

Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa: Diverse livelihood pathways

Pastoralists in the Horn of Africa have struggled for centuries with drought, conflict and famine. They are resourceful, innovative and entrepreneurial peoples, by necessity. While there are profound difficulties in creating secure livelihoods for all, there are also significant successes.

The African Union's Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africaⁱ recognises pastoralists' contributions to national and regional economies – supplying huge numbers of livestock and livestock products. Pastoralists' production systems are highly adaptive and constantly respond to market and climatic change. At the same time human development and food security indicators are amongst the

lowest on the continent. The Framework is designed to secure and protect the lives, livelihoods and rights of pastoral peoples, and is a platform for mobilising and coordinating political commitment to pastoral development in Africa.

This policy brief, based on latest research by Future Agricultures Consortium,ⁱⁱ reviews understandings and misunderstandings about pastoral livelihoods - innovation and entrepreneurship, not just coping and adapting; and cooperation and networking across borders, not just conflict and violence. It highlights the multiple pathways for future development of pastoral areas and offers an alternative view of pastoralism and practical ways forward.



Photo by Frederic Courbet

Camels exports from the Horn are booming.

Pastoralists in the Horn

Pastoralism is a way of life for some 20 million people across sub-Saharan Africa.ⁱⁱⁱ Pastoralists – people who depend primarily on livestock or livestock products for income and food - typically graze their animals on communally-managed or open-access pastures, and move with them seasonally. Adding in agro-pastoralists – who derive 50 percent of their income from non-livestock sources - the numbers reach 200 million,^{iv} over 30 million in the Greater Horn of Africa.^v

The Greater Horn of Africa and other arid areas where pastoralist communities live are isolated, remote and underdeveloped. Historically, pastoralists have been marginalised, both

geographically and politically. The creation of colonial states frequently cut pastoralists off from their traditional places for grazing, water and markets. Colonial policy promoted agriculture in highland areas and livestock development in the lowlands based on ranching. Colonial attitudes and misunderstandings about pastoralism, economics and mobility tended to be reinforced by governments after Independence (and in Ethiopia). They are still very evident in many countries - in land policies, in resettlements of pastoralists to make way for more 'commercial' investment, and in allocations of development support and services.

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Figure 1: Eastern Horn of Africa

and livelihood issues has a complicated history varying across countries and time. Local conflicts, trade and livelihoods are also invariably linked to national, regional and international political and economic trends – from control over resources and international security issues to population growth, food prices and climate change.

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A livestock revolution in Africa

The dominant picture of pastoralism is of the conservative herder, bound by culture to build his herd and sell as few animals as possible. Yet there are huge regional livestock trade networks

connecting pastoral hinterlands of the Greater Horn to markets in Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Khartoum and beyond – to Kinshasa, Cairo and the Arabian Peninsula. Vast numbers of livestock are traded in the Horn^{vii} (Box 1). The value of pastoral livestock and meat trade from the Greater Horn is nearing US\$1 billion a year^{viii} - making Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia 'high export' countries. This is several fold larger than government figures, which consistently underestimate the contribution of livestock and pastoralism to the national economy.

Box 1: Livestock traded in selected Greater Horn countries (2010)

- Sudan: 1,500,000 pastoral sheep, 200,000 camels, 100,000 goats
- Berbera, Somaliland : 1,570,000 sheep and goats, 136,000 cattle, 97,000 camels
- Ethiopia: 472,000 livestock
- Garissa 105,000 cattle and 25,000 goats

Pastoralists adapt to market demands and opportunities. A boom in camel prices has seen pastoralists in Somalia and Ethiopia switching the composition of their herds and boosting camel exports. Private abattoirs have emerged in pastoral areas of Somalia and Somaliland with exports of chilled meat to the Gulf States by private planes. Pastoralist marketing organisations supply milk to the growing urban populations within pastoral areas and process and package milk for supermarkets in Kenya and the Gulf. New pathways are emerging, responding to changing conditions, not dependant on aid or government, but facilitated by changing communication technologies and growing African and Gulf markets.

A livestock revolution is taking place in Africa – centred on the Horn. But this revolution does not follow standard economic models. This trade is run by a vast network of producers and traders, financiers and transporters who have to find ways through border restrictions, excessive taxation, out-dated veterinary controls and insecurity. In this environment opportunities for illegal trade and instability expand, fed by demand for imported goods from cities and involvement of elites outside pastoral areas.

