

Engaging with pastoralists – a holistic development approach

Pastoral development



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Ethiopia - Pastoral Community Development Project (PCDP III)

Why address pastoral development?

Pastoralism is a way of life based on territorial mobility, adopted in response to the challenges faced by human communities living in harsh or difficult environments.

Communities such as these need specific forms of social organization and institutions capable of regulating access to natural resources in appropriate ways, with solutions that differ radically from those that are suitable for settled farmers. In addition to experiencing environmental marginality, in many areas pastoralists have been excluded from decision-making and from access to services, making them the most vulnerable category among rural communities.

For over a decade, IFAD strategic frameworks have listed "pastoralists" among the vulnerable, marginalized, excluded or poorest groups. These groups have, accordingly, received much attention in IFAD's mandate, with a commitment to step up engagement.

Increased awareness of the highly specialized way in which pastoralists organize their production indicates that there is a need for thorough revision of the development approach, with solutions tailored to the context.

Background and context

Pastoralist livelihoods are found mostly in rangeland areas, where the most vulnerable rural populations are known to be concentrated and persistently high levels of poverty exist in combination with poor institutional and governance capacity, and conflict or potential conflict. The "natural" proximity of these areas to borderlands (as national frontiers have often been drawn in arid lands and mountainous regions) means that pastoral territories can spread across more than one state, and inhabiting communities may represent national minorities of a regional majority, with consequently limited capacities to influence policy agendas. These are also regions with a history of underinvestment and low levels of investment in social and economic infrastructure. Here, development programmes have too often resulted in a negative impact on the functioning of pastoral systems and contributed, albeit unintentionally, to their social and economic marginalization.

Despite this legacy, pastoral systems remain the main livelihood option for providing food, income and employment in these challenging territories; they bring benefit not only to pastoral communities, but also to those living in farming areas, urban centres and coastal regions, all of whom profit from regional trade and from the value chains of pastoral products. Pastoralism also provides essential ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation.

The healthy functioning of these systems is considered critical to securing both livelihood resilience and sustainable development in most drylands and mountain regions. Particularly in Africa, pastoral systems are also seen as uniquely positioned, potential allies in the struggle to prevent remote and desert regions from becoming a breeding ground for organized crime and international terrorist groups. The full value of pastoral systems, and therefore the real cost of losing them, remains poorly captured in public data.

Today, international interest in pastoral systems is again on the increase. The core question in pastoral development is shifting from how to forestall variability and "upgrade" livestock production beyond "traditional" pastoralism, to how to support modern, sustainable pastoral systems in their adaptation to integrate variability and take advantage of it. This shift is key to strengthening risk management and resilience, as well as to the goal of increasing productivity or reducing poverty in pastoral contexts.

The process of embedding such systems into a coherent vision of modern, resilient and sustainable rangeland development is under way, presenting great potential for innovative and carefully targeted investments.

Box 1. IFAD's engagement in pastoral development

"IFAD is the only United Nations specialized agency and international financial institution focused exclusively on reducing poverty and food insecurity in rural areas through agriculture and rural development [...]. Between 2003 and 2015 IFAD funded 29 projects that focused on pastoral development for an amount of US\$497 million. Support to pastoral development related to rangeland management, capacity-building, pastoral infrastructure, risk management, animal health, human health, education, institution-building, commercialization, microfinance and policy dialogue." (Jonckheere, Liversage and Rota, Pastoralism and Land Tenure Security, 2017)



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Rationale

Livestock herding is an important source of food, employment, insurance and savings for millions of people. Nevertheless, one of the context-specific traits of pastoral development is that pastoral systems and their economic value are largely invisible in public data. Despite commonly held views that pastoralism fails to maximize the productive potential of livestock production, research attests that pastoral systems have much higher economic returns per hectare than conventional agriculture and sedentary livestock-rearing under similar conditions. This is especially true for the African context, where the livestock sector – mostly based in pastoral areas – represents 20-25 per cent of agricultural GDP and cross-border livestock trade is a major economic activity through the corridors conveying livestock from the Sahel region to coastal urban areas or those connecting rangelands of the Horn with Somali export ports. Official figures do not accurately capture pastoralists' contribution to the economy since many pastoral products are traded outside formal markets.

In the countries of Central Asia that have relatively many pastoralists, the pastoralists are also making a substantial contribution to the domestic economy and exports, though this contribution is proportionally less in comparison with high-value minerals or crops such as cotton, rice or wheat.

Poverty

The number of people whose livelihoods are based on pastoral practices is estimated at between 100 million and 500 million worldwide, depending on the definitions used. While in the past herding groups were considered the wealthiest of rural people, today the situation is more diverse, and people living on rangelands often constitute a large fraction of the world's poorest, with official development indicators at their lowest in such regions. Pastoral populations often rank among the poorest and most destitute agricultural peoples in the world, and are the most excluded from basic socio-economic services and infrastructure. Human development reports indicate that over 50 per cent of the world's most disadvantaged countries are in dryland Africa. A similar situation applies to most pastoral regions across the globe; rangeland areas in Argentina and Brazil have twice the national average percentage of poor and indigent people. Conversely, in Central Asia pastoralism has provided a valid economic alternative in recent decades in areas where economic crises have hit hard as a result of the collapse of the Soviet systems and the shutting down of mining industries.

Box 2. Human development in pastoral areas of Kenya

In 2005, the Kenya National Human Development Report showed that the seven pastoral districts in the north of Kenya have a Human Development Index 0.2-0.3 points below the national average, and lower than that of Sierra Leone, the lowest-ranked country in the world.

