

## Abstract

Livestock are the main source of food (milk, meat and blood) for the Rendille pastoralists living in Marsabit District of Northern Kenya. However, drought is a common occurrence in the arid Rendille grazing areas coming roughly after every 5-7 years. The Rendille pastoralists have used various strategies for coping with these droughts. The objective of this study was to identify the ravages of major drought and evaluate the various coping strategies. This study used PRA tool of historical matrix exercise to identify the main drought coping strategies. Major droughts occurred in 1890, 1910, 1949, 1970, 1984 and 1991. The strategies identified by the pastoralists included, exchanging children for dried meat, utilising other animal products by the pastoralists included, exchanging children for dried meat, utilising other animal products (blood, meat and fat), borrowing milk animals from relatives and friends, selling animals to buy food, eating wild fruits and tubers and receiving famine relief food. Famine relief, although having starting later than most drought coping strategies is now the most reliable strategy. This may be gradually decreasing the capacity of the Rendille pastoralists to cope with droughts. The pastoralists did not mention some important strategies such as migrating to areas with forage and water and practising non-pastoral activities. This may be because of the obviousness of these strategies. Finally, since droughts are always there in pastoral production systems, all development plans for pastoral areas should have a provision for drought years.