Development challenges and successes

Development planners have responded to a perceived backwardness of pastoral areas with modernisation programmes: dip tanks, boreholes, livestock markets, irrigation schemes, fencing and rotational grazing. Most of the infrastructure is underutilised and dilapidated – high cost holding pens, for example, are inappropriate for flexible marketing systems – while intensive range management programmes are less productive than ranch systems across Africa. Large-scale irrigation schemes involve high costs, compete with pastoralism for riverine grazing, and are likely to be targeted by large-scale (non-pastoralist) investors. By contrast, small-scale irrigation and recession cultivation have always been an important component of livelihoods in dryland areas.

Appropriate investments can make a big difference - where designs take account of local circumstances and priorities and where pastoralists themselves are involved. Examples are:

- Privatised community-based animal health worker systems in Ethiopia
- Small-scale women's dairy groups in northern Kenya

- Participatory design and evaluation of livestock feed supplementation during drought
- Restocking programmes after drought - linked to traditional stocking systems.

Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS)^x promote livelihoods-based responses to drought: destocking and restocking, livestock feed supplementation and veterinary voucher schemes. Community-based peace building initiatives in pastoral areas can lead to local peace agreements – though gains are fragile and can be undermined by higher level interference. Distance learning for nomadic children using radio programmes, mobile tutors and print materials is a flexible approach to education being taken by the Ministry of Education in Kenya.

The regional dimensions of pastoralism necessitate harmonisation of policies affecting pastoralists' livelihoods. Regional economic integration – with free movement of people, goods and services – offers opportunities for pastoralists. With three different Regional Economic Communities (RECs)^{xi} within the Horn of Africa this has so far proved difficult. The AU Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa is a promising way forward. It recognises pastoralists' economic, social and cultural contributions, both historically and in the future. It addresses many of the myths surrounding pastoralism and calls for national and regional processes that place pastoralists and their institutions centre-stage in policy-making.

Future pathways – diverse livelihood options

What is the future for pastoralism in the Horn of Africa? Many pastoralists are responding to change – with significant benefits to themselves and the economy. But not everyone succeeds

– with dire consequences for those who lose out. Pastoralism does not represent a single form of livelihood. Pastoralists may have more or less animals, different combinations of species, difficult levels of engagement with markets (local, cross-border, export) and different livelihood diversification strategies. These different pathways vary from place to place and over time. Pathways are pushed and pulled by shocks and stresses – encroachment by agriculturalists and land grabs, droughts and floods, disease epidemics or livestock raids, trade bans imposed by veterinary regulations,^{xii} wars and conflicts, or shifts in market opportunities.

Future scenarios – possible pathways that might be followed for different people in different places – are depicted in Figure 2.^{xiii} This shows four simplified livelihood strategies with different levels of resource and market access. Access to these is, in turn, affected by multiple interacting factors. Resource access is affected by climate change, which impacts on pastures and water sources, and alienation of land to private enclosures, irrigation and game reserves. Market access is affected by disease outbreaks, quality of roads, holding grounds and port infrastructure, changing demand patterns from urban areas, and so on. Conflict – raiding and larger scale rebellion – may affect both resource and market access.

‘Traditional mobile pastoralism’ is becoming rare, but is still an important scenario where market access is poor, options for commercialisation are limited and resources still relatively plentiful – in parts of the ‘Karamoja cluster’ of north-western Kenya, north-eastern Uganda and south-eastern South Sudan, and the Omo River Delta, Ethiopia. In virtually all other areas, increasing pressures are shaping pastoral livelihood options and opportunities. ‘Land grabs’ – local and external



Figure 2: Four livelihood scenarios for future pastoralists

investment in land – are undermining access to critical pastoralist resources and increasing vulnerability. In Kenya, investors have targeted the Tana Delta, the largest wetland in the country and a vital drought-grazing land for pastoralists from across northern and eastern Kenya,^{xiv} as well as Laikipia plateau for tourism.^{xv} Private fencing of rangeland has resulted in disruption of traditional common property-based range management – in Borana, Ethiopia and elsewhere. Even removal of small resource patches can undermine the functionality of the whole system, such as the grabbing of seasonal grazing lands in Gedaref state, Sudan.

