

Session (1) : Keynotes

**Managing the Dry Lands' Natural Endowment: Harnessing Vegetation Resources at Hand
in The Face of Increased Climatic Uncertainty in Africa, the Case of Eritrea**

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ABSTRACT

Ubiquitously, more than ever, 'climate change 'or climatic variability is increasingly becoming a reality as manifested by recurrent droughts, increased erratic rainfalls, flooding, soaring temperatures etc. However, the impacts of climatic variability might be much more pronounced in those areas where precarious livelihoods prevail. This is particularly true in dry areas where the production is linked directly to natural resources-base that depend on subsistence pastoralism and agro-pastorlism. Despite such climate vagaries, people dry lands managed to survive under such harsh climatic uncertainty. In view of this, are there lessons that could be drawn in the way they manage and exploit their natural endowments –the vegetation? It is true, over the years nomadic and semi-nomadic people have developed and adapted an array of survival strategies in the face of increased climatic variability. These strategies did not emerge abruptly but gradually developed and adapted in response to drier conditions; and there is wealth of information where we can draw useful lessons to cope-up and eventfully adapt to climate changes. A priori, there are no fast and hard rules to draw lines between the do and don'ts and enlist procedures and criteria for survival. Hence, the objective of this paper is trigger/motivate debates on a number of issues related to the topic, particularly i) which are the major production defining, limiting and reducing factors in the dry lands, ii) how are people in the dry lands coping with climate changes/variability that enabled them live in arid and semi arid zones ii) most important/ promising browse species (e.g. herbs, shrubs and tree species) that provide fodder to livestock in general and camel in particular, iii) can we came up with plausible lessons learned for adaption in the face of climatic variability in order to enhance the resiliencies of the populations living on the fringes of the deserts. During the debate there is a dire need for a Paradigm Shift in the way we perceive climate change. Instead of demonizing climate change *per se*, it is very important to keep open our minds and explore opportunities provided by climate change to harness the natural endowment properly.

Keywords: *natural endowment, adaption, vulnerability, coping strategies, hazards, resilience, pastoralist*