

# Understanding social and ecological challenges in collective management of communal rangelands in the rural Eastern Cape

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52<sup>nd</sup> Annual GSSA Congress  
24-28 July 2017

# Introduction

- Eastern Cape is made up of the former homelands which have a long history of economic neglect and mostly rural.
- The ability of the rural people to make a living is linked to agricultural practices including livestock farming.
- Livestock is a key commodity of human well-being and provides social benefits such as food, income, nutrients, employment, traction and others.



# Introduction

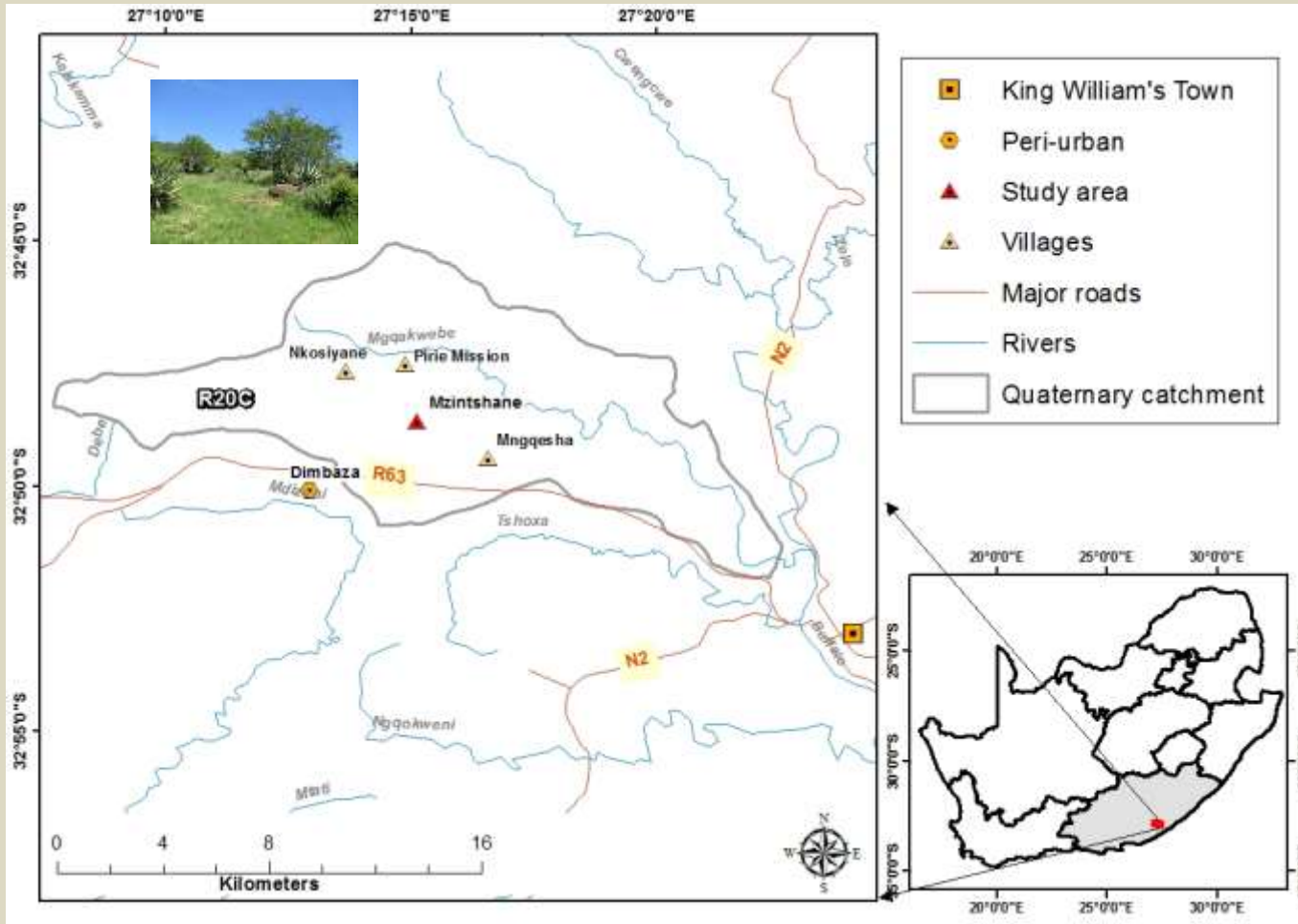
- Livestock role economically, socially and environmentally.
- Spiritual and cultural significance.
- Pressure on the ecosystem and natural resources, especially in open access communal grazing lands.
- Often these are poorly managed because of lack of individual responsibility resulting in degraded rangelands.
- Government efforts to prevent overgrazing through prescribed methods have not had the envisaged results.
- This is mainly because they ignore engagement with social and economic dimensions that influence rangeland management.