Growth in commercial trade and markets is creating numerous livelihood opportunities. Pastoralists are taking advantage of greater incorporation into national and regional economies to move livestock and goods across geopolitical and land-use boundaries. This expanding trade is having multiplier effects – promoting diversification pathways in the drylands, with knock-on demand for trekking and transporting livestock, high value fodder and milk. Households are adopting a mixed strategy – maintaining herds on the range and developing trade, business or services. Women

Pastoral women and economic diversification

Pastoral women - traditionally experimenters and initiators of livelihood activities - are taking advantage of new economic opportunities around trading towns. Many engage in small-scale enterprises – packing milk, yoghurt, aloe and honey for sale in urban supermarkets or hotels. Some women entrepreneurs are already significant employers in pastoral areas. New educational and training opportunities and new technology (e.g. mobile phone banking) can empower pastoralist women. Constraints to productive and broadly beneficial livelihood diversification are: weak transport, power and telecommunications infrastructure, irregular incomes making it difficult to get bank loans, low cash incomes and thin markets, cultural practices and restrictive policies. While some pastoral women are clearly managing to diversify and accumulate wealth, sensitive development policies are needed that address these constraints, reduce women's vulnerability and ensure they gain control of productive assets.

are engaging in value-addition, gaining an independent source of income.^{xvi}

The various drivers are creating a greater spread of livelihoods pathways and increased differentiation. There is a growing gap between those who are able to profit from the increasing market opportunities and those who cannot. The latter have to drop out of the traditional pastoral system and either move into other livelihoods (as labourers, small-scale entrepreneurs or service providers) or become

reliant, in increasing numbers, on aid agency support. At the same time an elite commercial class is emerging within pastoral societies, well-connected economically and politically at the centre, often losing their connections with the 'margins'. Traditional support networks are being eroded with absentee herd owners and the loss of cooperative herding arrangements which supported poorer herders.

Governments and development organisations are struggling to provide social protection to destitute herders. Safety nets which either involve returning large numbers to pastoralism or assume everyone will find alternative livelihoods may be fundamentally flawed. Livestock commercialisation does provide some new employment opportunities but numbers are relatively small. Assets provided through safety nets may help immediate food security needs but are too small to rebuild herds. New social protection mechanisms – index-based livestock insurance, employment guarantees, cash transfers and conflict resolution can also play an important role.^{xvii}

Ways forward for policy-makers

How can pastoralists' dynamic entrepreneurialism and innovation be capitalised upon and multiplied? And how can the crises, failures and destitution be avoided? Some major shifts are needed.

First, is a change in the way 'outsiders' view pastoral areas of the Horn. This means some fundamental flips in the way problems are framed and solutions envisaged (Table 1). Of course the world does not exist in bipolar opposites – the complex reality is somewhere in between. But looking at the world from pastoral perspectives can help understanding and planning of ways forward.

Table 1 Contrasting views of development in pastoral areas

| Issue | View from outside | Views from pastoralist areas |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Mobility | Nomadism - a stage in the development process, pre-sedentarisation | Mobility of livestock, people, labour, finance - essential for modern livelihoods |
| Climate and environment change | Villains in environmental degradation, and victims needing support for climate adaptation | Respond to non-equilibrium environments and climate variability as a way of life |
| Markets | Uneconomic, weak, backward – need to be formalised and regulated, value chains upgraded | Vibrant commercial trade, cross-border, linked to regional/global markets, constrained by states |
| Agriculture | Route to settlement and improved livelihoods | A temporary stop-gap. Needs to be flexible to support pastoralism and locally controlled – no land grabs |
| Technology | Backward, requiring modernisation (range management, fences, breeding) | Appropriate technology, mixing old (mobile pastoralism) with new (cell phones, internet) |
| Diversification | Way out of pastoralism, coping strategy | Complements pastoralism, adds value, provides business opportunities, reinvestment of new income in livestock |
| Socioeconomic groups | Homogenous, tribal | Highly differentiated, different socioeconomic groups |
| Gender | Regressive, anti-women | Women as key innovators, agents of diversification, promote peace through trade networks |
| Youth | Dangerous, idle, impoverished – engaged in banditry and raiding | Connectors to new economic activities, use new political fora to negotiate for pastoralists |

There are practical steps policy-makers and development organisations can take to encourage sustainable and secure pastoralist livelihoods pathways:

1. Work through existing frameworks. The AU Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa provides a vision of development pathways in pastoral areas. Policy makers in national governments and RECs now need to translate the Framework into policies and allocate resources for implementation.
2. Strengthen local presence and knowledge. Understanding of pastoral areas is constrained by the lack of good quality information. Locating staff within pastoral areas can help the shift towards a pastoral perspective.^{xviii} Long-term research is also needed around the complex, shifting socio-economies and ecologies of pastoral areas.
3. Protect pastoralists' access to rangelands and key resource area^{xix} - through national legal regulatory frameworks and traditional pastoral institutions, including support for dispute resolution.
4. Promote entrepreneurship and develop supporting policies – protection and development of pastoral livestock, appropriate regulatory mechanisms, marketing for pastoral livestock and livestock products, and improved roads and communications in pastoral areas.
5. Improve access to formal education. Demand for education is high among pastoralists. Educated pastoralists – particularly women – can increase family incomes, nutrition and health and remittances from urban employment.

