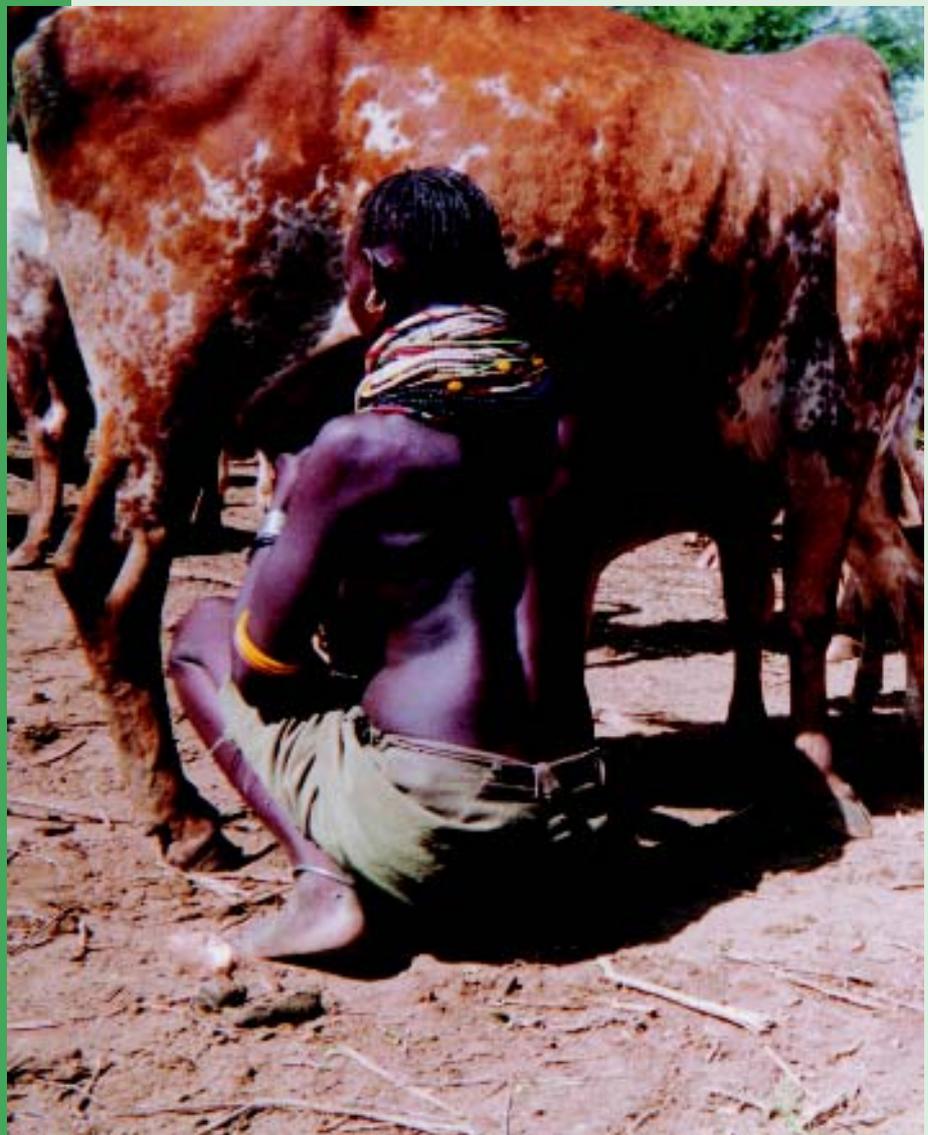


Pastoral Women and Livestock Service Delivery

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The Role of Women in Livestock Production

Pastoral women play a vital role in livestock production, particularly as concerns the responsibility of women for the household food supply. In many cases, however, this role is overlooked by development planners and government officials. Women have been called the 'hidden hands' of pastoral production and the importance of this role needs to be recognised¹.

Historically, livestock services in pastoral areas have been male orientated, as men have been both the agents and the targets. This reflects the assumption that since men have formal control over herding decisions and the disposal of livestock, women play a subordinate role in livestock production. This presumption ignores the allocated roles that pastoral women play, the indigenous technical knowledge they have accumulated to carry out these tasks, and the informal influence that they exercise over their husbands and sons in making livestock management decisions.

Disregarding these roles sometimes leads to negative impacts on women. A typical example is the commercialisation of dairy production. In some

pastoral areas, this has led to women losing control of the milk supply as men become increasingly interested in the process and take control. Women, therefore, lose access not only to the income, but also to the milk supply for family consumption, limiting their ability to feed their children.

Project Level Recommendations

There are many specific ways of involving women as recipients and providers of livestock services:

Extension message:

Informal channels, such as discussions at the well or short gatherings at a time convenient to the women's workload may be more appropriate than residential training courses; women extension agents may be more acceptable to the women (and their husbands) than male agents; language should be taken into account (many pastoral women do not speak the national language or lingua franca used by government staff); visual rather than written aids may be most appropriate for illiterate pastoral women; and the implications for women's workload should be carefully considered when introducing new techniques or technology.

