

# Pastoral mobility for sustainable livelihood systems

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## 1. Introduction

The concept of sustainable pastoralism defines a holistic existence in terms of both livelihood and production system. This has to be supported by a policy environment that supports mobility within and across boundaries. In recent years, pastoralism and pastoralists have been forced to take different shapes and faces. New terms such as post-pastoralism, which has been shaped by shifts in practice, imply that new forms of pastoralism have developed that have parted with the “millennial traditional pastoral ways of life” as a result of pastoral transformation. However there is one common factor: even though there are different types of pastoralism practised as a cultural inclination and/or as a production system, they are all found in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) that are becoming increasingly interesting for private investors, mainly due to the discovery of exploitable resources such as water, energy sources, minerals and land to be used for non-pastoral uses.

*Is about protecting grasslands and pastoral ecosystems that support huge numbers of livestock and wildlife resources, which significantly contribute to the economy.*



## 2. Mobility and its context in practising pastoralism

The success of pastoralist livestock production depends on mobility in order to ensure the timely and reliable access to pastures when nutrients in the vegetation peak. This justifies why pastoralists depend on extensive herding<sup>1</sup>. This practice also ensures forage availability

<sup>1</sup> Young H *et al.* 2013. Pastoralism in practice: monitoring livestock mobility in contemporary Sudan. Feinstein International Center Briefing Paper. Khartoum: UNEP Sudan / Somerville MA: Tufts University.

and pasture sustainability; however, their mobile lifestyles are being challenged by sedentarisation policies. These have different concerns which, in part, are impacting on the livelihood and production system of pastoralists in many ways: i) the land-tenure system is changing due to the systematic high monetary value placed on pastoral land; and ii) new forms of investments are altering the land-use patterns both for food production and for social interaction.

The weak or lack of policy and legal frameworks at the national level presents other challenges to the pastoral communities and, by extension, has opened the space for different levels of engagement by non-local communities in the transactions. On the other hand, where the policies or legal frameworks exist and provide clear methodologies towards secure tenure, the pastoralists' knowledge gap about them becomes the impediment. Often, pastoral community members do not have full understanding of such legal instruments and thus lean towards the traditional governance system, which – in the absence of defined complementarity with the legal system – becomes ineffective as far as tenure security concerned.



This trend has not happened unnoticed. It has defined not only local but also global debates around the condition and productivity of the world's pastoral lands and the need to recognise their importance as critical to a sustainable future for people everywhere who depend on such natural resources. The European Union (EU) has increased its attention to the large-scale investment in the ASALs, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has defined work around the Inclusive Business module, preferably partnerships that do not require large-scale land acquisitions<sup>2</sup>. The debate is not whether or not the investments or government development plans should be realised; it is more about place for the pastoralists and recognition of pastoral lands, which are largely rangelands and host diverse natural resources that are central in supporting the growth of national economies. However, such contributions and growth of economies can be realised only if the landscape is secure. The self-regeneration of rangelands is supported by a

*A business model is the way in which a company structures its resources, partnerships and customer relationships in order to create and capture value – in other words, a business model is what enables a company to make money. Business models are considered as more inclusive if they involve close working partnerships with local landholders and operators, and if they share value among the partners.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> Vermeulen S & Cotula L. 2010. *Making the most of agricultural investment: a survey of business models that provide opportunities for smallholders*. Rome: IFAD.

complex coexistence between and amongst humans, wildlife, livestock, plants etc. This makes it so important to recognise support to mobile pastoralism as a way to sustain pastoralism. However, it is also critical to recognise that practising mobile pastoralism can have negative impacts in degraded rangelands and can destabilise countries if there is a high influx through cross-border movement of herds. It can also endanger national security, compromise economic productivity and thus rob the younger generation of opportunities for a prosperous future.

