

Policies for Sustainable Pastoralism in Africa

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Pastoral Policy Framework for Africa African Union

Abstract

Pastoralists occupy about 40% of Africa's land mass and are custodians of resources found in arid and semi-arid areas yet these areas are neglected by most governments. In recognition of their potential contribution the Africa Union has developed a policy framework to articulate clearly the unique needs of pastoral communities and their institutions, identifying how the efforts of key stakeholders can be harnessed and interventions tailored to adjust them in a sustainable manner.

Key words: Pastoralism, Africa Union, Policy Framework

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Introduction: Pastoralism in Africa

Pastoralism is a way of life based primarily on raising livestock. Pastoral areas occupy about 40% of Africa's land mass with significant variations among countries. In Kenya for example, pastoral areas occupy over 80% of the country's land area, hosting about 10 million people, 70% of the national livestock population and 90% of the wildlife population. This is mainly land with few alternative economic uses. As predominantly livestock producing areas, pastoral communities contribute significantly to economic development. In some African countries where more than 50% of the total land area is classified as pastoral, livestock account for more than 30% of the agricultural GDP. In Somalia for example, livestock contribute about 80% to the agricultural GDP.

Pastoralists are custodians of national resources found in arid and semi-arid areas and, as a system, pastoralism helps to protect and safeguard these resources. This custodial function has helped contribute towards a vibrant tourist trade for many African countries. Some pastoral areas also have important and strategic resources such as minerals and oil reserves.

In Kenya, pastoralism is the best use of approximately 80 per cent of the land, but pastoralist do not benefit from pastoralism. In fact every day, policies are enacted to ensure that pastoralist continue to be marginalized from the benefits of pastoralism. I can state here clearly and categorically, that the current challenges impacting pastoralists in this region are enabled and fuelled by marginalization from policy processes and basic services. This marginalization stems from a general preconception amongst many policy makers in East Africa that pastoralism as a land-use system is economically inefficient, unsustainable and environmentally destructive. But this is untrue, and in recognition of the plight and potentials of pastoral people in Africa, the African Union Commission (AUC) is introducing a Pastoral Policy Framework for Africa.

The Framework aims to promote the development in African pastoral communities, in partnership with pastoralists, their organizations, governments and other stakeholders. It is expected that the policy framework on pastoralism in Africa will articulate clearly the unique needs of pastoral communities and their institutions, identifying how the efforts of key stakeholders can be harnessed and interventions tailored to adjust them in a sustainable manner.

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The policy framework will:

- provide pastoral people with an open space for the definition and management of their own development activities,
- make it possible for appropriate interventions to address the natural, physical and anthropogenic problems, and
- create economic opportunities for pastoral people.

Why a Policy Response

Policy is an essential element of a sustainable pastoral livelihood system. Policy can promote or retard economic and social development in pastoral areas. Access to the resources of pastoral areas has a significant impact on both equity and productivity. Poor resource tenure (i.e. access to and ownership of land, water and other resources); insecurity; lack of access to education, health and communication facilities; poor access to markets; and poor access to services can breed discontent, promote injustice and provoke conflict. These can also lead to non-sustainable resource use and environmental damage. Policy and institutional reforms are important to empower pastoral people and promote equitable access to resources, facilities and services, promote trade and economic growth and guarantee sustainable land use and environmental management. It can also promote the process of democratization and ensure improved governance in pastoral areas.

Pastoral Policy Framework: AUs Focus

The main areas that will be addressed by the Africa Union Pastoral Policy Framework are summarized below.

Governance: The development of pastoralism in Africa requires appropriate governance structures which take the specific features of pastoralism into account, especially acknowledging the unique knowledge of pastoralists and their sociopolitical organizations. In many countries pastoralists are *de facto* minorities and should be recognized as

such, which would result in the necessary legal protection. Good governance in decision-making must exist not only within national and local governments, but at all levels of civil society, including pastoralists' customary institutions, associations as well as in local, national and international NGOs.

