

## Constructivism effects of the project planning used discourses in the Maasai pastoral community

### Abstract

*In literature, the Maasai community has been identified as the dominating ethnic group among the multiple pastoral communities in Tanzania. The Maasai socio-cultural practices have been identified further as been under external pressure in meaning negotiation and interpretation. The literature identifies globalization and modernity elements as the most influential external factors. Furthermore, project planning is considered as inseparable from globalization and modernity elements as it is focused in social change processes. Different literatures consider discourses as the core of the change process, and that Pastoral development projects are associated with discursive practices through its communicative dimensions that entail social interactions whereby discourses are produced, distributed, and consumed. Although studies in development projects are fundamental in understanding discursive practices of such projects, this paper found a very limited body of knowledge on discursive practices in development planning specifically in the Maasai community. Therefore, this paper uses CDA to underscore constructive effects of the used discourses in project documents targeted to the Maasai community on its wider socio-cultural context. The data were gathered around the following research questions; how ideas and discourses related to pastoralists are produced, by whom, and under whose interest, and in what context? And finally, what are the effects of discursive representation of pastoralists in a wider socio-cultural context? The study findings indicate that there are misconceptions and domination of negative portrayals of the Maasai identity's in their livelihood system and lifestyle, social relations as well as ideological representation of the Maasai community within the analyzed documents.*

**KEY WORDS:** Pastoralism, Development Planning, Discourses, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), constructive effects, and socio-cultural context

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### 1. Introduction

Pastoralism can be defined as a form of livestock production in which livestock keepers move their livestock from place to place to take advantage of pasture and water which are available at

different times and at different places during the year (Sendalo, 2009). This definition unequivocally describes the Maasai community, which is considered as dominant pastoral community in East Africa. In Tanzania, the Maasai are found in the northern part though some of them have shifted to other parts of the country due to various push factors including development plans and policies, which do not fit well with the Maasai's way of life. For instance, under socialism (Ujamaa) era, several policies, which were established, led to the burning of the Maasai homesteads, confiscation of their cattle, and forceful eviction into sedentary villages (Hodgson 2001).

In a vast literature the Maasai has been identified as a community which is marginalized and constrained with numerous livelihood challenges (Mung'ong'o and Mwamfupe, 2003; Urassa and Massawe, 2015). In this respect, various projects are being implemented in this community to offset these challenges. Development projects always target to change undesirable situation to the desirable one. For this manner, projects perceived as change agents in different contexts, while the language or discourses used when writing the project documents are reported to be the core of the change process (Barret *et al.* 1995; Jaynes, 2015; Vaara, 2010).

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According to Fairclough (2003), texts can contribute to the changes in people's beliefs, attitudes, actions, and social relations. Furthermore, Castells' theory of communication power narrates that communication power is distributed through construction of meaning based on discourses that guide the actions of social actors (Castells, 2009). Likewise, Hastings' (1999b, p. 93) normative model of social change also states that 'changes at the social level can be constituted in part through changes in linguistic practices'. All these models stipulate the linkage between development interventions and the roles discourses plays on social practices alteration.

The word discourse as a concept has been perceived differently by various scholars but with a common underlying idea. This work will comply with a definition by Foucault (1972) that describes 'discourse' as an individual act of language or language in action that allows participants in a discourse practice to make sense of ideas and statements. It is through discourse that meanings, subjects and subjectivities are formed (Foucault, 1972). On the other hand CDA refers to a discourse analysis aiming at making connections between discursive practices and social practices on its wider socio-cultural context by analyzing production, distribution and effects of the discourses.

The Maasai community has gained much attention of various scholars whose interest was to study various dimensions of life including livelihood and wellbeing (McCabe *et al.* 2010; Sachedina and Trench 2009); land use related conflicts (Benjaminsen *et al.*, 2009; LHRC, LEAT and LRRRI, 2008); and the impact of eviction of pastoralist from various areas (PINGOs, 2013; Msigwa, 2014). Despite extensive body of knowledge on the above-cited aspects about the Maasai community there is relatively scant knowledge on the discursive practices aspect on various dimensions of the Maasai community. For instance, Massawe (2010) is among few studies that have addressed discourse aspect of pastoral communities through a critical discourse analysis of pastoralists and their conflict with farmers as represented in the media. Bishop (2007) on the other hand, focused on discursive practices in terms of schooling and the encouragement of farming amongst pastoralists in Tanzania.

