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M. Aufderheide, C. Voigts,
C. Hülsebusch, B. Kaufmann

Decent work?

How self-employed pastoralists
and employed herders on ranches
perceive their working conditions

The International
Center for Development
and Decent Work

Mareike Aufderheide holds a degree in Organic Agricultural Sciences, University of Kassel, Witzenhausen, Germany. Her current research interest is on wildlife management and integration into livestock keeping.

Clemens Voigts holds a Bachelor degree in Organic Agricultural Sciences, University of Kassel, Witzenhausen, Germany. His research interest is on livestock systems as human activity systems and on agricultural education programs.

Christian Hülsebusch is livestock scientist by training and is managing director of the German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture DITSL in Witzenhausen, Germany. His current research emphasis is on options for climate change adaptation in extensive livestock systems, and on possibilities of job creation and improvement of working conditions in livestock based value chains.

Brigitte Kaufmann is associate professor at the University of Hohenheim and, since 2008, leads the research group „Social ecology in agriculture“ at the German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture DITSL in Witzenhausen, Germany. Animal scientist by training, she does research on pastoral and agro-pastoral systems since 1991. Her current focus is on transdisciplinary research and collaborative learning approaches.

Editorial Board

Khayaat Fakier (University of Witwatersrand, South Africa)

Eva Schlecht (University of Kassel, Germany)

Contact Address

Prof. Dr. Christoph Scherrer

ICDD – Universität Kassel

Kurt-Schumacher-Straße 2

34109 Kassel, Germany

Contact: felmeden@icdd.uni-kassel.de

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Abstract

Pastoralism and ranching are two different rangeland-based livestock systems in dryland areas of East Africa. Both usually operate under low and irregular rainfall and consequently low overall primary biomass production of high spatial and temporal heterogeneity. Both are usually located far from town centres, market outlets and communication, medical, educational, banking, insurance and other infrastructure. Whereas pastoralists can be regarded as self-employed, gaining their livelihood from managing their individually owned livestock on communal land, ranches mostly employ herders as wage labourers to manage the livestock owned by the ranch on the ranches' own land property. Both production systems can be similarly labour intensive and – with regard to the livestock management – require the same type of work, whether carried out as self-employed pastoralist or as employed herder on a work contract. Given this similarity, the aim of this study was to comparatively assess how pastoralists and employed herders in northern Kenya view their working conditions, and which criteria they use to assess hardship and rewards in their daily work and their working life. Their own perception is compared with the concept of Decent Work developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Samburu pastoralists in Marsabit and Samburu Districts as well as herders on ranches in Laikipia District were interviewed. A qualitative analysis of 47 semi-structured interviews yielded information about daily activities, income, free time, education and social security. Five out of 22 open interviews with pastoralists and seven out of 13 open interviews with employed herders fully transcribed and subjected to qualitative content analysis to yield life stories of 12 informants. Pastoralists consider it important to have healthy and satisfied animals. The ability to provide food for their family especially for the children has a high priority. Hardships for the pastoralists are, if activities are exhausting, and challenging, and dangerous. For employed herders, decent conditions are if their wages are high enough to be able to provide food for their family and formal education for their children. It is further most important for them to do work they are experienced and skilled in. Most employed herders were former pastoralists, who had lost their animals due to drought or raids. There are parallels between the ILO 'Decent Work' concept and the perception of working conditions of pastoralists and employed herders. These are, for example, that remuneration is of importance and the appreciation by either the employer or the community is desired. Some aspects that are seen as important by the ILO such as safety at work and healthy working conditions only play a secondary role to the pastoralists, who see risky and dangerous tasks as inherent characteristics of their efforts to gain a livelihood in their living environment.

Keywords: pastoralism, herding, ranching, employment, wage labour, Kenya

1 Introduction

1.1 Characteristics of pastoralism and ranching

Pastoralism and ranching are both pasture-based livestock production systems, in which according to *Sere & Steinfeld* (1996) more than 90% of the household income results from livestock production and more than 90% of the fodder for the livestock comes from natural pasture. Pasture-based livestock systems contribute 10 to 44% to the gross domestic product (GDP) of African countries (AU-IBAR 2010). In Kenya 14.1 million animals, worth US\$ 860 million are kept in pastoral production systems (*Davies* 2007), pastoralists own 40% of the cattle and 70% of the goats of the country (estimates based on FAO 2004 and *Otte & Chilonda* 2002), and 35.6% of the total meat production is provided by pastoral systems (calculation based on *Rass*, 2006). The value of the animals that can be taken out of the herd per year without decreasing the asset base, the so-called possible offtake, amounts to US\$ 69.3 million in Kenya (*Davies* 2007). In addition to the commercial offtake of animals and products that go to the market is the subsistence offtake, which includes milk, meat, blood, and skins. For the Turkana, a pastoral people in Northwest Kenya, the value of the subsistence offtake for one household was estimated at US\$ 1,876 per year (*Davies*, 2007).

In the dryland areas, the average biomass production is generally low, and due to the high temporal rainfall variation, quantity and quality of fodder resources vary greatly between the rainy season and the dry season. There is also a high spatial variation due to edaphic factors. Different species of plants grow on certain types of soil and provide certain nutrients to the animals (*Swallow* 1994). Pastoralists differentiate rangeland patches according to their suitability for grazing of a certain livestock species at a given point in time. They make use of the high temporal and spatial heterogeneity in quantity and quality of the vegetation growing on the different patches in the course of the year. To exploit this heterogeneity in fodder resource availability, livestock is essentially mobile in order “to follow the forage”, while the household or part of the household is often sedentary. Other determinants of mobility of pastoralists are avoidance of diseases or competition for grazing areas with other pastoral communities or groups (*Dyson-Hudson & Dyson-Hudson*, 1980). Pastoralists’ grazing areas are mostly on communal land and hence get utilised by the whole community (*Githiori* 2004).