Decisions made on behalf of pastoralists without their direct involvement lack not only transparency but lack relevance as well. The core issue of representation is flawed. Pastoralists must find forms of representation in parliaments and governing councils of local administrations, associations and other organisations. Assurance of this representation is two-fold: governments must make the electoral process more accessible to mobile communities; and pastoralists themselves must promote civic involvement. The achievement of civic engagement can only be realized through increased educational opportunities.

National and local authorities should be appreciative of the important role traditional pastoral authority structures play in governance, including conflict resolution, management of land tenure and mobility as well as facilitation of interactions between pastoralists and other interest groups such as farmers. This means decentralized governance, with an effective transfer of competencies and budgets, delivered effectively and with respect for the protection of minorities.

A holistic approach to pastoralist policy development is needed, one which includes all line ministries such as health, education, agriculture and encompasses related interest groups.

Access to land, water and basic services: Traditional pastoralist land use methods have proven to be economical and ecologically efficient and viable. State-of-art scientific methods have underlined the importance of variability in rainfall as a driver of pasture quantity and quality in pastoralist areas. Research elaborates how mobility strategies are well adapted to this sort of resource availability.

Pastoralist activities must be recognized as a legitimate, productive land use, allowing pastoralists (both individually and collectively) the same legal entitlement as farmers, environmental conservation bodies and industrial enterprises. Land and water tenure rules and legal frameworks should take into account customary rules and mechanisms for resource allocation and management.

Laws and regulations should facilitate cross-border mobility and transhumance rights, increasing access to water, pastureland, and markets, while minimizing the spread of trans-boundary animal and human diseases and conflict within and between communities. Decentralization should occur in such a way so as to facilitate mobility and aid access to and affordability of technical services. There is a case for recognizing pastoralists as the ultimate owners of pastoral land taken for other purposes than for short-term investments, and to entitle them to a share of the revenue.

Governments should consider investing in rehabilitation of land that has been degraded as a result of these investments before returning it to pastoralists. The approval of pastoralists regarding any other kind of utilization of their land, such as wildlife conservation or private development, should be considered. They should also be fairly compensated for the revenue of these projects.

To alleviate difficulties relating to farming and other interests competing for land, water and other key resources, laws should be clarified and institutions opened to fair representation. The various interest groups should be brought into the policy framework consultative process to ensure fair treatment for all sectors and to take full advantage of the benefits each group can offer the other.

Education, science and technology: Education is of paramount importance for pastoral societies to realize their economic potential and adapt to an increasingly globalized world. The lead time for improvements in education is long, so work must commence immediately.

Education should be accessible to both children and adults in the mobile pastoralist community. This can be achieved through mechanisms such as mobile and radio schools as well as boarding schools. Educational quality, including teacher qualification, must meet national standards and the curricula employed that are relevant to pastoralist children, allowing for the educational process to address misconceptions about pastoralism in the community at large, build capacity in the implementation of pastoralist livelihood activities and prepare pastoralist students for a life outside pastoralism, should they choose other lifestyles.

Pastoralists and technical workers at all levels need technical and scientific knowledge and capability, mostly for improving human and animal health, but also for production and economic diversification. Modern technologies, such as satellite imaging and cell phones offer the possibility for pastoralists to have fast access to weather, grazing, market, and other information and communication. These technologies must be accessible and affordable. Production technologies such as those used in meat preservation and the transformation of fresh milk into powdered milk must also be made available, allowing pastoralists to diversify their market output, add value and compete with imported products.

Markets and financial services: African population forecasts show very rapid urbanization in the next few decades, resulting in a rapid increase in demand for livestock products. This will create enormous opportunities for pastoralists if they can meet the challenge.

Enlarged, equitable, and more efficient market networks are needed to improve terms of trade between pastoral and agricultural products. Public social security and private sector insurance mechanisms are needed by pastoralists whose market and production activities are disrupted by political (e.g. state actions) or environmental (e.g. drought) insecurity. Transportation, communications and certification infrastructure will facilitate

access to local, regional, national, and international markets. National and continental trade policies should consider the effects of taxation, tariffs and incentives on promoting trade and production. They should take into account the negative effects on pastoralist livelihoods due to importation of inexpensive subsidized livestock products from other parts of the world.