Omondi and Odhiambo (2009) acknowledged inadequate understanding and misrepresentation of pastoral system as well as little influence over policy and decision-making processes by pastoralists as the two major root causes of pastoral communities' problems. Furthermore, as its depicted earlier, discursive practices also pointed as the core of the changing process. With such

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highlight, discursive practices in Maasai community worth to gain prominence for further exploration. Therefore this work explores the effects of discourses used in development planning on the Maasai social-cultural aspects.

Although the existing literature on discursive practice of pastoral communities has identified the ways in which language usage can reflect tragic outcome in a wider social context, little efforts have been devoted to the study of discursive practices in development planning arena. Generally, discourses play a major role in shaping people's beliefs, attitudes, actions, social relations, and ideologies (Fairclough, 2003). Planning discourses are specifically oriented towards achieving the intended goals in a professional way. Therefore, the discourses used in planning have the ability of influencing social change in a wide range of societal dimensions. Nevertheless, little attention has been devoted to discourse aspect of planning in influencing social change.

## 2. Methodological Framework and Approach

This study employed Faircloughs' three-dimensional framework of CDA as an underlying theoretical framework. This framework focuses on dialectical relationship between discourses and other social dimensions in the society (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). The said dialectic relationship model considers discourses as having both discursive and social practices. Thus, the framework focuses on three dimensions or levels of analysis (text, discursive practices and social practices). These are, 'text' that covers the linguistic feature of the text; 'discursive practice' that entails processes involved in the 'production,' distribution and 'consumption' of a text, and social practice that focuses on the wider social practice analysis to which the communicative event belongs (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Marston, 2004; Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). The current work is the output of third dimension or level analysis (social

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practices). Such analysis is carried out by analysing the socio-cultural effects of the identified discourses from the analysed development projects targeted to the Maasai pastoral community. In CDA studies, discourses are socially constructed and maintained. This is prompted by Fairclough's (1992, 1995) conception that discourses are not free-floating; they are embedded in institutions and organizations and play an important role in structuring the relations of power within them. Social practices analysis is carried by studying identified discourses at (text level) in relation to other webs of texts to capture its full meaning and establishing relations of power. Further explanations of the application of the model are provided in the subsequent parts of this paper.

### 2.1. Study Area

The study carried out CDA on the project documents for the projects targeting the Maasai community residing in Mvomero District in Tanzania. This District was selected purposively as its primary economic activities include crop farming and livestock rearing (Saghiret al., 2011).

The literature regards pastoral communities in the southward of the country as immigrants in the locality they live and that is why they are constrained by numerous challenges. For this reason, it was worthy carrying out a study on one of these localities where the Maasai pastoral live but it is not considered as a traditional pastoralist territory. These localities are also associated with marginalization the Maasai experience in different domains of their life. For instance, it is argued that, negative perceptions still pervade pastoral policy and management, especially concerning livestock mobility and the migration of pastoralists to new territories outside their traditional areas and they are considered as minorities with no political representation (Galaty, 1993; IWGIA report, 2013). These identities can be associated with Maasai political, social, and

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economic marginalization (Tenga, 2008; Hussein et al., 1999; Benjaminsen et al., 2009) that can be realized on various discourses.

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## 2.2. Sampling Strategy

The study used purposive and simple random sampling. Purposive sampling technique was used in identifying projects, which are proposed, implemented or under implementation within the selected district in the Maasai community. The identification was done through consultation with the local Government Authorities (LGAs) including Mvomero District Community Development Department, Village Executive Officers, and key informants from the target community (Maasai people). The latter two consultations were done to supplement the limited data provided at the district level. After identifying the projects and the corresponding implementing institutions, random sampling was used to select implementing institutions whose documents have been reviewed.

