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Social Mobilisation and Social Marketing for Pastoral and Agro-Pastoral Wellbeing in the Horn of Africa: A Narrative Review

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Abstract: Pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in the Horn of Africa face interconnected climatic, economic and institutional pressures that undermine livelihoods, food security and wellbeing. This narrative review examines how social mobilisation and social marketing can jointly strengthen collective agency, improve access to services and markets, and support sustainable use of livestock, environmental and cultural assets. It synthesises 25 purposively selected publications issued between 2020 and 2025, comprising empirical studies, scholarly literature, institutional guidance and regional policy documents. The thematic synthesis identifies six interconnected priorities: community ownership and accountable governance; audience insight and differentiated inclusion; feasible behavioural objectives and valued exchange; integrated services and fair commercial relationships; environmental and cultural stewardship; and livelihood, nutrition and risk protection. The findings indicate that knowledge and communication alone are insufficient to sustain beneficial practices where affordability, service reliability, mobility, resource rights and decision-making authority remain constrained. Collective organisation can strengthen coordination and bargaining power, but requires safeguards against exclusion and elite capture. Similarly, increased livestock sales cannot independently demonstrate improved wellbeing because livestock also support nutrition, breeding, savings and social security. The review proposes an iterative framework linking participatory diagnosis, accountable organisation, co-design, voluntary piloting, evidence-based expansion and continuous evaluation. Success should be assessed through sustained practice changes, net income, dietary outcomes, resilience, equitable control of benefits and resource condition. However, geographically uneven evidence and limited evaluation of combined interventions prevent causal conclusions about the framework's effectiveness. Sustainable pastoral development therefore requires locally adapted testing that connects community influence with reliable services, fair markets and responsive institutions while protecting mobility, productive assets, cultural choice and voluntary livelihood diversification.

Keywords: *Social mobilisation; Social marketing; Pastoralism; Agro-pastoralism; Horn of Africa; Food security; Livelihoods; Wellbeing.*

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Introduction

Pastoralism is a livelihood and production system adapted to spatially and seasonally variable resources in dryland areas. Its economic contribution extends beyond livestock sales to household consumption, asset accumulation and social relationships. Assessing its contribution therefore requires attention to how benefits are generated and distributed, who controls them and whether the ecological foundations of production remain secure.

Pastoral communities face interconnected challenges, including limited access to markets, finance, infrastructure and essential services, alongside insecure resource rights and constraints on livestock mobility. Drought, disease outbreaks, resource degradation, conflict and price volatility can compound these challenges, undermining food security and household wellbeing. Nevertheless, drylands offer opportunities for sustainable livestock production, value addition, collective marketing, locally appropriate enterprises and services supported by digital technologies. People living in drylands and practising pastoralism can strengthen their economies and wellbeing through inclusive collective action, secure and negotiated resource access, adaptive herd and rangeland management, livelihood diversification and reliable connections to markets and essential services.

This review examines how social mobilisation and social marketing can jointly support these changes to improve livelihoods, food security and social and economic wellbeing. It argues that social mobilisation strengthens collective voice and accountable governance, while social marketing enables communities and service partners to design feasible practices and services that deliver valued benefits. Commercial livestock marketing connects selected improvements to market opportunities and income. The paper integrates these complementary functions while recognising that participation alone does not constitute empowerment and increased sales do not necessarily translate into improved wellbeing.

The map below shows the countries of the Horn of Africa and highlights areas where pastoralism is widely practised.

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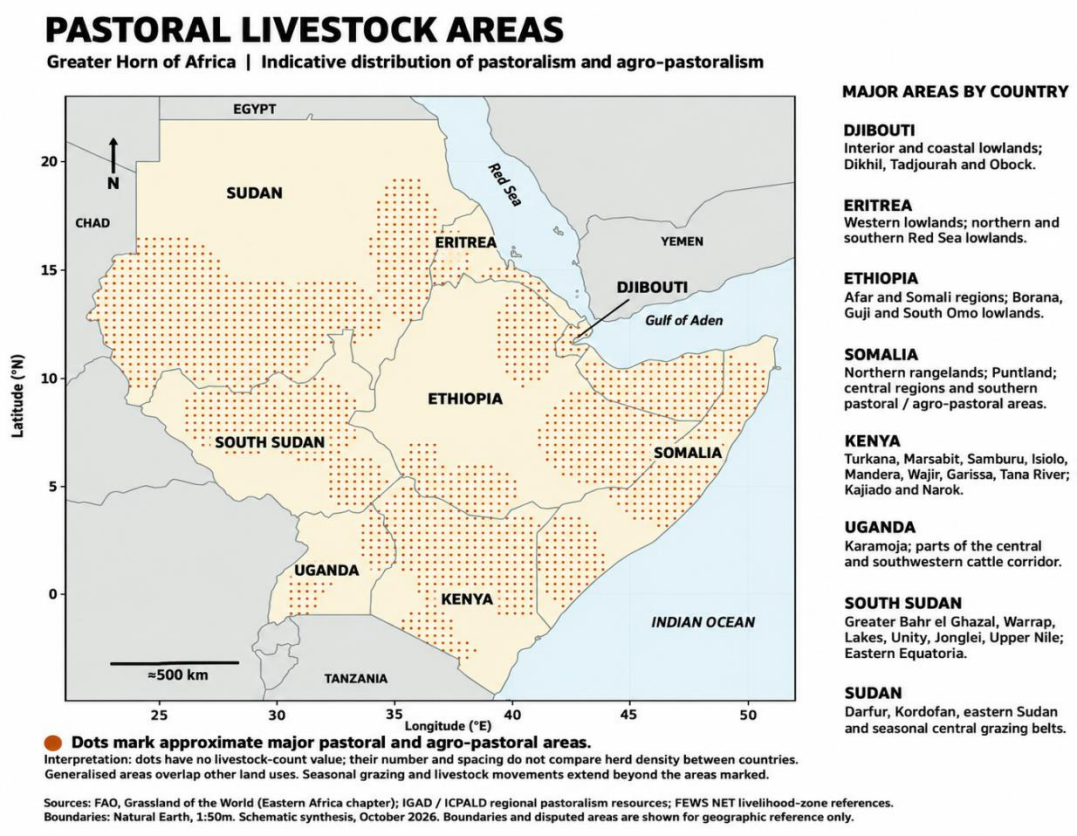