The production strategy of pastoralists hinges on selecting grazing units with above average quality and quantity of forage at any given point in time in order to permit their animals the best possible energy and nutrient intake exceeding maintenance requirements for a period as long as possible throughout the year. Given the spatio-temporal variabil-

ity, this strategy requires mobility, hence moving the animals strategically to appropriate forage areas is the management tool that is most critical for the animals to meet their reproductive needs and be able to produce milk or gain weight. Pastoralists also make use of livestock diversity to exploit the heterogeneity in fodder resource availability in that they keep different livestock species with different fodder requirements, which provide different types of products and fulfil different functions for the household. The main livestock products used are milk, meat, blood and skins (*Niamir, 1991*). However, the main livelihood function of livestock is that of a production asset, which reproduces and whose offspring can be sold to gain income on a regular basis (*Fratkin & Roth, 1990*). Animals also provide for social functions, e.g. dowry (*Fratkin & Roth, 1990*), community safety nets or reciprocation systems based on lending, leasing or swapping animals (e.g. *Tache & Sjaastad, 2010*). The pastoralists, like other farmers, are self-employed.

Over the past decades, the average number of animals per pastoral household decreased and the gap between rich and poor pastoralists is growing, with few households owning very large numbers of animals and large numbers of households owning only a few animals each. It has been observed that poorer pastoralists often settle in villages or near towns and try to generate income from other sources (*Fratkin & Roth, 1990*).

Since energy density is generally low in drylands – less plant biomass produced per unit surface area due to water and often nutrient scarcity albeit high solar radiation – a smaller number of people can be supported from the land than in higher potential areas where crop production is possible. Because of the overall low primary production with high variability and heterogeneity it is mostly not profitable to modify the environment at considerable cost, therefore dryland landuse systems are mostly “low external input production systems” (*Kessler & Moolhuijzen, 1994*). As a result, population density in the vast dryland areas is low and as a consequence, socio-economic infrastructure in many pastoral areas is weak or even completely absent with limited access to markets, financial services and educational, medical and communication facilities/services (e.g., *Umar, 1997*). In addition a high production risk results from droughts and insecurity, for instance due to cattle raiding between hostile pastoral groups (*Lesorogol, 2005*).

Commercial ranchland is usually privately owned, which means that the ranch owner has exclusive access rights to the land (*Barrows & Roth, 1990*) but at the same time is confined to this limited parcel. The land has to be managed accordingly to avoid degradation (*Ellickson, 1986*). Utilisation of the animals on a ranch is usually specialised. The animals are kept mainly for meat production, sometimes also for milk production. Unlike in pastoral systems, only a few animal products and services are exploited for human needs. The majority of ranches in Kenya are situated in semi-arid areas and vary in size between 2,000 and 20,000 ha. They are often situated on a medium altitude, many of them in Laikipia and the adjacent districts. More than two thirds of Laikipia District is covered with

vegetation dominated by grassland, open thicket and acacia trees as well as leafy bushland. Most of the area is used for beef production (*Heath, 2000*). Depending on the biomass production, animals are sold either as young stock for fattening/finishing in higher potential areas or – where biomass production permits – finished and sold directly for slaughter. Also stud animals for breeding are sold. In recent decades, the profitability of beef production decreased, many ranches in Kenya increasingly diversified their economy through, e.g. providing tourist accommodation and attractions (generating income from wildlife viewing), establishing smaller pockets of intensively cropped irrigated land and thus generating income from sale of vegetables, fruits and medicinal plants.

1.2 The International Labour Organisation concept of Decent Work

Working conditions have a major influence on the quality of life. Favourable working conditions were defined in the 'Decent Work' concept that was introduced by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1999. This concept represents a central objective for the international activities of the ILO to promote working conditions of "freedom, equity, security and human dignity" (*Somavia, 1999*) for all men and women. The question of relevance of the 'Decent Work' concept for different countries in different situations is currently addressed (e.g. *Ghai, 2002*).

The criteria for Decent Work defined in the ILO concept are: productive work, health and safety, social security and social dialogue (*Somavia, 1999*). Not only employees are included, but also "(...) unregulated workers, the self-employed as well as home workers" (*Somavia, 1999*). Productive work is well remunerated to cover the basic needs and earn a decent livelihood. This work should be carried out in safety, the working conditions should not put the working person at risk. Social security is needed not only to protect employees in case of injury or sickness, but also to provide them with general health insurance and pension. Workers need protection in case of losing employment. Social dialogue means to be able to negotiate working conditions (*Anker et al., 2002*).

