

POLICY BRIEF

APRIL, 2020

“Sound policies for climate resilient pastoralism and agro-pastoralism in the IGAD region”

Introduction

This policy brief is prepared based on extensive review of the recent literature on pastoralism and agro-pastoralism as well as more than 19 papers and several plenary sessions presented at the international Conference organized by the Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute (HESPI) jointly with the Institute of Pastoral and Agro-pastoral Development Studies (IPADS) of Jigjiga University on Climate Change, Pastoralism, and Resilience Building in October 2019 in Jigjiga. The conference brought together key players including policymakers, academia/researchers, experts and development practitioners on pastoralism in the IGAD region.

Background and context

With an estimated population of 275.3 million, the IGAD region covers a large physical area of 5.2 million sq.km of which 60 to 70 percent is arid and semi-arid, largely occupied by pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. The pastoral and agro-pastoral production system is key for the population which depend on it for their economic and social wellbeing, as well as its contribution to food and nutrition security, and to GDP. There is no data on the share of pastoralism and agro-pastoralism in the region’s GDP; but a somewhat old data shows that GDP contribution of livestock ranged 10-20% in 1980–2000. While disaggregated data on the pastoral population of the region is scanty, according to some sources, it is estimated at 30 million. Pastoralism is practiced in all the 8 IGAD countries, its share in total population and the total area it occupies being much higher in some countries than others. For example, pastoralism is practiced in more than 90% of the land in Djibouti, 60% in Ethiopia, over 50% in Somalia and the Sudan, and 44% in Uganda. The area is prone to drought and floods, which affect livestock, feed and water, and the eco-system as a whole. A recent World Bank projection

indicates that the Horn region is among the hot spots of climate change.

Pastoralism and agro-pastoralism provided viable ways of life for millions of people in the region for centuries. Pastoralist culture and social organizations governing livestock and natural resource management², dispute settlement, social support (to assist poorer members of the community and those exposed to shocks), security, etc. have evolved. Yet, until relatively recently, it was hardly recognized as a viable livelihood mechanism, and far less as contributing to the national and regional economy. Partly because of the sparse population density, and partly because pastoralism was perceived as backward ecologically harmful practice causing land degradation through overgrazing, and economically inefficient, pastoralists and pastoral lands historically received little policy attention and investments (infrastructure, livestock extension and research, water points development, credit, insurance, education and health facilities, etc.). Investments undertaken rarely aimed to support the pastoral way of life or strengthen its adaptive capacity. A further factor was the difficulties their mobility posed in government efforts to reach them with social services such as education, health, energy, extension services, etc. The common approach was thus to ‘modernize’ pastoralists by transforming them into market-oriented sedentary livestock producers or into agriculturalists.

Moreover, although land tenure arrangements in many countries recognize pastoralist lands as ‘communal’, they fail to provide tenure security; communities have no communal land certificate or equivalent, leaving an opening for encroachment by others. Pastoralists thus face challenges to their livelihood from rapid decline in grazing lands at a time of fast population growth and increasing climate change risks (variable and uncertain rainfall, hence access to pasture and water; food insecurity). Rangeland is increasingly being converted into other uses, posing a constraint on strategic mobility. Expansion of large commercial farms and plantations, hydro-dams, infrastructure such as roads and railways, exploitation of natural resources such as mining, establishment of national parks and reserves, etc. are absorbing considerable former range lands. Rapid expansion of existing urban centers and mushrooming of new ones is also claiming more and more land. In the face of such pressures, pastoralists often lacked the

¹ Disclaimer: The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not in any way reflect the opinion of Jigjiga University or that of HESPI.

² E.g. splitting and moving animals for grazing, control access to communal grazing, manage water points, etc.

political clout or connection to the centers of power or the capacity to make their voice heard, to share their knowledge and wisdom in the policy process, and to effectively participate in decision making and protect their interests. The lack of inclusion also represents a missed opportunity to benefit from their wealth of indigenous knowledge and experiences. The limited pastoral research hardly found its way to policymaking.

