

Rangeland Management and Drought Coping Strategies for Livestock Farmers in the Semi-arid Savanna Communal Areas of Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT Communal rangelands in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe are heavily stocked, poorly managed and drought prone resulting in high livestock losses during drought years. Resettlement interventions attempting to reduce the impact of drought have had little success. This suggests a lack of understanding of the community's view on rangeland condition, use and its drought coping strategies. This study therefore assesses and documents the perceptions of farmers on rangeland condition and improvement; current rangeland management practices and also identifies factors that explain the failed resettlement interventions. The documented drought coping strategies were assessed in relation to the farmers' socio-economic characteristics through a multinomial logistic regression analysis. A single visit survey method was used to gather data through a structured questionnaire in 34 households. Continuous grazing (100%) and open access (68%) were dominant grazing practices, while herding (97%) and stocking rate control (100%) were not practiced. About 60% of the respondents indicated that the rangelands were good in summer, and were very poor in winter (71%). Drought coping strategies included mobility to relief grazing farms (22%), moving animals to key resource areas (16%) and supplementation (54%). Predictors which were significant in explaining drought coping strategies were household herd size, total household income and access to relief grazing farms in winter. Most respondents (60%) view resettlement intervention as a failure since fences were removed and restrictions to access plus grazing management ceased. There is need for community cooperation in the utilization and maintenance of the common pool resources for efficient livestock production.