Figure 1: Horn of Africa Pastoralism Areas. Source: Researcher made.

Review Approach and Scope

Design and geographical boundaries

The paper uses an interpretive narrative review to connect bodies of literature that are rarely organised within one pastoral-development framework. It does not present a systematic review, meta-analysis or original field investigation. The core Horn comprises Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia; the wider analytical scope includes connected pastoral areas of Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and South Sudan. This wider scope recognises livestock routes and livelihood relationships that extend beyond the geographical core. Country-specific evidence is identified rather than treated as regionally representative.

Source identification and selection

Targeted web searches were undertaken on 9-15 August 2026 for publications issued during 2020-2025. Search combinations linked pastoralism or agro-pastoralism with livestock markets, social marketing, community engagement, gender, food security, animal health, climate information, land, water and investment. Searches prioritised publisher pages and the repositories of Tufts University, SPARC, FAO, IGAD, UNICEF, UNCCD, the World Bank and relevant scholarly institutions. The date window captures recent evidence and guidance; it is not a claim to cover all publications available in 2026.

Sources were selected purposively for conceptual relevance, geographical applicability, identifiable authorship and a verifiable publication record. Twenty-five sources were retained for citation: five journal articles, one edited scholarly book, and nineteen institutional publications, standards, briefs or policy documents. Four journal articles provide empirical pastoral or agro-pastoral evidence; the fifth reviews social marketing interventions. Institutional guidance was included because cross-border governance, emergency response and community engagement require evidence beyond journal studies. Promotional claims and untraceable references were excluded from the cited corpus.

Verification and synthesis

Authors, dates, titles and publication identifiers were checked against publisher or institutional records. Source summaries, available article text, abstracts and official descriptions were consulted; access to complete texts was uneven. Claims based on accessible abstracts are kept within the findings reported there. Verification establishes bibliographic traceability, not uniform methodological quality. No screening totals, pooled effects or formal quality scores are reported because the search was purposive and was not conducted as an exhaustive systematic process.

An organising matrix linked each source to population and setting, method or document type, relevant principle, reported finding and interpretive limitation. The synthesis used community ownership and accountability alongside social marketing benchmarks: behavioural objectives, audience orientation, theory, insight, exchange, competition, segmentation and a methods mix (Schmidtke et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2020). Findings informed the framework, while proposed design actions are presented as recommendations requiring local assessment. Repeated themes were consolidated into six substantive clusters, followed by an implementation and evaluation framework.

The approach supports a practice-oriented conceptual contribution. It cannot establish the average effectiveness of social mobilisation or social marketing in the Horn, rank countries, or

attribute observed livelihood changes to either approach. Those boundaries guide the interpretation throughout the paper.

Conceptual Foundations and Organising Principles

Distinguishing mobilisation, social marketing and commerce

Social mobilisation is understood here as the process through which communities and partners develop shared priorities, organise collective action, negotiate resources and influence decisions. It extends beyond convening meetings to include representation, leadership, practical coordination and accountability. UNICEF's community-engagement standards emphasise local involvement and ownership across decision-making and implementation (UNICEF, 2020). This guidance provides a transferable foundation, although it is not evidence of pastoral livelihood impacts.

Social marketing applies audience understanding and marketing principles to practices intended to create social benefit. Its object may be timely vaccination, safer milk handling, informed drought preparation or inclusive resource governance. It differs from social media promotion, which is only one communication channel. Commercial marketing concerns the exchange of livestock, products and services for payment. The two may reinforce one another, but a profitable transaction is socially beneficial only if its distributional, nutritional and environmental consequences are acceptable.

The figure presents social mobilisation as a continuous, participatory process for improving livelihoods and wellbeing among pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in the Horn of Africa. Its six stages i.e., listening and mapping, organising and agreeing, planning with partners, acting and verifying, expanding what works, and reviewing and adapting, connect community priorities with coordinated action. Partnerships and safeguards underpin the process, promoting inclusive representation, local ownership, resource rights, mobility protection and accountability. Through continuous feedback and learning, this pathway seeks to strengthen collective voice, reliable services and equitable resource access, contributing to food security, resilience and fair control over benefits, with outcomes requiring local verification.

The figure below presents a social mobilisation framework for pastoral communities, highlighting collective action to strengthen pastoralism and improve livelihoods in pastoral areas.

