



THE WORLD INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE PASTORALISM

Pastoralism and the Millennium Development Goals

Pastoralists are here to stay. Rumours of their imminent demise founder in the face their global resurgence and their obvious resilience. Economically, pastoralism out-performs any alternative land use system in the drylands¹ and ecologically it is simply indispensable. Yet Africa's development challenges – low population density, poor infrastructure, low human capital and poor adoption of production technologies – are amplified in the drylands where pastoralists live.

In countries where drylands predominate, the Millennium Development Goals are unattainable if the specific needs of pastoralists are not met. Archaic solutions, such as settlement, are neither achievable nor desirable: the economic, environmental and social costs are too great. The only feasible solution is to learn, from the plethora of successes around the world, how to partner with pastoralists to meet their needs in the way that serves them best.

Managing mobility is therefore one of the keys to meeting the MDGs. Rainfall in the drylands is low and unpredictable, both in terms of when it comes and where it lands, so the only practicable management system is an opportunistic one: to go where the resources are. This means spatial flexibility (being mobile) and temporal flexibility (having variable herd sizes and risk management strategies).

Most dryland ecosystems are ecologically grazing-dependent, and a reduction of mobility or exclusion of graziers results in a drastic drop in ecosystem health and stability. Nevertheless, the language of the millennium development goals may encourage agro-centrism, impeding progress towards the goals. A concerted effort is needed to recognise the value of pastoralism, provide relevant solutions for pastoralists and uphold the rights of pastoralists.

PASTORAL POVERTY

Pastoralism is an adaptation to hostile environments and it can be extremely resilient in the face of drought. Asset wealth and incomes, averaged out over time, are typically high in pastoral communities. Yet low Human Development Indices indicate that poverty is very real in the drylands, even if it is poorly understood.

Pastoral impoverishment is partly one of low Human Capital: in particular low literacy levels and poor human health. This poverty comes not from any inherent flaw in the production system, but rather from flaws in service delivery in pastoral areas and subsequent failures to

capture the risk-reducing benefits of development and to adapt to a rapid changing world.

Not all pastoralists are poor: those of Europe and Asia increasingly exploit niche markets for specialist goods and organic products, facilitated by generally high levels of education, strong political representation and good access to a wide range of services. Despite this resurgence of pastoralism in developed countries, developing country pastoralists find themselves cut off from services and markets, at risk of having their land confiscated, excluded from decision making and increasingly unable to avert destitution.

¹Mobile pastoral systems in the drylands have up to ten times higher economic returns per hectare than ranching systems under similar conditions (Scoones, I. 1995. 'New directions in pastoral development in Africa', in I. Scoones (ed), *Living with Uncertainty*. London: IT Publications).

The MDGs

Much progress has already been made towards the Millennium Development Goals, yet many African countries are not on course to meet their targets. The Millennium Development Project identifies four fundamental reasons why the MDGs are not being achieved in such countries: governance failures, poverty traps, pockets of poverty and areas of specific poverty neglect.

In countries with a predominance of drylands, poverty is particularly widespread. Drylands often represent geographic pockets of poverty where neglected poverty issues, such as gender biases, high maternal mortality rates and low emphasis on child health care, are especially poorly addressed. Governance failures are deeper in drylands areas, due to geographic marginalisation and often compounded by ethnic differences between those governing and those governed.

However, now that pastoralism is recognised to be a viable cornerstone of drylands economies, new opportunities are presented for tackling poverty and achieving the MDGs. Recent change in emphasis, away from substituting pastoralism towards enhancing it, has generated many opportunities and solutions, which means that achieving the MDGs in Sub Saharan Africa may finally now be possible.

ERADICATING EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

In most pastoral areas markets do not enable pastoralists to convert livestock wealth in times of stress, and so famine results from entitlement failure. This food entitlement failure can also be considered market failure: high transaction costs, low competition in the supply of goods and services, information imbalances and, crucially, inability to choose the time of sale, because of an absence of safe alternatives for investment of the wealth generated.

