



**Promotion of Pastoral Development in Kenya:
Perspectives from the Kenya Pastoral
Parliamentary Group (KPPG)**

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Research Brief O4-O2-PARIMA

August 2004

The rangelands of Kenya occupy a very large portion of the nation. The livestock-keeping peoples who reside in these areas are disproportionately affected by high rates of poverty and poor access to services and developed infrastructure. Recurrent effects of drought and environmental degradation are also important issues. Despite proclamations made since the 1980s that development must occur in the dry lands, pastoral development policy has essentially been dormant for over 20 years. The Kenya Pastoral Parliamentary Group (KPPG) is a legislative advocacy group comprised of people who are elected Members of the Kenya National Parliament. The KPPG sees great opportunity in the current Constitutional Review process and feels it can now more actively promote the development interests of pastoral people. A re-awakened focus on pastoral policy should highlight needs for improving the access of pastoralists to natural resources, formal education and health care, and strive to eliminate food insecurity and poverty. Cornerstones of such an approach should include renewed efforts to promote minority rights, advocate for pastoral compensation and reparations with respect to past injustices, proclaim the value of the various contributions that pastoral societies make to the nation at-large, and push for local sovereignty over common property resources.

Background

The arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of Kenya are rangelands. They are pre-dominantly occupied by pastoral and agro-pastoral groups and cover about 466,000 km² or 88% of the country. The population is about 5.8 million people. Annual rainfall varies between 125 to 500 mm in arid districts and between 400 to 1250 mm in semi-arid districts. The economic mainstay is livestock production. The ASALs account for 50% of the livestock, 3% of agricultural output, and 7% of commercial output for the nation.

The ASALs are subjected to an increasing frequency of drought, which also contributes to accelerating poverty. An average household may lose large percentages of livestock with each drought. Increased dependency on food aid, insecurity, and poor infrastructure are other major concerns.

The ASALs support over 90% of Kenya's large wildlife species, as most of the national reserves and parks are in the rangelands. The pastoral regions are associated with fragile environments prone to ecological degradation.

Many pastoralists live in poverty. Infant mortality rates are high. Baseline surveys show that absolute poverty is highest in Marsabit District as a percent of the total population (88%) compared with the national average

of 47%. Poverty rates for Samburu District (84%), Isiolo District (82%), and Mandera District (68%) tend to be higher than figures for Wajir District (58%), Garissa District (48%), and Laikipia District (46%), but all are unacceptable.

Initiatives to increase investment in the development of Kenya's dry lands started to gain momentum in the mid-1980s following recognition that there was little arable land in the higher potential regions that remained available for agricultural expansion. Since 1986, therefore, the official policy of the government has been to develop the arid and semi-arid land areas. Two key documents that underpinned this stance included: (1) *Session Paper No. 1 (1986) Economic Management for Renewed Growth*, and (2) the *Sixth National Development Plan 1989-93*. Both emphasized the need to implement concrete strategies for change in the ASALs through development of reliable water sources, improvement in livestock marketing, facilitating adoption of appropriate agricultural production techniques, and building capacity for rural communities. The fact is, however, that the implementation of such policies has been almost nil.

The Kenya Pastoral Parliamentary Group and the Constitutional Review

The Kenya Pastoral Parliamentary Group (KPPG) consists of Members of Parliament who have a special interest in the welfare of people who reside in the ASAL districts of Kenya. The KPPG is an organ for national advocacy and lobbying. The KPPG has existed for several, 5-year parliamentary terms and the current membership is around 40.

The Government of Kenya is presently involved in a Constitutional Review that will lead to a number of policy reforms. The process reviews all constitutional and institutional frameworks with an objective of making changes that will assist in the development of the nation. Prominent will be goals to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable livelihoods.

The process is expected to result in new policies and laws that will have critical implications for improved governance. The process offers great opportunity for pastoralists and other marginalized groups in Kenya to articulate their concerns and have their interests embodied in new frameworks.

Pastoral Policy Objectives

One foundation of the KPPG approach is **advocating for community-based property rights** in the pastoral regions. The KPPG believes that in order to give legal recognition to pastoral rights in general, it will also be necessary to formally recognize pastoral communities as legal entities. This entails an increased awareness among policy makers that these pastoral communities already have in place numerous mechanisms for managing natural resources. These mechanisms are founded on rules of conduct that have evolved over long periods of time. New policy needs to recognize the attributes of these systems.

Kenya is a signatory to three covenants that bind her to **guarantee food security** to the citizenry. *Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 bestows the right to food for everyone. The Convention on the Rights of the Child* commits the state to provide adequate, nutritious foods and clean drinking water. *The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights* requires the state to assist the family in its physical and moral health and notes the right of the aged and disabled to special protection in keeping with their physical or moral needs. None of these covenants have been translated to national law (in Kenya) as required. The Constitution of Kenya is silent on the critical issue of access to food as a basic right. The KPPG will lobby for adoption of these declarations by the government since the pastoral regions are the most food insecure in the country.

