



# Securing communal grazing land to improve pastoralists' livelihoods



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In Northern Tanzania, Masai and Datoga pastoralist communities depend on the land and its natural resources to graze their animals and perpetuate their traditional way of life. Although they have always been communal property, pastures are being requisitioned or privatised and transformed into protected conservation areas and agricultural fields where their herds are no longer welcome.

Climate change, including recurrent droughts, also contributes to the deterioration of natural resources and weakens livestock. Although livestock numbers are not increasing and, indeed, are in slight decline due to disease and a lack of water and pasture, the population is growing, which increases the pressure on the land.

The undermining of communal land tenure security often results into conflicts and the deterioration of pastoralist livelihoods and cultures that are closely linked to the land.

## What Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Belgium does

Since 2015, we have been working in partnership with the Tanzanian civil society organisation Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT) to secure and manage communal grazing land in the Northern Tanzanian rangelands. Following a participatory village land use planning process, Certificates of Customary Right of Occupancy (CCROs) are issued to communities.

These certificates effectively formalise the right of a group of people to communally hold and manage land. Since no single group member has any legal rights to deal with land against the wishes of the entire group, **group CCROs provide a high level of tenure security**. In Tanzania, this is the only way for a community to legally own and protect its land.

### Spotlight on our partner

#### Ujamaa Community Resource Team

The work of Ujamaa Community Resource Team revolves around helping pastoralist and hunter-gatherer communities to secure, manage, and benefit from their land. UCRT has focused on using various legal and technical mapping tools to secure stronger rights and formal tenure.

They have worked in more than 100 villages in Northern Tanzania, developing land use plans for close to two million hectares of village land and helping 69 communities to obtain Certificates of Customary Right of Occupancy for 91,204 hectares of village land.

UCRT has received national and international recognition for their pioneering work, including the UNDP Equator Prize in 2008 and the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2016 (for Director Edward Loure).


FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE WORK OF UCRT, SEE  
[www.ujamaa-crt.org](http://www.ujamaa-crt.org)

## Methodology

To begin with, we met with communities to explain the **existence of laws** which enable them to obtain certificates of occupation for their land. We gave details of the **steps** required to obtain these certificates, along with the roles and responsibilities involved.

A **Village Land Use Management (VLUM) committee**, consisting of traditional leaders representing men, women, and young people, was elected and trained in land use planning and management practices. We brought each village community together to **map the land and decide together on the use** and the boundaries of each plot of land. **Signposts and markers** were installed to keep villagers informed of the boundaries and respective land use types.

**By-laws** governing land and natural resources were established and approved by the General Assemblies of the villages. Village councils and elected grazing committees are charged with **ensuring compliance** with these by-laws, including respecting boundaries and the penalties for breaking these laws. As pastoralists move beyond their own village lands in search of pasture, committee representatives from each village form a joint village grazing committee to discuss cross-village mobility of livestock.

Steps for obtaining a group CCRO 

### 1

#### ESTABLISHING CLEAR BOUNDARIES FOR VILLAGE LAND

The village must agree on boundaries with their neighbours.

### 2

#### ISSUE OF A CERTIFICATE OF VILLAGE LAND

A Certificate of Village Land includes a map showing the size of the village and other defining features.

### 3

#### ESTABLISHING A VILLAGE LAND USE PLAN AND BY-LAWS

A village must agree on boundaries by means of a village land and zoning process, and by-laws must be passed at village council, assembly and district level.

### 4

#### APPLYING FOR A GROUP CCRO

Groups apply to the village council for a CCRO.

### 5

#### APPROVING A GROUP CCRO

The village council has 90 days to authorise it, after which approval is sought from the village assembly. If the land in the CCRO covers more than 250 ha, consent must be sought from the Ministry of Land, through the Commissioner of Land.

### 6

#### DISTRICT AUTHORITY REVIEW

Demarcation of the land and placing of markers.



CCRO is issued



### Key figures

**25**  
villages  
accompanied  
in 5 years

**710,000**  
hectares  
of pasture  
protected

for the benefit of  
**96,000**  
pastoralists



## Lessons learnt

The vast experience and strong participatory approach provided by UCRT, ensuring widespread stakeholder representation and meaningful and effective participation among villagers, was crucial in achieving these locally owned and well respected Village Land Use Plans. The **full participation** of all the different communities, traditional leaders, influential local politicians and local government structures at all levels and all stages is **essential for the success of the process**.

Thanks to our approach, pastoralists are now applying **better land use practices**. Livestock mobility is now based on grazing calendars that take the different land use types into account, which results into more sustainable grazing management. There has been no encroachment of settlements or agriculture on grazing land, and local communities live together and share resources more peacefully. They are increasingly aware of the importance of natural resource management and the need to ensure environmental health in light of the relationship between livestock numbers, livestock mobility and the availability of grazing land.

Climate change is confronting local communities with more frequent droughts, and invasive species are out-competing edible grassland species. In this context, larger communal grazing areas stretching across multiple wards can contribute to **effective climate change mitigation**. Pasture lands are carbon sinks which can help communities to be more resilient to climate change. Grazing areas set aside as a feed reserve for the dry season are another effective climate adaptation strategy.

Thanks to a better management of grazing resources, combined with the increased availability of veterinary and livestock extension services and increased availability of water (more water and more frequent access), **animals are more productive and in better health**. This translates into more milk and meat available for households' own consumption and for sale. In this way, we have contributed to securing and improving the livelihoods of an estimated **96,000 pastoralists**.

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