



Participatory rangeland management (PRM): from concept to continental scaling

Flintan, F¹; Otieno, K²; Sircely, J³; Nganga, I³; Eba, B¹; Mukalo, I²; Faustin, Z⁴; Akilmali, A⁵; Ngurumwa, P⁵; Ouma, D³; Olesikilal, B⁶; Ebro, A¹; Okoth, J²; Akiyaga, A²; Gudina, D⁷; Irwin, B⁸

¹ILRI, Ethiopia, ²RECONCILE, Kenya, ³ILRI, Kenya, ⁴Tanzania Natural Resource Forum, Tanzania, ⁵KINNAPA, Tanzania, ⁶IRLI, Tanzania, ⁷CARE International, Ethiopia, ⁸GGGI, Ethiopia

Key words: Participatory rangeland management, pastoralism, restoration, planning, community

Abstract

Participatory rangeland management (PRM) is a step-by-step process that builds the capacities of pastoralist communities to improve the management, governance and restoration of their land and resources. It seeks to address the challenges that pastoral communities across Africa face including a lack of tenure security with an increasingly degrading resource base as pressures on land grow. Introduced in 2010, it is now being implemented across more than 2 million hectares in East Africa. Three impact pathways were followed to reach this point – developing and piloting PRM, building capacities to implement PRM, and influencing a more enabling policy environment. However, though PRM in name can be easily scaled in terms of coverage, greater attention must be given to maintaining its core principles and deepening community engagement and capacities. It requires a significant investment from all involved including sufficient time and funding to move at a pace that allows for capacity building of communities to *lead* the process, co-develop solutions and support policy and legislation improvements.

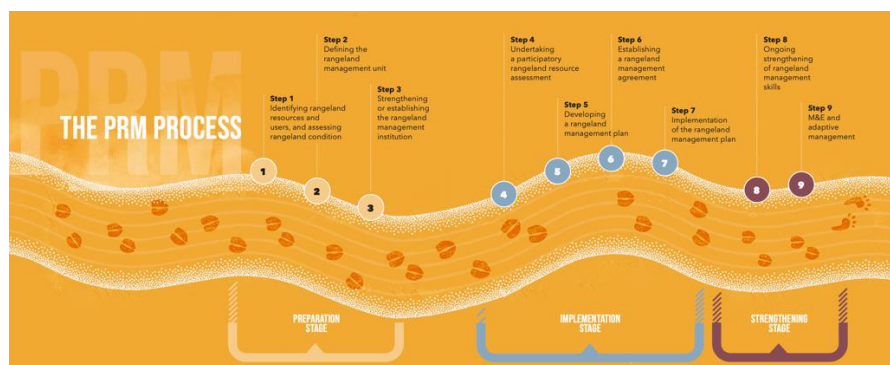
Introduction

Pastoral communities across Africa face the ongoing challenge of a lack of tenure security with an increasingly degrading resource base as pressures on land grow. In 2010 an attempt was made to reverse this situation; participatory rangeland management (PRM) was developed in Ethiopia drawing from the experiences of participatory *forest* management, adapted to a rangeland context (Flintan and Cullis 2010).

Following the introductory guidelines PRM was piloted at different scales (local/village and landscape) and later expanded across a million hectares. Evaluations highlighted its' initial impact and potential for strengthening good governance, improving rangeland health and productivity, reducing land use conflicts and benefiting local communities – both men and women (Flintan et al. 2019; Flintan and Eba 2023).

In 2019 PRM was introduced to Kenya and Tanzania by an EU-funded project implemented by local NGOs (namely RECONCILE, Tanzania Natural Resource Forum and KINNAPA) with technical support provided by ILRI. An independent assessment of this implementation highlighted important gains in rangeland management, livestock productivity and women's participation (Waweru et al 2021). More recently, ILRI and partners have supported its application in additional locations and as part of broader development processes

such as within One Health and introducing gender transformation, climate security, peacebuilding, livelihood development, and rangeland restoration.



Today PRM is being implemented across more than 3 million hectares in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, with almost two-thirds of this being supported by ILRI (Flintan et al, 2025). A multistakeholder PRM scaling readiness workshop in Addis Ababa in mid-2024 set an ambitious target of all of Ethiopia’s pastoral areas under PRM by 2034. Furthermore, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) Centre for Pastoral Areas and Livestock Development (ICPALD) and ILRI co-developed a manual on PRM (ICPALD 2024), with the aim of scaling across the IGAD region over the coming years. Additionally, ILRI is supporting the development and implementation of large-scale investments in PRM including an EU-funded Eastern/Horn of Africa project and a SDC-funded East Africa regional project.

There is a clear commitment to PRM in the East Africa region. There are also opportunities to expand to other countries e.g., Mali, Senegal (Flintan et al. 2022), Somalia (Flintan 2024) and Tunisia (Sghaier and Frija *forthcoming*). However, scaling PRM has challenges. This paper reflects on these, the impact pathways followed to reach this point, and what is being done to strengthen the approach and scale it.

Outcome impact pathways

i) Developing and piloting PRM

PRM is a process that can take many years to achieve and does not work well in short-lived project-oriented contexts. It requires long-term and consistent funding over at least five years as well as firm commitment from communities and supporting stakeholders. It has proved important to make this clear from the outset, and where possible offer shorter-term incentives such as livelihood-focused activities and learning visits alongside PRM establishment.