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After identifying projects to be considered in this study, requests to access project's strategic documents was made to the respective implementing organizations. However, bureaucratic complexities led to the rejection of some of the requests made to the randomly selected organizations. As a result, only five out of eight applied requests were accepted. As Sarantakos (1998) and Massawe (2010) argues, one of the limitations of using documents as a source of data is the difficulty involved in accessing them due to the bureaucratic nature of many departments and institutions. For this reason, this study accessed and analysed a total of eight project strategic documents from all the institutions that accepted the request of accessing their project related documents.

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### 2.3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Fairclough Dialectic CDA Model, which is an underpinning theoretical framework for this study. This model guided the analytical procedure for the obtained data. Moreover, the analysis involved prior procedures to ensure proper understanding of the discourses and social context. The analysis process started with the skim reading of the document, to get the overview understanding of the context of the document before continue with the critical study reading, which involved detailed understanding of the document. These techniques were useful in excavating the underlined meanings conveyed within the text, related concepts, and in questioning the discourses used in relation to the context portrayed. As Huckin (1997) recommends the first stage is viewing the text in without a critical eye, as does an ordinary, undiscerning reader and then come back to the text with a critical review.

Critical reading of the project documents concentrated on the project context or description, objectives and logic framework sections of the project. The critical review of the document accompanied with key notes taking as a tool for analytical procedures. As Karikari (2016) points out, Memoing, as an analytic technique, enhances immersion in data and provides a foundation for increased reflexivity. Furthermore, the memos enable the reader to capture and reflect on the different ideas that emerge in data exploration.

Following memoing, thematic analysis technique was used in thematisation of the related discourses that can comprise a unified meaning. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns of (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke 2006). With all identified techniques and procedures, the analysis procedures were eclectic in nature and not linear as they involve forth and back analysis between the description, interpretation, and

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explanation levels of analyses in which description and interpretation levels mediate explanation level as depicted in Fairclough's model. The findings presented in this paper are the output of explanation level analyses of the used model which informed by both interpretation and explanation levels of analysis. The details on how the model employed at this level is presented below.

**Textual analysis or description level** involves linguistic and general properties of the text analysis. This level of the analysis involves the examination of the general format of the documents (Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b). Leading discourses in the reviewed project plans and proposals were identified in this step. At this step, critical reading was done to gain an insight on linguistic and inter-textual properties entailed in project documents as well as studying the structural format of the reviewed documents. **The “discursive practices” analysis level** following textual analysis level was conducted and this covered discourse production, distribution, and consumption. This study found it worthy to study the relationship between the local NGOs, project beneficiaries, and the donors to gain a real understanding of social and institutional settings for the articulation of the discursive practices.

The analysis of **Social/ Socio-cultural Practice (explanation level analysis)**: Socio-cultural practices level extends the analysis of discourses to a much wider context beyond the grammatical and textual features, and the processes of production (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995). The analyses of the first two levels of the framework inform socio-cultural context analysis and in this matter, the analysis at this level involved both semiotic and non-semiotic elements. Semiotic elements have been involved at this level by focusing on intertextuality form of the reviewed documents.

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Non-semiotic elements covered social context, which is described in the reviewed documents. Therefore, the analysis at this level uncovered social practices manipulative power of the leading discourses in the project related documents and the respective constructive effects in socio-cultural dimensions of the Maasai community.

According to Vaara *et.al.* (2010), development plans documents serve several purposes: they communicate socially negotiated meanings, they legitimate ways of thinking and action and delegitimize others, they produce consent but may also trigger resistance, and they have all kinds of political and ideological effects, some of which are more apparent than others are. This contention implies that, the reviewed documents can influence manipulation of socio-cultural context of the Maasai community. Therefore, to explore the entailed manipulative power, this study formulated the following question to guide the analysis at this level: what are the effects of discursive representation of pastoralists in a wider socio-cultural context? To answer this question, this study carried out socio-cultural context analysis that stems out social constructive effects of the reviewed documents in accordance with three types of discourses effects depicted in Fairclough's model.

