



Map of natural and social interactions drawn on the ground by community members of Dhas kebele of Dhas woreda.

BRIEFING NOTE 2: PARTICIPATORY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (PRM) PLANS

“In the past there was a conflict between the government and NGOs on one side, and the traditional authorities on the other. The government authorities didn't understand the (traditional) system, and the NGOs often came and listened only to a few people, not everyone. So, for example, the government dug a pond or established a motorized water scheme in an area that was a dry season grazing land used by people from three kebeles. People came in to settle close to the water source, and the land got quickly degraded so it was no use for dry season grazing. This created conflict. Since the initiative over the last two years of consulting with the traditional authorities in all the relevant communities, things are much better.... Even the current Abba Gada, Kora Jasso, has been involved.” Golo Gutu, Konfi (well founder), Gayo kebele March 2022

The “initiative” to which Golo Gutu refers is the development of Participatory Resource Management (PRM) plans. This note describes the support provided by the NRM-Borana Project for the elaboration of such plans in the 16 project *kebeles* (the lowest administrative unit of local government) and provides background information on the resources concerned. The PRM planning process entailed bringing together local government agencies, traditional authorities and other community representatives, most notably women from women's groups, to jointly discuss natural resource management issues, identify problems, solutions, and agree a sustainable management plan. It was facilitated by staff of the project's local partner NGO, CIFA (Community Initiatives Facilitation and Assistance). An integral part of the procedure

was to recognize how the disconnect between traditional (customary) and government systems of natural resource governance has had the unintended consequence of exacerbating the depletion of such resources.

KEY NATURAL RESOURCES

Before outlining the PRM planning process, it is necessary to describe the nature of water and pasture resources in the Borana zone. Water sources are conceived in two categories: modern and traditional. Grazing areas are also essentially of two types – open and closed (*kalloo*), although significant areas of former grazing land are now encroached by invasive, thorny shrubs.

TRADITIONAL WATER RESOURCES

The traditional water resources of the Borana comprise deep wells or *ela*; shallow wells (*adaadi*); surface ponds (*haroo*) and crater lakes (*boque*). Their use is governed by bylaws that are made by the relevant council of elders and enacted and endorsed every eight years at the *Gumi Gayo* (general assembly).

Deep wells are hand dug and comprise a sloping passageway down to a trough at which livestock can drink and people collect their water. The water source may be much lower, some 100m below the surface, and require hand-hauling up to the trough by a team of four, even up to twelve, persons. Most of the deep wells occur in

nine clusters (called *tulla*). These clusters fall within the Dirre and Wayama natural resource systems (*dheedas*), covering the *woredas* of Dhas, Wachile, Dubluki, Miyo, and Guchi. Two of the nine are not currently within the Borana territory, being sources of conflict with the *Garri* peoples (another pastoralist group). Each well cluster has a name, and each is linked to a clan alliance, with ownership being attributed to the original well founder or *Konfi*. The current *Konfi* is usually a paternal descent of this founder, as the wells are many generations old. Any man or woman who wishes to use the water, whether of clan alliance or outside the clan membership, must first gain permission from the *Konfi*. However, the amount of water that may be taken is determined by the council of elders and overseen not by the *Konfi* but by an *Abba Herrega* or overseer who is elected by the clan members from their elders. He is helped in his regulatory tasks by an *Abba Guya* who keeps the well clean daily – removing livestock dung and making any necessary small repairs.

Shallow wells are often dug in sand river areas and are also governed by an *Abba Herrega*.

Surface ponds are also attributed to an owner (*Konfi*) – the person who initially dug out the site – but they are not named according to the owner's clan in the same way as deep wells. Like such wells, they are managed by an *Abba Herrega*. Hand dug surface ponds are generally only used at the beginning of the dry season, as they soon dry up. Machine dug ponds tend to be deeper and to last for longer periods, depending on size. In both cases, siltation tends to reduce the capacity of the pond over time, and thus de-siltation is an important maintenance measure. Once a pond has dried up, it is fenced off until the next rains.

Crater lakes do not have a *Konfi*, being a natural phenomenon. However, the use of the water points within them, which only takes place during the dry season, is generally regulated by an *Abba Herrega*. The three crater lakes within the Dirre and Golbo natural resource systems also have a high economic value for the salt that can be collected from them.

MODERN WATER RESOURCES

The main modern water resources comprise boreholes, hand pumps, and cisterns – all of which have been introduced by local governments or NGOs.