Formal education is a basic human right that is recognized by various international conventions of which Kenya

is a signatory. According to a speech by the Minister of Education at a recent conference, it is indicated that “some 1.5 million Kenyan children are not in school due to poverty, inadequate financial resources, and other socio-economic problems, and this figure is likely to increase to 4.4 million this century as school drop-out rates continue to rise.” The ASAL districts also record the lowest basic enrollment rates in Kenya, further compounding the problem. Gender disparities in primary and secondary school enrollments are also higher in the pastoral regions of Kenya compared to the national patterns—education of girls is not valued in traditional pastoral societies. Cultural and religious differences have greatly influenced school attendance and enrollments, and combinations of drought and flooding during rainy seasons contribute to the deaths of livestock and subsequent destitution leading to an inability for parents to pay school fees. Insecurity also causes low rates of school enrollment. Students from ASALs suffer from comparatively dismal performance on national standardized examinations. As one outcome of these serious issues, the KPPG joins the recent chorus for free and compulsory education, and this needs to include children of pastoralists. School boarding facilities must be provided and mobile education services need to be developed to better suit the nomadic aspects of pastoral lifestyles.

The Kenyan Constitution, which guarantees the protection and preservation of “fundamental rights” and other basic freedoms for the individual, does not mention **health care** directly. The provision of health services is recognized not only as a basic human right, but also an essential condition for the overall social and economic development of the nation. Baseline surveys conducted by UNICEF in North Eastern Province revealed that, on average, residents must walk hundreds of kilometers one way to reach a health care facility. The KPPG will fight for domestic legislation relating to health provision and strongly proposes the development of mobile clinics for the ASALs to better suit pastoral lifestyles.

The incidence of **poverty** among Kenyans has deepened and an estimated 12.6 million Kenyans across the nation are absolutely poor. Recently, the Government of Kenya has launched the National Poverty Eradication Program (NPEP) which seeks to provide an enabling national policy framework for addressing poverty. The plan has as its major components a charter for social integration that sets out the rights and responsibilities of citizens and communities and envisages major improvements in the supply and accessibility to basic services. The KPPG will lobby for acceptance of the Basic Rights Framework that would pave the way for a greater national consensus on the core basic rights of the citizenry and allow for a leaner and more collaborative targeting of poverty among Kenyans, with a view of giving special consideration for marginalized groups such as pastoralists.

Five Cornerstones for Change

This report has given a grim picture of the pastoral regions in terms of prevailing crisis and the poor legislative track record to shape ASAL development. The question posed here is, however, are there really opportunities for meaningful development in the pastoral lands? The answer is “yes,” and this author further qualifies this as a “big yes.” Some legal and political cornerstones for change are summarized as follows:

- (1) **Constitutional guarantees of minority rights.** Under the Bill of Rights, the Constitution of Kenya should expressly provide for the promotion and protection of minority groups such as pastoralists;
- (2) **Compensation and reparations for pastoral people.** Pastoralists have suffered many injustices under successive colonial and post-colonial governments. A special commission should be established to address the losses and damages suffered and seek legal means for community compensation and reparations;
- (3) **Special consideration for pastoralists due to**

historical injustices. Because of the perverse degree of poverty and under-development in the Kenyan ASALs, the government should be constitutionally bound to give special consideration for pastoral regions today in terms of prioritization of development resources to better bridge large welfare gaps that exist between pastoralists and other citizens of Kenya;

- (4) **Formal recognition of pastoralism as an important sector of the national economy.** Pastoral livelihoods have been disregarded by the nation in the past as viable and significant aspects of national life and national economy. This needs to be overcome, in part, through formal, political endorsements or proclamations; and
- (5) **Recognition of sovereign rights focused on common property.** As noted above, common property rights refer to the rights of rural communities to access, manage, control, and own natural resources that have been part of customary production systems on lands. These resources have often and inappropriately been regarded as being completely in the public domain. Sovereign rights of pastoralists concerning their common property should be clearly entrenched in the National Constitution.

Further Reading

This report has been edited and condensed from a public presentation now documented in the following publication:

Aboud, A.A., Gebru, G., Desta, S., and D.L. Coppock (eds). 2004. *Pastoralism in Kenya and the Policy Environment: Linking Research, Development Actors, and Decision-Makers. Summary of Proceedings.* Meeting held 8 August, 2003, at the Headquarters of the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), Nairobi. Published by the Pastoral Risk Management (PARIMA) Project of the Global Livestock Collaborative Research Support Program (GL-CRSP). Utah State University, Logan, Utah, USA. 32 pp.

Government of Kenya. 2003. *Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation, 2003-07.* Ministry of Finance and Planning. Government Printing Office, Nairobi.

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The GL-CRSP Pastoral Risk Management Project (PARIMA) was established in 1997 and conducts research, training, and outreach in an effort to improve welfare of pastoral and agro-pastoral peoples with a focus on northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia. The project is led by Dr. D. Layne Coppock, Utah State University, Email contact: lcoppock@cc.usu.edu.



The Global Livestock CRSP is comprised of multidisciplinary, collaborative projects focused on human nutrition, economic growth, environment and policy related to animal agriculture and linked by a global theme of risk in a changing environment. The program is active in East Africa, Central Asia and Latin America.

This publication was made possible through support provided by the Office of Agriculture, Bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade, under Grant No. PCE-G-00-98-00036-00 to University of California, Davis. The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID.

Design by Susan L. Johnson