

Maasai Indigenous Knowledge on Range Vegetation Analysis, Utilization and Management

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ABSTRACT A participatory vegetation inventory and research was conducted in Mashuuru Division, Kajiado District of Kenya, with an overall objective of capturing the indigenous knowledge of the Maasai pastoralist community on vegetation resource. Data collection was done through questionnaires, community workshops and meetings whereby the pastoralist, administration and extension personnel, and prominent leaders were invited. Representative pastoralists were engaged during the actual field data collection to assist in naming of vegetation types and uses of plant species encouraged. The pastoralists gave detailed information on the status of vegetation degradation, which they considered as a major threat to their source of livelihood. The information included indicators of vegetation degradation, the possible approaches, and benefits of reversing the degradation trend. The pastoralists also named and categorized plants into those that provide fodder and food for livestock and humans respectively; medicinal value to livestock and human; and as environment quality indicators. Finally, they named five plant species which they considered threatened with extinction due to over-harvesting for medicinal and other uses. The study that both indigenous knowledge held by farmers and technical knowledge held by researchers are complimentary and they need each other for more responsive research activities. The data collected from such participatory involvement of pastoralists is demand driven and therefore guides the researchers on the type of research interventions for enhanced natural resource management.