

21st Century Pastoralism

Strategies and ideas for
pastoralism in the future



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Preface

This report is about 21st century pastoralism, a way of life for millions of people across the world today. It is a livelihood with a viable, vibrant present and – as this report will show – a viable, vibrant future.

Below you will find a series of strategies and ideas for taking pastoralism further into the 21st century. The ideas were born out of a meeting of 17 pastoralist thinkers from India, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and the UK who came together in Amboseli Park, Kenya, in March 2007.

The conversation was designed to spark further debate among pastoralists, politicians, business people and all other interested parties. The issues it raised

are also central to today's worldwide debates about the environment and the economics and politics of globalisation.

'Going back to Jesus and Abraham, all the way to Ali Wario today, pastoralism is still with us. We are still there and will be there. We don't need to worry about the viability of pastoralism in the world today... [But] it is unfortunate we don't have a proper policy supporting this wonderful land... The major issues, land ownership, education, environment, marketing, these are the areas I want to focus on. Eighty per cent of the land is under pastoralism. Ninety per cent of the wildlife is found in pastoral areas. But [pastoralism] is not recognised in this country as a land use system.'

Ali Wario, Kenya

'My vision is becoming concrete. I had a dream years ago to see pastoralists meeting and sharing. I think we have that and it is a beginning. Where there is a meeting there is hope.'

Mohamed Ewangaye, Niger

Pastoralist thinkers:

Cameroon Hajara Haman

Ethiopia Nura Dida

India Dewa Ram Dewasi / Hanwant Singh

Kenya Abdi Umar / Ali Wario /

Daoud Tari Abkula / Jarso Mokku /

Peter Emuria / Said Ali Elmi

Mali Adam Thiam / Mohamed Ali Ag Hamana

Mauritania Dah Ould Khtour

Niger Mohamed Ewangaye /

Ourtoudo Bermo

Nigeria Nafisatu Mohamed

UK Jeremy Swift



Pastoralism
and political
power

If they are to have a future as productive, knowledgeable and contented societies, pastoralist communities need to find ways to exert more political influence.

Good government will help pastoralists to thrive – although their resilient systems of self-management will often survive bad government. They want better representation, self-government at local level and a bigger role for traditional institutions. More than anything they are calling for land rights, to secure their lives and livelihoods.

'As you go around the issues such as education and health, it all boils down to how well the society is governed. That is mainly the big issue. If you talk about education, whether it is accessible or not depends on how responsive the government is to the condition of pastoralists.'

Nafisatu Mohamed, Nigeria

'I want to emphasise politics every time. I want to focus on the role of pastoralists in the political process, in defining policies about education, health, the economy and everything. If pastoralists are not present in the policy-making process, how can they define their own identity and future?'

Mohamed Ewangaye, Niger



'I am a pastoralist and everything about me and my family is pastoralist. We have been working on building our own representation within the government. We want the process of other people speaking for pastoralists to come to an end. The challenge is that people think they know and understand us, but they don't.'

Nura Dida, Ethiopia



The challenge

The pastoralist lifestyle is coming under increasing pressure from external political forces. Traditional land management systems, which once sustained the environment and minimised conflict, have been abolished in many countries. Competition for land with farmers and other industries is rising. Meanwhile, new political arrangements have given power to individuals and groups that often do not represent pastoralists.

'A system has appeared in Mali, formalized in the new land tenure system. The new code of Mali does not recognise any land rights to the rural producers, especially the herders. They say agriculturalists can own, but pastures cannot be owned, even by a community. That wasn't the case before. The land used to be owned by the community. The new economics are destroying the old system without creating a new system.'
Adam Thiam, Mali.

The vision

Current political progress

In an ideal future, pastoralists will have a strong voice in national and international affairs, something they never had in the past. There are three ways of strengthening their political influence: increasing political representation of minorities within existing institutions; decentralising government power, allowing a measure of self-government; and building up customary institutions, trusted by the people.

'Africa itself is democratising. The fact we have a pastoral MP is a sign that things are changing,' said Adam Thiam, from Mali. *'You have new mayors in the pastoral communities. The AU is for the first time launching a continental brainstorming...There are problems but, if the current tendency continues, we will have a much better environment for people to put pressure on the government - despite the reluctance to see pastoralism as a culture and economy on its own.'*

The road toward good governance is a more effective integration between formal and customary governments.

Yet customary governments should not be given a blank cheque; they too have their limitations. More and more pastoralists are now winning seats in national assemblies – thanks partly to a number of affirmative action programmes and quota systems. This local representation will only increase as local communities are given more power to pick their own candidates – rather than accepting a candidate imposed upon them by a party list. The effectiveness of that representation should also improve with the introduction of more civic education programmes. The formation of pastoral standing committees in legislative bodies has helped amplify the voices of pastoralists. These committees are most effective when they have statutory powers and when they include a mix of pastoralist and non-pastoralist representatives.

But, of course, representation is not the answer if it is only empty talk and cronyism. One downside of decentralisation can be the creation of another level of local elites that can focus on their own interests and, potentially, oppress minority groups within their own communities.