1.3 Aim of the study

The concept of Decent Work was established concerning western working environments. Up to now, working conditions of pastoralists and employed herders have not yet been documented, possibly because the production systems are usually investigated with a focus on their “production potential” and not on their “employment creation potential”. This study aims at investigating, whether and in how far the criteria for Decent Work defined by ILO conform to the perspective of pastoralists and employed herders on the question, what ‘Decent Work’ means to them. This is of particular interest in the development debate, as rural agricultural food value chains potentially offer possibilities to create jobs – particularly in basic post-harvest treatment, handling and processing – thus providing employment opportunities for the rural population. However, given the limited market access, weak infrastructure and the often low prices and profit margins in agricultural food commodity production, such jobs are often remunerated at or even below minimum wages and often only as part time or seasonal job opportunities. Further, occupational health and safety regulations are often not enforced to the same degree as in urban – more industrialised – areas, and access to social security systems (health and pension funds) is limited. Thus the question arises whether the potentially arising job opportunities can be regarded as beneficial in the development context. On the other hand, any job opportunity potentially provides the respective incumbent with an income, thus contributing to securing their livelihood, and particularly people regarded as “the rural poor” appear to voluntarily accept working conditions considered far below the Decent Work standards. Against this background, the focus of this study was on assessing how pastoralists and employed herders on commercial ranches see their own working conditions. In order to reveal their perception of the working conditions it was investigated what “hardship” and “reward” means to them. The study used a comparative approach with the aim of finding similarities and differences between “self-employed” pastoralists and employed herders and to infer causes for the differences resulting from differences in their work and/or their working conditions. The last step was to compare the perception of pastoralists and herders of what decent working conditions are with the concept of Decent Work as defined by the ILO. This served at assessing how meaningful the international concept is for a working environment, which is very different from the western working environments.

2 Material and Methods

2.1 Study location

The study was conducted in northern Kenya among Samburu pastoralists living in Samburu District and in the southern part of Marsabit District and among employed herders on ranches in the adjacent Laikipia District. The area is mostly mountainous, but lowland regions do exist. Annual rainfall varies between 150–750 mm depending on the altitude and the year, the mountain ranges receiving more rainfall than the lowlands. The Samburu keep cattle, sheep, goats and some camels (*Nanyingi et al., 2008*). OIMaisor Ranch, where herders were interviewed, is situated in Laikipia District, 25 km north of the town of Rumuruti (Figure 1), and lies immediately south of the pastoral area under study. The annual rainfall in Laikipia ranges from 400 mm to 1000 mm with a high variation between the years (*Thenya, 2001*). OIMaisor Ranch covers about 12,000

hectares. About 3,000 Boran cattle are kept for beef production. Also sheep, goats and camels are kept on the ranch.

Samburu pastoralists around the town of Maralal and in the village of Ngurunit on the southern border of Marsabit District (Figure 1) were interviewed. Elders as well as warriors¹ and women were included. The questionnaire that was used for interviews with the pastoralists was slightly modified for the employed herders and discussed with the ranch owner.

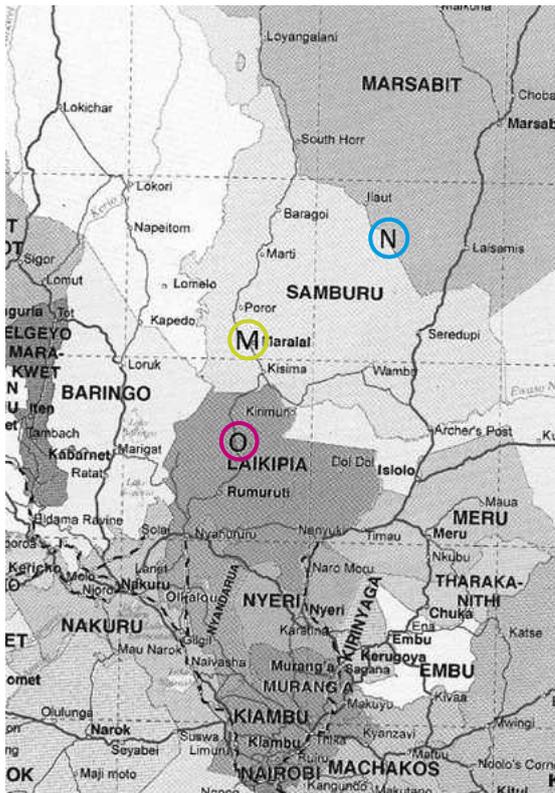


Figure 1: Study locations in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya (O = OIMaisor Ranch, M = Maralal, N = Ngurunit) (Muraya et al., 2010)

¹ unmarried men after circumcision

2.2 Data collection and analysis

The livestock keepers were interviewed face to face. Data were collected using open and semi-structured interviews (see Table 1). Only in some cases both types of interviews were held with the same person. The semi-structured questionnaire contained questions concerning daily activities, freetime, income, hardships and rewards, social security and education. The open interview followed the structure used in narrative interviews (e.g. *Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000; Bates, 2004*). These interviews were held to find out about the informants' own perception and to learn about additional aspects of the working life of the respondents, which were not included in the semi-structured questionnaire. Thorough training of the interviewer is necessary for this method. The two techniques were combined to get both, information on the respondents' own perception, and more systematic data related to the criteria defined by the 'Decent Work' concept.

Table 1: Number of open (left) and semi-structured (right) interviews at different locations

	open interviews [n]	semi-structured interviews [n]				
	Maralal	Ngurunit	OIMaisor	Maralal	Ngurunit	OIMaisor
Elders	13	9	13	9	9	13
Warriors	4	0	1	6	6	4
Women	2	1	0	2	5	0
Total	19	10	14	17	20	17

From the open interviews, five interviews with pastoralists and seven with herders – chosen for quality and richness in detail - were fully transcribed and analysed in detail. The remaining open interviews were evaluated concerning aspects relevant to the study's problem and integrated into the research. Qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 1983) was used to group information from the open interviews according to the topics concerned in the semi-structured interview.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Pastoralists

In this section we first present information on daily activities and on what is regarded as “hardship” and “reward” by pastoralists and employed herders respectively in separate sections. This is followed by a comparative assessment of the evaluation of their work and their working conditions with regard to its decency and attractiveness.