Boreholes and water pumps have been promoted since the first concerted international response to the major drought of some forty years ago. They generally operate through a tariff system and are widely recognized to have increased the availability of water, especially in times of need. At the same time, water has been monetarized – and there has been a shift in power over it

from traditional authorities to the governance structures of the local government. Formally under the Woreda Water, Mineral and Energy Office (WMEO), boreholes and hand pumps are generally managed and administered by a community-based Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Committee (WaSHCO), sometimes known simply as Water Management Committees. These are made up of local women and men and may include elders who are also part of traditional governance structures – but this is not mandatory. The inclusion of women is a positive step towards gender equality but may not result in any real empowerment. The governance of WaSHCOs is recognized to be problematic, with difficulties in the collection and safeguarding of tariffs. Generally, the fees collected are not properly managed to recover the maintenance costs, which then fall back on the *woreda* administration and/or on NGOs.

Cisterns are a slightly more recent intervention, in the past three decades. They dot the landscape and are filled through roof-water harvesting, groundwater, or by tankers bringing borehole water. Unlike boreholes and hand pumps, they are owned either by individuals, institutions like schools or health centres, or small community groups, and access to them is determined by the owners (although often it is difficult to deny water given the strong community sentiment that it is a common resource).

TRADITIONAL PASTURE MANAGEMENT

Across the area of some 95,000 km² to which they claim heritage, the Borana recognize two main geographical (rangeland) systems: the Liban and the Dirre. The Dirre geographical system is further ecologically classified into five types of open grazing land or *dheeda*: Malbe, Wayama, Gomoole, Golbo, and Dirre. The *dheeda* are further divided into smaller areas or *reera*. Significant areas of these rangelands have become overgrown with invasive woody shrubs – a result of a 1970s government burning ban. The ban was introduced for military reasons and meant that the Borana could no longer conduct controlled burning, which was used to promote grass growth, control external parasites, and inhibit invasive species.

Traditionally, the *Abba Dheeda* delineated the dry and rainy season grazing land, ensuring a rotation of livestock in an equitable manner that conforms with the suitability of the different pastures for use in different seasons. As elaborated elsewhere, such traditions have been eroded, although they remain in the minds of many Borana. In addition to *dheeda*, almost all villages have enclosed grazing areas known as *ka/oo*. Such land is usually very close to settlements and is reserved for calves, lactating cows, or sick animals which are often cared for by women. In recent decades, the local government and NGOs have pro-

moted the improved productivity of *kaloo* for haymaking, including the physical removal of invasive species and construction of soil and water conservation structures depending on the level of degradations.

PASTURES VERSUS FARMLAND

The conversion of pastures to farmland over the past forty years has placed the traditional pastoralist livelihood system of the Borana under increasing pressure. Farming has been encouraged by government policies aimed at increasing the availability of food, notably cereals. Unfortunately, the opportunity to buy land has also been seized by elites. Land registration is conducted by the Woreda Rural Land Administration and Use (RLAU) Office and facilitated by the *kebele* administration. The expansion of farmland was particularly significant in Dirre and Miyo after the 1991/92 drought, when large numbers of livestock died. In the 11 *kebeles*, six are agro-pastoral and five are pastoral. Similarly, nearly half the *kebeles* in Miyo woreda are agro-pastoralist. The lowest incidence of farming is in Dillo, Dhas, and Wachile *woredas* where red lateritic soil unsuited to cultivation predominates.

To promote and encourage agro-pastoralism, local government Agricultural and Natural Resources Management (ANRM) Offices have been established, following the same approach used in the Ethiopian highlands, despite them being agro-ecologically very different. Extension

services provided by such offices include the introduction of new agricultural technologies, input supplies such as agrochemicals and seeds of improved varieties, soil and water conservation activities, and nursery establishment.

Project interventions to improve the management of traditional water and grazing resources are outlined in **Briefing Notes 3 and 4**, respectively. This Briefing Note now describes the PRM planning process.

THE PRM PLANS

The written PRM plans comprise a standard introduction about the context and process adopted, followed by a description of existing water and fodder/pasture resources within the *kebele*, and the problems faced because of differing governance systems, increasing land use pressure and climate change. They also set out actions and resources needed for further improvements and sustainable management. They are written in English as a reference for other development actors, in the expectation that interventions can be conducted in a synergistic manner without duplication.

A standard procedure was followed in the PRM planning, comprising three stages – investigation, negotiation and then implementation. In total, these stages involve ten steps, as indicated in diagram 1.