'Higher representation doesn't mean you are taking on the issues. You can have guys from the village there, but without seeing the big picture. You can have the representation, without the media encouraging a national debate,' said Peter Emuria from Kenya. *'Higher representation often means more noise, but that noise has to be relevant.'*

'The decentralisation process has allowed pastoralists to be represented at the local decision making levels,' said Mohamed Ali Ag Hamana from Mali. *'The current situation is that although pastoralists have been elected as mayor, the transfer of resources from the central state to the local level has not happened.'*

Land needs to be protected

It is crucial to have pastoralists' rights to their land codified in law. This will give them some level of protection as markets open and outsiders move in to compete in the livestock trade and in using valuable land and water resources. Governments need to create appropriate authorities to protect that land right whenever it is challenged.

'[In some West African countries] there has been a transferring of power to pastoralists,' said Dah Ould Khtour from Mauritania. *'The state cannot now claim the pastoral land because pastoralists have the power to control their land. You cannot even carry out construction near a bore hole. And the population themselves cannot sell the land. They only have the right to manage.'*

Everyone can benefit

A strong relationship between pastoralists and the central political power can be good for the national economy. Instead of resisting and distancing themselves from governments they consider useless or even dangerous, pastoralists will be able to cooperate, manage land effectively, innovate and diversify and, importantly for government, pay their taxes and cast their votes.

But it is a different picture when that relationship breaks down. Experience shows that various levels of resistance develop. This can range from open dissent and non-cooperation, to civil disobedience, even violent conflict. People can refuse to help officials, refuse them water, exaggerate prices, evade taxes, refuse to take part in censuses and revert entirely to customary institutions. In the worst cases, pastoralists may join armed militia groups and move into banditry and kidnapping.

'Resistance comes when there are no pastoralist-friendly policies for education and markets. When everything around you is a difficulty, it is easy to develop a negative attitude. Pastoralists decide to come up with their own party here. They even form a militia group.'
Ali Wario, Kenya

'One of the systems of resistance is distancing yourself from your own government and relying more on your own systems. You stop relying on it. If you can't change the government, you smile when they are around and curse them when they leave. If they inquire about something, you point them in the opposite direction of where it is. If they want to buy something that costs two shillings, you tell them it's ten.'
Ourtoudo Bermo, Niger



Traders in Karamoja, Uganda



District administrator's office - Dimeka, Ethiopia



Prison regulations - N'Djamena, Chad

Pastoralism and the economy



As markets open up pastoralists will be quick to grasp the advantages, despite the many risks. Many recognize that they need to be inventive, adapting and diversifying their businesses to meet growing economic challenges, and they speak of how much they need knowledge and freedom to act.

They want the tools to innovate and strengthen their livelihoods, and to find alternatives. This means preserving cross-border movement and regional market access. They want additional training and education to diversify into new areas. They call for wider availability of credit and financial services.

The challenge

Protective tariffs and regulations are blocking access to key international markets. Subsidies to meat producers in wealthy countries including Argentina, the US and France sometimes flood African markets with low-price meat, undercutting local suppliers. Importing countries routinely impose long bans on African meat and livestock following reports of animal diseases. As time goes on and old systems of wealth sharing decline, the gap between rich and poor pastoralists is widening.

The vision

Opportunities

'I like the world open,' said Abdi Noor Umar, from Kenya. 'A lot of restrictions in demand areas will fall away along with the subsidy to rich Australian, Argentine and US producers. So there will be big demand. The variability will be an opportunity.'

Dah Ould Khtour from Mauritania added: *'There will be a reclassification of pastoralists, rich and poor, and a specialisation of pastoral production. Some will remain as pastoralists in the traditional manner while others will develop their system. That is what will allow for satisfaction of the local market but also provision to an external market.'*

Diversification

Pastoralists could do more to diversify their economies beyond the production of meat and livestock. Tourism is just one largely untapped area that could be explored. But, of course, diversification of livelihoods in rural areas can be the cause of conflict as the remaining pastoralists clash with the new agro-pastoralists or tourism entrepreneurs. This is where pastoralists can benefit from a good relationship with government – good governance being crucial to the management of these disputes.

Increased global demand for organic meat could bolster pastoral production. Niche markets for products like camel meat and milk could also expand. It is not just international trade regulations that need to change, pastoralists also need more and better credit and financial services, from private, public or even

local sources to help them develop their existing businesses and move into others.

Education

A powerful way of coming up with new strategies is to educate young pastoralists and encourage them to innovate. But prevailing prejudice against pastoralist communities has always undermined education initiatives in nomadic areas – the clichéd view is that once you are educated you have moved on from being a pastoralist. But schools and curricula can strengthen respect for pastoralism and ability to innovate. It is all a question of attitude. Nigeria has had some success by getting schools to train young pastoralists, for example. Nigerian pastoralists' fears that their educated young people would automatically migrate to cities did not materialize and the scheme has become popular.

'Unfortunately, in most places, the education system is not meant for pastoralists so you have to choose between education and your way of life, which is why we have so few pastoralist professors,' said Ali Wario, a Kenyan MP and pastoralist.