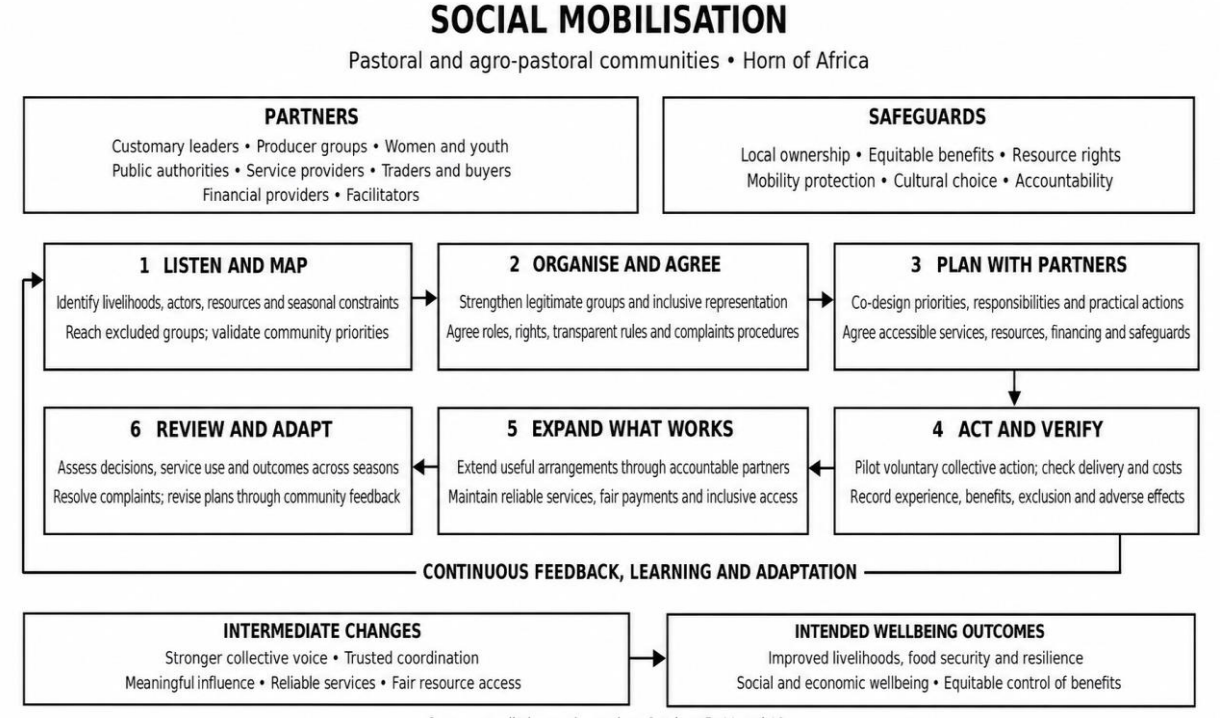


Figure 2: Pastoral social mobilization framework. Source: Researcher made.

The social marketing figure below presents a six-stage social marketing framework for promoting beneficial, voluntary practices among pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in the Horn of Africa. It progresses from understanding community needs and defining observable changes to assessing benefits and barriers, co-designing appropriate services and communication, piloting interventions, and expanding successful approaches through evaluation and feedback. Throughout, reliable services, fair terms, enforceable rights, and ecological and cultural safeguards underpin implementation. The intended outcomes are sustained adoption, improved net income, food security, resilience and equitable wellbeing, recognising that increased livestock sales alone do not demonstrate improved welfare.



Figure 3: Pastoral social marketing framework. Source: Researcher made.

A combined explanatory pathway

The proposed pathway begins with community-defined priorities and representative institutions. These enable joint diagnosis of barriers and the design of useful offers. Suitable services, incentives and rules then make desired practices feasible. Improved production, safer trade and resource management may produce income, food and resilience gains, provided benefits reach intended households and remain under equitable control. Feedback revises both the offer and its institutional conditions.

This pathway is conditional. Organisation may increase bargaining power but may also create gatekeepers. A premium may encourage quality improvements but exclude producers who cannot afford compliance. New market access may raise income while shifting milk away from children. Each linkage therefore requires evidence, rather than an assumption that one activity automatically generates the next outcome.

Principles used to cluster the review

The first cluster concerns ownership, trust, collective agency and accountable leadership. The second concerns audience insight and segmentation by livelihood, resources, gender, age and mobility. The third addresses clear behavioural objectives, valued exchange and competing practices. The fourth combines products or social offers, price, place and promotion with commercial relationships. The fifth considers environmental and cultural stewardship. The sixth assesses livelihoods, nutrition, inclusion and risk protection. Enabling policy and evaluation cut across all the six cluster areas.

Schmidtke et al. (2021) found incomplete application of social marketing benchmarks in the low- and middle-income-country interventions they reviewed. Their evidence supports disciplined design and reporting, but cannot be transferred directly into claims of effectiveness for pastoral livestock development. This paper therefore uses the benchmarks as an analytical scaffold, not as a proven regional intervention recipe.

The resulting unit of analysis is the relationship between people, institutions and opportunities. Pastoralists are co-designers and rights holders within that relationship. Traders, veterinarians, local authorities, insurers and buyers are also audiences whose practices may need to change. This broadens the focus from persuading households to creating conditions in which mutually agreed improvements can be sustained.

Livestock, Environment and Culture as Interdependent Assets

Production systems and differentiated opportunities

Pastoral households rely substantially on livestock and flexible access to grazing and water. Agro-pastoral households combine livestock with cultivation, with diverse balances between crop and herd income. These categories are not fixed: households may change their activities after shocks, market opportunities or changes in resource access. Programme design should therefore establish the local livelihood pattern rather than infer needs from a regional label (Hesse & Catley, 2024).