Despite high livestock wealth and incomes, pastoralists often engage in small scale, unremunerative cultivation to ensure a supply of grain at certain times of the year. The high and inefficient labour expenditure reflects the failure of markets to allow adequate compensation for similar labour invested in livestock. Where market failure has been overcome, pastoralists have quickly shifted from crop cultivation to fodder cultivation, raising their return to labour via the market mechanism.

Increased incomes and production, important as they are, will not enable people to buy food where

markets have failed. However, transaction costs decline with increasing education and greater market access. Financial services play an important role in strengthening bargaining power. Growing populations in drylands areas can lead to greater diversification of livelihoods and a shift away from subsistence. Meanwhile, urban growth in developing countries is increasing the demand for pastoral products.

The significant contribution of pastoralism to GDP and foreign currency earnings is rarely acknowledged in government policy. Instead of investing in markets, policy often favours taxation and regulation, driving an already thriving black market economy further underground. Achieving the economic potential of pastoralist regions requires the provision of enabling incentives, including land and resource rights, access to credit and banking services, relevant research and extension and improved access to government: providing these rights and services are adapted to the pastoral context.

GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND EDUCATION

The presence of a significant pastoral population does not necessarily impede a country from achieving high primary school enrolment. Some countries with extensive pastoral populations are exceeding expectations: for example Iran, Kenya, Mongolia, Tanzania and Jordan. However, even in these countries, remote drylands areas lag behind. Mongolia, however, provides an informative example of a way forward: investment in mobile education, radio classes and boarding schools.

In Iran, partnership has been forged between mobile communities and the government to ensure that education is locally relevant whilst meeting and even exceeding national standards. In Sudan, teachers from pastoralist communities receive government salaries and move with the community, setting up school at the encampments and teaching according to a seasonally and daily-relevant timetable.

The exact model of pastoralist education differs from country to country, but certain factors are addressed in all cases. The timing of classes is appropriate, teachers are local to the community, services are owned by both government and the community and the curriculum meets national standards whilst maintaining its relevance to students.

However, whilst school enrolment of girls is usually higher than boys in developed countries, the opposite is usually the case in poor countries. This is particularly so in rural and remote areas, where traditional social expectations are strong, schools are remote and the fear of sexual predation is greater. This trend has been reversed and education of girls has increased in pastoral communities where women's disposable income has risen and where appropriate education service has been provided.

REDUCING CHILD MORTALITY, IMPROVING MATERNAL HEALTH AND COMBATING MAJOR DISEASES

Mobile pastoralism confers significant health benefits on many of its practitioners, with better nutrition resulting from high consumption of milk, lower incidence of diarrhoeal and respiratory diseases, higher growth rates and less malnutrition and stunting among pastoralist children. Yet serious diseases, including important zoonoses, are common in pastoral communities. Many pastoralists cannot access health services and they often lack understanding of basic hygiene practices. During periods of stress, nutritional problems can increase susceptibility to infectious diseases.

HIV prevalence is generally low in pastoral areas, but is at risk of increasing due to economic migration and increased market integration. The risk is heightened since pastoralist women typically have few rights, populations are generally poorly educated and access to condoms is low. Where health services are weak, exposure to HIV through the lack of sterile needles, poor control of other STDs and failure to prevent mother to child transmission is greater.

Knowledge development is a key part of the solution to many of the major health problems of pastoral areas. Adequate nutrition of children requires adequate health and education of their mothers, and the most deadly infectious diseases in children are preventable and curable providing they are understood and diagnosed. Malaria can be tackled through awareness of the importance of treated mosquito nets and making nets available. Another

major health risk, TB, is treatable but requires awareness of the risks of failing to complete treatment.

Reducing child mortality and improving maternal health both require greater use of local paramedics or trained midwives, which requires a significant investment in educating pastoralists. Mobile health services have been successful in many pastoralist settings, particularly where the service is provided by trained local paramedics. However, the issue is not only one of mobility, but also of quality: many pastoralists would attend health centres for treatment if they were certain that they would find the centres open, equipped and stocked, and operated by culturally-sensitive staff. Investment must be made in effective basic health infrastructure, to provide centres where serious cases can be referred.