Urbanisation

Africa's growing urbanisation could challenge or complement the traditional pastoralist lifestyle. There is already a considerable upside for the pastoralist economy – the rising demand for meat and other livestock products and new opportunities for people from pastoralist families to take up new businesses.

'In twenty years it is a possibility that there will be pastoral towns, but not necessarily settlement. People will have an urban life but the system of movement will still remain,' said Nura Dida, from Ethiopia's Borana community. 'There's a possibility of split in families. For example, in one family with three wives, one remains in town while two move with animals, and milking animals will be around [settled] areas, so rules will have to develop. We're already thinking about that, about how to regulate land around urban centres...There is a proverb in our language. Life is in mobility. I want people to understand one thing. If the animals don't move, that's the end of the animals.'



Livestock market - Douz, Tunisia



The port at Mogadishu - Somalia



'It is a question of how to keep pace with the changing world and to have institutions that can make strategic engagements with political and economic processes. Pastoralists are resilient and can adapt to changes, but for pastoralists to survive in the future and exploit an ever-changing outside environment, they have to be inventive.'

Daoud Abkula, Kenya



Business man in Bossaso, Somalia



Cattle market - Bamako, Mali



Pastoralism and the environment

Pastoralists have a lot to teach the rest of the world when it comes to adapting to harsh climactic conditions. But more erratic weather patterns could make the pastoralist lifestyle increasingly challenging in the future.

And pastoralists are already having to cope with increasing competition for land with farms, other business interests and Africa's ever-growing urbanisation.

'Our animals are beneficial to the environment. They are eco-friendly. Animals and the environment depend on one another.'

Dewa Ram Dewasi, Rajasthan, India

The challenge

Rainfall is due to become even more erratic over the Sahel and eastern Africa, as climate change strengthens its hold on the continent. Current analysis suggests global warming may actually increase rain levels in some pastoralist areas. But those rains will become more unpredictable and the gaps between them may increase. Harsh weather conditions will add to the pressures caused by the encroachment of fenced farmland and the erosion of traditional land sharing agreements.

The vision

Existing expertise

Pastoralists are experts at making the most of unpredictable climactic and environmental conditions. They use mobility, careful management of key resources and selective breeding. They also know how and when to make the most of their markets to eke out scarce resources and help families in need.

'Often what we regard as science can display itself to be false science,' said Said Ali Elmi from Somalia. 'So pastoralists shouldn't lose confidence in their knowledge.'

The importance of good governance

Even the worst climatic conditions can be allayed by a responsive government with a good relationship with its pastoralist communities. Increasingly variable rainfall may actually benefit some pastoralists, those who maintain their ability to be mobile. Once again, good governance is key.

'When you start with good governance, even when the climate is poor, there is a contingency in place so that the impact is managed well,' said Borana elder Nura Dida. 'By the time you find yourself in that position, you already know what to do.'

'If we get good governance and good climate conditions, all pastoralists will have more knowledge, the young generation will be more educated and that will help reduce the poverty within the communities.'

Dah Ould Khtour, Mauritania

Minimising the impact

'Even though the climate is poor, there is a way of bringing out lots of innovation to ensure the quality of the animals. You may have ways of taking care of those animals' said Ourtoudo Bermo, from Niger.

Governments and traditional pastoral authorities could work together to minimise the impact of droughts and other environmental shocks. Agreements could be reached to allow pastoralists to cross borders freely to pasture and water. Customary governments are already experienced in negotiating these arrangements. Social insurance programmes could be developed out of those that already exist within pastoralist societies to soften the blow of sudden disasters.

During times of drought, when pastoralists sell off their animals, there are often no banks to take the money, or to channel the cash back to the community as investment. Pastoralists are calling for more financial institutions to open up in pastoral areas. These institutions will need to find more pastoralist-friendly ways of delivering their services, for example accepting collective guarantees as collateral.

Pastoralists could do a lot more to boost internal trade within their own countries, leaving them less reliant on international trade. An integration of markets, which comes about when the markets are able to operate more freely, could also balance out production in a given year, as excess production in one area compensates for lower production in another. In most countries, however, this would depend on huge improvements to the existing transportation and communication networks and changes in regulations and taxation regimes. Pastoralists would also have to prepare themselves for greater competition in their markets – and for the possibility of 'outsiders' taking advantage of the more open market conditions to enter the livestock business.





Herding sheep by the Nile - Luxor, Egypt



Herder and his son - Maradi, Niger



'Pastoralists have been able to adapt to nature, to climate change, for thousands of years. Their weakness is adapting to human change.'

**Mohamed Ewangaye,
Niger**

End note

'I'm starting with a vision where I see a government receptive to and accommodating of pastoralist interests and concerns. [I see] pastoralists who have a right to their land and are in charge of land resources and with access to all the external resources on which they depend. Combine those two forces and you get better livelihoods and access to amenities such as health and education and the enjoyment of a good life. And finally, I see pastoralism contributing to the human race through the sustainable use of natural resources.'

Nura Dida, Ethiopia



Cattle herder - Yabello Ethiopia



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