

Executive Summary

Love & A Bag of Cement: Desertification, NGOs, and Capacity Building in Communal Lands of Southern Namibia, Cralan Deutsch, 2002.

Results

- A majority of pastoralists interviewed perceive rain to be the main factor controlling range condition.
- 90% of employment opportunities in the area are related to small-scale livestock herding. Pensions, livestock sales, and wage labor are the main sources of income.
- Livestock herds, primarily goats and sheep, are the main savings mechanism.
- Pastoralists are not constrained from destocking or implementing rotational grazing schemes by a lack of knowledge.
- A few farmers wish to shift from subsistence to semi-commercialised farming, and were able to articulate how this process would occur. This is an indicator of the impact of efforts by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs), and ongoing adjustments to sedentary conditions.
- Pastoralists who work with NGOs and CBOs have a higher likelihood of perceiving range degradation as an outcome of human management than those who have no such contacts.
- Range management strategies at Hardap include: spatial mobility; removal of fences; response to climatic conditions; species breed selection; concentration of livestock at waterpoints; and 'over-droughting', keeping as many animals as possible alive during droughts.
- Constraints to intensification of livestock production in the form of rotational grazing and regular destocking include: the tradition of mobility rooted in risk-aversion; lower economic viability of smaller fenced units; periodic scarcity of water and vegetation; labor costs and outmigration; and the high cost of supplements and infrastructure in the form of boreholes and fencing.
- Ethnic rivalries, exacerbated by recent colonial history, pose a threat to CBO success and can have a large impact on the work of NGOs. Rivalries can be analysed in terms of power struggles and jealousies associated with inequalities of material resource accumulation.
- Waterpoint committees (WPCs) provide potential jobs for people who hope to learn waterpoint maintenance as a skill and become locally employed.
- Rural populations expect more services from CBOs than NGOs. CBOs are expected to address multiple issues. This finding correlates with goals set by the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) facilitating the formation of CBOs.

- Conservancy formation is an opportunistic range utilisation strategy; to gain control over land resources and decision-making processes.
- In the initial stages of conservancy formation a middle-management approach may be necessary when fiscal decisions are made, but lack of communication between conservancy committee members and constituents threatens project success
- The distribution of funds through CBOs presents a substantial potential for conflict amongst both constituents and competing groups vying for limited development funds.
- Significant contributions of CBOs and NGOs to date include the facilitation of public discussion forums, workshop and training activities, and reduced vulnerability to drought through the provision of investment opportunities.
- A higher potential degree of public participation in anti-desertification projects exists when consistent support is focused through a community-based organisation.
- Indicators of project success include development of local leadership, potentials for local investment, and sustained commitment from external agencies.
- Emerging local leaders are greatly advantaged by the possession of communication and transportation devices, such as telephones and automobiles, which are likely to enhance the chances of a successful bid for leadership responsibilities.
- Communities with a high rate of female-headed households exhibit a higher disparity in wealth and livestock distribution.
- A definition of 'desertification' which includes quantification in human and socio-economic as opposed to purely biophysical terms is useful for practitioners attempting to address loss of productivity or food security.
- Evaluation of programs designed to increase range management technologies in communal areas has shifted to include development of capacity-building and social organisation as indicators of success.
- The need for capacity-building and inputs into rural social organisation is a partial legacy of the apartheid era's governance structures, which precluded local involvement in planning and development issues.

Conclusions

- Projects which present an investment opportunity for which all households are eligible have the highest level of participation.
- Differentiation of local socio-historical developments and material capital help to explain why some communities exhibit higher levels of social organisation than others. Important variables contributing to the emergence of community

- organisation include proximity to roads, access to vehicles and telephones, and strong local leadership.
- Long term commitment and follow through on the part of external service organisations plays an important role.
 - The time frame in which permanent changes to soil fertility take place spans more than 50 years, partially explaining difficulties in recognising human-induced vegetation change.

 - The proposed privatisation and handover of waterpoint control to waterpoint committees (WPCs) poses a threat to the sovereignty of traditional leadership. If traditional authorities cannot confer access to waterpoints their authority will be eroded. Waterpoint committees will play a role in determining where animals are grazed. Land and grazing allocations will be negotiated by WPCs and traditional authorities.
 - While desertification remains a pressing problem, the institutionalisation of desertification in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was a partial knee-jerk reaction to massive livestock and crop failure in the Sahel.

Recommendations

- Human management and organisational skills are as important as technical range management skills at the local level in efforts to combat land degradation, and should be given equal precedence in training and funding.
- By asking community members which NGO and CBO services are the most valued, development workers can solicit future aspirations in a 'client-driven' approach.
- Rural development projects in communal areas of Namibia should include marginalised groups such as herders and wage laborers.