3.1.1 Daily activities

Pastoralism is a family business, in most cases involving all family members including children. The different livestock species are in most cases herded separately in order to take better care of their fodder needs and grazing behaviour. Furthermore, herds are traditionally often split into household herds that comprise mainly milking animals, usually at the peak of their lactation, and satellite herds that contain all other animals and are kept far away in better pasture areas. The household herds are kept close to the homestead in order to supply the household with milk and have therefore a much smaller pasture range at their disposal. They are hence less mobile. The satellite herds foraging far away have fewer restrictions to their mobility and can thus make much better use of the spatio-temporal pasture heterogeneity than the household herds. Therefore, the nutritional status of the animals in the household herds is usually lower than that of the animals in the satellite herds, and being in the household herd for a period of time means nutritional stress for an animal with consequent decline in milk yield and weight (in the case of lactating female animals) or weight gain (in the case of their offspring). Therefore, single animals are frequently exchanged between the household and the satellite herd depending on the status of the animals and on the requirements of the household. Applying these herd splitting practices hugely increases the demand for labour. Since herding and watering the animals as well as much of the other livestock management has to be carried out every day, also on weekends, possibilities for free time are restricted.

In the interviews, typical day-structures were given. For all interviewed groups, the days tend to start at 6 am and to end around 9 pm. The activities depend on the age and position of the informant. The heads of household, usually the married men, are called elders, and their main responsibility is supervision of the work of the other family members. Warriors are men after their circumcision, before they become elders by getting married and starting their own family. Men stay warriors for usually 12 to 14 years. The work performed by warriors is the most strenuous, since they are young and strong. Elders may also do work of warriors if there is no son in warriorhood in the family, otherwise the elders usually delegate the physically hard tasks to the warriors in their family. The older an elder gets, the fewer physically demanding tasks fall under his responsibility. Usually, elders decide about distribution of tasks and about livestock management and offtake. Women perform many different tasks surrounding household maintenance and also livestock husbandry. They are responsible for taking care of the children and young animals at home.

In the semi-structured interviews the informants were asked to describe their activities on the day before the interview. The daily routines of an elder, a warrior and a woman are exemplified in Tables 2 to 4.

Table 2: Schedule of a day (18 / 09 / 2010) of the elder Mouseijan Lesukat in Ngurunit (S25)

5 am	Check animals, open gates of the 'bomas' ^a
	Wake up children
	Breakfast
	Releasing animals, milk camels
Morning	Watching other people giving interviews from his house
Around 1 pm	Watering lambs which grazed at wells, bringing them back together
	Lunch
Afternoon	Sitting at elders' tree (talking, sleeping, playing a game)
4 pm	Receiving shoats ^b in field, bringing them home with herder
	Supervising milking
9–11 pm	Tea, supper, telling stories, going to sleep

^a fenced corral, where the animals are kept at night. ^b mixed herd of sheep and goats.

Table 3: Schedule of a day (23/09/2010) of the warrior Joshua Lewaljinge in Ngurunit (S28)

6 am	Getting up, watering cows, bringing them back home
	Milking, separating calves
	Releasing cows, accompanying them to grazing area with herder
Morning	Repairing well
4 pm	Washing himself and his clothes
	Receiving animals in field, bringing them home with herder
	Having fun outside the house ^a
	Milking cows
9 pm	Supper (separately, away from home)
Until 1 am	Dancing

^a this means meeting friends near the home for talking and enjoyment

Table 4: Schedule of a day (24/09/2010) of the woman Nainina Lepitiling in Ngurunit (S31)

6 am	Waking up, opening gates of 'bomas', milking shoats
	Cooking tea, cooking food for herders
	Letting lambs/kids out after shoats are gone
Morning – 11 am	Cleaning 'boma', fetching water
12 pm	Cooking lunch for family
3 pm	Going to town, looking for food (credit)
	Assembling lambs/kids
	Milking shoats, which came back
	Preparing tea, preparing supper
9 pm	Eating supper
	Sleeping

Work and life often cannot be separated clearly from each other. The life surrounds the animals kept, and activities necessary for the wellbeing of the animals are part of life in a similar way as taking meals or sitting under a tree and discussing community matters. Pastoralism is a labour intensive way of living and gaining a livelihood. *Shields* (1999) defines a "long hour week" as 41 hours or more. In a study on Austrian agriculture *Greimel et al.* (2003) quote figures of Statistik Austria for the average yearly workload of Austrian farmers as 2,160 hours. The pastoralists' working hours of 77 hours per week and accordingly 4004 hours per year are however not seen as a constraint or hardship by the pastoralists themselves.

3.1.2. Routine tasks

In order to give an idea of the type of work carried out by pastoralists, the routine tasks of herding, watering, fencing, milking and bleeding an animal are described in more detail and shown on pictures in figure 2.

The largest proportion of a day is taken up by herding. Herding includes walking far distances with the animals, often up to 20 km, to take them to good pastures. The different animal species are herded separately. Therefore many family members are occupied by this task. The responsibility of the herder is to make sure that the animals take in enough fodder and grant their security. Attacks of wild animals have to be prevented and dangerous areas have to be avoided.

On the watering day several people are needed. One or two have to keep the animals away from the well and only release small groups to approach the watering draft. Inside the well several people, depending on the depth, are needed to lift the water up. They exchange buckets of water and empty ones for refilling. This has to be carried out very fast so that animals do not need to wait to satisfy their thirst. Usually, these wells are dug several meters deep in the stony ground of dry riverbeds by warriors.

Fences are made out of thorny acacia tree branches to protect animals against predators during the night. In a settlement area, trees of which branches can be used for fencing are often far away, since material close by has been used up. Therefore branches have to be dragged a long way. The satellite camps, also called 'fora' camps, tend to shift weekly, thus new fences have to be built regularly.