Meeting the MDGs in pastoral areas requires investment in appropriate services and increasing public health awareness, through mass communication using trained community health workers and appropriate technologies such as radios. Cost of basic health services may not be an impediment, if the service provider is trusted, although the financial independence of women to pay for services is often a pre-requisite. Addressing women's rights and education will reduce their exposure to HIV, will increase awareness of how to prevent infectious diseases and will make treatment more accessible.

ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Pastoralism is one of the few production systems that is genuinely environmentally sustainable. Where mobility is enabled, ecosystem integrity is maintained and dryland environments are conserved. The misguided development prescription of sedenterisation has had a damaging environmental impact and reversing this requires a significant re-investment in mobile pastoralism, on the ground and at policy level.

Provision of safe drinking water and sanitation in pastoral areas remains a challenge. However, pastoralists generally have a good understanding of how to protect and manage water resources and catchments, and access to water is regulated just as strongly as access to pastures. To reach an

understanding of how to control water borne infections requires an investment in public awareness and enhanced domestic water supplies.

Periodic shocks cause people to leave the pastoral system, and whilst some use social linkages to return, others drop out of the pastoral system altogether and migrate to urban areas. Population growth and commoditisation may put pressure on social safety nets, raising the risk of destitution for people who are poorly equipped to deal with urban environments. Although the quality of life of slum dwellers may not seem an obvious challenge for pastoralists, attention must be given to providing exit strategies for pastoralists who may leave the system.

DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

Pastoralism is a global phenomenon and not something confined to the drylands of Africa. Important lessons have been gained, throughout the world, in developing mobile services and markets, securing communal land and access rights and developing the voice of pastoralists. The time has arrived to capitalise on these wide-ranging experiences and apply them in developing countries that hitherto have only considered their pastoralists to be a constraint rather than an opportunity for development.

The GEF funded World Initiative for Sustainable pastoralism (WISP) is a global partnership that catalyzes this kind of learning to improve perceptions of pastoralism as a viable and sustainable resource management system. WISP provides the social, economic and environmental arguments for pastoralism through knowledge management and enhanced policy dialogue at global, regional and national levels.

PASTORALISM IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

1. *Achieving the MDGs and escaping from the localised poverty trap found in the drylands requires recognition of, policy support for and investment in mobile pastoralism as the most viable and sustainable production system for the drylands.*
2. *Achieving the MDGs requires empowering pastoralists and enhancing their capabilities to allow them to sustainably manage their environment, protect their assets and enhance their incomes.*
3. *Progress against many of the millennium development goals requires the provision of appropriate services efficient, culturally sensitive and (often) mobile which requires a significant investment in education and training to ensure a supply of service providers.*
4. *Effective service delivery requires better understanding of pastoralist household dynamics and the increasingly sedentary nature of many pastoralist women, children and the infirm: mobility should not remain a convenient excuse for failure to get simple messages on health and hygiene to pastoralists.*
5. *Progress against all MDGs, in particular those relating to health and education, requires promotion of the rights of pastoralist women.*

Mobile livestock rearing will persist in developing countries, as is does in many developed countries, as the backbone of the economy of marginal areas and as the mainstay of environmental protection. Management will be 'professionalized', the system capitalized and the land area and animal numbers per herder may increase, but although people may become more sedentary, livestock mobility will be enhanced and protected. Socially, economically and environmentally, pastoralism will continue to become more market focussed.

Over time, security will be more effectively provided leading to lower labour demands of herding, greater resilience and more 'system-integrity'. Increased security and greater political influence will lead to higher investment in pastoralist areas and the pastoral system will be enhanced rather than substituted. Successful 'localization' of MDGs will happen when pastoralist men and women are able to make informed choices and demand appropriate policies.