

P a s t o r a l i s m

Progressing Policies that favour Pastoralists

3. Rights, Governance and Voice

The context

The persistence of poverty, environmental degradation and conflict in many pastoral areas is largely a direct result of inappropriate policy and development interventions. Enduring perceptions of pastoralism as an economically inefficient and environmentally destructive land use system continue to drive rangeland and livestock policy. Yet none of these policies is evidence-based, nor are they developed with the participation of pastoral communities.

Governments' poor understanding of pastoralism, combined with the inability of pastoral groups to influence policy and hold government to account, is perpetuating a vicious circle of pastoral poverty and conflict, reinforcing the preconceptions that pastoralism has no future and has to be modernised or replaced. Building the capacities of both pastoral communities and their advocates to challenge these perceptions and participate more effectively in political decision-making is thus critical for future development and peace in the drylands.

Policy implications

- Pastoralists have to master the policy process, putting themselves at the centre of local and national debates intended to address their priorities and needs
- Secure land tenure is a prerequisite to sound and profitable rangeland management
- Policies and laws must promote livestock mobility and access rights to resources that sustain high livestock productivity
- Governments need to have a sound understanding of the significant economic returns from land under pastoralism.



credit: WRENmedia

“ If I go alone to policymakers nobody would listen to my voice. To be heard we gather as communities, as villages, even across a region to agree on issues and to speak with one voice. It is this unity that brings good results. We get media coverage. Four to five years ago politicians seemed to know nothing about pastoralism. Now our ministers know about us. We have begun to get recognition for our rights. ”

Ramaram Raika, pastoralist leader, India

Understanding pastoralism

Overcoming deeply ingrained prejudice and misunderstanding of pastoralism is a fundamental prerequisite for greater participation by pastoralists in national and local decision-making processes. But pastoralist groups also need to address their internal divisions and divergent interests, and build the capacity of ordinary pastoralists to hold their leaders to account. This will enable them to articulate the significant economic and environmental contributions they make, and acquire sufficient political clout to effect policy change.

Securing land rights is critical to ensure the good governance of pastoral lands, but pastoralists need to be legally “literate” so they are able to exercise these rights. And exclusion from political processes and erosion of access to natural resources are key contributors to conflict that need to be addressed.

viable livelihood

productive

knowledgable

economically important

adaptable

skilled

environmentally sustainable

market suppliers

resilient

Ways forward

- Challenging perceptions and making the economic argument: a strong political constituency, concerted support and coordination between governments in Africa and elsewhere are required to empower pastoralists to influence policymaking. There is also an urgent need to develop a dynamic economic model that will track pastoralism's social and economic contribution, in order to challenge policymakers' perceptions
- Strengthening civil society: finding ways to give a real voice to pastoralists is critical so they are able to assert their rights and engage in policy debate
- Responding to pastoralists' immediate needs: poverty and conflict are endemic in many pastoral areas and require immediate attention if local people are to subscribe to more strategic, longer-term and intangible issues such as "empowerment".



“ We have a stronger voice now. ”

Dali Bai, Raika pastoralist and community representative, India

Evidence of change

Widely regarded as backward and irrelevant in modern times, the Raika pastoralists of Rajasthan, India, have steadily increased their profile in the eyes of policymakers and have begun to influence policy in their favour. With the support of a local NGO, LPPS (Lokhit Pashu - Palak Sansthan), Raika representatives have travelled both within and outside India to persistently lobby for pro-pastoralist policies. Recent policy changes achieved include the inclusion of camel milk in the National Dairy Act, which makes trading fresh and processed camel milk legal and, under the Forest Rights Act, recognition that pastoralists along with tribal people have rights to access forest reserves for dry season grazing. At an international level, they have participated in the process led by livestock rights lawyers representing Maasai pastoralists to draft the International Declaration on Livestock Keepers' Rights, presented to FAO.

For more information: www.lpps.org



“ We have built our traditional ways to develop a voice. Within Burkina Faso we had a national cattlemen's association and then we thought "Why don't we join with similar organisations in neighbouring countries?" We have. Now we sit at regional meetings and raise our points. For example we needed time to translate documents from French into local languages. We were given it, could share the draft policies and feed back. Now we are involved. ”

Barry Tidjane, President of National Union of Traders and Exporters, Burkina Faso