Provision of flexible education with new technologies can reach large numbers of pastoralist children at low cost.

6. Engage with pastoralists. Pastoralist communities are poorly represented in political circles. Pastoral parliamentary groups need to be heard in national policy and budget decision-making circles. Educating local leaders^{xx} and building capacities of local institutions will enable them to manage economic and social change. Political decentralisation with genuine devolution of powers to local communities - not captured by elites – is needed to secure a fair deal for pastoralists.

Key policy findings

- A livestock revolution is taking place around the Horn of Africa - with US\$1 billion trade in livestock and livestock products, plus associated economic activities – transport, marketing, financing and processing.
- Pastoralism represents diverse livelihood pathways – different livestock, livelihood diversification and market engagement strategies, reflecting differing access to market and resources, pushed by stresses and shocks. Policy-makers and development organisations need to work on multiple fronts to encourage sustainable and secure livelihoods.
- A fundamental shift in thinking is needed about pastoralist livelihoods - recognising innovation and entrepreneurship, not just coping or migration out, and cooperation and networking across borders, not just conflict and violence.

End Notes

- ⁱ African Union (2010) Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa: Securing, Protecting and Improving the Lives, Livelihoods and Rights of Pastoral Communities, Addis Ababa. Approved at Executive Council 18th Ordinary Session 24-28 January 2011, Addis Ababa. <http://www.future-agricultures.org/events/future-of-pastoralism/7521-au-policy-framework>
- ⁱⁱ Future of Pastoralism International Conference, FAC and Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, 21-23 March 2011, Addis Ababa <http://www.future-agricultures.org/events/future-of-pastoralism>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Morton, J. (2008) 'DFID's Current and Potential Engagement with Pastoralism: A Scoping Study', Greenwich: NRI
- ^{iv} African Union (2010) Ibid.
- ^v Morton, J (2008) Ibid. Greater Horn of Africa: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, parts of Tanzania and Uganda.
- ^{vi} Sandford, S. (1995) 'Improving the Efficiency of Opportunism: New Directions for Pastoralist Development' in Scoones, I. (Ed.) *Living with Uncertainty: New Directions in Pastoral Development in Africa* ITDG, London; Sandford, S. (1982) *Management of Pastoral Development in the Third World*, Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.
- ^{vii} Catley, A. and Akililu, Y. (2012) 'Moving Up or Moving Out: Commercialization, Growth and Destitution in Pastoralist Areas' in Catley, A., Lind, J. and Scoones, I. (eds) (In press) *Pastoral Development in Africa: Dynamic Change at the Margins*. London: Earthscan/Routledge.
- ^{viii} Estimated from market figures
- ^{ix} See: Western, D. (1982) 'The Environment and Ecology of Pastoralists in Arid Savannas' *Development and Change*, 13:183-211; Oba, G. (2012) 'The Sustainability of Pastoral Production in Africa' in Catley et al. (Eds.)
- ^x LEGS (2009) *Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards, LEGS and Practical Action Publishing*, Rugby www.livestock-emergency.net
- ^{xi} International Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD), East Africa Community (EAC) and Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA)
- ^{xii} Veterinary regulations – some based on outdated science, or to meet EU requirements which may not be a market source for pastoralist producers
- ^{xiii} Developed by Ethiopian policy makers, pastoral leaders and development practitioners: UN OCHA Pastoralist Communication Initiative (2007) *The Future of Pastoralism in Ethiopia* Addis Ababa UN OCHA PCI.
- ^{xiv} Nunow, A. (2012) 'Land Deals and the Changing Political Economy of Livelihoods in the Tana Delta, Kenya' in Catley et al. (Eds.)
- ^{xv} Letai, J. and Lind, J. (2012) 'Squeezed from All Sides: Changing Resource Tenure and Pastoralist Innovation on the Laikipia Plateau, Kenya' in Catley et al. (Eds.)
- ^{xvi} Livingstone, J. and Ruhindi, E. (2012) 'Women and Economic Diversification in Pastoralist Societies: A Regional Perspective' in Catley et al (Eds.).
- ^{xvii} Devereux, S and Tibbo, K (2012) 'Social Protection for Pastoralists' in Catley et al. (Eds.)
- ^{xviii} The 'University of the Bush' seminars bring together pastoralists and policy makers to debate current research findings on pastoralism innovations, facilitated by FAC. <http://www.future-agricultures.org/pastoralism/7452-university-of-the-bush-seminar-2>
- ^{xix} See: Tache, B. (2012) 'Rangeland Enclosures in Southern Oromia, Ethiopia: An Innovative Response or the Erosion of Common Property Resources?' in Catley et al. (Eds.)
- ^{xx} FAC, Centre for Minority Rights Development (CEMRIDE) and Pastoralists Development Network of Kenya (PDNK) host breakfast meetings for MPs from the pastoralist community to share latest research findings and strategise on engagement between the Pastoralism Parliamentary Group and other stakeholders <http://www.future-agricultures.org/pastoralism/7644-fac-and-its-partners-host-mps-meeting-on-pastoral-livelihoods-and-policy>.