The marginalization and neglect resulted in “deterioration of productivity, worsening impacts of drought, increasing poverty, food insecurity and other livelihood vulnerabilities” among the pastoralist communities, causing economic hardships, suffering and frequent resort to emergencies (IDDRSI Strategy 2013: 11). An increase in the frequency, intensity and geographic coverage of droughts, floods and other shocks, reduced access to grazing lands and water, and degradation of natural grass, undermined the basis of their livelihood, weakened their adaptability and resilience to shocks, and became contributing factors to conflict. Groups such as women and the youth were marginalized. A *re-think* in policy, strategy and approach was thus needed.

Promoting climate resilient pastoralism and agro-pastoralism in the IGAD region

To begin with, such policy stance and practice towards pastoralism is unwarranted for several reasons. First, not only does a sizable population make livelihood from pastoralism based on arid and semi-arid areas but also brings such areas into production. As the FAO concluded, pastoralism “represents one of the most viable – and sometimes the only suitable – livelihood options in the drylands”. It has a “unique ability to add value and convert scarce natural resources into meat, milk, income, and livelihoods” (FAO 2018³: v). Second, livestock are not only high value assets but also enable pastoralists to build up assets quickly due to herd growth. Third, livestock constitutes important exports and source of inputs for agro-processing industries. In sedentary areas and towns governments devote much time and resources in formulating policies and strategies that promote micro and small businesses, including petty trade and breeding small ruminant animals such as sheep and goats (whose values are insignificant compared to livestock such as camels). In the context of pastoral communities, proactive support to livestock production and resilience represents a sensible and viable option to deal with poverty.

³ FAO (2018), Pastoralism in Africa’s drylands Reducing risks, addressing vulnerability and enhancing resilience, Rome,

⁴ These include mobility, keeping mixed species, herd splitting, herd growth, changing herd composition, using feed supplementation, selective slaughtering, and traditional social support systems.

A major shift in approach took place in the 2010s. There was recognition: (i) that pastoralism is a ‘way of life’ involving people, livestock, natural resources and related institutions and using a range of risk management strategies⁴ that evolved over centuries; (ii) that mobility by pastoralists, far from being an irrational and random movement, represents a strategy to manage drought and disease risks⁵ - that is, it is a strategic and rational move in response to uncertain availability of pasture and water or to avoid disease-affected areas, making sedentarization risky – more so with the increase in frequency, intensity and scale of droughts; (iii) far from being static, pastoral production system is an adaptive system that responds to emerging opportunities and challenges including market and climate trends; (iv) that pastoralism is important both as livelihood mechanism and in terms of its contribution (current and potential) to national and regional economies in the continent; and (v) that pastoralists have rights including rights to their way of life.

The adoption of the Pan-African POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR PASTORALISM marked an important development regarding pastoralism and pastoralists in the continent. Its objectives were: (1) Securing and protecting “the lives, livelihoods and rights of pastoral peoples and ensure continent-wide commitment to political, social and economic development of pastoral communities and pastoral areas; and (2) Reinforcing the “contribution of pastoral livestock to national, regional and continent-wide economies” (AU 2010: i). The framework emphasized the “need to recognize the rights, existing economic contributions and potential future contributions of pastoralists to development, with related political and policy processes needed to develop appropriate pastoral policies and fully integrate pastoralism into national and regional development programmes and plans”. It also brought focus on core assets of pastoralists (namely pastoral rangelands and livestock) in terms of improving their governance, accessibility to pastoralists, involvement of traditional pastoral institutions, protection and development of pastoral livestock, risk-based drought management, and support to marketing of pastoral livestock and livestock products (in domestic, regional and international markets) (AU 2010: i⁶). The framework also provided a basis for development of regional and national level policies to support pastoral development.

