

Pastoralism and Conflict: Getting Policies Right

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Conflict in Pastoral Areas is a Poverty Issue

Pastoral communities are among the poorest in sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for 20 million households, yet policy makers often neglect them. African countries with significant pastoral populations exhibit some of the world's lowest human development indicators in the world. In the Moroto District of Uganda, the infant mortality rate is 148/1000 compared with 97/1000 in the rest of Uganda and less than 10/1000 in industrialised countries.²

Nevertheless, recent research shows that pastoral communities are well adapted to the harsh physical environments of the arid and semi-arid regions they inhabit.³ Rainfall is erratic and the potential for cultivation is limited. Investing in pastoral systems could improve food security, boost economic development and reduce economic and social marginalisation.

In spite of this potential for sustainable and fruitful livelihoods, violent conflict, raiding and clashes over land use continually undermine pastoral livelihoods and wealth creation.

Insecurity causes human suffering and death, provokes spirals of revenge attacks and turns large tracts of grazing lands into 'no-go' areas. Conflict is often the best-known but least understood feature of pastoral communities. It is increasingly common for individuals from urban centres who are linked to the market system to steal from rural areas and quickly sell the animals to middlemen in towns.

Violent conflict and raiding hinder the delivery of vital services such as education and human and animal health care. Any developmental gains are soon undone by new outbreaks of violence. Conflict has a particularly significant impact on animal health because raiding increases transboundary epizootic disease transmission and impedes the improvement of primary veterinary services and the livelihoods dependent on livestock keeping.

To enable much-needed development in pastoral areas, policy makers and development agencies must look for ways of tackling conflict that are based on understanding the root causes of conflict in pastoral areas.

Tackling the Root Causes of Conflict

Development actors frequently acknowledge the need to reduce the *incidents* of violent conflict in pastoral areas, but all too often the response is driven by and limited to security concerns. There is an equally compelling case for all agencies working in pastoral areas to tackle the *root causes* - factors that cause conflict.

Root Causes of Conflict in Pastoral Areas

In many pastoral communities the root causes of conflict include:

Poverty and limited economic integration

- few economic alternatives to livestock keeping
- insufficient infrastructure such as roads or markets to enable interaction with other communities
- limited reach of judicial and law enforcement institutions in pastoral areas

Small arms proliferation

- availability of automatic weaponry from macro-level conflict in the region (such as Sudan, Somalia in East Africa) leading to increased banditry and making commercial raids more viable
- small arms enabling smaller groups of raiders to act regardless of community disapproval of raids

Environment

- unpredictable weather conditions leading to periods of hunger, necessitating migration for grazing
- encroachment of rangelands
- division of grazing lands between different governments

Social institutions

- weakened community sanctions on 'theft' of cattle
- bridewealth (paid to families of the bride) amounting to 200 cattle among some groups, but more commonly 30 - 60, encourages raiding among youths to secure the necessary assets to marry

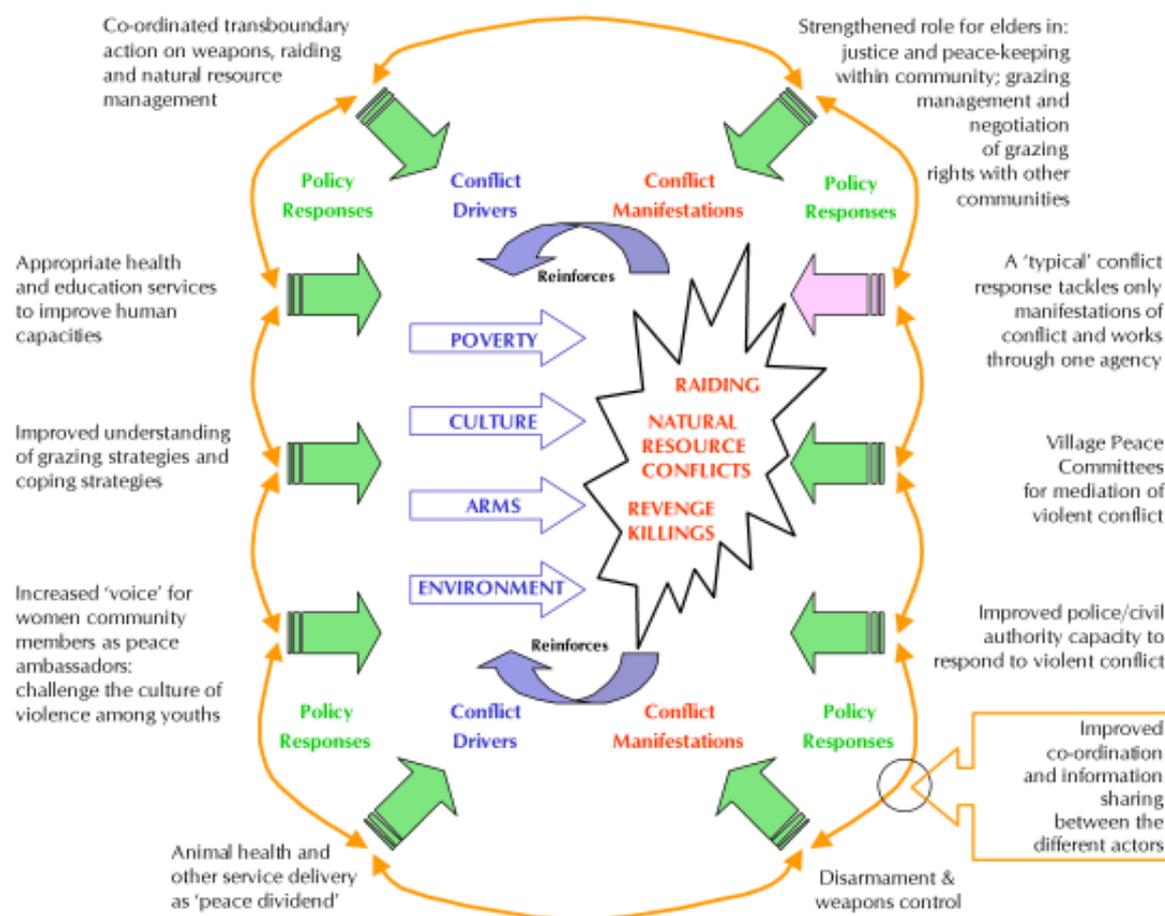
Coherent Policies and Approaches in Partnership