Sick animals: women are often the first to identify sick animals. They spot parasites and note changes in milk productivity or the dung, indicating that the animal is sick. Women are often involved in preparing traditional remedies and treating sick livestock, although in many pastoral societies modern medicine is bought and administered by the men.

Fodder production or collection: where fodder is produced or collected for livestock, it is usually the women who carry out the task.

Animal draught: in some pastoral societies women join with the men in the management and operation of draught animals.

Milking and milk distribution: in most pastoral societies women traditionally milk all the animals and are usually responsible for the distribution of

the milk between family members. Where milk is processed before consumption, it is usually a task assigned to women and girls. Importantly, in small-scale production, women are also generally responsible for selling milk and they also control the income generated by this activity.

Small stock: in most pastoral societies, women are responsible for the small stock (goats, sheep, and sometimes chickens), including herding and watering them. In some pastoral groups they also take care of large stock such as camels and cattle.

Young stock: the young of all stock types are commonly kept in or near the pastoral homestead in the care of the women and children.

Informal power: over 'male' decision-making areas such as grazing management, peace and conflict, treatment decisions etc.²

Pastoral Women and Livestock Services

Animal health:

Women can be targeted in animal health extension messages by government and community-based extension agents. These messages should be based on women's areas of traditional expertise and knowledge, in particular with regard to small stock and young stock which they usually have the primary care of.

Marketing:

Pastoral women need increased access to appropriate markets for their 'traditional' products, namely hides and skins, and possibly milk. Key areas for support may include: helping women to understand the markets (particularly where the stock go to and the marketing and pricing systems elsewhere in the country); increasing transport links and the accessibility of markets; providing business skills and literacy/numeracy training; and increasing the availability of credit/capital.

Women Community-Based Animal Health Workers:

To increase the number of women Community-Based Animal Health Workers (CAHWs), men and women need to be encouraged to select women to be trained. Additionally, the training needs to be appropriate for women. Women CAHWs act as informal extension agents, passing information and techniques on to women as they work.

Policy Level Recommendations

A gendered perspective on pastoral women's roles in livestock service delivery leads to a number of policy implications. There is a need for each of the following to increase:

Recognition of women's key role:

Recognition of women's existing and vital role in livestock production should be the starting point for a more effective approach to livestock service delivery. It should also build on women's indigenous technical knowledge.

Research to improve the understanding of women's role:

Research should be carried out to increase understanding of women's contribution to livestock production and the roles that they could play in service delivery, both as recipients and actors.

Women's participation:

Pastoral women should be key actors in the planning and implementation of initiatives, not simply the targets.

Build on women's institutions:

Interventions should build on or link with pastoral women's local social institutions wherever possible, even if they are informal and thus more difficult to define.

Gender disaggregated data:

Progress in involving pastoral women in the provision of livestock services cannot be monitored without the collection and analysis of gender disaggregated data.

Appropriate training:

It is important that training opportunities are designed with women's needs and workloads in mind. This may have implications for the timing and location, and also the content which should be based on women's roles and knowledge. Similarly, women should also be encouraged to train as government agents in livestock service delivery.

Gender training for extension staff:

Basic gender awareness training should be provided for government and NGO staff working in pastoral areas, to enable them to apply a gender perspective to their work and to support them in increasing women's access to livestock services.

Credit and marketing facilities:

Here appropriate, credit and marketing facilities should be provided to enable women to become involved in marketing livestock and/or livestock products.

Key Messages:

- Women play a vital role in livestock production in pastoral areas
- Livestock services generally ignore this role
- Women's needs and knowledge should be taken into account when planning livestock projects and services
- Women can be more involved in the delivery of livestock services in pastoral areas
- Policy decisions should take women's roles and needs into account, and encourage a gendered perspective in livestock service delivery planning

References

¹Rangnekar, S., no date. Women Pastoralists, Indigenous Knowledge and Livestock Production in Northern Gujarat Pastoral Development Network Paper, Overseas Development Institute, London

²See IBAR Policy Briefing Paper Number 10 Pastoralism and Conflict: Getting Policies Right CAPE Unit and Pastoral Women as Peacemakers, Nairobi 2003: Findings of a Research Project by the CAPE Unit of AU/IBAR CAPE Unit, Nairobi 2003.

Cover photograph

by Akony Lorukeya, a Turkana pastoralist from Nanam as part of the CAPE Unit photography project Pastoral Visions. see <http://www.cape-ibar.org> for further details.

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- Initiate, develop and execute projects in animal health and production
- Liase with appropriate authorities of member states, regional groups, inter-governmental and international organisations

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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