It has also proved important to develop and promote core PRM principles, which sets it aside from other community-based natural resource management approaches. First and foremost PRM is community-led. Having participatory rangeland resource mapping as the first step in the process has proved important for community leadership (Irwin et al 2015) Also PRM requires working at different scales – at the broader rangeland unit and at household cluster or village level with well-established linkages between.

Gender equity and social inclusion are also important principles. Though the community needs to be responsible for the rangeland management institution there is opportunity to influence its membership to be more inclusive (Bullock et al 2022). Gender transformative tools and approaches appropriate for collective societies to influence greater equity e.g. community conversations (Bullock 2024) and women’s leadership forums (Dungumaro and Mkami 2019) can be introduced. PRM can be an important vehicle for building collectivity and such as peacebuilding – however, this has proved challenging and a recent study on the impact of PRM on collectivity showed little impact (Ng’ang’a et al 2024).

ii) Building capacities to implement PRM

Implementing PRM requires new skills and capacities as well as a change of mind-set i.e. that we ‘outsiders’ are facilitators of PRM and not drivers or leaders. The community also requires capacity building, and particularly where traditional institutions and practices have broken down. An institution capacity assessment is undertaken to understand needs.

New challenges may be faced that require co-developed solutions e.g. dealing with invasive species and restoring lands. Building up a toolbox of training resources targeting different stakeholders has taken time, particular as stakeholders work at different levels and with different priorities. In 2024 ILRI supported ICPALD to produce a manual on PRM for practitioners (ICPALD 2024).

iii) Influencing a more enabling policy environment

A process such as PRM requires an enabling policy environment and this has proved elusive. In Ethiopia the policy environment was neglected during initial piloting, and still there is no policy and legislation that supports PRM in same way policy and legislation on participatory forest management supports community rights to forests. However, steps have been made towards this through CARE Ethiopia establishing government-led regional PRM technical working groups, as well as the integration of PRM into government-led projects such as the Lowlands Livelihood Resilience Project Phase Two. And in Kenya working at county level (rather than national) has proved productive (Carleton and Flintan 2023).

Concluding remarks

Participatory rangeland management has significant potential for strengthening rangeland management and governance building on what communities are already doing, their knowledge and their institutions where functioning well. However, to be successful, it requires a significant investment from all involved including sufficient time and funding to move at a pace that allows for the capacity building of communities to lead the process and to build government support. The development and implementation of PRM by ILRI and partners has had positive results, however there is still much to improve and work on both in terms of deepening PRM implementation and getting scaling right.

Acknowledgements

The development and writing of this article were supported by the CGIAR Research Initiative on Livestock and Climate and the CGIAR Science Program on Multifunctional Landscapes. The CGIAR thanks all the donors that contribute to the CGIAR Trust Fund.

References

- Bullock R (2024) Community conversations to support equitable and locally-led adaptation in rangelands. Nairobi: ILRI. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/127293>
- Bullock B, Miriti, P, Lopez DE (2022) Participatory Rangeland Management: Understanding women’s engagement and implications for social change. Nairobi, Kenya: ILRI. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/119791>
- Dungumaro J, Amos M (2019) Pastoral women’s rights and leadership forums, Tanzania: Experience, impact and lessons learned. Rangelands Research Report 3. Nairobi, Kenya: ILRI. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/106430>
- Flintan F, Sircely J, Nganga I, Eba B, Olesikilal B (2025) Scaling, improving and supporting participatory rangeland management. France: CGIAR. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/173807>
- Flintan F (2024) Participatory rangeland management. Presented to members of the World Bank Horn of Africa team and ministry partners supporting the implementation of the Ground Water for Resilience Project and the Somalia Barwaaqo project, 29 July 2024. Nairobi, Kenya: ILRI. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/158372>
- Flintan FE and Eba B (2023) Participatory rangeland management: A vehicle for pastoralist women's empowerment in Ethiopia. *Pastoralism* 13(1). <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/132571>
- Flintan F, Diop A, Coulibaly M (2022) Opportunities for Participatory Rangeland Management (PRM) in the Great Green Wall Initiative in Mali and Senegal. ILRI Project Report. Nairobi, Kenya: ILRI. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/119174>
- Flintan F, Cullis A (2010) Introductory guidelines to participatory rangeland management in pastoral areas. USA: Save the Children. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/99430>

- Flintan, F, Ebro A, Eba B, Assefa A, Getahun Y, Reytar K, Irwin B, Yehualashet H, Abdulahi M, Gebreyyohannes ZT, Awgichew S, Gudina D (2019) Review of participatory rangeland management (PRM) process and implementation. Rangelands Research Report 2. Nairobi, Kenya: ILRI. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/106017>
- ICPALD (2024) Participatory Rangeland Management. A guideline for practitioners. Nairobi: ICPALD and ILRI. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/145167>
- Irwin B, Cullis A, Flintan F. (2015) Mapping guidelines for participatory rangeland management in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas. Addis Ababa: CARE. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/105639>
- Ng'ang'a M, Hoffman C, Lybbert T, Mdoe J (2024) Experimental Assessment of the Collective Action Impacts of Participatory Rangeland Management in Baringo, Kenya. Unpublished report.
- Sghaier M, Frija, A (forthcoming) Review of the potential of participatory rangeland management (PRM) in the Tunisian context.
- Waweru T, Maina, J, Liheta B, Apunda, E (2021) Independent impact assessment report: Participatory Rangeland Management (PRM) in Kenya and Tanzania. Kenya: AFREDEC. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/118128>