



THE CRAWFORD FUND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## Food and Nutrition Security: Transformative Partnerships, Local Leadership and Co-Design

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Parliament House, Canberra, Australia, and online



# Challenging dominant narratives on development approaches in the drylands

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# Context: Dominant development narrative in drylands

- The main livelihood system in the drylands is pastoral production
- Pastoral production system – not recognized - despite being the most sustainable livelihood system in the drylands
- Contribution to national and global economies remains unappreciated
- Land viewed empty – for conversion to other ‘better’ uses – resulting in rampant loss of land
- The system was kept peripheral in development policy frameworks



# Influence of the dominant development narrative in drylands

## Disconnect between external policy/practice and pastoral perspectives



- Pastoralism seen as vulnerable, requiring recurrent relief and diversification
- Overlooks the reality and the potential of the drylands
- Resulted in failed development interventions – more vulnerable communities



# Rethinking interventions in the drylands

- Pastoralists - long-established repertoire of ways of responding to crises and shocks
- Not patterns of passive 'coping' but an active process of deliberate, well-planned response and adaptation
- Existence of High reliability management by pastoralists and their networks is skilled and usually avert disasters – but not recognized
- Akin to those managing critical infrastructure – there are 'high-reliability professionals' among the pastoralists



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# Advancing alternative approach -Building 'Resilience from Below'



Australian Centre  
for International  
Agricultural Research

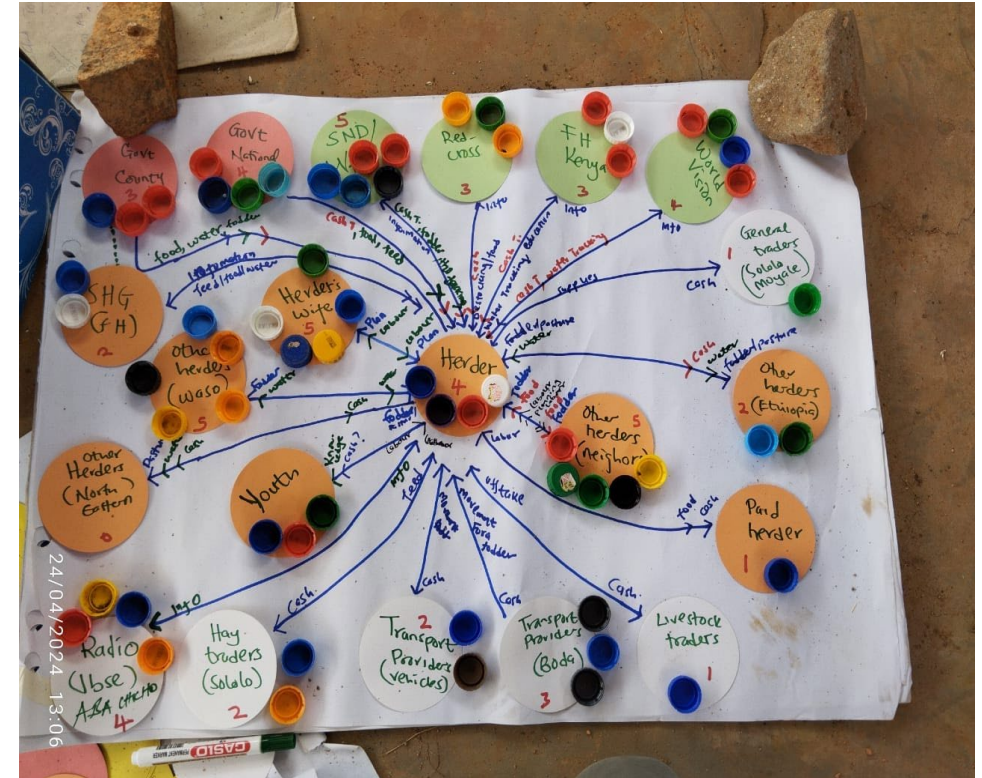


- 4 year project funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)

The project: Exploring local constructs of 'Resilience' in the face of chronic uncertainty in the Drylands:

## Aims

- Gather evidence for an **alternative approach** to embrace variability and acknowledge **uncertainty**, rather than trying to manage or control these factors
- Prioritise the understanding of existing local practices and governance processes that exist outside external interventions



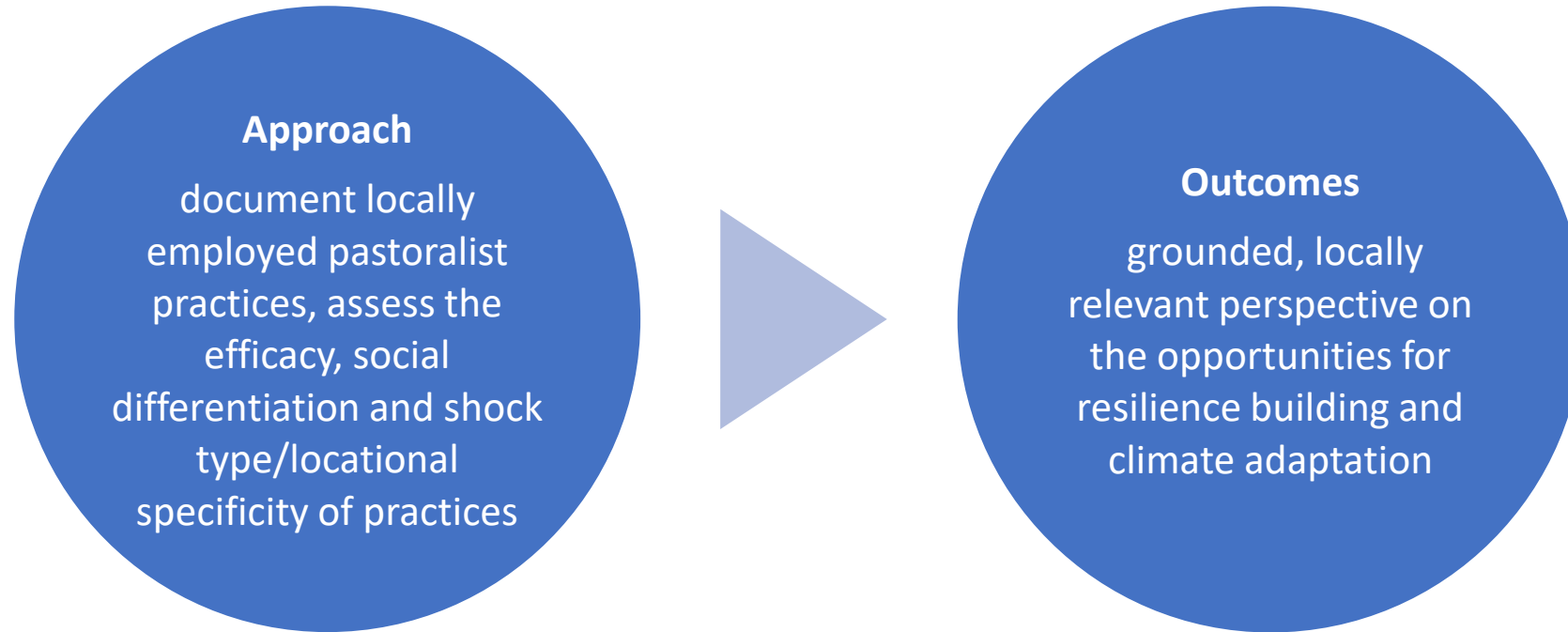
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# Our research approach: 'Resilience from Below'



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# Potential policy direction

Establish policy disconnects and how resilience from the perspectives of pastoralists can be reconsidered and infused into policy landscapes

Continuous and collaborative efforts to privilege the integration of pastoralists' resources, networks and assets in resilience-building efforts

Pitch outcomes to county, national, regional and international levels (for instance through the IYRP 2026)



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## Concluding remarks

- Dominant narratives are not easy to reverse – sustained effort required
- This resonates with the conference theme of partnerships, consultation, and collaboration for codesigning and delivering high quality agricultural research for development
- Placing the community knowledge and practices central is vital in achieving local on-ground outcomes
- For effective locally embedded research for development capacity of local organizations are central



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Thank you!



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