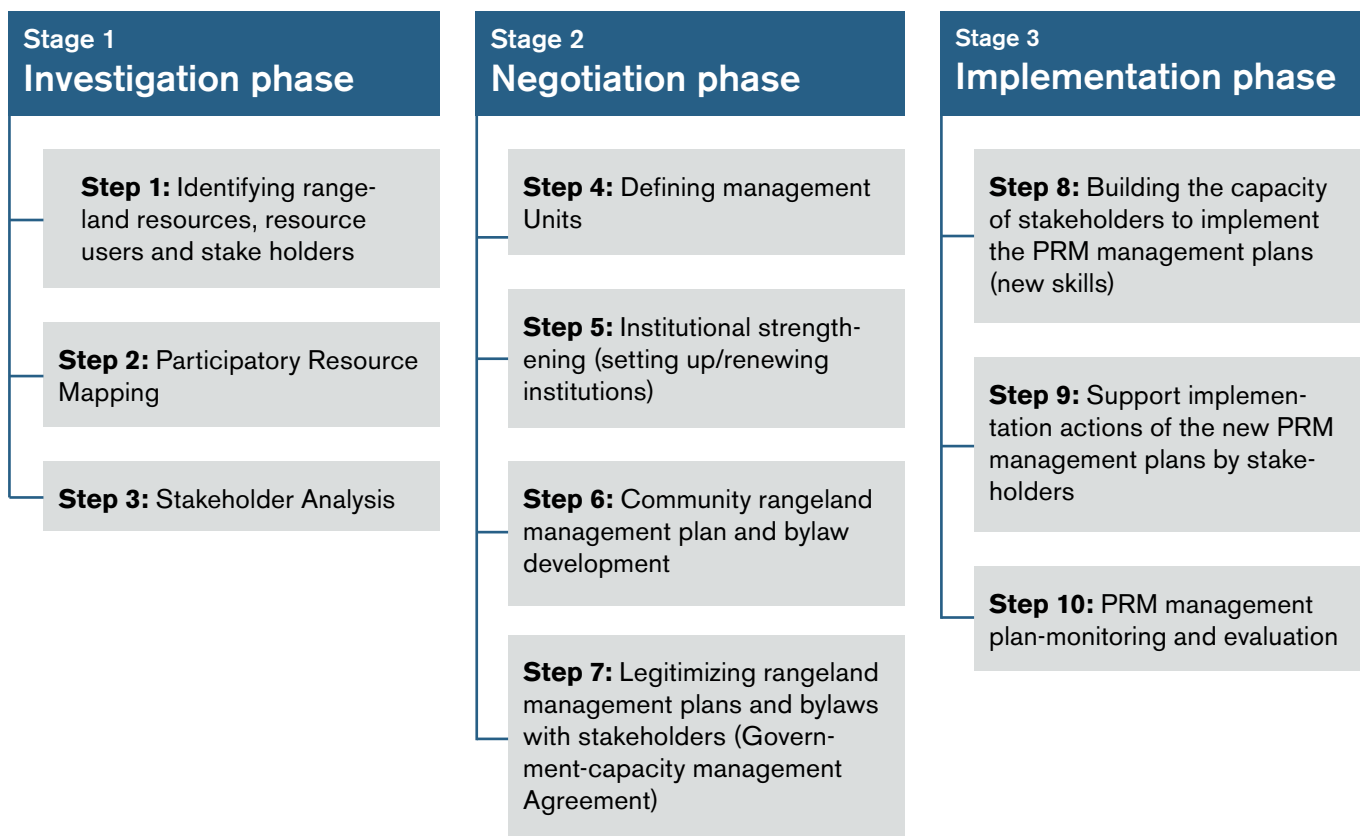


Diagram 1:
Participatory Rangeland Management



Drawing a map of natural and social interactions at Hida-Babo *kebele* of Miyo *woreda*.

INVESTIGATION

This begins with an identification of all the key stakeholders in the *kebele* – the residents, users of resources, government staff of different offices, and other development actors, notably international and local NGOs. Development interventions supported by the government are identified and described, along with those supported by NGOs – and these activities are compared against their budgetary allocation. In this way a first overview of existing development activities is obtained – the diverse inputs, and very differing levels of financial support. As one example, in Gorile *kebele*, it was noted that CARE, Help the Aged International, Action Against Hunger (AAH), Water Aid International and IGAD (the Intergovernmental Authority on Development) were all present – the latter through the Drought Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods Program (DRSLP) of the African Development Bank.