## Aim

The present study was aimed at understanding the social and ecological challenges faced by communal farmers in collective management of the rangeland.



# Pilot Study Site



## Municipality

Amathole District,  
Buffalo City  
Municipality

## Catchment

Keiskamma River (R20C)

## Mean Annual Rainfall

± 400 mm

## Average Temperature

19°C in winter

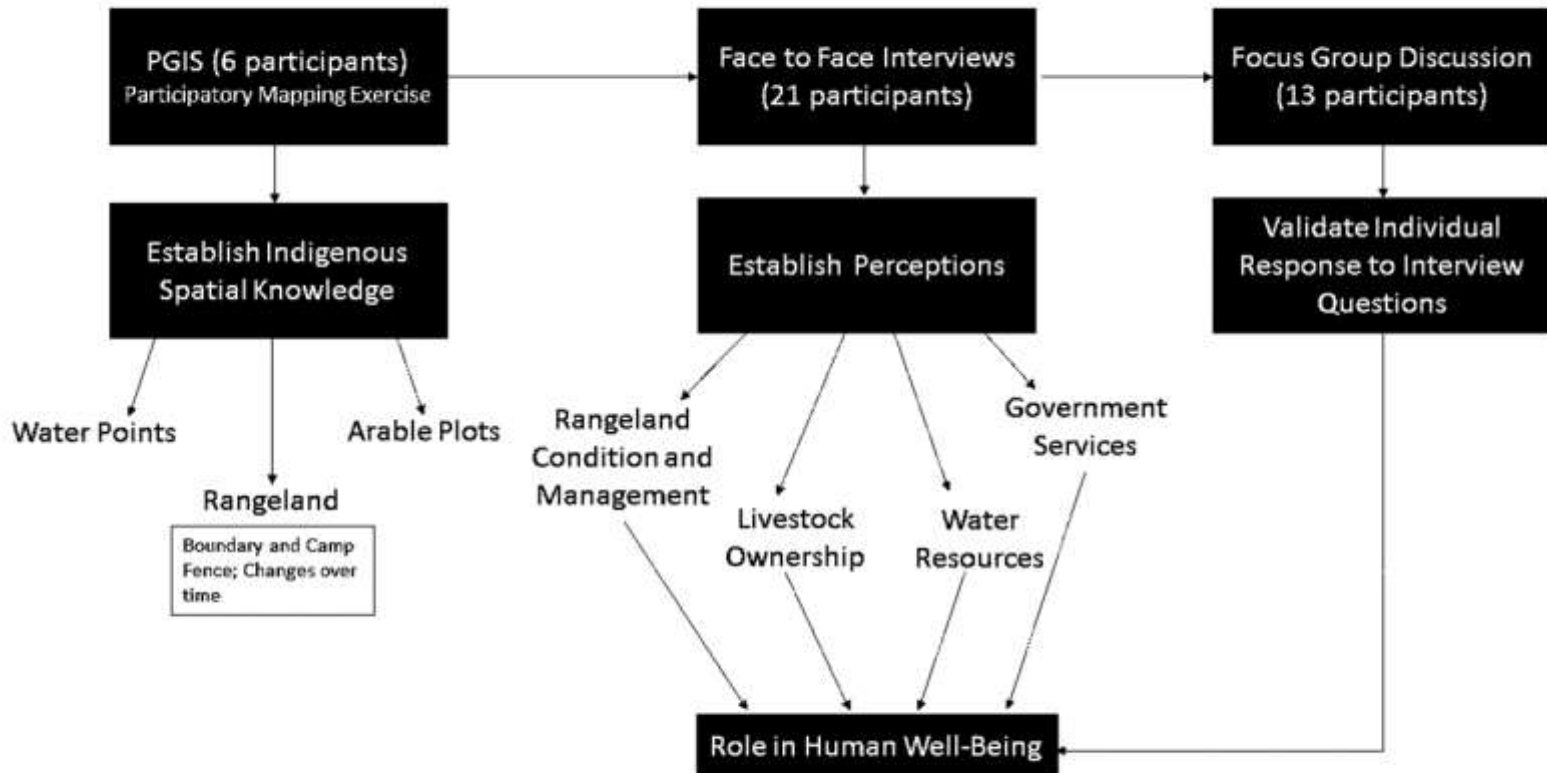
28°C in summer

## Vegetation Type

Bisho Thornveld  
(savanna biome)

# Methods

To understand the perceived social and ecological challenges and their effects on people's lives, a combination of participatory methods were used:



- **Digital Maps** for the PGIS exercise were created in ArcGIS 10.2.1
- Analysis for both the face to face interviews and focus group discussion was carried out using a **thematic analysis method**.
- Thematic Analysis involves: generation of codes, searching, reviewing, defining and naming themes



# Results

- The results obtained from the three methods piloted showed that the challenges that are faced by communal farmers are both ecological and social.
- The ecological challenged emerged strongly from PGIS exercise.
- While social challenges were more apparent from the interviews and FGD results.