Flexible financial services which accommodate the mobile pastoralist lifestyle and which accept pastoralist assets or group guarantees as collateral will contribute to economic growth. These include savings and credit services for investment in productive operations. Loans should be charged at realistic interest rates or be based on a culturally acceptable alternative.

Conflict: Conflict is rampant in pastoral regions. These conflicts stem not only from competition over pastoral resources, but also result from boundaries that were established without taking the needs of pastoralism into account, from weakening of customary conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, from a decline in mobility and from a proliferation of small arms. Conflicts in pastoral areas are often exacerbated by politicization and lack of adequate or appropriate intervention by security forces. Climate change also compounds conflict.

Dialogue between pastoralists and competing interest groups has to be promoted, facilitated by governments and civil society organizations. Pastoralists should organize themselves at local, national and regional levels to ensure that their opinions and expertise is taken into account in the search for solutions. Governments should acknowledge and accept the authority of traditional pastoralist peace-making mechanisms in resolving disputes as they arise and promoting harmonious relations in society. Governments must act on the politicization of disputes and crack down on the proliferation of small arms which serve to escalate conflicts to previously new levels.

Poverty, risk and vulnerability: Mobility, necessary for the continuation of the pastoralist livelihood, involves particular health and security risks that differ from those associated with a sedentary lifestyle. While many pastoral households hold considerable capital assets in the form of livestock, which are often greater than those of crop farmers, these assets are highly vulnerable to loss from drought, theft, conflict or animal disease. As such, policy development should consider measures to manage and reduce this vulnerability.

The commonly held perception that pastoralism is a state of poverty and a constant struggle for survival for which there is no hope for improvement has caused for relatively low and sustainable investment in pastoralist regions. Instead there is a tendency to spend resources on temporary relief efforts which are necessary but proved to be inadequate to strengthen resilience.

Drought planning systems can make use of early warning technology, including satellite imaging, and should be based on the pastoralists' own perceptions and of assessment risk. Rapid reaction contingency plans can be prepared in advance for rapid implementation. Mobile pastoralist populations need continued access to health services, credit facilities, insurance and investment plans to protect assets. Where land tenure rules entitle pastoralists to land, providing collateral to be used as needed their resilience increases. Where educational initiatives inform government and community at large about the pastoralist lifestyle, mistreatment as a result of negative misperceptions is minimized.

Within the pastoralist community, women and children are most vulnerable. Pastoralist women seldom enjoy equal rights in all facets of pastoralist life and livelihood. Yet pastoralist women's role in pastoralist associations, as elected representatives and members of government could contribute significantly to creating social, economic and political improvements for pastoralists.

Environmental impact, biological and genetic aspects: There are many useful aspects of cross-breeding. The possibility of raising other animals in addition to the traditional species is important for future development of pastoralism. However, avoiding the genuine problem of genetic erosion resulting from the cross-breeding of indigenous breeds with exotic breed demands well-informed policies. Government actions must work to guide practices in a holistic manner, weighing the benefits of cross-breeding against ecological and other consequences.

The environmental impact of any change in pastoralist regions should be carefully studied and thoroughly debated between pastoralists, scientists, governments and other interested parties.

Conclusion

Pastoralists have the capacity to contribute to Africa's GDP in a sustainable way. It is increasingly accepted that while livestock are the dominant enterprise in pastoral commun-

ities, pastoral issues and the policies to address them go beyond those related to livestock production, marketing and trade to include critical issues involving primary health care, education, land rights, women's rights, governance, ethnicity and religion, conflict and insecurity. These are the issues that add to the complexity of pastoral livelihood systems. Policy response to the development needs of pastoral areas must therefore embrace all these issues.

To bring about sustainable development and serve the multiple goals of equity, poverty reduction, income growth, and efficiency in pastoral communities, a coherent and practical policy framework is important to address all of the critical issues. A pastoral policy framework therefore faces the challenge of providing a sound basis for guaranteeing access to resources, services and facilities; ensuring their sustainable management; and facilitating investment and generation of economic opportunities.