The key part of the investigation phase, however, is the Participatory Resource Mapping, in which the participants draw a map on the ground and mark out all the important natural resources such as wells, hand pumps, surface ponds, water cisterns, open grazing areas, enclosed grazing areas, areas of bushland, and the main vegetation species. Each of these are then described

in turn, noting their condition. For example, some of the hand pumps may have a good water flow but others may be broken or producing salty water; some of the ponds may have good capacity but others be silted up; and some of the grazing land may be of good quality, whilst other areas have been encroached by invasive shrubs.

The mapping exercise is followed by an analysis of the resource users, using a “4R” matrix of rights, responsibilities, relationships, and revenues. The matrix clarifies interactions over natural resources both within the community and with others who may access them – such as pastoralists from other *kebeles* who visit seasonally. Whilst the Borana consider water and pastures to be accessible to all who wish to use them, there are nevertheless clear rules on how this may be done (see **Briefing Note 1**). Having completed the matrix, the discussion moves on to a problem analysis, in which the participants identify the main difficulties they face over natural resources – and then prioritize them. Typically, access to water and bush encroachment are given high priority. The reasons behind the problems are then analyzed. It is here that different ideas and approaches of traditional systems versus local government become clear in discussions, often becomes clear in discussions, but with all participants then considering together what can be done.

NEGOTIATION

Finding solutions to the problems requires common agreement amongst the men and women – using the mapping exercise as a base for discussions. For this, the map was first transferred to paper, different management units and activities were then considered, agreed and marked out. It is important at this point to ensure that solutions are feasible and realistic, ideally identifying the specific stakeholders who will take responsibility for their implementation. Normally an assessment of the budget required for specific interventions is also made, to assist prioritization. All the project interventions described in **Briefing Notes 3 and 4** were first identified through the PRM plans.

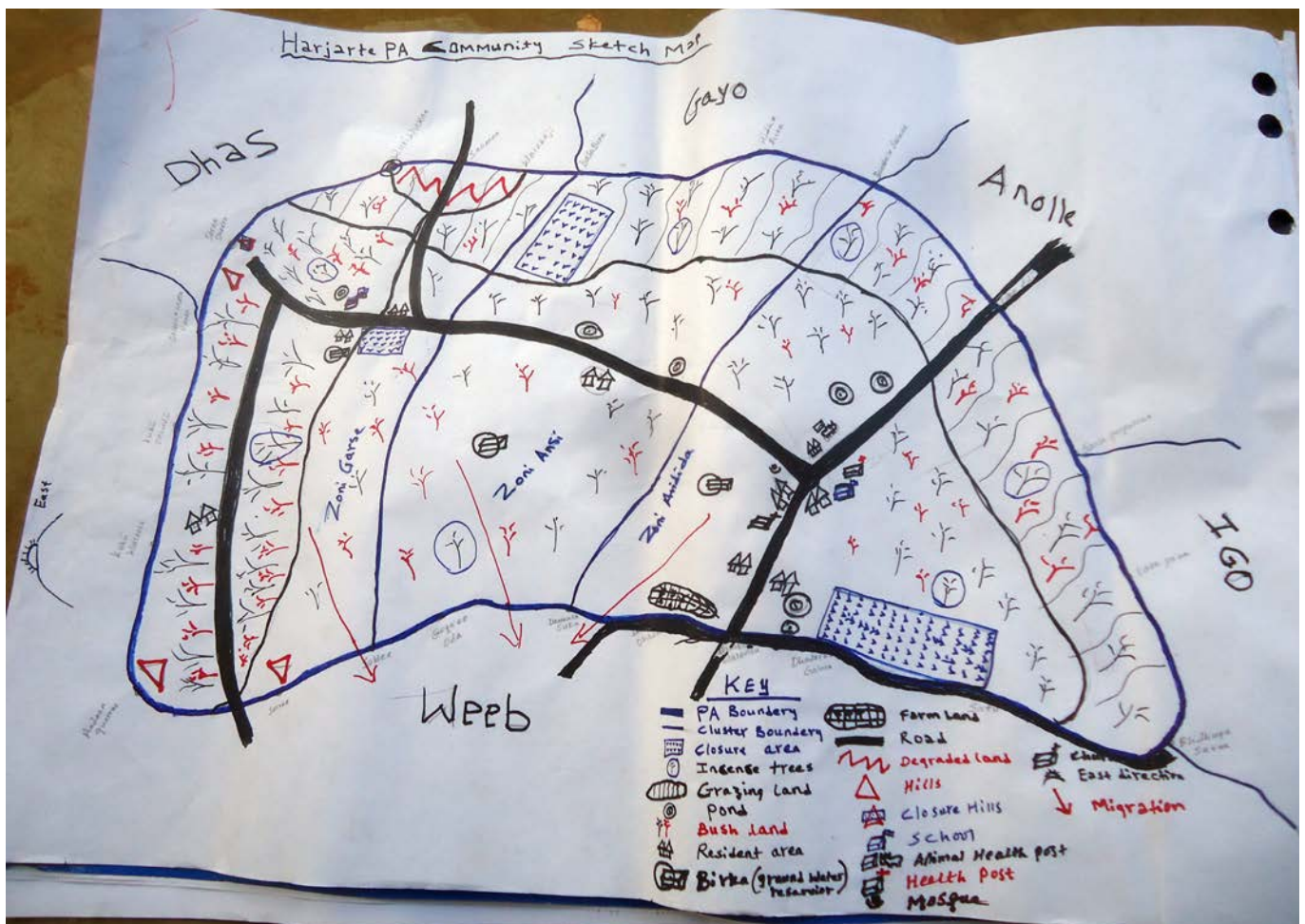
Another aspect of the negotiation process is determining the rules and regulations by which the natural resources will be governed in future. The bylaws established and agreed generally draw on what has been traditional practice. They cover, for example, the amount of a given resource that can be claimed by a household (such as the area that can be grazed, the area that can be held by women (*kaloo*) and from which hay can be collected, or the number of livestock heads that can use deep wells during the dry season). They also set the level of fines

