

# Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Livestock-Keeping in Arid Rangelands of Kohistan, Pakistan: A Qualitative Survey

ASHFAQ AHMAD MANN AND MUHAMMAD SARWAR†

*Departments of Rural Sociology and †Livestock Management, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad-38040, Pakistan*

## ABSTRACT

The paper presents the findings of a qualitative study conducted in arid rangelands of Kohistan, Sindh, Pakistan. The main objective of the study was to delineate socio-cultural dimensions of livestock-keeping in the area. A set of qualitative techniques such as field observation, focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews was applied for data collection. The respondents included heads of tribe, graziers, heads of the households and forest/rangelands officials. The results show that Kohistani people have many of their own ways of livestock bearing and rearing which have their own social and cultural significance.

**Key Words:** Socio-culture dimensions; Livestock; Rangelands

## INTRODUCTION

The arid rangelands are currently in a process of advancing degradation. Total desertification, where the vegetative cover has been removed and cannot restore itself unaided, or not all, does occur locally. In most other areas, a limited amount of vegetation persists, but where soils are not very stable, this could readily be eliminated through a further increase of grazing pressure.

Present interventions are concentrated on those state-owned lands where Forest Departments retain a special mandate. Such would be the rangelands that have been declared Forest Reserves or Protected Forests. These represent about 10 % of the total rangeland area. Even on these lands, activities have been fragmentary and of a limited effectiveness (Beerling, *et al.* 1991)

There are two main reasons why the Forest Departments have not been able to be more effective. The first is the one-sided emphasis on vegetation and conservation. The Departments do not have a clear mandate and are not equipped with adequate staff to formulate a comprehensive view as to livestock development in relation to range management. Small gains in range improvements have often been subsequently submerged under increased grazing pressures.

The second reason is that even with committed staff, it is impossible to actively manage any significant area in isolation from livestock owners. The Forest Departments have no tradition of extension activities.

In Kohistan ranges, cropping mainly is practised on alluvial fans. Villages are scattered over the

Kohistan plains. As in the other desert areas, livestock depend partly on feed and water from the outside. In Kohistan, the typical vegetation is a thorn scrub, although much of the area is now devoid of any vegetation due to cropping. The area is subject to severe wind and water erosion. Severe flashfloods occur each season and can be very destructive to any structures in their paths. In the Dhabeji area, good grass growth was seen on ranges not overgrazed, and usually in association with a tree or tall shrub canopy. In the Babar Bund and Sri Sing areas there was little vegetation to be seen.

Keeping in view the above mentioned situation, the main objective of the paper is to throw light on the socio-cultural dimensions of livestock-keeping in the area.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Two villages from each area of Dhabeji and Babar Bund and Sri Sing were visited for data collection regarding livestock-keeping practices in the area. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were conducted with the herdsmen, livestock-owners, heads of tribes and rangelands/forests officials. In addition, field observation was made to verify some of the information. It is important to mention that rangelands and forests officials remained with the data collection team to facilitate this challenging study in these far flung areas. The data were analysed and the findings are presented below.

### **Qualitative Findings: Arid Rangelands of Dhabeji, Kohistan, Sindh, Pakistan.**

**People and Livestock.** Dhabeji is basically near to an old city of 'Bhambore' during Raja Dahir Regime. It

was previously the famous sea-port of 'Dibal'. Dhabeji is a word of Sindhi language. Goat, cow and sheep are the major species of livestock in this area of Kohistan. However, people prefer to have goats and cows rather sheep. It is because the types of fodder for sheep is less available. This area is declared as industrial area as well that is causing a lot of pollution, particularly cement factories. This, ultimately, is resulting in different diseases for both human beings and livestock. People keep 4-5 to 40-50 animals per family. People also serve in government and private organizations for earning their livelihood. People are also entering into different businesses due to division of land and other property.

People make a boundary wall by wood and bushes near their residences to keep their animals there at night. Mostly there is no shed on these livestock huts. They plough their fields by tractor or do traditional ploughing. People sell milk, ghee and livestock to fulfil their everyday needs. People, mainly, have Sindhi species in their livestock. People sell their fodder as well. However, livestock-keeping is not the only source of livelihood earning. People also do labour, employment and various businesses to earn their livelihood. Whenever there is disease among the livestock, people first do any local treatment and go to the hospital or doctor only in serious cases. Very amazingly, there is no livestock-theft in the area because there is a high social order and people have a strong informal social control on animal theft.

