

Indigenous Technical Knowledge for Resource Monitoring in Northern Kenya

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KEYWORDS Vegetation. Livestock Attributes. Livestock Behavior. Range. Physical Phenomena

ABSTRACT This study, which was undertaken in the Northern Kenya pastoral community, was aimed at documenting the various indicators the community use in monitoring the quality of range resources, especially vegetation. It should be noted that livestock production is the main livelihood system in this communities. Data was captured using interviews and focused group discussions with a section of the community members. The study revealed a wealth of knowledge in monitoring of the range resources quality within these communities. Among the two communities, it was evident that they observe livestock behavior, livestock attributes and physical phenomena, as indicators of vegetation quality. Livestock behavior observed could tell when the range conditions were suitable for livestock and when the conditions were unsuitable. Goats' being playful is a common characteristic that indicates that the range conditions are suitable for livestock. Other observable livestock behavior or attributes indicating good range conditions are livestock responding to their names when called; increase on milk out put; increased mating. Indicators of bad range conditions include: - rough hair on camels; livestock grinding teeth at night; high mice populations; increase in camel flies. Some specific observations are specific to few individuals. This is in the case of judging the suitability of forage by smelling livestock urine. However these indicators are used to make decisions always when the community migrates from one region to another in search of pastures. Documenting this indigenous knowledge aids in better understanding the reasons behind the decisions made for livestock migration.