Through their adoption of the MDGs (and subsequently the SDGs 2030) and the AU Agenda 2063, IGAD countries have committed to, among other things,

⁵ Catley, A and I. Scoones (2016), The futures of pastoralism in the Horn of Africa: pathways of growth and change, Rev. Sci. Tech. Off. Int. Epiz., 2016, 35 (2), 389–403.

⁶ It is somewhat surprising thought that the First Ten Years Implementation Plan 2014-2023 of the Agenda 2063 fails to have explicit goals or priority areas related to the pastoral economy in the continent while it does so with respect to the blue/ocean economy.

poverty eradication, inclusion, equitability, participation and gender and youth empowerment. For example, Aspiration 6 of the AU Agenda 2063 stipulates that Africa's development be 'people-driven, relying on the potential of Africans, its women and youth' in particular (AU Agenda 2063). In the context of the IGAD region, these would dictate an approach that ensures inclusion of the pastoralist population, including pastoralist women, girls and boys. An interesting recent development that has important policy implication is the growing role pastoralist women are assuming in livestock herding, traditionally the domain of men. Pastoral and agro-pastoral policy and strategy should thus aim to empower pastoralist communities in general and women, girls and boys in particular to effectively participate in the development process and equitably benefit from the outcomes. Drawing on their wealth of indigenous knowledge and experiences, pastoralists and pastoralist institutions can make substantive contributions to the policy formulation and implementation process as well as the development effort. These could be further enhanced through provision of easy and equitable access to pastoral resources (livestock, land, water, etc.), education/skills, health, extension and facilities and services among pastoralist boys and girls, creating alternative livelihoods (jobs) for pastoralist youth and for those who get pushed out of the pastoral system (say due to depletion of herds by drought) are critical.

Emerging opportunities

Even as rapid urbanization, expansion of infrastructure and commercial farms are posing challenges by absorbing pastoral lands, they also offer a range of opportunities. These include: reducing pressure on pastoral lands by pulling people into urban or employment based alternative livelihoods; growing demand for livestock products, creating job opportunities, and reduced distance for the pastoral communities to inputs and services, etc. The creation of jobs in urban centers and infrastructure projects in pastoral areas is important in view of the lure of cities among the youth, especially those with education, requiring deliberate policy to promote such jobs in pastoral areas. Agriculture investments in the areas (those with irrigation in particular) also create opportunity for pastoralists to learn by observing cultivation of crops, fruits and vegetables, which they could possibly diversify to over time.

Development strategies in some countries prioritize promotion of agro-processing industries such as meat and milk processing and leather industries. For example, identifies expansion of pastoral-friendly urban centers and infrastructure linked to livestock based agro-processing industries and growth corridors among the strategies. Several of the Agro-processing zones

identified in the Integrated Agro-processing Industrial Parks (IAIP) strategy are to be located in the pastoral & agro-pastoral areas, promising to create a major backward linkage. This offers an opportunity which, with appropriate extension services, pastoralists in the region could exploit and gradually move to commercialization; (i) it provides closer sustainable market, including for pastoralists in nearby cross-border areas, in effect creating a regional market and reducing transactions costs, and (ii) pastoralists may enjoy better prices of gains from export of processed livestock products passed on to them. Both may reduce the importance of informal cross-border trade of live animals and associated risk exposure.

The expansion of physical infrastructure such as roads and electricity in the region improves access to market and services. Improved availability of electricity also enable use of storage to address the problem of seasonal supply shortages and excesses of milk and other pastoral products. Improving transportation and refrigeration also facilitates formally supplying cross-border markets.

The Agreement Establishing IGAD already provides a basis for cooperation, although it does not explicitly refer to pastoralism or its climate resilience. For example, it indicates harmonization of "existing national plans of action for marginal lands and dry lands management and control of land degradation" and "improving their capacity in agricultural research, training and extension services" as key areas of cooperation (IGAD 1996:137).

Need for and Importance of adopting a regional approach

The AU Policy Framework anticipated that the RECs and individual member countries would formulate policies and strategies to support pastoral development. Adopting a regional approach is important for several reasons.