**Grazing and Stall-Feeding Practices.** People graze their animals in their private-lands and forest-lands also. People give special diet to milk-giving animals and also other special animals like oxen, etc. They also stall-feed their livestock when there is no rain for a long time. People graze their animals from morning to evening. Children and elder people mostly graze their cattle. Sometimes, whenever no male is available due to any reason, women also graze their animals but near the populated areas. People also give and take fodder on loan and exchange terms. But the period of paying loan back does not exceed the length of one year and the rate is also higher than cash payment. People do not keep servants for herding their livestock. They hand-over their livestock to their close relatives and pay them for grazing. The charges are double for cow as compared to that of goat/sheep per month.

**Arid Rangelands of Babar Band and Sri Sing, Kohistan, Sindh, Pakistan.**

**People and Livestock.** Cultivating, labour and livestock keeping are some of the major occupations in these areas of Kohistan. A lot of Hindus are residing in these areas of Sindh rangelands. There are negligible

water resources in the area. People keep cows, goats, sheep and camels in their livestock. Buffalo is very rare. People sell milk but do not sell ghee. At night, animals are kept in bush and wood made boundary wall near or besides their house. Surprisingly, there is no theft of livestock in these areas. Even, animals are not kept under lock and key at night. People mostly give local treatment to sick animals and human beings and only in serious cases consult the doctor. However, veterinary hospitals are very rare in the area.

**Grazing and Stall-feeding Practices.** People graze their cattle in their private-land as well as state-land. Mostly, animals are brought for grazing and stall-feeding is only for milk-giving animals or oxen. Graziers graze their livestock whole the day. They carry food and water with them and use leather-bags for water carrying purposes. Children and elders graze their cattle but women do not go out for grazing except some exceptions. People do not sell fodder due to shortage of fodder but they give and take fodder on exchange basis. People also keep servants for grazing their animals. People give them share or salary.

**Migration.** About four-fifth of the people are non-settlers and only one-fifth of the people are settlers in these areas. In dry season people migrate to other areas where grazing and water is available. However, this is partial migration and people return to their original places during rains and remain there up to the availability of grass and water. People also have migrated totally. For example, milk-men have totally migrated from these areas.

**Role of Women.** Mostly, women work inside the houses. However, women also work in the fields besides their husbands and sons. Women do work like watering and stall-feeding the animals and harvesting. They are always consulted about internal problems and sometimes about external problems as well. Mother and elder sister is helpful in solving different disputes.

## CONCLUSION

A lot of Hindus are living in Babar Band and Sri Sing areas of Kohistan. Goat, cow and sheep are the major species of livestock in Dhabeji area of Kohistan but camels are also found in Babar Band and Sri Sing areas of Kohistan. However, people prefer to have goats and cows rather than sheep due to non-availability of fodder for sheep. The industries, particularly cement industries, are causing diseases for human beings and livestock. People keep their livestock at night in a boundary wall made of wood and bushes near their residence. People sell milk, ghee and livestock to fulfil their everyday needs in Dhabeji

area but do not sell ghee in Babar Band and Sri Sing areas of Kohistan. People mainly have Sindhi species in their livestock. However, livestock-keeping is not the only source of livelihood earning. People give their livestock local treatment except when they are seriously sick.

People graze their cattle in their private-land as well as state-land. People give special diet to milk-giving animals and also to other special animals like oxen. People graze their livestock whole the day. Children and elder graze their cattle but women do not go out for grazing except few exceptions. In Dhabeji, people do not keep servants rather hand-over to their close relatives and pay them for grazing. Whereas, in Babar Band and Sri Sing areas people keep servants for grazing their animals. In Babar Band and Sri Sing

areas of Kohistan, people migrate to other areas, in dry seasons. Mostly women work inside the houses. However, women also work in the fields besides their husbands and sons. They do work like watering and stall-feeding the animals and harvesting.

## REFERENCES

- Beerling, M.L., G. Grosenick, A.A. Mann, A.R. McLaurin, P. Mulder and G.H. Van Rootselaar, 1991. Draft report on arid rangelands in Pakistan. Forestry Sector Master Plan Project, Islamabad-Pakistan.
- Mann, A.A., 1992. Sociology of Rangeland in Pakistan. Forestry Sector Master Plan Project, Islamabad. Pakistan.

(Received 07 September 1999; Accepted 01 October 1999)