Animals are milked in the morning and in the evening. Usually the animals are approached in the herd and milked without tethering. Milk is stored in calabashes. All family members can perform this task. However, camels and cattle are usually milked by adults while smallstock is milked by children.

Bleeding of animals is performed by tying a rope around the animal's neck as a tourniquet to retain the blood of the jugular vein. Then an arrow is used to make a fine cut of the skin and the jugular vein. The blood oozing from the cut is collected in a calabash, stirred to prevent clotting and consumed together with milk as a supplement of the diet. About two litres at a time are taken from an adult cow.

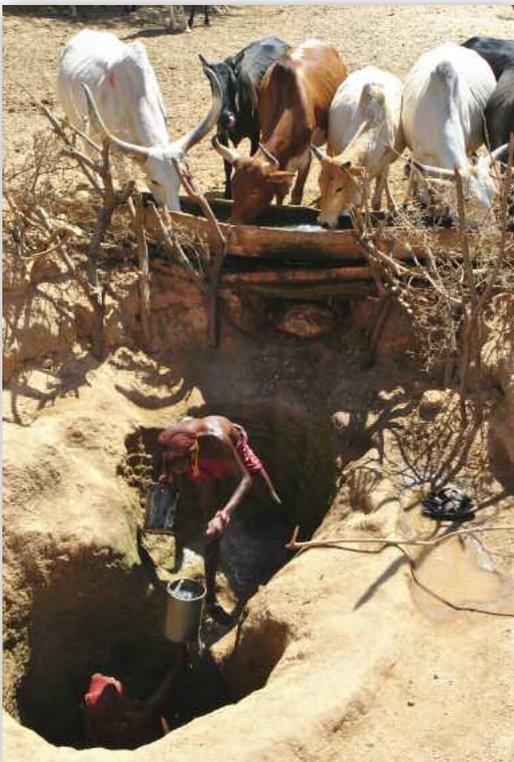
Apart from the routine tasks, there are many tasks that only need to be carried out periodically or at a certain point in time. These are for instance feeding supplementary feed to animals in the home based herd, or caring for female animals during parturition. The difficult tasks, often conducted by one person, demand a wide spectrum of knowledge and abilities of the person performing it.



Herding



Fencing



Watering



Watering in deep well



Milking



Bleeding

3.1.3 Hardships mentioned frequently by pastoralists

The major hardship mentioned by pastoralists is drought, it was mentioned by 27 respondents (n=41). Drought means that one or more rainy seasons failed and the dry period extends up to 24 months. In a drought it becomes a lot more difficult to feed the livestock. Pasture areas with sufficient fodder supply become scarce and distances between the areas larger. The daily herding period needs to be extended and herders and animals have to cover longer distances. Animals kept at the homestead for provision of milk have to be supplemented. Feed has to be brought to these animals, often from far away. In Ngurunit one feed supplement used during droughts are tubers from a plant called "Loiseichi", which are dug from the ground in the mountains. Also forage gets cut from trees. The provision of feed to the animals demands a lot of effort during a drought. On the other hand the milk production of the animals goes down. Also due to poor body condition, slaughtering of the animal does not yield a lot of meat for the family. Especially elders see it as a hardship if they are not in a position to provide enough food for their family. During droughts, prices obtained when selling animals are extremely low. In extreme cases people have to decide, whether they slaughter their animal for the little meat available, to prevent the humans from starving and therefore reduce their asset base (herd size), or if they remain without food and try to provide a minimum amount of feed to the animals to prevent them from dying of under-nutrition and weakness.

Watering is seen as hard by seven, out of twelve respondents (warriors) involved in watering. The depth of a well, which is dug by hand, depends on the location and ground water level. Especially in hard and rocky soil digging of the well is laborious (see Figure 2). Also watering itself is very tiresome and can be dangerous. If animals push each other into the well, when they are very eager to get to the water, the people inside the well can get severely hurt or even killed. If water buckets are accidentally dropped they can also hurt people severely.

Insecurity was also mentioned by seven interviewees as a hardship. If other ethnic groups attack, they fight and steal animals, often the whole herd. Nowadays guns are often used instead of spears and the frequency of fatal attacks increases. Activities are seen as a hardship by pastoralists if they are exhausting, challenging, dangerous or burdensome (Table 6).

Table 5: Categories of hardships for pastoralists

Exhausting	Challenging	Dangerous	Burdensome
moving far	the person has to concentrate for a long time	risk to get physically hurt	the advice is not accepted
carrying heavy things	the right tools are not available	risk of getting killed	getting disturbed
carrying for a long distance		risk of getting economically hurt	children do not obey
it takes a long time			not taken seriously (warriors)
			not being able to take care for family (elders)

Those hardships that pastoralists perceive to affect them mainly derive from environmental conditions. The major hardship, drought, cannot be influenced by pastoralists themselves, only grazing management can be adapted. The pastoral work gets more laborious during a drought, but also the inability of taking care of the family and the animals is a perceived serious constraint to the pastoralist. Among the hardships many tasks that were seen as burdensome were mentioned. The burden of having to worry about necessities of life, like how to get food for the family or the animals is felt more strongly than work that is challenging or dangerous.