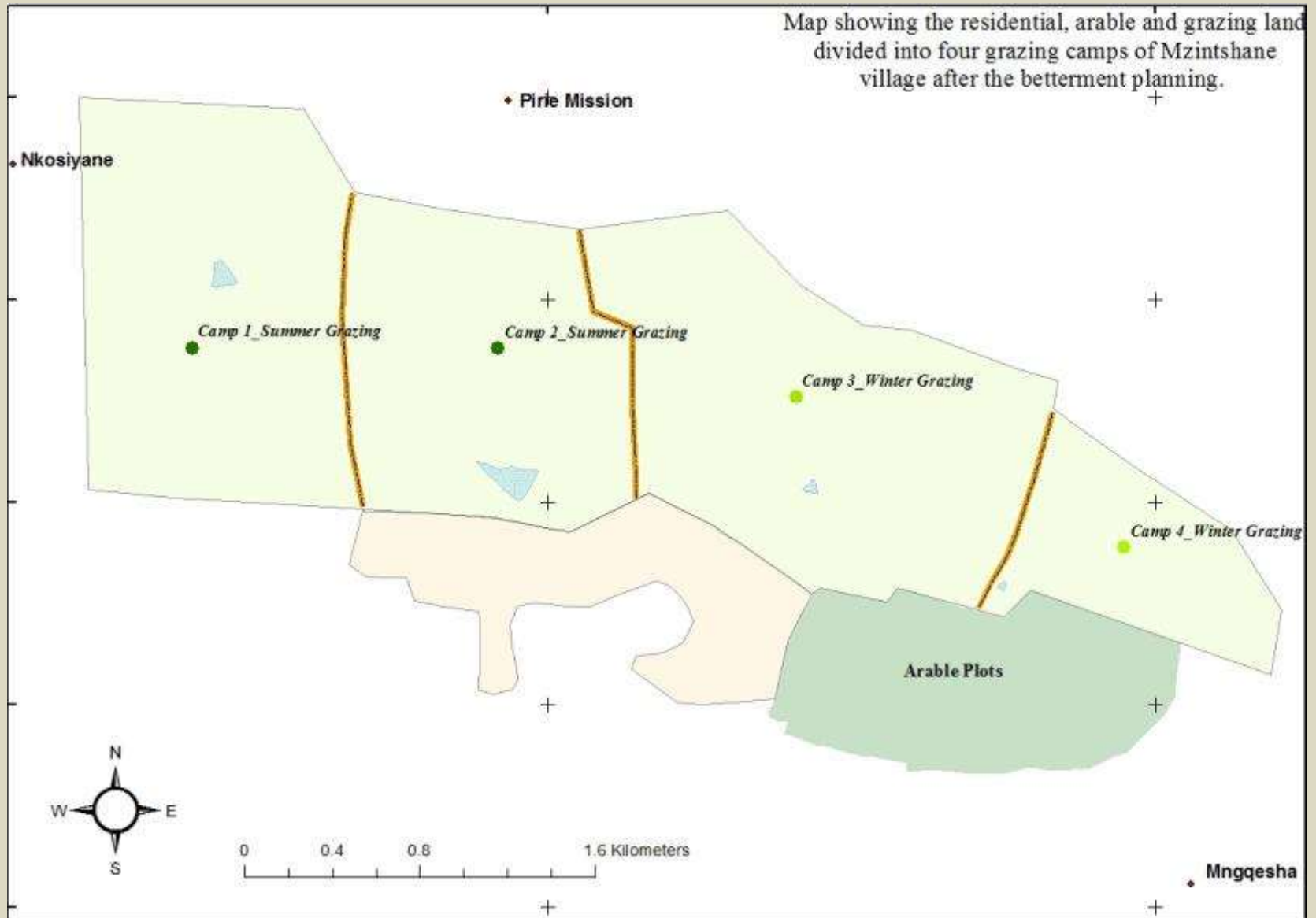
## Ecological Challenges - PGIS

- Erosion gullies have been expanding over the past 20 to 25 years, resulting in muddy streams.
- Grazing quality has decreased over time as evidenced by invasion of *Vachellia karoo*.
- These challenges have been attributed to the absence of the camp fence and thus rotation grazing.