The practical opportunities differ accordingly. Mobile herders may prioritise accessible veterinary services, safe corridors and timely buyer connections. Agro-pastoralists may also benefit from crop residues, fodder conservation, manure use and negotiated post-harvest grazing. A household near a town may have dairy opportunities that a remote household lacks. None of

these differences justifies assuming that settled or intensive production is universally superior.

Risk is ecological and institutional

Climate hazards interact with vulnerability and development conditions; adaptation is constrained where households lack resources and services (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2022). Pastoral vulnerability also reflects non-climatic pressures that weaken adaptive capacity (Nassef, 2024). This suggests that a drought-preparation campaign cannot succeed through messages alone when grazing access is blocked or services are unavailable.

Land and investment decisions are equally consequential. Lind et al. (2020) examine how large projects reshape local politics and livelihoods in Eastern African drylands. Their work cautions against treating investment as an automatically inclusive process. For this review, the implication is that mobilisation must give affected communities influence over siting, access, compensation and benefit distribution before infrastructure or commercial expansion is presented as an opportunity.

Recognising value without romanticising practice

Livestock-linked culture includes knowledge of animals and landscapes, customary cooperation, food practices and identities. These resources can support trust, learning and enterprise. However, cultural legitimacy should not exempt institutions from scrutiny where women, younger people or minority groups lack voice. Nor should economic development require communities to stage or sell cultural practices they prefer to keep private.

Environmental value also requires qualified interpretation. Rangeland stewardship is a social–ecological task involving local governance and ecological conditions (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification [UNCCD], 2024). Grazing is not uniformly restorative or uniformly destructive. Its effects depend on access, timing, stocking patterns, rainfall and competing land uses. The proposed approach links commercial decisions to community-defined resource safeguards instead of using blanket claims of environmental benefit.

The assets thus reinforce one another when institutions work well: viable herds support livelihoods; healthy landscapes sustain production; and cultural knowledge and cooperation help manage uncertainty. They can also come into tension. Expanding cultivation may restrict corridors, a water point may concentrate grazing, and tourism may compete for land. A mobilization-marketing strategy must make these trade-offs visible before choosing activities.

Clusters of Social Mobilization and Marketing

Cluster One: Community Ownership, Collective Agency and Trust

Begin with listening and negotiated priorities

Mobilisation should begin with separate and joint discussions about desired outcomes, current constraints and existing responses. Participatory mapping can identify grazing areas, water points, markets, service routes and contested access. Seasonal calendars can show when labour demands, milk availability and cash needs are greatest. Wealth and livelihood discussions should be handled privately where public categorisation could stigmatise households. These are recommended diagnostic tools, not claims about activities already implemented across the region.

Existing associations, customary authorities, women's networks, traders and local government should help identify stakeholders, while independent outreach checks who is absent. Engagement should include mobile households, people with disabilities, minority communities and displaced livestock keepers where relevant. Meeting times, language and location are practical determinants of whose priorities enter the agenda. Transport and facilitation costs should be budgeted as part of participation.

Build useful organisations with accountable authority

Organisations should have a defined purpose: joint sales, animal-health scheduling, water management, savings, negotiation or knowledge exchange. Their usefulness is tested by services and decisions, not by registration or membership totals. Recommended governance arrangements include transparent membership rules, publicly explained fees, elected or otherwise locally legitimate leadership, accessible financial records and a credible mechanism for complaints and leadership review.

Traditional and statutory institutions need negotiated roles. Odhiambo (2024) identifies land-access challenges and institutional responses in African pastoral settings; this provides a basis for connecting local organisation to resource rights. The review recommends that grazing agreements recognise different users and document how disputes, exceptional drought access and sanctions will be handled. Organisations should not claim authority over land or members beyond their legitimate mandate.

Collective action can reduce the cost of finding buyers and coordinating services, but aggregation also creates risks. Leaders may favour relatives, divert fees or restrict independent sales. Groups should explain how prices are obtained, how deductions are calculated and how payments reach sellers. Individuals should retain informed choice over participation, subject to agreed and lawful group obligations.

Trust through reciprocity and demonstrated delivery

Pastoral knowledge and customary safety nets are significant components of responses to shocks (Hassan et al., 2024). External partners should first understand these arrangements and avoid replacing reciprocal relationships with short-lived project structures. Trust is more likely to grow when commitments are modest, visible and fulfilled: a veterinarian arrives as agreed, a buyer pays on time, or a committee resolves a complaint fairly.

Demonstration should therefore combine practical performance with open discussion of costs and limitations. A small voluntary service pilot can show whether attendance, payment and follow-up are workable. Community feedback should reach both facilitators and providers, with responses reported back. If a promised benefit fails, the offer should be revised before promotional effort expands.

The mobilisation principle emerging from this cluster is reciprocal accountability. Communities contribute knowledge, coordination and agreed effort; partners provide reliable services and meaningful decision space. Sustained participation depends on that relationship producing results that people recognise as useful.

Cluster Two: Audience Insight, Segmentation and Inclusion

Segment by circumstances that change decisions

Segmentation should distinguish meaningful differences in opportunity and constraint. Herd assets, species, market distance, mobility, access to cultivation, household labour, cash flow and service coverage may matter more than administrative location. A mobile camel-owning household, a small-ruminant trader and a peri-urban milk producer may respond to different offers. Segments should remain provisional and be revised through local consultation.

Market evidence illustrates why this matters. In Southern Omo, Kena et al. (2022) analysed 150 households and found that education, lactating cow numbers, market distance, information and cooperative membership were associated with dairy-market participation. These observational findings identify relevant design considerations, not proof that changing one variable will produce the same effect elsewhere. Training should therefore be paired with checks on supply, access and transaction costs.