3.1.4 Rewards as seen by pastoralists

Many rewards are related to the fact that pastoralists are self-employed. Being the boss and doing work for oneself is seen as reward. As described e.g. by Tuwanai Lesukat, an elder from Ngurunit: *“I like my job, because there is no other person, I am my boss in my job. But if I were employed by anybody, I could be kicked off any time, people command you. Here is no command, nobody can threaten me.”* (Interview S26, 21/09/2010). It is also seen as rewarding when work is not time consuming or physically demanding. Especially women define work as a reward if it is not physically demanding, since they have many tasks that involve a lot of physical labour. Also described as rewarding is getting good prices for animals sold. Although watering is regarded as hard work, some people like it because it is an exercise. Joshua Lewaljinge, a warrior from Ngurunit said: *“I like watering. If you stay some days without watering, your body is not at ease. You feel tired just staying in the house. If you always do watering you are active, your body feels nice.”* (Interview S28, 22/09/2010). A warrior describes the reward of having responsibility: *“(At home my father) makes decisions, I contribute. (...) especially when going to ‘fora’, I am the one to give decisions”* (Oltepes Leganida, warrior, Ngurunit, Interview S29, 22/09/2010).

Ichniowski et al. (1996) studied ways to enhance motivation of employees. They found that “workers may enjoy work more when the characteristics of the job make work interesting and ensure the work provides feedback and rewards. This correlates with the perception of pastoralists. A task is liked if the completion helps to achieve a desired condition, not only if the task itself is enjoyed. The importance of self-efficiency, of working for the own benefit and not having to take orders from others appears frequently during the interviews. Elders, and warriors who have been to the ‘fora camp’ alone, have experienced the position of being their own boss and see benefits from it. It influences their perception of aspired working conditions. Work is seen as desirable if the required task is known to the person and the abilities needed are possessed. It was never mentioned that acquiring new knowledge and abilities is seen as rewarding.

3.2 Employed herders on a commercial ranch

3.2.1 Daily activities

On the ranch investigated, there are two types of jobs related to livestock keeping for the employed workers. These are herders that take the animals out for grazing during the day, and night guards, who guard the animals at night in the '*boma*', the coral. There is a distinct structure of the day that applies to all day herders on the ranch (Table 6) and night guards (Table 7) respectively.

Table 6: Daily Routine of an employed herder

5:30–6:30 am	Get up, have breakfast
6:30–7 am	Help counting the animals
7 am	Leave ' <i>boma</i> ' to take animals to grazing area
Around midday	Take the animals to water point
	Some herders have lunch
6 pm	Take animals back to ' <i>boma</i> '
	Help counting
After 6 pm	Eat, chat, sleep

Table 7: Daily routine of an employed night guard

6:00 pm	Meet herders at ' <i>boma</i> '
	Count animals, health check, medication
During night	Light fire, guard ' <i>boma</i> ', assist cows when calving
6:30–7 am	Count animals
During day	Sleep

All herders and night watchmen on the ranch have one day off per week, meaning four days off per month. It is not necessarily Saturday or Sunday and not necessarily one day per week. The herder can also work straight for a certain amount of time and then take the free days he is entitled to consecutively.

There is no break for many of the herders and a working day includes eleven hours of work, which results in 66 hours per week. This is a “long hour week” according to *Shields (1999)*, and also considerably longer than 41.5 hours workload per week in Austrian agriculture (*Greimel et al., 2003*). This might raise the issue of overtime. However on the ranch there is no overtime pay and the employees did not demand overtime pay in the interviews.

3.2.2 Routine activities

Since the workers are employed as herders, their daily tasks are herding, watering and counting. Once a week animals are treated against ticks, since tick borne diseases – particularly East Coast Fever (ECF) – are widespread in the area. For tick treatment the animals have to pass through a spray race and all herders and herds gather at that point once a week. Herders have to make sure that animals are well fed and healthy and therefore grow well. There is an extra pay added to the salary if this aim is achieved. Most animal-related decisions, like the ones about breeding or sales of animals, are carried out by the ranch management. Herders only make few decisions on animal husbandry, but make decisions about matters within their family. Some families live on the ranch, some families live further away, therefore the amount of responsibilities within the family differs from herder to herder.

3.2.3 Hardships mentioned frequently by employed herders

The hardships mentioned by the employed herders in the open interviews could be differentiated into hardships occurring in the life before the person became a herder and hardships of the work on the ranch.

Most herders originate from pastoralist families, they have a pastoral background. They have practiced livestock keeping from early childhood on. Most interviewed herders started seeking employment on a ranch because they had lost their animals at home. Without animals there was no more work and lack of possibilities to earn a livelihood in their home area. Hence the hardships they experienced in the past are the reasons why they sought employment. In the seven transcribed narrative interviews, animals were lost due to disease (two informants), livestock raids (five informants) or drought (five informants). Of two informants the father died in early childhood and of one informant the mother died in early childhood. Some herders even had to cope with a number of different losses. An example is Akale Naukot, herder on OIMaisor: *“I was born in Baragoi, we had livestock and as we started to grow old - start to use our brains - the Pokots came in and took all the livestock and killed my dad. They killed my mum. So we were left with only 3, two sisters and me. So we went to our uncle. (...) I started herding and looking after my uncle’s livestock. (...) Just after I married (...) the Pokots came in again and took off with my uncle’s livestock. Then I decided, now let me leave this place, because my uncle’s animals are gone, (...) so I have nothing else to do here. (...) I left Baragoi.”* (Interview NR9, 15/10/2010). A number of herders, after losing their animals in the past, had built up a herd of sometimes hundred animals and only if they lost their animals several times, they started seeking employment.

Hardships of the work on the ranch can be divided into two areas. One is health and safety, the other remuneration and appreciation. Hardships relating to health and safety are mainly risks arising from conflicts with wild animals. Wildlife density is higher on the ranch than in the pastoral areas. This is due to the fact, that neighbouring ranches are involved in game tourism and that ranches are usually more conscientious about wildlife protection than the surrounding population, which is understandable given different means of wildlife control and evasion. On ranches with tourism activities, wild animals are regarded as asset and looked after. These animals also move freely on OIMaisor Ranch, but no incident was described where a wild animal actually hurt a herder. However, death and injury of people in human-wildlife encounters are not uncommon in Kenya. *Kenya Wildlife Service* (2000) recorded 230 people killed between 1989 and 1994. This might explain why the risk is perceived by the herders although no incident has happened on the ranch.

