



# Socio-cultural foundations and characteristics of well-functioning pastoral community groups in Northern Kenya: An emic view

Raphael L. Arasio<sup>1</sup>, Brigitte Kaufmann<sup>2</sup>, David J. Otieno<sup>1</sup>, Oliver V. Wasonga<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Nairobi, Kenya <sup>2</sup>German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (DITSL), Germany

## Background

- Many community groups in rural Africa are malfunctioning or even collapse after external support ends.
- One reason for this is seen in the use of a top-down, non-consultative and non-contextual approach in establishing them.
- However, to enhance the sustainability of the group process, views and options of group members on factors affecting group functioning should be considered.

## Objectives

- To assess group members' perceptions on social and governance factors important for the functioning of pastoral community groups,
- To determine the extent to which these factors are related to socio-cultural collective norms and practices of the Rendille pastoral community.

## Results

### Social factors important for functioning of groups, and explanations given by group members

Social factor	Characteristics of group members	Groups showing the trait (n=18)	Reasons (related to the socio-cultural context of the Rendille pastoral community)
Age	Only middle aged	4	- Common in men-only groups (2/4)- age set (an aspect of cultural grouping)
	All age groups included but over 50% middle aged	14	- Common in cultural collective activities where different competencies are required - All age groups are important - Middle age- energetic and better reasoning - Youth- walk long distances to livestock purchase and sale points - Old- wisdom to advise but inactive
Gender	Women only	4	- Freedom to speak, interact and work together - Mostly available for group activities
	Women groups co-opting 1-3 men	7	- Limited men membership- fear dominance and debts - Men can trek long distances to livestock purchase and sale points; good price negotiators
Location	Reside in same village	11	- Traditionally common among members of same clan - Well known to each other; easy to meet; easy to work
	Reside in different villages	7	- Inevitable where interest of a person is prioritized - Rules and regulations strictly applied to mitigate effect of distance on performance
Clan	Same clan	8	- Inherent feature of socio-cultural organization - Know each other well- easy to interact and work
	Different clans	10	- Inevitable among women groups due to intermarriages- no effect on performance
Education	All illiterate	4	- Formerly limited opportunities for education - With negative effect on communication/records
	Co-opted 1-3 literate members	14	- For communication/records but prefer all members to have adult literacy
Wealth	Different wealth classes	17	- Socio-economic interdependence is common - Every wealth class is important - Wealthier classes- easily pay statutory fees - Poor class- delay payments but with more time for group activities

(Sources: Semi-structured and in-depth interviews conducted with officials of 18 well-functioning income generating community groups)

Although the listed social factors matter, final selection and admission of group members is based on their interest and willingness to cooperate