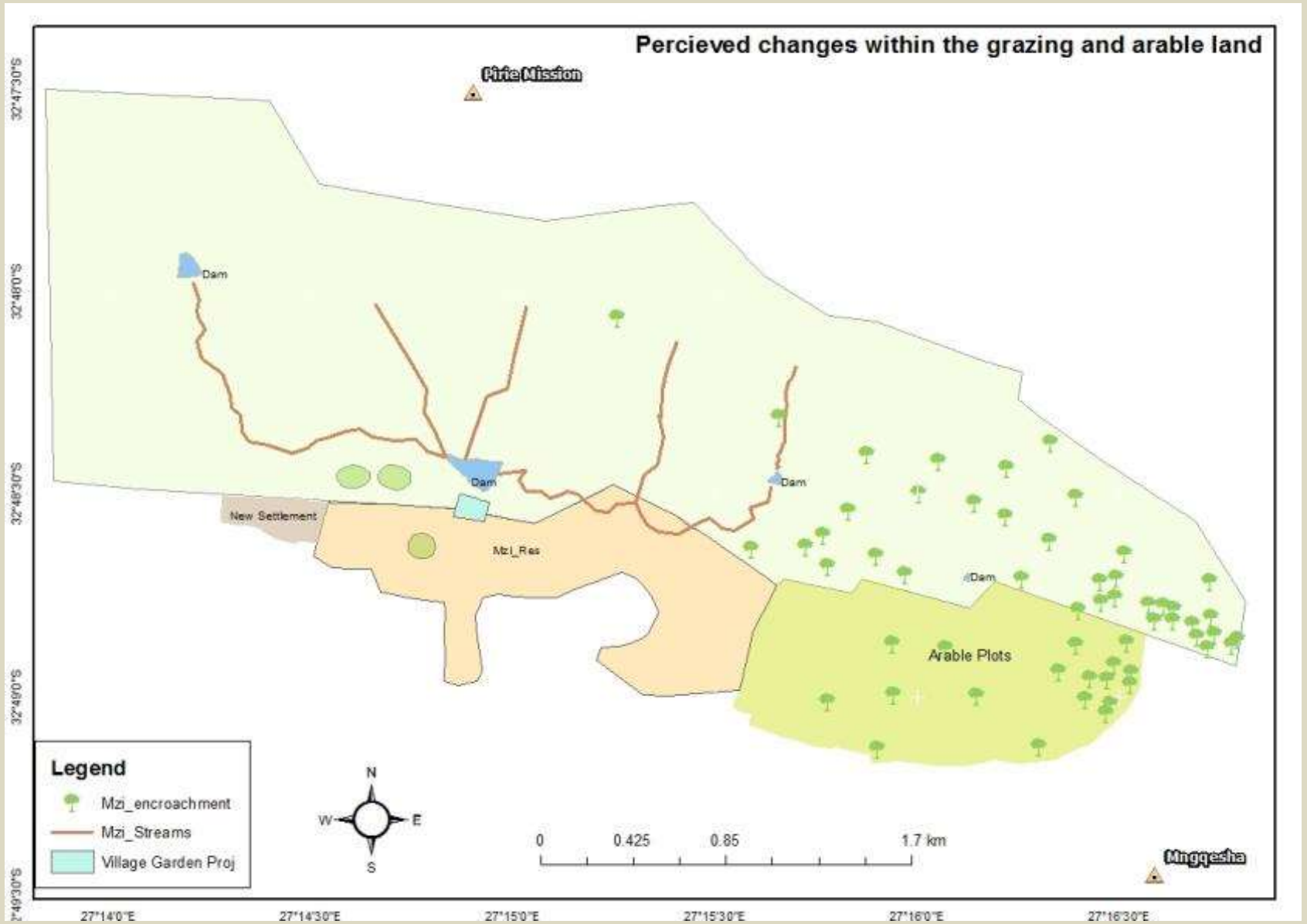




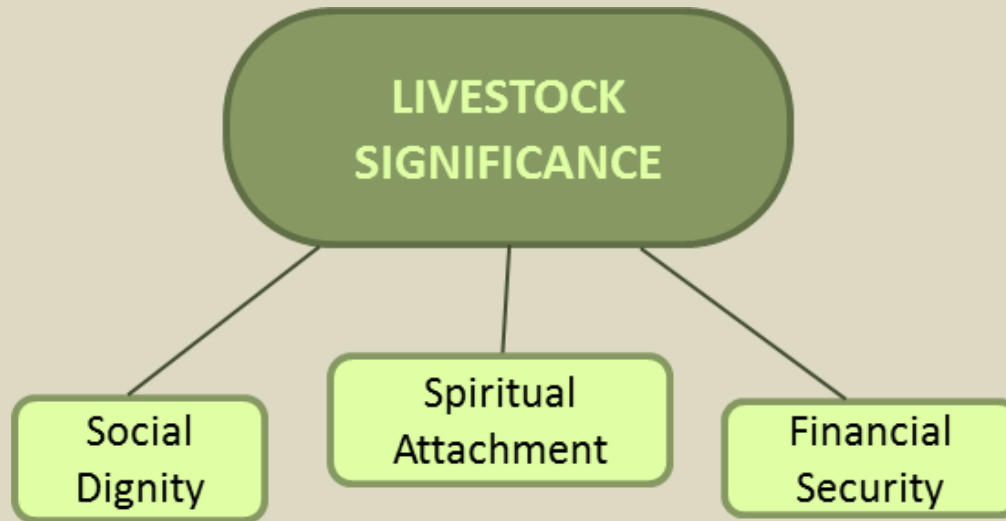
# PGIS Digital Map 1



# PGIS Digital Map 2



# Livestock Significance