Fairclough (1992) lists three constructive effects of discourse as follows (i) construction of social identities (ii) construction of social relations and (iii) construction of systems of knowledge and belief or 'ideational functions'. These effects entail transformative power of the discourses. In this case, the findings are categorized into major three effects of discourses which are discussed in relation to the identified representative discourses in the Maasai communities within the reviewed project documents.

### **3. Study findings**

#### **3.1. Construction of Social Identities effect**

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### 3.1.1 Maasai Pastoral Identity construction

The reviewed documents in numerous ways have drawn the Maasai identity using different discourses or labeling. Massawe (2010) identified two kinds of identity labeling, downward identity construction and identity construction from below. The identified discourses mark downward construction, thus marks the way the group in power constructs an identity of the subordinate groups. Identification of the Maasai identity's discourses labeling involved intertextuality analysis, through which these discourses have been considered within a long chain of texts.

The Maasai constructed identities revealed in this study include the use of words such as, *invaders, vulnerable, marginal, dependent, unskilled, indigenous people, conservatives, strong leadership, among others*. As depicted above these discourses were not floating texts in a vacuum, but they were within the chain of other texts. The use of words such as *invaders, discrimination, unskilled/uneducated, vulnerable, and marginal* holds a negative downward identity representation of the Maasai. On the other hand, *strong leadership, conservatives, and indigenous people* might hold a neutral portrayal of the identity of the Maasai people. In negative identity portrayal, the Maasai people are termed as invaders in relation to the conflicts on land use resource. Excerpts such as

*...conflicts have increased in magnitude and spread southward of the country.....Several of these conflict areas cannot be categorized as traditionally important areas for livestock keeping... signify such labeling.*

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This identity construction has an effect on the pastoral counterparts, the farmers on the way they perceive the pastoral people. The words unskilled, marginal, and vulnerable were the related

discourses in the intertextual context. These words portray the identity that, the Maasai are not educated and thus are uncivilized; and are associated with other possible negative connotations, including being illiterate people. Moreover, possibly that is why they are in the marginal position in the society and are being more vulnerable.

On the other hand, the neutral identity portrayals such as strong leadership, conservative, and indigenous can be positive in a sense that the discourse consumers can regard the indigenous people as the ones who need special attention. In addition, that their culture need protection while the conservatives identity may have an implication on the rigid and backward community as well as robust cultural maintenance and unaffected by distortions of external cultural influence, and the element of having a strong leadership may connote a strong community with its recognizable governance.

### **3.2. Maasai pastoral people social relations construction**

Discussion in this part focuses on the discourses that affect the relationship of Maasai community with other people or social groups in the society. As identified in the previous section of this paper, the consumers of discourses that emanate from the project document covers a broad array of stakeholders including, public institutions, private sector stakeholders, direct and indirect project beneficiaries including non-pastoral people and donors. Therefore, the social relation representations that are discussed hereafter excavate the construction of relationship between pastoral Maasai and the identified social groups as situated within the reviewed documents.

#### **i. Relationship with the government and public institutions**

The use of the words such as *human rights*, *violation*, *evictions*, *unfavorable*, *victims* and *threaten future* depicts the practices of the governing authorities and their responsible bodies within the Maasai pastoral environment. For instance, '*human rights violation*' shows that, the government that is responsible in protecting the right of its people either failed to protect or influenced its violation. '*Eviction*' shows the association with the mechanisms the government adopts in resolving land resource use conflicts while the word '*victims*' portrays the outcome of that mechanism. '*Unfavorable*' and '*threaten*' the future portray unfavorable environment that the national policies and legal frameworks create for pastoral people and this act as the threat to the existence of pastoralism livelihood system. Some of clauses weighty such portrayals include;

*"Pastoralists have become the ultimate victims of national policies and global development processes.....that have restricted development of pastoralism"*

*Government has evicted many Maasai....from their lands in favor of the growing demand.... And unlawful squandering and confiscation of pastoralists' livestock by farmer groups sponsored by unauthorized government leaders in Morogoro*

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These narrations construct negative relationship between pastoral people and their government. These narrations stipulate that the government is powerful while the pastoral people are marginal. The constructed negative relationship has negative effects on this relationship which includes, an increase magnitude of anger against the government, and opposition against the government in different public forums including political campaigns. On the other hand, some of the documents constructed this relationship in a positive way. The use of the word '*optimal land use*' shows an opportunity of the government to support pastoralism attain economic gains from the sector.

