

Blog “Sustainable Land Management in Sub-Saharan Africa: Improving livelihoods through local research”



INTRODUCTION



Our bi-monthly blog is intended for project staff as well as interested stakeholders from science, policy and practice, to share experiences and mutually learn. It is an opportunity to showcase the multi-faceted nature in which we improve livelihoods and support sustainable land management through local research.

This current blog takes a closer look at InfoRange’s transdisciplinary approach to the co-generation of knowledge with local stakeholders.

INSTITUTIONALISING COLLABORATION BETWEEN RESEARCHERS AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS IN NAMBIA AND KENYA THROUGH INFORANGE COMMUNITY COMMITTEES

Mobile pastoral livestock production is a knowledge and information intensive production system integrated within overall rangeland management. In **InfoRange**, we seek to enhance information access to support pastoralists in their management decisions and practices concerning grazing and animal health, by co-developing digital tools.

INFORANGE COMMUNITY COMMITTEES

After a series of participatory stakeholder analyses were conducted using a Net-Mapping tool, several **InfoRange** Community Committees were formed at our different project locations in order to integrate relevant societal actors from the beginning of the project. They consist of representatives from different stakeholder groups connected to rangeland and livestock management specific to each location. This tool supports dialogue about who is important in specific areas, how they are interconnected with arrows representing flows, relative influence in decision-making with influence

towers and goals of each stakeholder within the network. In this way, different types of stakeholders within communities who are important to rangeland management were identified including traditional authority, herders, livestock keepers and others as specified for each project site. The activity stimulates discussion about important topics such as:

- Who makes decisions about which rangelands need to be conserved for dry periods?
- Who makes decisions about which livestock are allowed to use particular water points?
- Who is involved in conflict resolution when a livestock keeper does not respect community decisions about rangeland use?



The intention of the Community Committees is to offer a transparent mechanism for involving people from our project areas into a transdisciplinary research process with the goal of generating more equitable engagement practices. Transdisciplinarity goes beyond inter-disciplinarity (between disciplines) because of its emphasis on knowledge

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creation processes that integrate academic (from multiple disciplines) and stakeholder knowledge to solve ‘real-world’ problems together.

Approaches used in the InfoRange project are diverse. For example, a mobile phone app is in the process of being developed to pair user-generated data with satellite imagery, among other inputs. This integrates machine learning for categorisation of vegetation to improve analysis of hyperspectral imagery through inputs from those who know and use the local flora. To align the social context and technological innovations, emphasis is placed on learning and understanding existing governance mechanisms and current information exchange patterns.

COMMITTEES IN PRACTICE

In Kenya, **InfoRange** is active in Marsabit County with research activities clustered in the Moyale-Sololo area in the north and in Lower Laisamis in the south. In Marsabit County, there are 9 **InfoRange** Community Committees with a total of 70 members from 43 different villages and settlements.



In Namibia, **InfoRange** has selected areas for activity in Kavango East, including the George Mukoya Conservancy and the Muduva Nyangana Conservancy, and in Omaheke, including the Eiseb Conservancy and Aminuis Constituency. There are 4 **InfoRange** Community Committees in Namibia with 48 members from 48 different villages and settlements.



Regular meetings between **InfoRange** researchers, particularly the PhD students and the Community Committees ensure that the communities are constantly informed about the content and aim of the work as well as the current activities and preliminary results. This is prerequisite for their

involvement in joint decision-making.

Some of their roles are to:

- **Make joint-decisions** with **InfoRange** researchers about the involvement of their community in research processes with the goal of bringing community members to the level of co-researchers;
- **Review research activities** of **InfoRange** researchers before they start fieldwork to offer feedback for how they can be improved or where there are redundancies;
- **Recommend individuals** with the appropriate role and level of expertise specific for particular research activities. Those individuals have voluntary and free choice whether to accept and to participate in the research. However, their fellow community members on the **InfoRange** Community Committee are better informed to know who, for example has the most knowledge on traditional animal health practices, or who is on the community committees for water management;
- **Share information** about **InfoRange** research activities with other members of their communities.

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IMPACT

Involving the **InfoRange** Community Committees demands a paradigm shift from researchers—to seek community inputs and adapt practices from the beginning of the research to the end. To support this shift, PhD students have been involved in online trainings led by Prof. Brigitte Kaufmann and other DITSL staff since March 2023 so that high levels of community involvement can be planned into research design from the beginning.

For example, a training topic was entitled, ‘Positionality and ethical relationship building in transdisciplinary research’. Too many research projects come into communities, gather data and never return. Institutionalising the role of people living in local areas through the **InfoRange** Community Committees is a way of creating an active role for them: To know that their voice and their knowledge are an important part of the process—to give critical feedback—so that researchers and stakeholders together shape the knowledge that is co-generated.

PHOTO CREDITS

Photo 1 – by Belinda Thanises: Adding beads as influence towers to represent power relations during Net-Mapping activities in the Eiseb Conservancy, Namibia.

Photo 1 – by Halkano Galma: Convening community members for participatory stakeholder mapping in Ariya, Marsabit County, Kenya.

Photo 2 – by Felista Timaado: Gathering community members to decide on the final composition of the **InfoRange** Community Committee in Korr, Marsabit County, Kenya.

MEDIA

Follow us for updates on the research programme on our [website](#) and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).

Previous blog contributions

[“Socio-economic Survey of Farmers in the Senegal River Valley”](#)

[“Highlights from 2023 and Planned Activities for 2024”](#)

[“Connecting Climate Knowledge Across Continents”](#)

Latest Briefing Series

1/2024 - [Fostering gender-responsive innovation adoption among smallholder farmers in Africa](#)

Latest Videos

[Dr. Colin Stanley explains the InfoRange project on Namibia Connect](#)

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), within the strategy of its platform [Research for Sustainability](#) (Forschung für Nachhaltigkeit, FONa), the **INTERFACES** project works with four regional projects – **COINS**, **DeLaRe**, **InfoRange** and **Minodu** – to strengthen the integration, coherence and reach in the area of sustainable land management.

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