LIVESTOCK, LIBERALIZATION AND DEMOCRACY: CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS IN A REFORMING UGANDA

Livestock production contributes to the livelihoods of poor rural Ugandans by serving as a source of food, a store of wealth, a source of cash, and a complement to crop farming. However, livestock producers, traders, and processors are constrained by missing or inadequate infrastructure, poor quality livestock, endemic and epidemic diseases, the small size of the domestic market, and Uganda's limited capacity to service international markets.

The political economic environment is equally important. Producers operate within a semi-authoritarian political environment framed by unresolved violent conflict in northern and eastern Uganda on the one hand, and a liberal reform alliance between the Ugandan national government and its international development partners, on the other. This environment sends mixed signals about political participation.

• Politics in Semi-authoritarian Uganda

Fourteen of Uganda's 56 districts have been affected by sustained conflict since 1986. Conflict has centered on violence between the Lord's Resistance Army, the government, and civilians, and predation by cattle rustlers. These conflicts have devastating humanitarian effects, and they divert resources toward security, diminishing the funds available for government investment in the livestock sector.

In stable regions, Ugandans encounter a political regime that combines elections and other opportunities for citizens to influence public policy with restrictions on political participation and occasional violations of citizens' civil liberties. The "Movement" political system prohibited political parties from engaging in core activities such as preparing platforms and holding regular meetings. (Many of the restrictions were lifted recently.) The government also has implemented decentralization measures ostensibly intended to bring government closer to the people. However, the impact of devolution has been diluted by concentration of financial resources and decision-making authority at the more difficult-to-access district level.

• Reforming Uganda

The Ugandan government has adopted liberalizing economic reforms that seek to create macroeconomic stability, to reorient government from direct service provision towards providing an enabling environment for the market, and to establish a demand driven approach to services. Reforms were pushed by an alliance of major multilateral and bilateral donors and reformers within government.

Reformers have made neoliberal rhetoric the dominant government discourse, but bureaucratic tactics show there is substantial resistance. The implementation of the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), an important component of agricultural reform, has been hindered by inadequate budgetary allocations. Despite donor willingness to fund this initiative, civil servants exploited the reform emphasis on fiscal discipline to limit NAADS expenditures by allocating funds to other sectoral activities, and thereby reducing permissible NAADS spending. With the ADB Livestock Sector Development Program loan, on the other hand, substantial funds have been allocated to undertake a number of activities inconsistent with reform.

Reformers have focused attention on poverty, and the government has institutionalized public participation processes. The most recent version of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan, Uganda's central policy document on poverty, was

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developed through a participatory process. Pastoralist organizations engaged in a concerted advocacy effort that met with some success. Participatory processes offer an opportunity for influence within the dominant macroeconomic framework.

However, the privatization of the parastatal Dairy Corporation shows that major policy decisions continue to occur without public consultation. Stakeholders were excluded from the divestiture process, which did not follow established procedures. In this case, media coverage served to counterbalance this exclusion by revealing irregular actions, prompting parliamentary intervention and leading to a change in the outcomes.

• Entry Points

In this context, the government-donor focus on markets, participation and poverty provide strategic entry points for interventions that could improve the livelihood of poor producers.

1. Improve livestock sector infrastructure

Government intervention to facilitate provision of sector-specific infrastructure—weighing stations, cattle dips and milk collection centers—would facilitate the operation of the livestock sector. The small producers who benefit most directly from their existence cannot afford individual purchase, but this infrastructure could be provided through direct government provision, market establishing requirements, and subsidizing the purchase of infrastructure.

2. Improve incentives for market participation and productivity

Lack of product and market information and the imposition of taxes and fees on marketed livestock are serious disincentives to investment in commercial production. Interventions to disseminate livestock market information could be undertaken by government, donors, or the private sector. Establishing a grading system, increasing government enforcement of existing standards or investing in branding would encourage investment in quality. Government intervention would be necessary to remove the taxes and fees imposed upon livestock.

3. Link participation information to reform assessments

Government reform programs are under pressure to deliver results, so it is important to incorporate measurable indicators of the extent to which poor people, pastoralists, women and other marginalized groups participate in and benefit from these programs. These indicators would encourage program implementers to focus on these groups, and would assist civil society organizations to monitor reform success and advocate change. Donors that provide financial support for reform are in a particularly good position to encourage the collection and analysis of disaggregated participation and outcome data.

4. Support citizen and civil society participation

Most Ugandan civil society organizations have little experience participating in policy development and advocacy. Experienced advocacy organizations could build the capacity of producers' membership associations to participate in public policy. Support could include sharing information about participatory processes, supporting groups of poor producers, and linking similar groups in different areas. Individuals and local group should retain control over their level of engagement and form of participation.

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