Regional nature of pastoralist ecosystems: Pastoralist ecosystems in the region have a regional nature in that they transcend national borders, most of which are colonial demarcations arbitrarily dividing 'established social-economic and ecological units' (AU 2010: 12). As asserted by the AU, movement of pastoralists and their livestock within the systems is "economically and ecologically rational" (AU 2010: 2). In many cases both sides of the border have the same communities. It should thus be proactively supported rather than artificially partitioning it. Besides, a shock in any one country in the Region will directly or indirectly affect the other neighboring countries, requiring response capacity at both national and regional levels. Thus, forging of "regional approaches, cooperation and implementation of cross-border initiatives" are required (FAO 2018: 20). There are also economies of scale to be

⁷Agreement Establishing the INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD), Assembly of Heads

of State And Government, IGAD/SUM-96/AGRE-Doc Nairobi, 21 March 1996

gained from such cooperation and collaboration. One of the key areas of cooperation specified in the Agreement Establishing IGAD is harmonization of “existing national plans of action for marginal lands and dry lands management and control of land degradation” (IGAD 1996:13⁸). A second area relates to formalizing and strengthening regional animal markets and livestock movements supported by coordinated provision of animal health services and ensured security. Another area of cooperation relates to “improving their capacity in agricultural research, training and extension services”⁹. Yet, the preparation of a systematic and thorough regional policy and its mainstreaming into national and sectoral development strategies, and building public sector capacities for better implementation has been lagging in the region. There is a wider consensus to harmonize climate shock-related efforts in the Horn of African region. But, it needs to go beyond that as harmonization of pastoral policies, though necessary, is not sufficient.

Scope for diversification

Several IGAD countries may simultaneously get exposed to similar and recurring climate shocks, which also weakens the indigenous social support mechanisms to assist those affected. In this respect, the region’s diverse topography offers opportunity to reduce the average risk through geographic diversification which could be exploited if countries adopt a regional coordinated approach and response. The high value of livestock means that the potential losses (both due to death and collapse in livestock prices) associated with climate shocks such as drought and flood are quite significant, making it important to have scope for risk reduction through diversification over a larger geographic area and topography. Having a harmonized regional policy framework on pastoralism and commercial pastoralism and facilitating easy mobility across borders by pastoralists (e.g. jointly promoting water points, having

common standards for and provision of animal health services, insurance, security, promoting regional animal markets, early warning systems and information exchange, and awareness creation on both sides of borders) would go a long way in this respect.

Recommendations

The region needs to create avenues to discuss pastoralism and build policy dialogue platforms that will provide open and transparent two-way exchange to capture the voices of all, especially emanating from the facts on the ground and thereby creating space for all to participate in policy formulation and implementation. With looming climate change impacts on vulnerable sectors, such practices should be treated as a matter of urgency.

For the IGAD region to make its pastoral and agro-pastoral communities resilient to climatic shocks, there is a need to improve the prevailing policy dis-incentives and build capacities for response on both anticipated and unanticipated climate shocks. In fact, differentiated policy measures may be needed for pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. Strengthen its disaster risk management system starting from community level. It also has to show more commitment to conduct research on climate change impacts (taking pastoral land tenure, governance and equity considerations and role of indigenous institutions into account) and ensure that research knowledge is effectively transferred to the users especially policy makers. There is an urgent need for building sustainable pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihood systems and developing participatory policy frameworks (at regional and national levels) that are progressive, transformational and responsive to the pastoral and agro-pastoral smallholders. So far, a systematic and thorough regional policy crafting and inculcating them into country policy documents, and building public sector capacities for better implementation have been meager.



Conference participants

⁸ Agreement Establishing The Inter-Governmental Authority On Development (IGAD), Assembly Of Heads Of State and Government , IGAD/Sum-96/AGRE-Doc Nairobi, 21 March 1996

⁹ These also constitute important steps towards promoting integration of the IGAD region.