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Author(s): Catherine A. Schloeder, Michael J. Jacobs, M. Dawood Sherzad, Zohal Maqsoodi, and Hadia Banwal

Source: Rangelands, 35(6):58-62. 2013.

Published By: Society for Range Management

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2111/RANGELANDS-D-13-00030.1>

URL: <http://www.bioone.org/doi/full/10.2111/RANGELANDS-D-13-00030.1>

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On the Ground

- The Kuchi are pastoralists who raise sheep and goats on the rangelands.
- Kuchi women are equal partners in the success of pastoral production, despite facing unique risks.
- Kuchi women are unskilled, illiterate, and underserved, and remain constrained by cultural beliefs. They are eager, however, to improve the welfare of themselves and their community when given appropriate opportunities.
- Women with training demonstrate they are more than capable of finding effective and sustainable solutions for female-related problems.
- Building the capacity of motivated women and supporting their efforts outside the home to resolve conflicts themselves are keys to success.

Keywords: PEACE Project, women's empowerment, pastoral development, risk management, conflict management.

Las mujeres como socias en la producción pastoral de Afganistán

Perspectiva desde el campo:

- Las kuchis son pastoras que crían borregos y cabras en los pastizales y tierras silvestres.
- Las mujeres kuchis son socias igualitarias en el éxito de la producción pastoril, a pesar de que se enfrentan a riesgos singulares.
- Las mujeres kuchis carecen de capacitación, son analfabetas, marginadas y siguen estando limitadas por las creencias culturales. Sin embargo, están ansiosas por mejorar el bienestar de ellas mismas y su comunidad cuando se les brindan las oportunidades adecuadas.
- Una vez que reciben capacitación, las mujeres demuestran que son más que capaces de encontrar soluciones efectivas y sostenibles para los problemas relacionados con el sector femenino.
- La construcción de la capacidad de las mujeres motivadas y el apoyo de sus esfuerzos fuera de casa para resolver los conflictos por sí mismas son las claves para el éxito.

In Afghanistan, 5% of the rural population is engaged almost exclusively in extensive livestock production (henceforth termed *pastoral production*) yet there have been few gender studies related to this livelihood, particularly with respect to the role of women or the risks they face as partners. Pastoralists in Afghanistan are referred to as *Kuchi*—a term meaning *to move* in Persian, today. Afghanistan's Kuchi raise sheep and goats for multiple purposes including dairy, wool, hair, meat, and hide production (Fig. 1). They also play an integral role in Afghanistan's economy by providing more than 75% of the live animals brought to mar-

ket each year.¹ Historically, Afghanistan's farmers and pastoralists have had many positive relationships involving the exchange of goods and services.² Decades of conflict, periodic droughts, and a growing need for agricultural land, however, have had a negative impact on these relations. Pastoral production, as a consequence, is under threat.³ Today, over half of Afghanistan's total Kuchi population is settled, with many living in poor living conditions increasing the likelihood of starvation. More importantly, they represent 70% of the country's Internally Displaced Population (IDP) and the norm for these IDPs is poverty and food insecurity.^{4,5} Ad-

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