

NUTRITION AND GENDER AMONG PASTORALISTS IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

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A research team under Niall Hanan (South Dakota State University) has developed an innovative pastoral ecosystem model to predict how climate change and emerging land use patterns will change availability of key resources like water, fodder, and movement corridors that pastoralists depend on (Climate Change, Pastoral Resources and Livestock in the Sahel: Developing a community relevant pastoral prediction system - CCPRL). The project team is working closely with local partner organizations and pastoral communities to ensure that our research activities align with community needs and to prioritize the information herders need to make decisions about livestock management practices. By design, informed and/or improved livestock management practices should enhance food security, income and the sustainability of grazing practices, leaving communities better able to adapt to climate change.

The negative impact of climate change on the nutrition of livestock holders – particularly women – is well documented. Pathways include low crop/fodder production and consequent calorie deficiency; interaction of infection, catalyzed by changes in weather and climate, and malnutrition; and unfavorable exchanges at market after environmental shocks. In addition to the direct consequences of climate change on nutrition, poor nutritional status may play an important role in determining what livestock management practices are embraced and if/how they affect food security, income, or sustainable grazing practices. In other words, poor nutrition may alter the way that communities use information and what livestock management practices they embrace. Thus, an understanding of the nutritional situation of herders is an important component when attempting to improve their adaptive capacity to climate change and other environmental shocks.

Since 2012, Dr. Sarah McKune has

worked with the CCPRL team on the cross cutting issues of gender and nutrition. Her work is with project personnel and partners, including training of NGO partners in research methods for nutritional analysis and collaborating with staff and project partners to develop methodologies to explore gender and its impact on the broader research questions about adaptation to climate change. Dr. McKune works with the Research for Development Specialist to analyze nutritional and gender related results and to design appropriate empowerment and nutrition related activities, where appropriate.

In 2014-2015 Dr. McKune is working with one of the project's NGO partners to conduct an analysis of herder nutrition at six locations, three in the north and three in the south. Sample populations will include pastoral populations across a gradient of mobility, including highly mobile transhumant populations as well as recently settled communities.

Sarah McKune is assistant professor of epidemiology and director of public health programs for the College of Public Health and Health Professions.