## ii. **Relationship with farming society**

Clauses such as '*crops destroyed by livestock*' and '*conflicts*' creates negative relationship between farmers and pastoralists. These discourses imply that livestock is grazed in farm plots. This tendency situates the pastoralists as selfish people caring more about their livestock regardless of the impacts of their practices to other people. Conflict discourse emerges as an outcome of the crops damaged. Both of these identify a contradictory relationship among the groups, which are associated with long-term revenge. The portrayal of relationship discourses such as '*collaboration*' and '*optimal land use*' signifies a possibility for these groups to collaborate in solving long standing issues sustainably in a harmonious way and live peaceful lives. Thus, with optimal land use in a collaborative way can make the historical friendly relationship of these groups retained and enhanced.

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### 3.3. Construction of systems of knowledge and belief or ideology construction

The reviewed project related documents construct ideological representation of the Maasai communities, which have an influence on other people's knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards the represented group. Van Dijk (1998: 8) on ideology observes that, "ideology forms the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group." This means ideology is about representation and justification through legitimization of the representation. In conceptualizing ideology in relation to discourse analysis, Vaara (2006) points out that ideologies provide frameworks for beliefs and values concerning what is true or false, right or wrong, in particular contexts. Within the identified discourses and genre that signify ideological representation, the discussion is carried out in such a way that each ideological discourse or theme is discussed independently with a critical justification on opposing or accepting the identified ideologies.

i. **Conflicts representation and its resolving mechanism ideology**

One of the reviewed project documents depicted land use conflicts between farmers and pastoralists as the opportunity for generating innovative ideas. The ideological construction emanate from the described source or causes of the conflicts in relation to the described conflicts' magnitude. The document justified that, crops destroyed by livestock is solely the cause of land conflicts without considering the existence of the associated and its root causal factors. To support this argument, various scholars argue that; farm encroachment into cattle routes is deliberately done as a bait to put pastoralists into trouble (Gefu and Kolawole, (ed) (2002) Urassa and Massawe, 2016). On the other hand, land use planning is also associated with the identified encroachment and crops damage; URT, (1999) observes that, unclear land demarcation contributes to continued unwitting interference of one group by the other or sometimes deliberately by the group which is knowledgeable. This construction legitimizes false conception of the causes of the conflicts and holds an ideological construction that the Maasai are disobedient.

ii. **Literacy related ideological construction**

The ideology constructed within education status of the pastoral Maasai is being illiterate. Well they are illiterate, but the project goal as depicted in the document indicates that, high retention and lower grades level of the Maasai schoolchildren are associated with education curricula that do not meet the Maasai cultural demands. The identified strategy of offsetting illiteracy, school dropout and academic performance within the Maasai pastoral people is the introduction of bilingual education system that involves the use of Maasai language at the early stages of childhood. This construction cements the belief that, poor understanding of Swahili language by

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the Maasai children is the source of poor performance and low retention level. There are factors that lead to poor performance in school and drop out other than first mother-tongue language and hence the constructed ideology is a fallacy.

iii. **Pastoralist own big lands in relation to nomadic practices**

The statement reads *Pastoralists are having large land which is not cultivated and solely used for grazing,* which found in one of the documents situate the pastoralists as among the groups who own large portions of land within their localities. This construction intends to make other social groups believe and perceive pastoralists as owning large pieces of land. The real social context of the pastoral society is quite different from the one postulated in the document. As observed by Porokwa (2000) various laws and policies were not giving much attention to pastoralists as compared to other sectors and that causes land conflict between farmers and pastoralists since the *pastoralists have no enough areas for grazing their cattle*. This contention identify pastoral community as the one that lacks access to ownership of land, and the land attained through their traditional means has been revoked to other land use purposes. Furthermore, nomadic lifestyle described in the document position the Maasai found in non-pastoral lands in the southern part of the country seen as *'invaders'*. The invasion ideology situates the pastoral people as the northern people and they do not deserve land ownership in the southern regions.