→ **Personal character as decisive criteria for admission to the group**

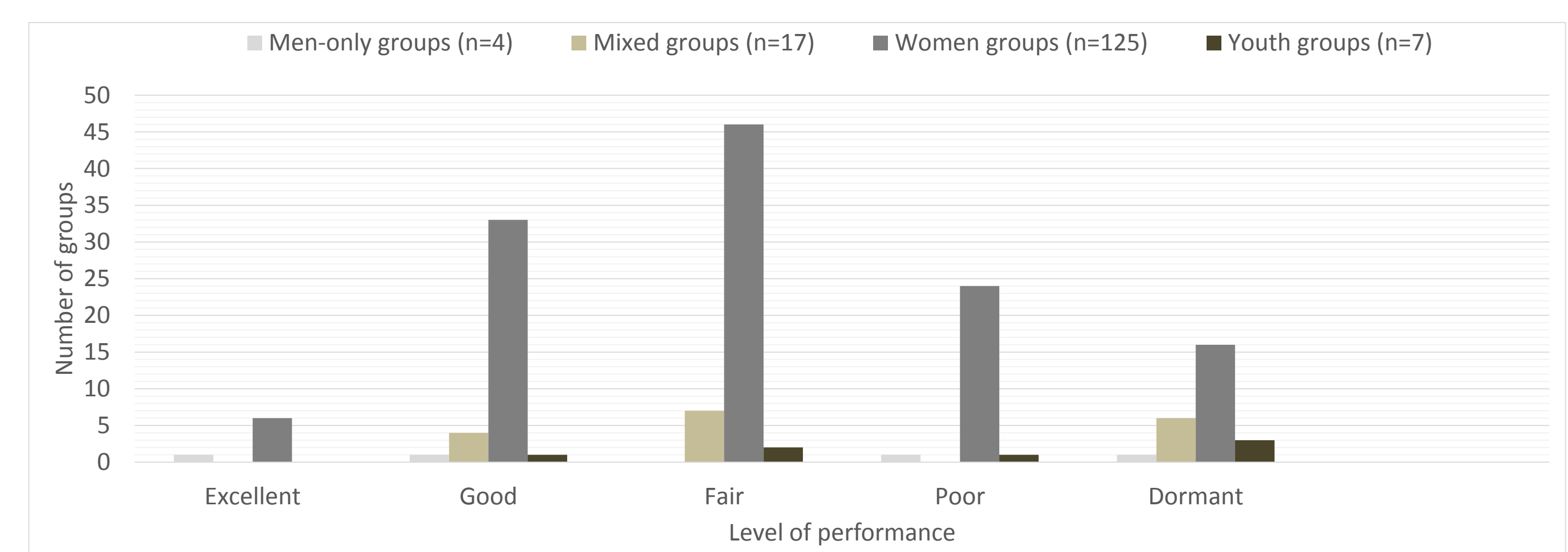
## Conclusions

- Social factors such as age, gender, location, and education are perceived important but not sufficient for formation and functioning of groups unless personal character features such as interest and willingness to cooperate are considered.
- Pastoralists modify externally provided guidelines on group leadership, decision-making, by-laws, transparency and accountability based on their experiences and to what works best in their current setting and draw from socio-cultural norms and practices to enhance performance of groups.

## Policy implications

- The study emphasises the importance of obtaining knowledge on socio-cultural norms, practices and mechanisms, and of considering experiences and perceptions of community members when establishing sustainable community groups

### Performance of income generating groups as perceived by group officials and members



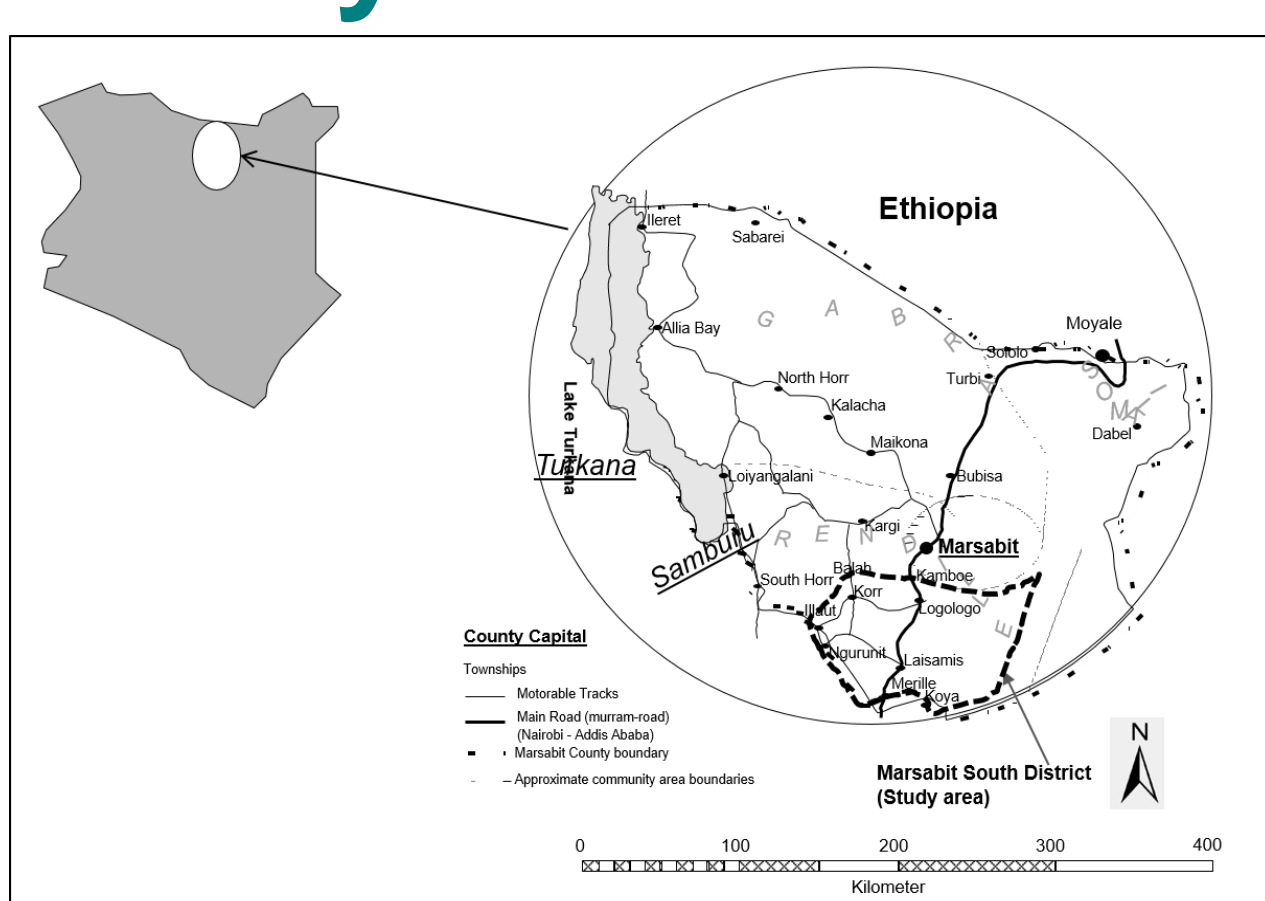
(Source: Participatory Likert-type scale rating exercises with 153 income generating groups in the Rendille area)