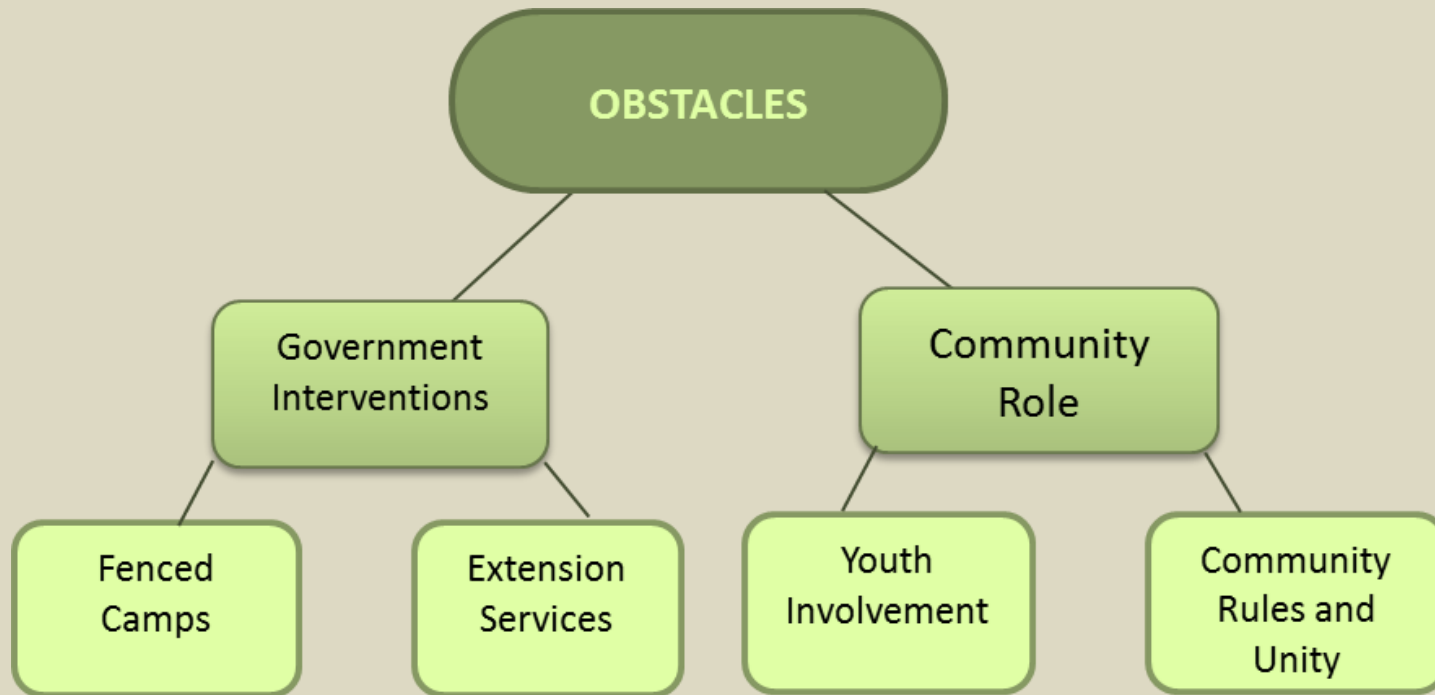
*'You become a man amongst men when you own cattle'*

*'It gives you a sense of dignity just like having a wife and house.'*

*'We use livestock when we have rituals and for boy initiation. You do not have to buy a cow when you need to do something for the ancestors.'*