IFAD's comparative advantage

IFAD's experience with rural vulnerable categories gives it a comparative advantage in addressing the problems of pastoral development. The IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025 and various IFAD sector policies contain provisions that help address the specificity of pastoralism.

IFAD's long experience in building rural people's capacity to access markets through improved value chains is key in addressing the vulnerability of pastoralists and in dealing with demographic change, particularly by focusing on women and youth.

Equally important is the attention IFAD dedicates to the social empowerment of marginal rural communities through advocacy, enhanced policy dialogue and support to civil society.¹

The mobility of pastoralists – with the inherent specific social, cultural and institutional solutions, and the experience of marginality – puts them in a structural situation comparable to that of indigenous peoples, and means that they are particularly exposed to tenure security issues.² Accordingly, the following thematic policies cover key aspects of pastoral development:

- Policy on Improving Access to Land and Tenure Security (2008)
- Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples (2009)

¹ See: Country-level policy engagement in IFAD. Guide book.

https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/39144386/CLPE_book_170412_W.pdf/a203813d-8918-43ac-a94c-ad700bcca036

² See: Lessons learned. Pastoralism land rights and tenure. <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/885a2f03-c359-4396-9b8b-94f4c2fd78af>



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India, Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists, November 2010

IFAD is among the few international organizations that have extended the application of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)³ beyond the strict limits of internationally recognized indigenous peoples. FPIC is required whenever projects affect the land access and/or use rights of communities, especially where a rural community has culturally distinctive land tenure regimes based on collective rights to land and territories. FPIC is a consultation procedure that not only ensures the beneficiary's participation in decisions about the project, but also allows many of the key challenges of pastoral development to be dealt with:

- cultural distinctiveness
- consideration of customary and informal natural resource tenure, while building pluralistic systems
- bridging of customary and statutory institutions
- better understanding of the specific economic, political and socio-cultural context, which increases the possibility of building on existing governance and conditions with context-specific solutions.

³ See: How To Do Note. Seeking Free, Prior and Informed Consent in IFAD Investment Projects.
<https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/beec86e1-270d-45a1-8786-4b749c9db733>

By delegating key decision-making to those who have a deep understanding of the territory and its governance – including customary leaders – it is possible to:

- introduce innovation without affecting the overall viability of the pastoral system
- improve value chains that may demand territorial resources, especially in initiatives in support of women and youth
- improve natural resources management by accommodating innovation within the overall governance of natural resources, including consideration for informal and customary resource tenure and local and indigenous knowledge
- introduce the new required elements of tenure security acknowledging the existence of flexible common property regimes, finding solutions that may be alternative to the introduction of formal land titling.

The specificity of pastoralism requires special attention during the project design phase. IFAD's quality assurance processes provide the required internal instruments.

About the toolkit

The pastoral development toolkit complements other thematic toolkits produced by IFAD and reflects IFAD's commitment to increase its efforts to build internal capacity for systemic engagement in pastoral development. Its main purpose is to provide IFAD's country programme managers, project design teams and implementing partners with guidance on how to engage in appropriate interventions in support of pastoralists. It also aims at providing inputs in country-level policy dialogue on pro-pastoral policies, to be reflected in IFAD's results-based country strategic opportunities programmes (RB-COSOPs).

The pastoral development toolkit consists of three documents:

1. This Teaser, which addresses IFAD's comparative advantage in pastoral development, describes the structure of the toolkit and lists the most relevant complementary IFAD documents.
2. Lessons Learned, which sets out the key principles and reviews successful interventions in pastoral areas, in addition to IFAD's experience, in order to identify guiding principles for IFAD's engagement.
3. Based on the issues and principles outlined in these documents and on IFAD's experience, the How To Do Note provides practical guidance on addressing pastoral development in IFAD-supported programmes and projects.

The How To Do Note makes reference to a number of documents contained in other thematic toolkits, either explicitly dedicated to pastoralism or particularly relevant to it. They should be regarded as complementary to the pastoral development toolkit:

- Land tenure toolkit: Lessons learned, Pastoralism land rights and tenure, specifically dedicated to IFAD's experience in the sector
- Land tenure toolkit: How to do land tenure in IFAD project design
- How to do: Seeking free, prior and informed consent in IFAD investment projects

- Sustainable inclusion of smallholders in agricultural value chains: “How to do: Livestock value chain analysis and project development. Sustainable inclusion of smallholders in agricultural value chains”.
- Gender and livestock: tools for design

Reference is also made to other IFAD mainstreamed approaches. The following IFAD practical guidance documents are particularly relevant to pastoralism:

- How to do: Poverty targeting, gender equality and Empowerment during project implementation. Gender targeting and social inclusion.
- A guide for practitioners. Institutional arrangements for effective project management and implementation

IFAD has either produced or supported a number of reviews of past engagement in pastoral development. They provide a solid basis for renovating the approach by acknowledging that more emphasis should be given to considering pastoralists as peoples, with their own institutions, values and lifestyles, having specific problems in tenure of natural resources, access to public services, integration into national and international markets, and capacity to influence decision-making. These documents are also key references for the pastoral development toolkit:

- FAO's and IFAD's Engagement in Pastoral Development. Joint Evaluation Synthesis (2016)
- IFAD's Livestock Position Paper. Livestock planning, challenges and strategies for livestock development in IFAD (2010)
- Supporting Sustainable Pastoral Livelihoods: A Global Perspective on Minimum Standards and Good Practices (2011)
- Pastoralism and land tenure security: Lessons from IFAD-supported projects (2017)

In line with IFAD's existing policies and building on best practices, IFAD's engagement in pastoral areas can contribute significantly to the reorientation of development practices as a people-centred and holistic approach to pastoral development.



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