### Modifications of externally provided guidelines on leadership and literacy, decision-making, by-laws, transparency and accountability

Factor	External guidelines	Modifications made related to social-cultural context
<b>Leadership structure</b>	Top positions to be equally deputized	- Deputies not necessary- rarely in action - Prefer a small team like in traditional leadership of elders
<b>Oversight committee</b>	One per group	- More than 1 depending on number of activities - Oversees group activities and resolves conflict like <i>Naabo</i>
<b>Tenure of officials</b>	Limited term ( 2 to 3 terms of 2 years each)	- Limitless term just like in traditional leadership, only exit due to misconduct or death or change of location
<b>Election procedure</b>	Secret ballot, queueing or acclamation	- Consultation and consensus just like in selection of clan/village elders
<b>Literacy of a treasurer</b>	Mandatory	- Qualities such as strictness, wealth, honesty and intelligence are considered more important than education
<b>Frequency of meetings</b>	Weekly	- Weekly meetings preferred but can be adjusted based on time needs for domestic and livestock management tasks
<b>Documentation of by-laws and constitution</b>	In written form	- Rarely documented due to high illiteracy - Critical by-laws are memorized as it is done traditionally with information
<b>Transparency and accountability</b>	Records needed	- Rarely keep records due to high illiteracy - Record keeping compensated through regular sharing of memorized information - Adult literacy demanded to enhance record keeping

(Sources: Semi-structured and in-depth interviews with officials of 10 well-functioning income generating community groups)

## Study Area



### Marsabit County, Kenya

- Laisamis sub-county of Marsabit County, located in the arid Northern Kenya
- The area is remote and characterized by poor infrastructure in terms of services, communication and transport
- Approx. 12,000 Rendille pastoralist households live in the area
- In the last three decades, over 300 pastoral community groups have been founded

## Methods of data collection

- Participatory likert-type scale rating exercises with 153 income generating groups (IGGs) to obtain perception on levels of performance of IGGS
- Key informant interviews with 9 head chiefs and 1-3 officials of 10 IGGS each, to obtain information on socio-cultural setting and community groups
- Semi-structured and in-depth interviews with 1-3 group officials of 18 IGGS each, to obtain information on characteristics of members and with 10 out of 18 IGGS to obtain information on governance characteristics



### Contact information

rlotira@yahoo.co.uk

### Acknowledgment

This study was conducted within the BMBF and BMZ funded project „Reduction of Post Harvest Losses and Value Addition in East African Value Chains“ (RELOAD).

