

# Backgrounder

## Drylands and pastoralism

### Keywords:

Resilience, climate change, adaptation

iied

Issue date  
February 2014



Marie Monimart

## Valuing pastoralism

### *Adaptation plans must incorporate dryland communities' knowledge and needs*

Despite some improvement in the policy and legislative framework in Africa and innovative donor investment in pastoral development, the seeming inability of pastoralists to cope with recent droughts is making decision makers question the viability of pastoralism, particularly in the face of future climate variability and change. Governments are concerned pastoralism will collapse, driving millions of people into destitution at huge cost to national economies. Collapse would also make pastoral areas more insecure, with ramifications for political and economic stability. So policies to settle pastoralists and introduce them to modern cropping and livestock production, or to choose different livelihoods, are back on the agenda.

These policies are widely challenged by pastoralists, their advocates and scientific knowledge on pastoral systems. Environmental degradation and a global food crisis are used to justify investments in large-scale appropriation, fragmentation and

conversion of the commons to alternative uses that themselves are often major drivers of poverty, loss of resilience, conflict and degradation.

Lack of knowledge and understanding by government of the inherent values of dryland livelihood systems, particularly pastoralism, coupled with poor governance frameworks, the abuse of the rule of law, and limited capacity of drylands communities and their advocates to challenge these forces are part of the problem. Recent governance reforms and more progressive dryland and pastoral policies do offer new opportunities but need to be sustained, supported and appropriated by citizens to be effective.

### **A future for pastoralism**

The future of African drylands, and their people, lies in securing pastoralism for those who wish to remain pastoralists, and providing alternative, but complementary,

## FACTS AND FIGURES

### Total economic valuation research

**Ethiopia:** six case studies in Afar, Borana and Somali regions on the contribution of pastoralism to the local economy.

**Kenya:** four case studies in Isiolo county on the contribution of pastoralism to the economy of Isiolo town.

**Tanzania:** design of total economic valuation framework to assess the relative contributions of pastoralism, crop farming, tourism and conservation to the economies of the districts of Longido, Monduli and Ngorongoro.

## WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Drylands cover 40 per cent of the world's land surface and are among the world's most variable and unpredictable environments. And they harbour at least 2 billion people. But people here have known for a long time how to live with and harness this variability to support sustainable and productive economies, societies and ecosystems.

Policymakers, however, have ignored this wealth of experience and expertise with negative consequences. In the face of climate change and increasing uncertainty in the drylands, the need to reframe policy and practice has never been greater. The future must be built on sound scientific information, local knowledge, informed participation and the wisdom of local institutions.

## KEY SPACES

- African Union pastoral policy framework (2010)
- ECOWAS framework for cross-border mobility in West Africa

livelihood options for those who do not (or cannot). The African Union policy framework for pastoralism offers an opportunity to make pastoralism a mainstream part of national and regional policies. Pastoral people, and their institutions, must be central to this. Designing supportive national policy and investments cannot be left to governments alone. Improving understanding of what makes drylands work is a pre-requisite, but is not enough. Political leverage is also necessary, and it must be driven by 'pastoral citizens'.

### Addressing misconceptions

To address this dual challenge, IIED and partners in East Africa, Ethiopia, the Sahel and Sudan are running a training programme on the policy implications of supporting resilient dryland economies and societies; researching the total economic value of pastoralism; and working with local and national governments to improve climate-resilient planning in dryland areas.

Four independent evaluations of the training programme in eastern Africa and the Sahel have highlighted the transformative effects of the training on participants who gain not only a better understanding of dynamics of pastoralism, but also with changed and positive attitudes.

### Valuing the drylands

Relatively small-scale but crucially important pastoral grazing resources are being converted to other uses such as commercial irrigated agriculture. This jeopardises the sustainability of existing pastoral production systems on a much wider scale. This is happening in the absence of sound data on the environmental impact of these land-use changes and without any evidence that they will bring sustainable economic, environmental or social returns to justify the losses from undermining pastoralism. The longer-term impacts of these changes are not fully understood.

IIED is developing a total economic valuation (TEV) framework with a partnership of universities to assess the overall economic contribution of pastoralism in dryland environments. It will be critical to build strong demand for this research from public institutions such as ministries of planning, finance and local government. Understanding governments' priorities and their perspectives on what is the best use of pastoral land, will allow the programme to frame its research in a more strategic

manner and, ideally, secure governments' involvement in the research process and subsequent use of the research findings.

### Strengthening governance

The pastoral training and TEV research on pastoralism are contributing to two projects in Kenya and Tanzania seeking to put climate at the heart of national and local government planning. The effects of climate change will hit dryland communities and economies earlier and more severely than other areas of Kenya and Tanzania. This will exacerbate weak governance and planning institutions, leading to less effective social and economic services and greater levels of poverty.

Pastoralists, in particular, are 'masters of adaptation' yet lack the skills to influence devolved planning processes. Government planning implemented through formal processes and channels does not sufficiently involve local institutions. This disconnect between citizens and government undermines the capacity to respond to climate variability and change in the drylands.

IIED is partnering with national and local government institutions, NGOs and research organisations to pilot an approach in five counties in Kenya and three districts in Tanzania to institutionalise climate change adaptation into government planning and budgets. We are building the capacity of county and district governments to manage a devolved climate adaptation fund to finance investments in public goods prioritised by communities, that strengthen climate resilient economic growth and livelihoods. The pilot prepares local government to draw down global climate finance through national climate funds mechanisms. This project will provide practical experience and a tested model for effective and robust disbursement of funds that can be replicated throughout Kenya and Tanzania, and beyond.

- Pastoral laws in Burkina Faso (2002), Mali (2001), Mauritania (2000), Niger (2010)
- Kenya's Constitution (2010) and National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands (2012)

### SOUTHERN VOICES

*Resource mapping has been a fascinating exercise for the communities. The validated maps have ignited a process that is reinforcing traditional governance structures to ensure better use of natural resources and stronger articulation of community rights over land and resources. County institutions too will be able to use the maps to demonstrate their resource base.*

Daoud Tari Abkula, Resource Advocacy Programme



### Knowledge Products

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) promotes sustainable development, linking local priorities to global challenges. We support some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in decision making.

### FIND OUT MORE

IIED's work on pastoralism is undertaken by our climate change group and partners. For more information see [www.iied.org/drylands-pastoralism](http://www.iied.org/drylands-pastoralism)