Gender analysis beyond attendance

Stites (2024) cautions that pastoral gender relations are more complex than the simple division of male livestock control and female milk control. Mobilisation should establish who owns animals, performs work, decides sales, receives payment and controls its use. Separate consultations may reveal constraints hidden by public household accounts. Representation should be accompanied by meaningful influence over budgets, services and benefit distribution.

Yurco's (2024) Kenyan research shows the importance of intra-household livestock-management arrangements for access to milk and food security. This suggests that a household's herd size or total income cannot serve as a complete proxy for women's or children's wellbeing. A proposed dairy offer should examine how collection schedules affect labour, how milk is allocated and whether women retain control over earnings.

Bullock et al. (2025) describe collective action and dialogue as common mechanisms in gender-transformative pastoral interventions, while noting weaknesses in robust impact assessment. Their review supports deliberate work on restrictive norms and institutional barriers. It does not justify assuming that group participation alone transforms unequal relations. Locally appropriate safeguards and outcome measures are necessary.

Youth, disability and household vulnerability

Young people should help select enterprise opportunities with credible demand, such as transport, aggregation, feed services, animal-health support or repair. Training should follow an assessment of customers, costs, skills, regulation and seasonality. An enterprise is not viable simply because it uses a digital tool or is labelled innovative. Mentorship and initial market relationships may be more important than classroom instruction.

Accessible participation may require audio information, suitable venues, assistance with travel or alternatives to smartphone-only systems. Support should reflect the individual's preference rather than presume inability. Households with limited livestock may need food assistance or social protection before commercial investment. People displaced from pastoral livelihoods should not be expected to benefit from herd-based offers they cannot use.

An inclusive segmentation approach consequently combines opportunities with safeguards. It avoids assigning everyone the same sales target, fee or service package. Its test is whether differences in circumstances inform design and whether previously excluded people obtain benefits and decision-making power, rather than merely appearing in attendance records.

Cluster Three: Behavioural Objectives, Exchange and Competing Practices

Specify changes that can be observed

A programme objective such as "improve pastoral wellbeing" is too broad to guide implementation. Each offer needs a feasible practice, a defined audience and an observable measure. Candidate objectives include completing agreed vaccination appointments, checking buyer terms before sale, using approved milk-handling routines, acting on an early-warning plan or applying negotiated water rules. Targets should follow baseline assessment and local agreement rather than be imposed as universal percentages.

Provider and institutional objectives are equally important. Veterinarians may need to publish schedules and prices; buyers may need to explain grading and deductions; committees may need to disclose revenue; and authorities may need to maintain predictable certification procedures. This distributes responsibility across the system. It also prevents low uptake from being attributed to pastoral attitudes when services or rules make participation impractical.

Understand the exchange from the household's perspective

Catley (2024) explains pastoral livestock-marketing decisions through the dual role of animals as income sources and financial assets. Selling an animal sacrifices future functions as well as obtaining immediate cash. Advice to sell regularly should therefore consider breeding value, milk supply, expected prices and alternative ways to meet cash needs. A household may rationally reject an offer that appears profitable when assessed only at the market gate.

The proposed social offer must make its benefit credible relative to financial and non-financial costs. Vaccination can involve travel, waiting and handling animals. Aggregation can require surrendering control over sale timing. Milk quality compliance can add cleaning work and equipment costs. Mobilisation should help reveal these costs; social marketing should help redesign the offer to reduce them rather than conceal them in persuasive messaging.

Useful exchanges might combine coordinated veterinary visits with transparent charges, joint transport with individual payment records, or milk-quality guidance with a reliable buyer and an explained premium. These are candidate designs, not tested packages. Small pilots should assess whether participants value the benefits and whether the costs remain acceptable through different seasons.

Diagnose competition and non-adoption carefully

Competing practices may include self-treatment, individual sales, established trader relationships, retaining cash outside formal accounts or relying on customary forecasts. Such practices often

provide convenience, flexibility or trust. Programme design should compare their advantages with the proposed alternative before describing them as barriers. A trusted trader's credit and willingness to buy small quantities may outweigh a higher quoted price from a distant buyer.

Kamel et al. (2025) examine behavioural and normative dimensions of animal-health access in Ethiopian and Kenyan pastoral areas. This source supports analysing decision contexts alongside service provision. The recommendation here is to distinguish lack of knowledge from lack of opportunity, affordability or decision authority. Different causes require different responses.

Ethical practice preserves informed choice. Participation should not be secured through threats, shame or inflated promises. Community leaders should not compel sales or disclose sensitive household information. A socially beneficial offer must remain open to scrutiny, revision and refusal, including when its stated economic return appears attractive to implementers.

Cluster Four: An Integrated Marketing Mix and Fair Commercial Relationships

Product: a practical and credible offer

The product in social marketing may be a service or practice rather than a physical item. In pastoral development, candidate offers include an accessible vaccination service, a buyer-linked aggregation arrangement or a workable drought plan. The associated commercial products include live animals, milk, meat and other livestock outputs. Each offer needs an explicit specification, delivery arrangement and quality assurance appropriate to the setting.

Quality improvements should begin with buyer requirements that can be verified. Proposed live-animal arrangements may use agreed grading or weighing where infrastructure and oversight are available. Dairy arrangements should explain hygiene, acceptance and rejection criteria. Investments should follow assessment of willingness to pay and recurrent operating costs. Building a collection facility before testing demand and supply can create a costly asset without a viable service.