Tackling pastoral conflict necessitates formulating coherent policies and approaches with others. Security-driven responses focus on immediate containment and suppression of violent conflict. To adequately respond to violent conflict, it is important to first acknowledge that conflict is a policy area where a coherent, co-ordinated approach is required. From this recognition, it is necessary to develop coherent policies based on evidence and research, specifically:

- A policy level response rather than a security-driven response by single agencies
- As conflict is a transboundary issue, it should be resolved through a transboundary response: governments will need to co-operate to tackle transboundary raiding
- Policies based on evidence not myths about pastoralists⁷

All agencies need to work together to tackle the underlying causes of conflict, to realise real developmental and peace gains. Addressing any single issue or simply focusing on incidents of conflict will not give the desired results.

A Model of Conflict Policy



Getting it Right - Four Ways to Tackle Pastoral Conflict

- 1. Working with traditional institutions:** Communities have their own traditional response mechanisms that development actors can draw on - such as *alokita*, the traditional right of women to air grievances among communities in the Karamojong Cluster⁴; Oxfam has rebuilt traditional arbitration mechanisms between elders in the Northeastern Province of Kenya.⁵
- 2. Socio-cultural change** will need to take place as well as changes in the economic and policy environment, for example, decreasing the bridewealth price and developing appropriate mechanisms for development interventions such as Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja, which delivers accessible education to pastoral children.⁶
- Getting policies on pastoralism right will also involve **giving pastoralists a greater voice in the development of policies** that affect them, as well as basing policies on facts, not myths. Supporting the development of pastoral advocacy groups will assist in this.
- Conflict as a cross-cutting issue**, affects all ministries and development agencies with an interest in pastoral areas. A narrow approach has been proven to fail time and again.

References

- ¹ Swallow, 1994 cited in Holden et al., *Livestock and Poverty Interactions: A review of the literature*. Livestock in Development Ltd 1997.
- ² Moroto Planning Office cited in Feasible, Participatory, Peaceful and Sustainable Disarmament of the Karamojong', ADOL, 2000.
- ³ See for example, Scoones, I., R. Behnke, and C. Kerven, 1993, *Range Ecology at Disequilibrium. New Models of Natural Variability and Pastoral Adaptation in African Savannas* (ed). Overseas Development Institute, London Exploring Understandings of Institutions and Uncertainty.
- ⁴ See <http://www.cape-ibar.org> for more information.
- ⁵ Oxfam's Peace and Development Committees in Wajir, Kenya are acknowledged leaders in this field
- ⁶ For more about ABEK see http://www.karamojadata.org/kis_projects.htm
- ⁷ See reverse for AU/IBAR's set of briefings for policymakers tackling common misperceptions about pastoralism.

Cover photograph by Lokolimoe Phillip, a Community-Based Animal Health Worker and pastoralist from Kathile, Uganda as part of the CAPE Unit photography project *Pastoral Visions*. See <http://www.cape-ibar.org> for further details.

The African Union/Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources

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For many years AU/IBAR has been an African success story, by attracting donor funds and providing technical and policy support to the member states, particularly veterinary services. In the new millennium, the bureau understands that livestock issues are becoming increasingly complex due to forces, such as globalisation, rapid technological advances and the demands of stakeholders. Stakeholders at all levels are becoming more vocal, influential and involved in governance, priority setting, financing and evaluation of development interventions. AU/IBAR provides effective responses by having a clear vision of its direction, policy and strategies.

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