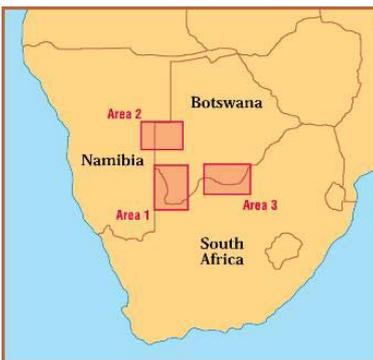


Land Policies in Communal Rangelands

*in the semiarid
northwest*

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

No. 4B

PANRUSA Briefing Notes

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This briefing compares the impact of different land policies on communal rangelands in the semiarid northwest region of Botswana and the adjacent area of Namibia. Major land use changes in the region have led to shifts in natural resource management through the privatisation of the range on both sides of the border with long term impacts on natural resource availability and livelihood security and sustainability. This historical context is essential to understanding present day livelihoods.

History of land use change

Shared histories: Like many regions in the Kalahari, the first residents of Omaheke and Ghanzi Districts were the San (from the Ju'/hoansi, !Xo, G/wi, Naro, Kaukau and G//ana groups). They were the only permanent (but mobile) residents of the region until the eighteenth century, when Kgalagadi and later Herero and Tswana migrated and settled in the region with their cattle. The San groups then entered into very unequal relationships with these 'settlers' (inc. white farmers) and these have underpinned much of the subjugation and subordination that they face today.

It was towards the end of the nineteenth century that the **Omaheke region** in Namibia experienced major change as the Tswana, Nama and Herero people signed treaties and came under German control. After the German-Herero war of 1904 white settlement of the region began in earnest. As these settlers moved in, large areas of the region were declared 'white' and separate areas were created where the 'native' population could be settled. Different areas were declared and re-declared for the different ethnic groups and each was allocated its own administration to manage, amongst other things, land allocations. Overall however, the reserves aimed to provide areas in which 'natives' could pursue their 'traditional' lifestyles while also fulfilling the labour needs of the white farming areas.

With this context, communal and commercial areas continued to develop in isolation from each other until Independence in 1990. With Independence, the Namibian Constitution repealed all proclamations referring to the second tier (black) authorities, and in 1992 Regional Councils were established. Regional Councils have responsibility for planning physical development in their regions including the management of rangelands in communal areas. Namibia is now in the process of formulating a National Land Policy, following the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Bill (1995) and the Communal Land Bill (2000).

In **Ghanzi District in Western Botswana** it was also the end of the 19th century which brought major changes to the region. A group of white South African farmers settled on the Ghanzi Ridge (an area of good grazing and water resources) gradually increasing control over the land through fencing private farms and therefore excluding other resource users. In other areas, Bakgalagadi and Herero utilised pit wells and seasonal water resources for their livestock, often with San in subordinate roles as poorly paid herders. With independence in 1966 and changes in land policies through the 70s and 80s, there has been pressure to commercialise communal area livestock production through the creation of leasehold ranches (TGLP, 1975, see BN10B), and more recently with new plans to fence further areas (Agriculture Policy, 1995, BN 10E). Other areas in the district have been declared Wildlife Management Areas where the primary form of land use is the sustainable utilisation of wildlife (inc. plant) resources. This has been followed by community-based natural resources management projects which are having varying degrees of success (BN9C).

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: Both areas have experienced increasing privatisation of the range through the 70s, 80s and 90s. **Aminuis** communal area has witnessed the fencing of land by individuals to create paddocks (camps) for their exclusive use. There has also been one case of fencing by a community, negotiated with neighbouring settlements, but not all rangeland users. The main aim was to improve rangeland resources through reducing grazing pressure by excluding certain resource users. Though this can be seen as 'good' rangeland management practice on the one hand, it is also detrimental to the livelihoods of those excluded and marginalised by this process. The **Ben Hur** farms were formerly white commercial ranches and therefore already have fenced paddocks allocated to households. Originally strictly managed by the Tswana Administration, levels of management are now determined at household level to varying degrees of success. **Corridor**, a strip of land along the Namibia-Botswana border, comprises 22 fenced farms: only a few have internal fences, usually creating four paddocks. These farms are heavily utilised and this has led to individuals fencing off large private paddocks within some farms. A policy gap allowed fencing of communal land to occur in Namibia: it was not strictly legal nor illegal. With the new communal areas land policy, all existing fences

(based on Botswana Land Board system) and all new proposed fences must gain their approval in advance. **Botswana's** communal areas are managed through a borehole system which gives the owner access to the land surrounding the water point. Boreholes are owned individually, more recently through syndicates (usually made up of family members) and by government (providing water for those in settlements, especially poorer households without access to other water and grazing resources). Botswana has adopted a more formal policy approach than Namibia so far, 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.

Sustainability of Actions

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. In **Namibia**, the impact of land policies has both livelihood as well as ecological sustainability implications. Varsdrai is a farm which has been used for resettlement, 115 Damara households are now living there. Little provision has been made for livelihoods here and with so many people living on one farm grazing resources are severely limited. The lack of coordination between the Ministry of Resettlement and the ministry of Agriculture is problematic in such a situation.

Consequences for the Marginalised

In Aminuis young men establishing new households find it increasingly difficult to secure access to land and water. Poor households are also marginalised by the fences which exclude them and deny them access to essential communal resources. In Botswana, new fencing plans have the potential to marginalise poorer households unless the already often overburdened settlements can secure access to wider grazing resources.

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