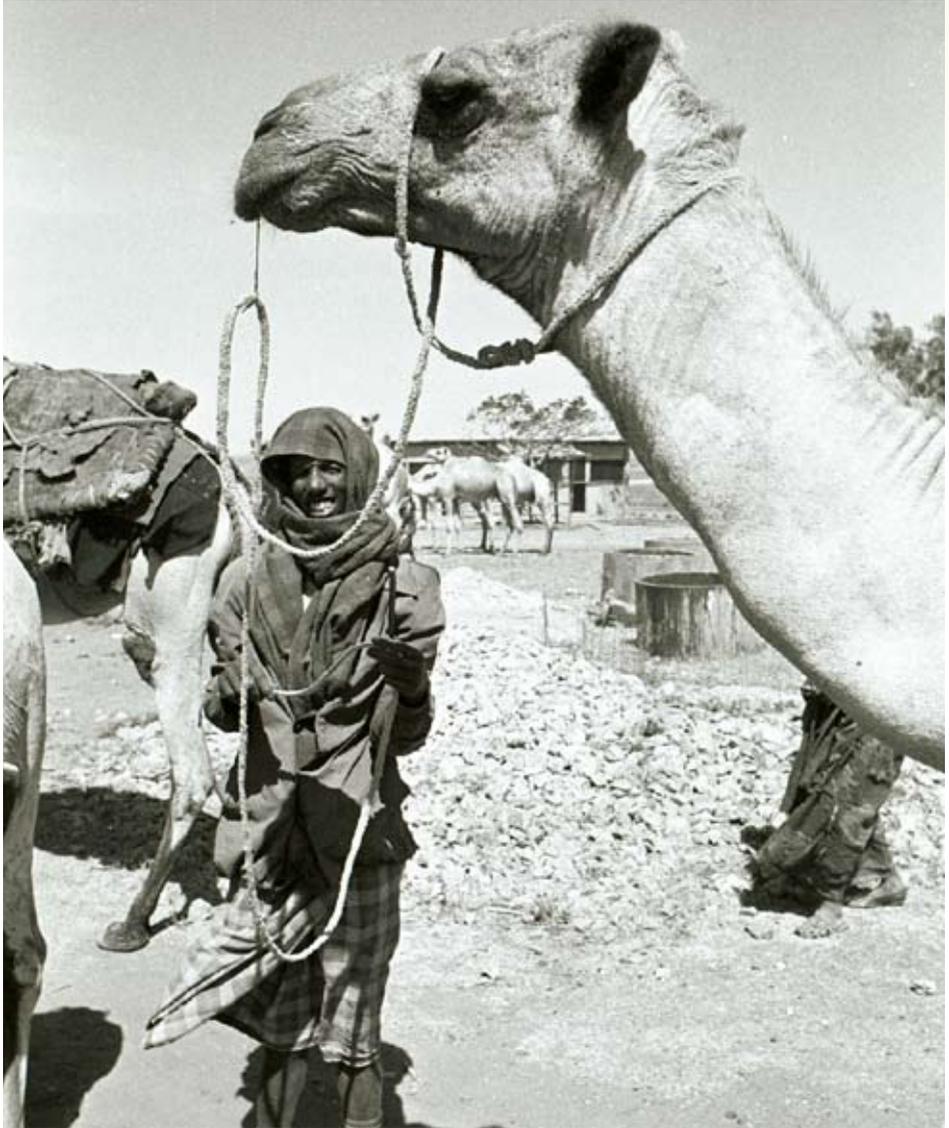


Photo by Andy Catley

Camels are a major part of the livelihoods of many pastoralists in the Horn.

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