

# Rush for the “wastelands”: revaluing pastoral land in light of renewable energy

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## Introduction

- **Past:** rangelands seen as low-potential, marginal, empty wastelands
- **Present:** with climate crisis & need for transition to green energy, rangelands are new frontier
- **Danger** that investments in green energy ignore traditional rangeland users



Credit: Petra Dilthey

## Study of impact of large-scale green-energy (LSGE) projects on pastoralists

Commissioned by *Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung* with two main aims:

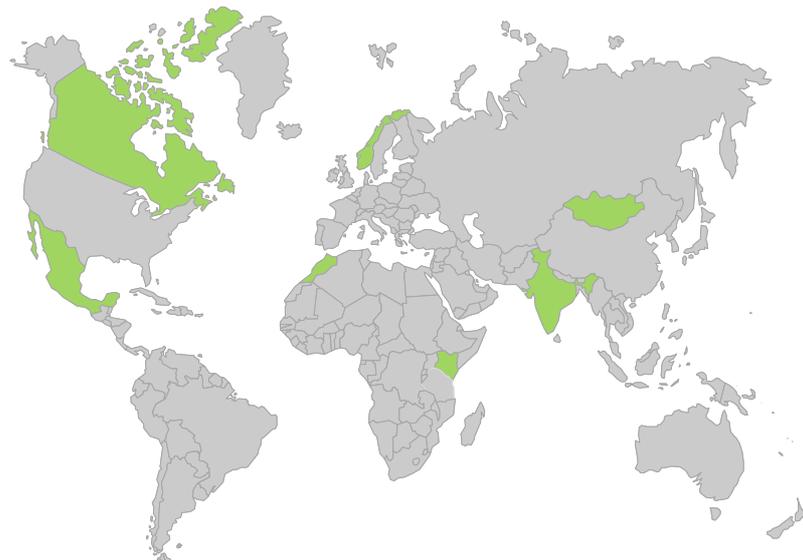
1. to stimulate policymakers to shape expansion of LSGE production in rangelands so it does no harm
2. to make pastoralists better prepared to deal with LSGE expansion

Focus on LSGE projects for **solar and wind power**



### Methodology:

literature  
review +  
case studies



Countries where case studies located

## Current trends in energy sector



Credit: Alta Wind Energy Center

- Fast expansion of solar & wind power projects to meet demand for carbon-free energy
- National commitments (Paris Agreement, SDGs) to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions
- Growing no. of countries target 100% green energy by 2030
- Green energy to produce green hydrogen
- **Rangelands excellent for generating solar & wind power**

## Threats of LSGE projects to pastoralists:

cases in India, Kenya, Morocco & Norway



Credit: Kalyan Varma

- LSGE projects in rangelands without local consultation or FPIC
- State did not recognise land rights of traditional users
- Livestock access blocked / grazing areas fragmented / mobility hindered
- Pastoralists' climate-change resilience reduced

## Threats of LSGE projects to pastoralists: cases in India, Kenya, Morocco & Norway (cont'd)

- Governments underestimate value of pastoralism & rangelands
- Pastoralists in weak position to negotiate continued land use or compensation
- Pastoralists not well informed about project plans or their own rights
- Pastoralists not well organised to defend land or negotiate terms



Credit: Hannah Logole

## But growing opposition by pastoralists

### 1) Kenya: Lake Turkana Wind Power project



Credit: Twitter KETRACO

**2009:** 67,000 ha rangeland acquired from Kenyan Govt

**2014:** Construction began – pastoralists went to court

**2019:** Energy from 365 turbines fed into national grid

**2021:** Court ruling: **land-acquisition process illegal**, but wind park in full operation

Court recommended to “regularise” land acquisition.

## Growing opposition by pastoralists (cont'd)

### 2) Norway: Øyfjellet Wind Park

**2019:** Construction began on 4000 ha rangeland

**2020:** Sámi reindeer herders went to court

**Oct 2021:** Court ruling:

- Wind park interferes with reindeer herding
- **Government licence for project violated**
- **UN Covenant on Civil & Political Rights**

**Dec 2021:** 72 turbines completed – dispute continues



Credit: Lawrence Hislop

## Conflicts led to lose–lose situations



Credit: Astonfield Renewables

LSGE projects blocked herders' access to pasture, water and energy (firewood), yet rarely gave them access to electricity produced

Energy companies experienced conflicts, damaged infrastructure, construction delays, higher costs or project failure



Credit: NMG / Kenya Business Daily

## Summary of negative impacts on pastoralists

Many LSGE projects led to:

- Land, water and energy dispossession
- Interference in livestock migration routes
- Disruption of pastoral cultures
- Decreased resilience of pastoral systems

*If human-rights principles are not applied, more pastoralists will lose land & water resources to LSGE projects and become poorer – fuelling more conflict, hopelessness & emigration.*

## Potentials of LSGE projects for pastoralists: cases in Canada, Kenya, Mexico & Mongolia

### **When** good consultation processes:

- Energy company & local community share land & water use
- Local community given equity shares in energy company
- Community-managed trust funds fed by energy revenues
- Project siting took high-value pastures & water points into account
- Herders can access pasture under turbines and power lines



Credit: alter-eco.uk

## Co-existence of green-energy projects and grazing

- Scientific studies: green energy can co-exist with grazing & can improve animal welfare (e.g. Goetzberger & Zastrow 1982, Campos Maia *et al* 2020, Hall *et al* 2021)
- **BUT** where ranchers with private land can negotiate with companies, e.g. USA, Australia
- More complex situation where pastoralists use common property resources



Credit: Claudio Marongui

## Facilitating just transition to green energy in rangelands

Recommendations for policymakers, energy companies, planners, & investment banks



Credit: Margareta Lelea



Credit: Ishaan Samuels

*Green energy, also green hydrogen, only from projects that meet global human-rights standards*

Recommendations for CSOs & researchers, with view to:

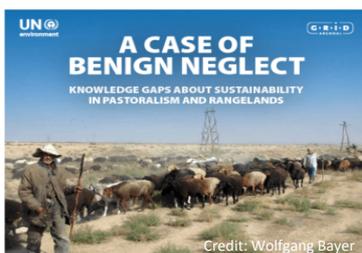
- protecting pastoralists' rights
- helping them gain evidence to strengthen their position for negotiation

## Recommendations for CSOs, including pastoralist organisations

- Become aware of existing **international standards & codes of business conduct**
- **Strengthen capacities** of pastoralists to negotiate with green-energy projects, e.g.
  - claiming community rights to common land
  - legal advice about human & civil rights
  - access to independent conflict mediation
- Facilitate **multistakeholder planning processes** for multipurpose land use
- Advocate for **policy change** to secure pastoralist communities' resource-use rights



## Recommendations for researchers



- Fill knowledge gaps on **multifaceted value** of pastoralism & rangelands
- Fill knowledge gaps on **socio-economic consequences** of LSGE projects in rangelands
- Participatory action research (PAR) with pastoralists for their **legal empowerment**
- PAR with pastoralists on ways to **integrate green energy & grazing**

## Conclusions

- Global energy transition: LSGE projects will expand further
- Need **inclusive participatory design** of LSGE projects within multifunctional land use
- Could be win–win situation – *if* pastoralists' **voice & agency strengthened**
- Governments must manage energy transition carefully in open discussion with **well-informed pastoralists**

***Only then can an equitable transition to renewable energy be made.***



Credit: Alta Wind Energy Cent

## Thanks !

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**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the *Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung*.



Credit: Christine Matthews