to be levied for rule-breaking (such as letting cattle entering a grazing area before the agreed time, collecting firewood from areas enclosed for regeneration, or cutting fodder from a forbidden area). Special provisions may be made for disadvantaged households, such as those headed by women.

At the end of the negotiation phase, when priority actions and bylaws have been agreed and the whole PRM plan has been written up, it is verified and stamped at both *kebele* and *woreda* level. The PRM plan thus becomes an official government document, to which any local government interventions should adhere.

IMPLEMENTATION

The activities set out in PRM plans are not necessarily feasible without some of the stakeholders first enhancing their skills – especially when what is foreseen is relatively new. Capacity building of women and men can thus be crucial, along with financial and material support for interventions. Whilst the NRM-Borana project aims to support some of the actions in the PRM plans, it is expected that other development actors will play a complementary role.



THE IMPACT OF DROUGHT

Unfortunately, drought brings major challenges to the implementation of the PRM plans. The difficulties were well explained by key informants in Gayo kebele in early March 2022.

“Drought has affected our meeting schedule as we are all busy looking for pasture, so we are unable to meet as planned. It is a very difficult time – it is difficult even to find time to visit one’s neighbor, let alone go to a neighboring kebele.” Nura Bitu, Abba Herega and Elder

“If there is rain, we know how to manage; we can enclose different areas and enforce control. But when there is no rain, all bylaws cease to exist, and everyone has their own priorities. The most severe issue is drinking water; you see how low the water table is. This is particularly difficult for pregnant and breast-feeding women, and for the elderly.” Roba Guyo, Kebele Manager

However, even in such difficult times, there remains the spirit of cooperation between traditional authorities and local government officials that has been built. This has proved important in the organizing of humanitarian assistance – a topic outlined in **Briefing Note 6**.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The documentation of the PRM plans in English, rather than the local language of Oromo, has proved somewhat controversial. The decision to use English was taken to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration between external development agencies operating in the area. A projected future activity is to summarize the plans in Oromo.
- The PRM planning process was never intended to be static, yet the plans are static documents. At very least, they require regular revision to maintain their pertinence to on-going achievements and challenges. It is foreseen that external facilitation will be required in this regard.
- The PRM plans have been criticized for using *kebeles* as the unit, rather than taking the broader five agro-ecological systems traditionally recognized by the Borana; the *dheedas*. As a result, the plans only cover parts of the Borana zone. This is a valid criticism, although the important gain from working at *kebele* level was the full engagement of the local government authorities. If the process was replicated in all other *kebeles* of the *dheeda*, there would eventually be full coverage and the possibility of harmonizing plans in keeping with the concept of agro-ecological systems.

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