Price: net benefit and transparent obligations

Price includes money, time, effort and risk. A higher gross sale price may produce a lower household return after transport, commissions, feed, losses and delayed payment. Recommended records should therefore capture net receipts and payment timing. For services, fees should be explained before use, and any subsidy should have a clear purpose and financing plan.

Fairness also concerns bargaining and risk allocation. Contracts should describe quantities, delivery, inspection, rejection, deductions, payment deadlines and dispute resolution in an accessible form. Where literacy is limited, oral explanation and witnessed agreement can complement written records. Groups should retain alternative buyer relationships where feasible, reducing dependence on one purchaser without promising that competition will always secure a premium.

Place: delivery adapted to mobility and seasonality

Kihoro et al. (2024) show how flexible milk-trading practices can align with pastoral production and seasonal conditions. Their findings challenge rigid business arrangements that require producers to adapt entirely to a predetermined model. The design implication is to assess routes, collection frequency, intermediaries and payment arrangements together, rather than promote one permanent delivery pattern throughout the year.

This principle also applies to animal health, market information and financial services. Market-day visits, mobile delivery and coordinated outreach can be tested against fixed-centre provision. Trade routes should be mapped from production catchments through assembly, secondary and terminal markets, identifying actual actors and costs. Simplifying that chain is useful only when the functions performed by existing intermediaries are understood.

Promotion: dialogue supported by delivery

Promotion should use locally appropriate languages and trusted channels, combining discussion, demonstrations, radio and phone-based messages where accessible. Messages should explain what is offered, eligibility, costs, location and follow-up. Claims about profit, quality or drought protection require substantiation. Bedelian (2024) finds that useful climate information must be timely, locally relevant and connected to trusted networks, while digital access varies. This reinforces the need for multiple communication channels.

The four elements must work together. Advertising a service that people cannot reach, afford or trust is unlikely to deliver lasting change. The review therefore recommends judging promotion by informed uptake and user experience, not by message volume alone.

Cluster Five: Environmental Stewardship and Community-Controlled Cultural Value

Mobilising around grazing and water governance

Environmental stewardship begins with negotiated access and practical management. Recommended mobilisation activities include mapping resource users, agreeing seasonal use, protecting drought reserves and defining how exceptional access will be negotiated. Rules should reflect ecological conditions and legitimate rights, and should be reviewed after major shocks. Restoration work should not become a route to excluding people who previously depended on the land.

Pertaub (2024) connects water governance to surrounding rangelands, peace and degradation risk. Accordingly, a proposed water intervention should assess likely changes in animal concentration and grazing pressure, not just the number of people served. Communities need arrangements for maintenance, equitable access, recurrent finance and dispute management before construction. Livestock and human water needs should be considered together without assuming that one institution can manage every function.

Stewardship also requires careful monitoring. Communities and technical partners can agree observable indicators such as vegetation condition, water-point functionality, access disputes and use of designated reserves. Improvements should be interpreted against rainfall and other influences. This avoids attributing every vegetation change to programme activities or treating a temporary rainfall-driven recovery as proof of successful governance.

Environmental income with realistic expectations

Potential complementary livelihoods include locally suitable fodder enterprises, restoration contracts, guide services and conservation partnerships. These options require demand, clear rights and transparent benefit-sharing. Carbon or biodiversity payments should be considered only after assessing legal authority, measurement requirements, contract duration, costs and restrictions on future land use. Neither participation nor payment should be promised before those conditions are established.

The review recommends assessing environmental enterprises against household opportunity costs. Land allocated to an enterprise may also support grazing, cultivation or seasonal movement. Commercial returns should therefore be compared with displaced uses and the distribution of benefits across users. An attractive aggregate revenue figure can conceal losses borne by poorer or less influential households.

Culture as identity, knowledge and optional enterprise

Culture contributes to wellbeing even when it is not commercialised. Community-led documentation, intergenerational learning and appropriate recognition of pastoral knowledge can strengthen agency and continuity. Cultural enterprise is an optional pathway: crafts, food experiences, interpretation, storytelling or locally governed visitor activities may be explored where communities want them and demand is credible.

Because the selected corpus does not establish region-wide income effects from cultural marketing, these activities are proposals for feasibility assessment. Communities should decide what may be shared, photographed or sold and who may authorise representation. Agreements should identify ownership, payment, attribution and consent procedures. Cultural knowledge should not be assumed to be freely available simply because it is collectively held.

Commercial opportunity must therefore remain subordinate to cultural choice. Locally controlled enterprise should allow people to modify, decline or withdraw activities without losing access to unrelated services. This preserves the distinction between valuing pastoral culture and requiring it to become a marketable product.

Cluster Six: Livelihoods, Food Security and Risk Protection

Test commercial gains through household outcomes

In Afar, Benti et al. (2022) found that livestock-sales participation was associated with reduced food insecurity on access and coping measures, but expenditure-based findings were not consistently significant. Their propensity-score analysis offers context-specific evidence of potential benefits; it does not eliminate unobserved selection or demonstrate uniform gains from commercialisation. Income and food-security effects should consequently be assessed through several measures.

The proposed evaluation should examine net earnings, breeding-asset retention, food access and who controls income. A rise in sales caused by distress can accompany worsening wellbeing. Conversely, protecting breeding animals while obtaining cash from other sources may represent successful resilience even if offtake falls. Indicators must therefore distinguish productive market participation from asset liquidation during crisis.

Nutrition-sensitive livestock and milk marketing

Animal-source foods can contribute important nutrients within healthy diets, but availability, safety and dietary context matter (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2021; 2023). This supports protecting food use alongside commercial sales. It does not imply that producing or selling more livestock products automatically improves nutrition for every household member.

