

PASTORALISM AND CLIMATE CHANGE DEBATE:

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This paper gives overview on the characteristics of pastoralism in African context specifically in the Horn and the Boraan of Northern Kenya. It discusses the organization of the traditional governance institutions of the Boraan of Isiolo District and evolution through which it is going. It further proceeds to highlight pastoralism in the light of the ongoing debate as it relates to pastoralism sounding out the danger this discussions might inflict on the already embedded stereotype myths associated with pastoralism. It ends by giving an example of a hybrid planning tool being used by the traditional management institution in setting out futuristic choices along which they will influence events to design the life they desire to live the paper is meant to provoke thought and discussion about climate change and how it relates to pastoralism and the wider issues involved in pastoralism.

PASTORALISM

Pastoralism is a production system based on livestock rearing which is characterized by: mobility, ecologically fragile environment, high degree of flexibility and variability. It is managed through social organization based on traditional authority structures which is either clan or territorial in its jurisdiction. Key issues of management are natural resources, and other social, political and economic issues associated with it.

KENYAN CONTEXT

There is about 20 Million Pastoralist living in the Arid and semi-arid Range lands of the Horn of Africa. The major groups are the Maa, Somali, Boraan, Turkana, Groups in South Omo of Ethiopia, the Karamojog of Uganda and many other groups. Pastoralists occupy about 80% of Kenya's Land mass and are about 30% of the population. Their economic significance goes beyond the livestock industry as tourism, minerals and trade are all important economic sectors in the Pastoral areas of Kenya. Isiolo district is part of the Pastoral Northern region of the Country. It is largely inhabited by the Boraans who are keepers of cattle, goats and lately camels. The Boraans living in Kenya are an offshoot group of the major Boraan community living in southern part of Ethiopia. Unlike their brethren in Ethiopia where social organization is around "Madda" i.e water points, the Ewaso Boraans as they are oftenly called are organized around "dedha" which is defined as the largest recognizable unit used by the Boraans for the purpose of resource management. The district is subdivided into 15 distinct dehas, which are then divided into smaller units called Ardas, which are further divided into other small units called "Ollas" or homesteads. Each Olla is headed by the most important clan elder who is referred to as "Aba Olla." The "dedha" council therefore is comprised of several "Aba Ollas" living within that particular dedha. All pan dedha issues and other external issues are all handled at the level of dedha. Crucial resource based decisions and matters related to defining rules of engagement with other external Pastoralist groups are all made at the dedha level.

It is the dedha council that allows or denies access to natural resources existing within its area of jurisdiction. The dedhas have evolved over time especially with government and other development actors using it as entry point in their programmes. Some have transformed themselves to hybrid creatures like range users association which work with modern development actors in a more formal way that covers more wider spectrum of community issues. This evolution has not been rosy at all times. In some instances the interaction between articulate influential pastoralist leadership and high government officials has resulted in the former being incorporated into the government side with the resultant corrupt working. Especially so in Kenya where a very fluid and high voltage politics is always at play. Prominent and influential members of dedha council have been absorbed by the political class thereby compromising their effectiveness as traditional leaders in the society. However for the Borans of Ewaso it is still true that the dedhas provide a vibrant and effective functional framework within the society for the purpose of not only resource management but also other wider social political issues affecting the community.

THE CHANGING CLIMATE AND UNCHANGING DEBATE

Over the last 2-3 decades the pastoralist of this region have experienced an unusual variability in climate resulting in unpredictable rainfall and drought occurrence. The rains could vary over both time and space and the same is true also for the drought. Pastoralist peoples being master adaptors to variability and shocks have evolved several coping mechanisms that mitigate the adverse impacts occasioned by this cyclical climate weather movements. The whole business of being pastoralist is dependent on ones ability to be flexible and opportunistically exploit the range lands to your advantage and be mobile enough to minimize risks from attendant calamity. This ability by Pastoralists to domesticate and use the range lands for an enterprise that is economically not only viable but also sustainable have been greatly undermined over the years by external actors. Critical resources that are used as drought reservoirs located in dry season grazing areas have been ruthlessly expropriated for other uses, external land tenure regimes that are alien to pastoral way of life have been forcefully enforced e.g. group and block ranches, outright settlement policies have been initiated by States curtailing pastoralist ability to be mobile when they need to be. These negative actions are fuelled by a myth that pastoral production system is not viable and that in any case pastoralism is not compatible with modernity and should therefore be changed into something else different. The theory championed by the pioneer range scientist that informed most of development decisions and practice have not been helpful either. They were completely ignorant of the time tested pastoral management system and to the contrary perpetuated inappropriate paradigms like tragedy of commons, carrying capacity, Land degradation, expanding desertification, cattle syndrome and others which all depict pastoralism in bad light and guided the approach to development initiatives in the pastoral areas over long time. These wrong theories not only brought about destructive development projects but are also largely responsible for entrenching negative myths on which are based faulty policy prescription by the policy makers. It can therefore be said that this failed programmes and wrong policies developed on the basis of very deficient science have

undermined the resilient ability of pastoralists. It has abated the negative impact associated with climate change as experienced by the pastoralists all over Africa. Recent literatures on the impact of climate change on pastoralism are all predicting a very gloomy situation. They are expected to be among the first group to be exterminated by the hazards of climate change, except for the study done by Nick Brooks which is different. Just like the Range Scientist who has preceded them the climate change experts who are discussing its impacts and pastoralism are missing a very crucial line in the debate. The resilient nature of pastoralism in adapting to variability and shocks is not coming out clearly in the debate. Whilst we don't downplay the havoc caused by climate change, it is our contention that what is tipping an already fragile pastoral environment is the persistent effort by government and other external actors to marginalize pastoralism and carry out programmes and policies that largely undermines the production system. It is the negative policies that have eroded over the years the resilient ability of pastoralist peoples. Coupled with the shocks associated with climate change, then a picture of people in demise is being portrayed. By failing to clearly articulate the adaptive strength of pastoralism in this otherwise fragile marginal environment the current ongoing climate debate will do a great disservice to pastoralist. It will only add and entrench the negative myth associated with pastoralism. There is therefore an urgent need to refocus the debate to take account of the positive strength of pastoralism.

SCANNING THE HORIZON

The dedhas in Isiolo District are toying with the idea of scanning the horizon in the light of unfolding changes that are taking place in their environment. They are planning to map out the likely scenarios into the future and work out on a process that will influence those possibilities to their advantage. This is not a futile futuristic exercise that is based on wishful thinking but rather a complex process that will account for all the possible options on the menu giving flexibility to dedha leaders to chart the path they want to move on.

It is our feeling that the continued neglect and marginalization of the Pastoralist is both political and human right issue. Primarily the states within which the Pastoralist lives have cardinal constitutional responsibility to support an empowering process that allows for the pastoralist people to determine their present and future life. There is need for urgent pro-people policy process to be developed. Other external actors too have responsibility to engage with pastoralist and their governments on terms that are favorable to the pastoralists.