibia (2b) and South Africa (3a), young men and women starting new farming households have severe difficulty securing access to land, grazing and water resources in communal areas. In Namibia (2b) and SW Botswana (1b), politically marginalised groups and destitutes (often inc. San and Damara people) find themselves less able to adapt to changes than others, and thus are often excluded from the positive benefits of policy changes.

Smallscale 'sustainable' agriculture in Area 3a



Outcomes

- Impacts of land policies must be considered in both social and environmental terms
- Privatisation of the communal range can benefit some people while at the same time marginalise others
- Reducing access to key rangeland resources increases some people's vulnerability to events such as drought, and can cause changes within the environment.
- Poor people are the most likely to be excluded or marginalised from the benefits of changes in land policies because they are less able to adapt to change
- The security of both the environment and people's livelihoods is dependent upon understanding long-term, as well as short-term, impacts of policy.

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