The opening up of new investment frontiers in the ASALs brings many challenges that, if not quickly addressed, could put livelihood opportunities at even greater risk. Insecure land-tenure regimes in a fast-expanding space for exploiting oil and natural gas, wind power, coal,

*Investment model so far adopted is equivalent to development by dispossession/displacement of pastoralists*

etc. using large infrastructure attract uncontrolled large-scale investments in these areas. Guidelines for commercial engagement are urgently needed. Especially private investment in ASALs requires a clear

framework, since the people living in these areas are mainly pastoralists, who move their cattle to make best use of water and pasture and are affected heavily by these investments.

Cases of large-scale land acquisition or “land grabbing” are contributing to high commercial pressures on the pastoral land and livelihood system, the trickledown effect of which is land fragmentation and conversion of usage. Essentially, these cases curtail mobility and stifle the vibrancy of pastoralism in its real sense of practice.

Many important questions need to be addressed: How sustainable are these investments? What are their economic, social and environmental impacts? How are the needs of the local people being taken into account? Are policies, laws and institutions outward looking or are they cognizant of the trends and the demands? To what extent are the pastoral communities involved in the formulation and implementation of some or most of these policies and laws? What is or could be the role of the international and/or development partners in supporting and/or contributing to initiatives and processes that support sustainable pastoralism?

### **3. Conclusion**

Two observations are critical in the discourse of pastoral mobility: Firstly, extensive movement is a key strategy to meet nutritional demands of livestock while redistributing grazing pressure throughout the landscape. However, because quantitative monitoring data are lacking, pastoral mobility tends to be overgeneralised as being “irrational”, which largely led to sedentarisation-oriented policymaking. Secondly, rotational grazing allows pastoralists to track greener pastures in ASAL environments while redistributing grazing pressure throughout the landscape. However, herding practices and grazing behaviour have rarely been studied rigorously, partly because of the lack of intensive and continuous monitoring of livestock movements.

a) *Improved co-management in the rangelands*: Management of the rangelands in order to secure pastoralism has been recognised as an important approach towards addressing

the different challenges that pastoralism is confronted with. In the northern rangelands of Kenya, one approach has been setting up conservancies, which include group ranches joining together to form one big conservancy, thus two types of conservancies: private and community-based in the case of Naibunga and Olpajeta. However, the two models need a scenario-building analysis to understand in depth the possible benefits for the communities in cases where the conservancy model is applied strictly.

- b) *Traditional pastoral management of water and other natural resources*: Water is the lifeline of pastoralism, but the paradox is that this is practised in rangelands with very unpredictable rainfall pattern. The success of pastoralism thus depends on proper water use and management systems, traditional and often supported by government and other institutions. While the new trend towards supporting the establishment of water infrastructure is important, recognition of the traditional systems and the role of customary institutions related to natural resources is critical.
- c) *Capacity and application of local skills and knowledge*: In-built capacity is critical for the sustainability of knowledge and skills. Training of pastoral civil-society organisations (CSOs) in recent years has demonstrated that it is critical to develop capacities and institutions for sustainable change and development. The establishment of different networks in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia etc has kept the engagement with communities such as community based animal health workers, although they are not legal in some countries (e.g. Kenya), but it has been proven that training of herders to provide frontline service to animals saves more animals. This is also linked to and results in local pastoralist empowerment and a sound capital base.
- d) *Planning and mapping of pastoral lands and resources within them*: The world is increasingly moving to the digital age. Identifying and monitoring the trends in the state of natural resources through remote sensing is becoming the rule of the game. As such, in order to address conflict trends that are defining the face of pastoralism and pastoralists, temporal mapping has the potential to facilitate targeted interventions with the ability to help practitioners understand the resource trends either reducing or available in abundance. Boundaries are becoming of greater concern in the traditionally communally managed resources. Therefore, in order to help the communities identify these in a more participatory way, joint mapping is important and the Rangelands Initiative through its programme in the Tanzania Sustainable Rangelands Management Programme (SRMP) is a classical case. It helps in isolating conservation areas and can also support conservation-based livelihood systems. Recognising the existence of customary and statutory or formal institutions therefore defines governance and management of resources based on practice. It does not change the social relations for pastoralist women but strengthens their roles in resource mapping.

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