iv. **Cultural practices and development**

The reviewed documents in different instances have shown that Maasai cultural practices are associated with community development paradigms. Thus, cultural practices are contradicting with development processes in the community. These practices are depicted in a way that, they

increase vulnerability of the Maasai community to the external shocks that slows down economic transformations of the community. An excerpt that reads “.....*Maasai facing marginalization because of some elements in their culture...*” signifies this ideological construction. In other instances, the documents situated cultural practices of the Maasai people as influencing poor social services in their localities, which is one of the indicators under developing society. All of these ideologies are a fallacy, and that cultural practices have nothing to do with social provisions, rather the responsible providers of the services have to cope with lifestyle of their clients (of the respective population) for better services provision.

v. **Pastoralism as a problematic livelihood system**

Persistent use of words like, *poverty, land use conflicts, climate change, violation, committing suicide, droughts, loss of life, livestock death, and confiscation* and many others in various parts of the reviewed documents, signify that this livelihood system is constrained with many challenges that even slow down the development pace of the pastoral people. The existence of these challenges facing these communities are related to Maasai nomadic nature as among the influencing factors. The belief and knowledge created in this ideological portrayal is that, the starting point of solving the challenges facing the Maasai people relies upon challenging their nomadic nature and its associated practices. Various scholars acknowledge the potentiality of nomadic life in the adaptability to seasonal variability as well as sensitivity to cultural issues in development paradigms, though this ideological construction might be treated as a fallacy portrayal of the Maasai pastoral people. World Commission on Culture and Development (WCCD) report of (1995) stated that

*Development divorced from its human or cultural context is growth without a soul.*

*Economic development in its full flowering is part of a people culture*

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#### 4. Conclusion and recommendations

This study found biased and inaccurate presentations of various dimensions of the Maasai community and pastoralism in different social aspects in the reviewed documents. This kind of representation can be regarded as misleading and misconceptions on Maasai community socio-cultural context which further may undermine efforts aimed at addressing different issues concerning pastoralism and Maasai peoples' welfare. This also may triggers continuation of Maasai community marginalization. Pastoralist's targeted interventions that remain inattentive to the cultural interactions and based on such misconceptions on pastoral environment will be ineffective in addressing different issues in this community as stipulated in findings and discussions sections of this dissertation and may lack relevancy to this community. Representations which legitimize Maasai people identities such as invaders, pastoralism as irrational, Maasai owning big land plots, and others shown in the findings are among inaccurate representations of this marginalized community.

From the study findings, this study recommends a number of issues directly to the scholars, consultants, planners and development practitioners who in one or another way are interested or working with this community. Firstly adherence to old development orthodoxies and theories which in most cases are not relevant to pastoralism in the East has encouraged and accentuated longstanding negative perceptions of pastoralism as a backward and irrational system that need to be replaced under modernization discourses. Therefore this study suggests a need for a critical review of any development model on its relevancy on the particular environment before its adoption in development actions in the Maasai community.

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In addition to this there should be an effective public information campaigns to help people understand and changing people's mindset on the past longstanding drawn misconceptions in the Maasai community.

Furthermore this study suggest full analysis on cultural, socio-economic benefits as well as political implications of the designed plans in Maasai community instead of relying only on economic aspects without involving socio-cultural dimensions in the project appraisal. This will help in recognizing the potentials of pastoralism and enhance project acceptability and relevancy to the concerned community.

Lastly this study recommends on full involvement of the pastoralists themselves on development planning rather than basing on technocratic and conventional planning modalities. This should be incorporated with capacity building to the pastoralists through formulation and strengthening of the pastoralist's structures and representing organizations. This will ensure self-determination and articulation of the viability and compatibility of their livelihood patterns into sustainable development.

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