*'It plays a big role in paying for tuition fees and alleviating poverty.'*

# Social Challenges – FGD and Interviews

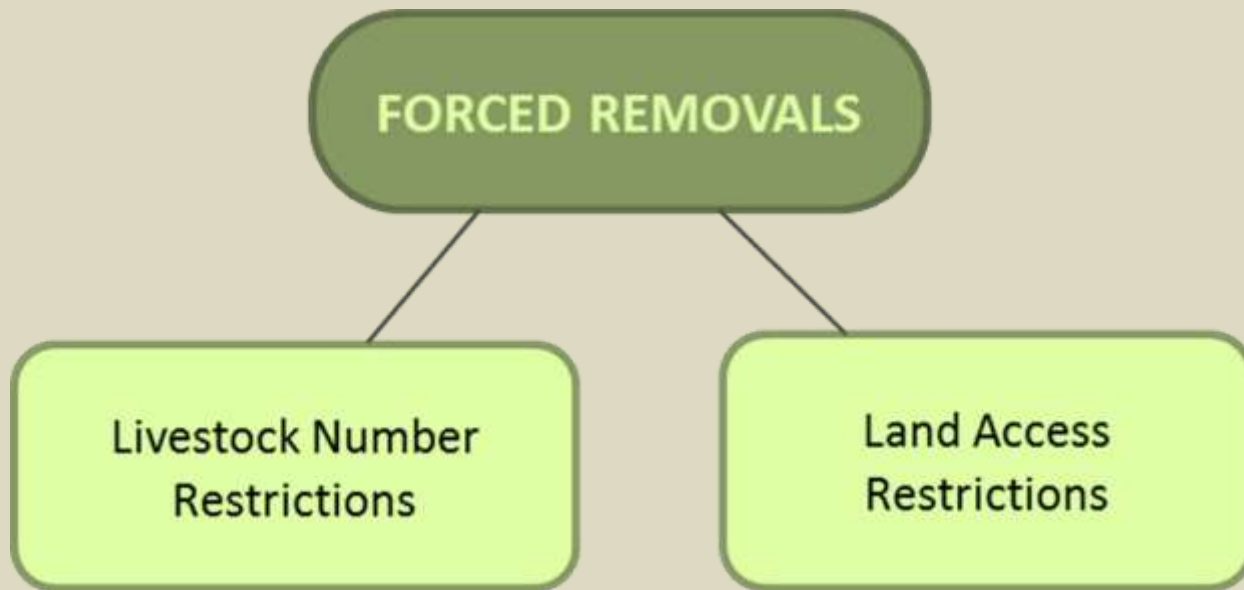


*‘..there are no camps and the animals graze everywhere and the grass does not get a chance to grow.’*

*‘Because there is no fence .....they wonder around a lot and are sometimes stolen...’*

*‘But now the government cannot give us any bulls even if we need them unless the camps are fenced off as they used to so that those bulls have a place where they are kept...’*

*‘There is no structure in the village to communicate with Agriculture.’*



*'So I could not have 10 cattle because I am a squatter, my cattle must be 3 or 4 and not beyond that number.'*

*'Of course it was affected because it had places where it was not allowed to go. Our livestock used to stay in the forests and graze there and were well nourished. But they were chased away from there and if they were found there they would be impounded....'*

# Discussion and Conclusions

- Livestock significance is one of the reasons forced removals were met with resistance
- Resulting in vandalism of grazing camp fence when the democratic government was elected.
- People are aware of the changes in grazing quality and how these changes affect the quality and performance of their livestock.
- Leading to a belief that there is a need for a grazing camp rotation system and community rules.
- Showing that people know that a management system is required for the improvement of the current condition.



# Discussion and Conclusions

- Moreover, these results showed that there are strong linkages between the ecological and social challenges faced by communal farmers and addressing them through social-ecological systems approach can pave a way to finding effective management strategies.

# THANK YOU