Working alone is seen as a hardship, because in the case of an accident of an animal or the herder, the herder is not able to call help, because he has to stay with the herd. Furthermore working at night or during rain and in the cold is seen as a hardship as well as standing the whole day.

The remuneration includes salary and appreciation by the ranch management. Half of the informants perceive their salary as too low. Three informants feel bothered or not appreciated by the ranch management for their work, they wish to have more responsibility in animal management. According to *Andalón et al. (2008)* the monthly minimum wage for herdsmen on Kenyan ranches was 2,420 KES in 2004. The salary of 4,500 KES per month paid in 2010 to the herders (without deductions) can be seen as high compared to the figure given by *Andalón et al. (2008)*, but can also be seen as low since there is no subsistence production and the herder has to support his family and often also relatives from the salary. Since ranching is a cost-intensive business with low profit margins, the ranch owner has however not much room for paying higher salaries.

When the former pastoralists were seeking employment they often did this with the motivation of earning money to buy animals. At first employment was seen as a temporary situation, but then the herder experienced that support of the family and buying animals at the same time is hardly possible.

3.2.4 Rewards of working on the ranch

The main reward for employed herders is receiving the salary. The salary is paid every month also when environmental conditions are poor - thus also during droughts when there is low livestock production or even high losses. This is a main difference to pastoralism where income depends on environmental conditions. Another reward for employed herders is the fact that they have a job they are used to. They do not have to be instructed by others, but know the necessary tasks from their life and work as pastoralists. Some of the herders on the ranch have started to build up own herds with their salary. This is seen as a reward because it pains the informants to only look after animals that are not their own. The ability of building up an own herd is related to the amount of pay and the needs of the family.

3.3 Differences and similarities in perception of working conditions

Although pastoralists and employed herders both work in pasture-based livestock systems their work is not exactly the same. For instance, activities carried out by employed herders are not as varied as the activities of pastoralists. In addition, the responsibility of herders on the ranch is much lower than that of pastoralists, since the latter look after their own animals. This influences their perception of their work and of the aspired working conditions.

An idea of how people evaluate their job and see its future can be obtained by enquiring about the wishes for work for their children. Many of the pastoralists said that they divide their children into two groups, half of their children go to school and the other half stays at home to look after the animals. The ones who are sent to school are then expected to find employment, the ones who stay at home should follow pastoralism. A number of pastoralists said, all their children should go to school but also wished their children to own livestock when they grow up. Pastoralists want their children to have both, on the one hand an employment, but on the other hand own livestock. The animals are then looked after by a relative or friend. There were however two pastoralists who said their children should not have livestock when they grow up. The employed herders wanted their children to get formal education. Most employed herders want their children to get employment in town or start their own business in town. Some wished for the children to also work on a ranch. One informant specifically said he would not like his children to work on a ranch. No herder had the wish for his children to become pastoralists.

In the semi-structured questionnaire the informants were specifically asked what it means to them to have decent and good working conditions. One aspect that pastoralists emphasised as important were environmental conditions that are conducive. This means: sufficient rain, good pasture, no diseases, close market access and security. Pastoralists frequently mentioned self-employment again in this category. Also being able to work at one's own pace and not being far from home were mentioned.

Both, pastoralists and herders said that being used to the work and having experience in it is 'decent' work to them. Some of the herders said working with livestock is decent work. Others saw working in the government or having own business to be decent work. In the words of employed herders, decent work is defined as: *"The best work is work that you are experienced in and where you know what you are doing. So good work to me is herding (...), because that is something I know how to go about it, if there is any problem ... There might be any other good work, even better than herding, but as long as I do not know it, or have no experience in it, it's not good to me"* (Lokeni Lonia Kahn, Interview NR7, 14/10/2010) *Another herder explained: (Having an own business is good) "because you are the one who makes decisions on what you do, so when there is success, you know why there was success, when you fail, you know why there was a failure and you make changes (...)"* (Luke Muwenda, Interview SR12, 18/10/2010).

For both, pastoralists and employed herders, obtaining a good income is important. But the perception of remuneration is different between the two groups. To the employed herders the monetary remuneration is the most important factor about their work. Some want to buy animals but in general the money is primarily spent on food, education and other products, hence is used for the herders' families. Income also matters to pastoralists, because they also need to spend money for the upkeep of their family. The amount of income depends on the herd size and on the performance of the animals. There is also direct provision of food and other products from the animals. The pastoralists see the welfare of their animals as an important factor to make them see their own work as rewarding and 'decent'. The employed herders do not put an emphasis on the wellbeing of the ranch's animals.

3.4 Comparison with the criteria defined by the Decent Work concept

The criteria for Decent Work defined in the concept of the ILO are: productive work, health and safety, social security and social dialogue, meaning to be able to negotiate working conditions.

How productive work is depends for the pastoralists – as explained above – on the size of his productive asset – which is the livestock herd. In the study, people of different wealth status were interviewed. Depending on the number of animals owned and the environmental conditions, work is more or less productive. Under good circumstances accumulation of wealth is high and the family can be well taken care of, food and formal education can be paid for. Under poor circumstances there is a high risk of losing a big share of the production asset. For example, during droughts or due to animal raids high animal losses may occur.

