

Securing Pastoralism in East and West Africa: Protecting and Promoting Livestock Mobility

Summary

Livestock mobility allows millions of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists to lead productive lives in areas few other producers can exploit. It is critical for local livelihoods, for trade, and for coping with climate change. In several parts of Africa there are important efforts underway to facilitate livestock mobility and to remove the obstacles that constrain the inherent flexibility of pastoral systems.

This one-year project will draw together the lessons from these initiatives in order to increase understanding about the importance of livestock mobility in drylands. In so doing it will lay the foundations for a longer-term programme of work to enhance livestock mobility in East and West Africa and thus promote the sustainability of pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods.

The benefits of livestock mobility

It makes possible the sustainable use of dryland ecosystems. In areas where the quantity and quality of rainfall, pasture and water resources vary considerably from one season to the next, mobility is essential for animals to access fodder and water where they exist.

It enhances complementarity between pastoral and agricultural systems. Pastoralists and farmers in the Sahel have traditionally benefited from reciprocal arrangements: transhumant herds manure farmers' fields; farmers' livestock are raised in neighbouring pastoral areas; pastoral herds are often the main source of traction animals. Carefully negotiated livestock movements make these connections possible.

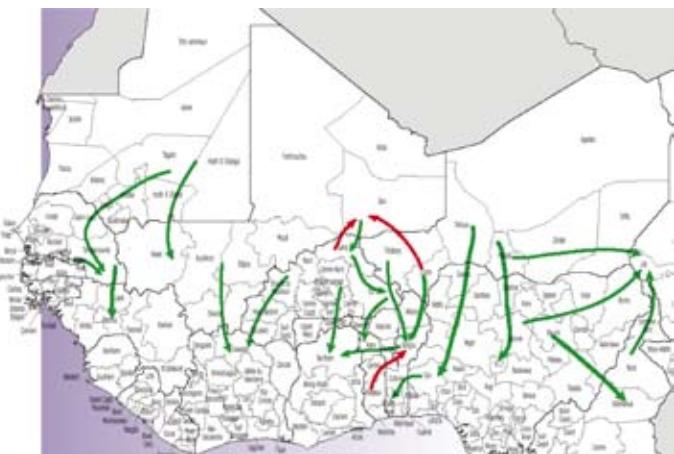
It facilitates the domestic, regional and international trade in livestock, thus supporting local livelihoods and contributing to national economic growth. Well-established regional markets link

the Sahelian and coastal zones of West Africa, and connect the countries of the Horn/East Africa with the Gulf States. Demand for livestock and livestock products is likely to grow significantly over the coming decades as urban populations rise.

It is an essential part of how pastoralists protect their herds. Pastoralists move their animals to protect them from the impact of drought, disease, or conflict. Most climate models suggest that rainfall will become increasingly erratic and unpredictable over the coming decades. In such a scenario herd mobility will be critical in enabling pastoralists to adapt to climate change. It may also give them an important comparative advantage over other, more sedentary groups.

The challenges

Historically, governments in Africa have regarded pastoralism – and livestock mobility in particular – as backward, uneconomic and destructive. The trend has been to favour settlement and try to turn nomadic pastoralists into 'modern' livestock keepers. Government policies have failed to protect key pastoral resources, such as wetlands, dry season reserves and livestock corridors, from encroachment by farmers, investors and national parks.



Cross-border transhumance routes in the Sahel and West Africa. Source: Livestock in the Sahel and West Africa, Policy Note Number 3, SWAC/OECD



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Pastoralists from South Kordofan, Sudan, arriving in neighbouring North Kordofan for wet-season grazing.

In recent years some governments have shown greater awareness of the importance of livestock mobility for dryland ecosystems. New legislation in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Mauritania sets out pastoralists' rights to move their animals within and across national borders. However, government officials' limited understanding of pastoral systems means that this legislation is likely to be implemented in an unduly technocratic and centralised way, thus in practice continuing to curtail mobility. Moreover, while the various regional integration processes across Africa permit the free movement of people and goods, pastoralists still face many practical difficulties when moving their animals across borders.

In several parts of Africa there are innovative local initiatives to facilitate and protect livestock mobility. Traditional transhumance routes and livestock corridors are being re-negotiated and defined; researchers are studying the costs and benefits of transhumance; and mechanisms are being established to manage livestock routes and deal with conflict between different user groups. But very little of this experience has yet been documented or shared in ways that can inform future policy and practice.

The programme

This one-year project, funded by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation and commencing in December 2007, is being implemented by IIED and SOS Sahel UK. It involves a range of activities which will provide the foundation for a longer-term programme of work to enhance livestock mobility in East and West Africa and thus promote the sustainability of pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods.

During this first year we will do the following:

1. Identify who is working on which aspects of livestock mobility in both West and East Africa, and summarise the key lessons of good practice from this experience.
2. Analyse existing and emerging trends with respect to livestock mobility in selected countries, in a general context of climate change, growing demand for livestock products, the promotion of modernisation agendas as a pathway out of poverty, and increasing external interest in pastoral areas (driven by oil, counter-terrorism, or tourism).
3. Review the policy and legislative environment at different levels (continental, regional, and national) and synthesise the main institutional provisions in support of or against livestock mobility.
4. Design, test and evaluate a methodology that enables pastoral groups to articulate their views on the future role and significance of mobility within their livelihood system.
5. Build consensus among a small group of strategically placed organisations and individuals on how best collectively to address the challenges in securing livestock mobility and to take this work further.

In this first year the focus will be on a core group of eight countries, including Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somaliland. These present a representative geographical spread across the broad Sahelian belt, illustrate a range of contexts where livestock mobility is important, and are countries where there is valuable policy and civil society experience on which to draw.

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If livestock mobility is to be enhanced in the long term, we believe that the following core issues will need attention:

- Greater political will: more informed and positive attitudes towards pastoralism, and specifically a greater understanding of its economic benefits.
- Stronger pastoral civil society organisations which can articulate and defend their members' interests, and engage with government in the design and implementation of policies that support livestock mobility.
- A more efficient legal and administrative system that facilitates a peaceful but dynamic system of mobile pastoralism, based on principles of negotiation and reciprocity with other groups.
- Resilient livelihoods and better market integration to ensure pastoral communities can respond to climate change and meet the rising regional demands for livestock and livestock products.
- Greater consensus about the importance of livestock mobility and the most appropriate strategies to secure it, developed through active learning networks that involve policy-makers, civil society organisations and pastoralists themselves.



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Oropoi, Turkana: women taking livestock up the escarpment on the Kenya/Uganda border in the early morning for grazing and water.

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