Recommended dairy arrangements should assess the trade-off between selling milk and retaining it for consumption. Household allocation discussions can identify needs without imposing a universal retention quantity across species, seasons and families. Milk-handling guidance should connect animal health, safe containers, storage, transport and locally appropriate processing. Buyers and households need clear responsibilities rather than contradictory quality requirements.

Food security also depends on purchasing power and access to other foods. Monitoring should examine seasonal food access, dietary diversity and coping strategies alongside livestock outcomes. Clinical nutrition indicators require suitably trained personnel and appropriate study procedures. Higher turnover or group savings should not be substituted for evidence that households can obtain adequate diets.

Finance, anticipatory action and crisis support

The World Bank's DRIVE design links drought insurance, savings and digital accounts with market connections in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia (World Bank, 2022). These are programme intentions, not proof of achieved livelihood effects. The review recommends that financial mobilisation explain costs, coverage, exclusions, payment conditions and risks in accessible language. Index insurance also requires clear explanation that a payout trigger may differ from an individual household's loss.

Emergency support should protect livelihoods while meeting urgent needs. LEGS provides standards for participatory livestock-response planning, including feed, water, veterinary support and offtake (Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards [LEGS], 2023). Early actions should be linked to locally agreed triggers, available buyers and financing, rather than remain an information campaign. Social protection is necessary where households cannot sustain minimum consumption or recover through market activity alone.

The Global Report on Food Crises documents the interaction of conflict, weather and economic pressures in food-crisis settings (Food Security Information Network & Global Network Against Food Crises, 2025). Commercial and behavioural initiatives must therefore remain connected to broader humanitarian and public-service responses. They cannot substitute for emergency assistance during severe crisis.

Proposed Mobilization-Marketing Implementation Framework

From diagnosis to accountable delivery

The framework below is a proposed sequence for local adaptation. It combines the principles reviewed above. Progress between stages should depend on evidence that the preceding conditions exist, while feedback can require returning to earlier decisions.

Table 1: Mobilization and Marketing implementation framework

Stage	Principal work and responsibility	Evidence for proceeding
1. Listen and map	Community representatives and facilitators identify livelihoods, actors, resources, exclusion and seasonal constraints.	Priorities validated by different user groups; absent stakeholders contacted.
2. Organise and agree	Associations and customary/statutory authorities clarify roles, representation, rights and complaints procedures.	Legitimate mandate; transparent rules; agreed resource and benefit safeguards.
3. Co-design the offer	Households, providers and buyers specify practices, services, costs and alternatives.	Demonstrated demand; feasible delivery; accessible terms; viable recurrent finance.
4. Pilot and verify	Providers deliver a small voluntary pilot; users and monitors record costs, uptake and experience.	Promises met; net benefits credible; adverse effects identified and addressed.
5. Expand through partners	Groups and accountable public/private partners extend proven arrangements.	Reliable service capacity; fair payments; inclusive access; resource safeguards maintained.
6. Review and adapt	Communities and evaluation partners assess outcomes across seasons and revise the design.	Observed practice and wellbeing changes; explanation of variation; continued local choice.

Note. Author's synthesis and proposed operational sequence; the stages are iterative.

Institutional responsibilities and financing

Communities define priorities, contribute knowledge and oversee agreed local arrangements, producer organisations coordinate members and transactions within their mandates, traders and processors offer credible terms and market feedback, and veterinary and extension services assure technical quality. Financial providers explain products and handle complaints, public authorities protect rights, oversee standards and address infrastructure and coordination failures, and facilitators support these functions without becoming permanent substitutes for them.

Recurrent costs should be assigned before expansion. Commercial services may recover costs through user fees or transactions when affordable and viable. Public goods, inclusive facilitation and basic protection may require public or development finance. Any subsidy should specify its purpose, duration and exit or continuation conditions. Cost recovery should not become a reason to exclude households from essential crisis support.

The 2025 IGAD ministerial communiqué calls for action on transhumance, participatory rangeland management, animal health, trade, inclusion and early warning (Intergovernmental Authority on Development [IGAD], 2025). This creates a policy alignment opportunity. However, regional commitments must be translated into functioning national and local arrangements; endorsement is not equivalent to implementation or a livelihood impact.

Scaling with diversity

Expansion should replicate useful functions while allowing different organisational forms and delivery routes. A successful dairy arrangement near a town may not suit remote mobile herders. FAO (2021) emphasises diversity, connectivity and household resilience in agrifood systems. Applied here, that supports maintaining several suppliers, buyers and livelihood pathways rather than forcing all households into one model. Scaling should preserve adaptation and choice as well as service quality.

Consolidated Review Findings

The review of 25 publications identifies social mobilisation and social marketing as complementary approaches to strengthening pastoral and agro-pastoral wellbeing in the Horn of Africa. Mobilisation supports collective voice, coordination and accountable governance, while social marketing helps communities and partners design feasible practices and services offering valued benefits. Their potential depends on reliable services, fair commercial relationships and enforceable rights. Livestock provide food, breeding assets, savings and social security alongside income; consequently, increased sales alone cannot demonstrate improved wellbeing. Drought, conflict, disease, insecure resource access, restricted mobility and inadequate infrastructure interact to shape livelihood opportunities and vulnerability.