The salary of the employed herders on the ranch is regular but perceived as low. It does not depend on environmental conditions, but is secured by the ranch management. When the study was conducted in 2010 a herder earned 4,500 KSh per month, this was the equivalent of 41.63 €². When pastoralists were asked how much money they need and how many animals they sell, the average of two goats per month or one cow in four months was given. That is roughly the same amount as the salary of herders, but is seen as sufficient. The difference in need for monthly income lies probably in the fact that pastoralists have additional direct benefits from their animals when using animal products for subsistence. Another reason might be a higher demand for goods and services by the herders. If possible all children of herders are sent to school and buying goods for all family members requires large proportions of the salary.

Health and safety is a minor topic of concern for pastoralists, even though they are exposed to a number of hazards. For pastoralists, livestock husbandry is the only way of gaining a livelihood with their animal husbandry and hazards are seen as an inherent part of that livelihood system. The herders, who get monetary remuneration, emphasize the need of working in healthy and safe conditions. The benefits of working are not as diverse for herders than for pastoralists. The aim of herders is to get a salary. This salary can be gained in many different ways. With the choice of employment opportunities comes an awareness of conditions of the work. Health and safety then get a high priority.

² Exchange rate of 1 Euro to 108 KSh on 1 Jan 2011

Pastoralists gain social security mainly from family members and from other members of the community through a communal security system that is based on giving animals as a loan. In Kenya also governmental social insurance programmes exist. There is the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) and the National Social Security Fund (NSSF). No interviewed pastoralist stated to be an active member of the formal social security system. Many of the pastoralists are illiterate and offices of the formal social security systems are only found in the major towns. Therefore access to these funds is restricted for pastoralists. On the ranch, some health care is provided by the owner, who has together with the owners of the adjacent ranches established a small dispensary. Furthermore, the ranch management applies for the membership of NHIF and NSSF for each worker. The informants on the ranch saw it as difficult to get the insurance cover when needed and mentioned deductions from the promised pensions by the government. There is only limited social security provided by the herders' families, since with leaving the often pastoral society they do not have access to the traditional social security system anymore. Therefore formal social security becomes more important. In general since urbanisation is increasing it has become more and more difficult to provide enough help through traditional security systems (Dau, 2003).

Social dialogue about issues of the work is not seen as desirable by most in the pastoral system. Only between elders there is regular exchange of opinions, but no discussions about tasks occur with the children. The elder gives instructions to the children and does not permit questioning. Only warriors mentioned the desire of being included in decision-making. Herders on the ranch have no influence on decision making in livestock production and limited negotiation possibilities regarding their working conditions. Herders have in general two options, either to stay on the ranch and accept the working conditions, or to leave and look for employment elsewhere. One finding is that even though they do not have many options, the herders exercise this right to choose work. In the narrative interviews it was seen that some herders went from one ranch to another without having been dismissed or given notice. These herders did not agree with specific working conditions, they left one ranch to find another ranch where the working conditions suited their expectations better. One herder who had made this decision was asked whether he liked the work on OIMaisor Ranch and he said that if he would not like it, he would not be there. Other herders gave the answer that if they found a job with a higher pay, they would leave their job at OIMaisor Ranch. Social dialogue is not rooted in the pastoral social structure and is therefore hitherto not demanded by the employed herders either.

4 Conclusions

The Decent Work concept was developed to make earning money satisfying. Although pastoralists and herders do similar tasks in general, ownership of the production asset, the livestock, makes a big difference with regard to responsibilities, and perception of benefits and failure of their work. As seen from their wishes for children, importance of owning animals decreases with possibilities arising from education and employment and is therefore judged higher by pastoralists than by employed herders. Whereas decency of work depends directly on environmental conditions for pastoralists, for the herders it depends mainly on the employer and to a lesser extent on the productivity of ranching that is influenced by environmental conditions. For herders who obtain a salary, the Decent Work criteria are more important. Once earning a monetary remuneration the importance of safe working conditions increases. Pastoralists, on the contrary, obtain satisfaction from the direct outcome of their work. Prosperous herds are the aim of that work, and when having healthy and numerous animals, pastoralists are regarded as wealthy and respectable by others. Hence they are more inclined to take risky working conditions for granted.

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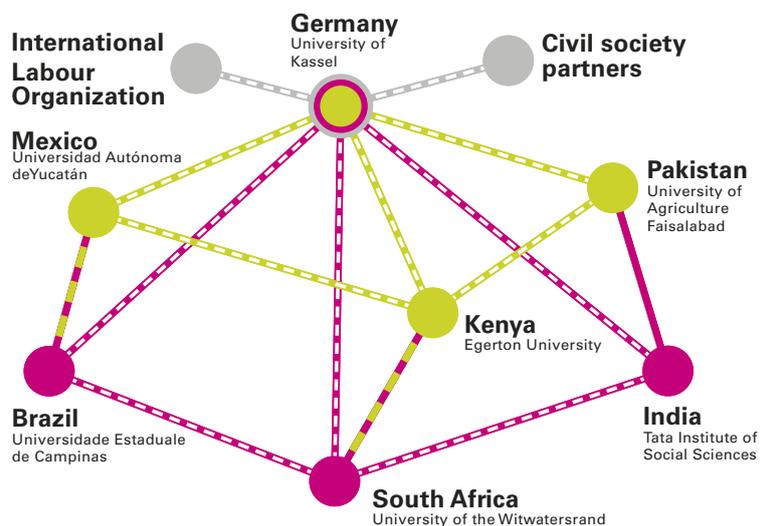
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International Center for Development and Decent Work

University of Kassel

Kurt-Schumacher-Str. 2, D-34117 Kassel

Phone: + 49 (0) 561 804-7397

E-Mail: icdd@uni-kassel.de



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