Community ownership requires meaningful influence over priorities, resources and benefits. Accountable organisations can coordinate services, strengthen bargaining and negotiate grazing and water access, but may also enable elite capture, exclusion and unfair deductions. Transparent rules, legitimate leadership, accessible complaints mechanisms and fulfilled commitments are therefore essential. Interventions must reflect differences in herd ownership, mobility, species, market distance, labour, wealth and service access. Evidence from Ethiopia associates dairy-market participation with education, lactating cow numbers, information, distance and cooperative membership, while Kenyan research highlights how household livestock-management arrangements affect milk access and food security. Inclusion consequently requires assessing women's control over income and workloads, youth enterprise viability, disability access and poorer households' need for protection.

Behavioural change depends on affordability, convenience, trust and decision-making authority alongside knowledge. Existing practices, including individual sales, customary forecasting and established trader relationships, may offer benefits that proposed alternatives lack. Effective offers should combine useful services, transparent financial and non-financial costs, accessible delivery and credible communication. Flexible milk collection, coordinated veterinary outreach, buyer-linked aggregation and timely climate information illustrate locally adaptable options. Commercial arrangements require clear quality standards, deductions, payment deadlines and dispute procedures. Net returns and payment reliability provide stronger measures of benefit than gross prices, while providers and authorities must also improve their practices.

Environmental and cultural safeguards are integral to sustainable development. Negotiated grazing arrangements, protected mobility corridors, drought reserves and accountable water governance can support resource access and resilience. Infrastructure and commercial expansion require assessment of grazing pressure, displaced land uses and unequal benefit distribution. Fodder production, restoration, conservation and cultural enterprises offer potential diversification pathways, subject to demand, secure rights, viable costs and community consent. Cultural knowledge retains value beyond commerce, and communities should control its representation and use. Food-security evidence is mixed: livestock commercialisation was associated with improvements in some measures in Afar, but expenditure findings were inconsistent. Milk sales must therefore be assessed alongside household consumption, dietary diversity, breeding-asset retention and income control. Savings, insurance and anticipatory action require accessible terms and functioning response arrangements; severely affected households may still need humanitarian assistance and social protection.

The proposed framework connects listening and mapping, accountable organisation, co-design, voluntary piloting, evidence-based expansion and continuous review. Implementation requires defined responsibilities, sustainable recurrent financing and functioning local institutions. Evaluation should distinguish participation and communication outputs from sustained practice changes and improvements in net income, nutrition, resilience, equity and resource condition. However, the combined framework remains unvalidated: empirical evidence is concentrated in Kenya and Ethiopia, and long-term impacts, disability inclusion and cultural enterprises remain insufficiently studied. The findings therefore support locally adapted testing across seasons, with success judged by demonstrable wellbeing gains, protected productive assets and wider voluntary livelihood choices.

Evaluation, Discussion and Conclusions

Measure the pathway and unintended consequences

Evaluation should distinguish mobilisation outputs, practice changes and wellbeing outcomes. Meeting attendance, messages delivered and groups registered describe activity. Representative influence, complaint resolution, repeated service use, reliable payment and observed compliance describe intermediate changes. Net income, food access, livelihood recovery, resource condition and equitable control of benefits describe outcomes. Baseline and follow-up measurements should use comparable seasons and report differences across relevant population groups.

The proposed indicator set should include participation in actual decisions; use and reliability of animal-health services; net returns and payment delays; retained breeding assets; household food access and dietary diversity; women's control over relevant income; labour demands; resource-access disputes; and ecological indicators appropriate to the site. The final selection must reflect local priorities and measurement capacity. This is an evaluation menu, not a validated index.

Mixed methods can explain why outcomes vary. Interviews can investigate trust, exclusion or cultural acceptability, while transaction and service records track actual delivery. Where feasible, phased implementation or comparison groups can strengthen assessment; simple before-and-after comparisons should acknowledge rainfall, prices, conflict and other influences. Evidence of contribution should not be presented as causal proof without an appropriate design.

Contribution and evidence limitations

The review's contribution is to locate social marketing inside collective governance and livelihood systems. It shifts the practical question from how to persuade pastoralists to participate toward how communities and partners can make participation beneficial, feasible and accountable. Mobilisation supplies influence and coordination; social marketing supplies audience insight and offer design; fair commerce supplies selected income pathways. Their interaction remains a proposition to test.

The evidence base is uneven. Empirical market and household studies are concentrated in Kenya and Ethiopia, while other countries are covered principally through regional guidance. Several institutional publications overlap in their underlying evidence. Cultural enterprises, disability inclusion and the long-term effects of combined packages are insufficiently evaluated in the selected literature. English-language selection and uneven full-text access add limitations. The findings should guide context-specific design rather than be treated as an exhaustive regional assessment.

Conclusion and research priorities

Social mobilisation and social marketing offer complementary principles for strengthening pastoral and agro-pastoral wellbeing when connected to reliable services, fair markets and enforceable rights. Their value lies in helping communities define priorities, negotiate useful exchanges and retain influence over livestock, environmental and cultural assets. Improved wellbeing must be demonstrated through benefits reaching people, not inferred from higher sales or participation totals.

Priority research should test combined approaches over several seasons, compare effects across livelihood and wealth groups, examine intra-household nutrition and income control, and measure ecological and cultural trade-offs. Policymakers and practitioners should support community-led diagnosis, accountable organisations, feasible offers and responsive institutions. Development should preserve mobility where it is useful, protect productive assets and allow voluntary livelihood diversification. The ultimate outcome is a wider and more secure range of choices for pastoral people, supported by evidence of improved food security, resilience and social and economic wellbeing.

Disclaimer

- The views stated in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of any of the entities mentioned.

Interest Conflicts

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