

PASTORALISM

This Tip Sheet¹ uses the sustainable livelihoods framework to outline the range of conflict drivers within and between pastoral communities and neighbouring farming or urban communities. It offers guidance on strengthening the conflict sensitivity of programme design in pastoral regions, and gives additional sources for further information.

Pastoralism, practised on a quarter of the globe's surface, is critically dependent upon access to and conditions of range resources. Development cooperation can support conflict prevention in these areas by enhancing livelihood options and strengthening customary and formal conflict resolution mechanisms.

Key messages

- **Violence** has long been a part of pastoral lives. Yet in situations where external social, environmental, political and economic changes are narrowing pastoral livelihood options, the incidence and intensity of clashes within and between pastoral communities and other land users may increase. Conflicts may arise concerning access and use of strategic resources, between different pastoralist groups, or between pastoralists and other resource users (e.g. over water points, corridors, forests, flood plains, resources in protected areas).
- A sustainable livelihoods-based conflict **analysis** should address agro-ecological conditions, existing livelihood strategies, and the socio-economic and political context, including gender dimensions. Analysis needs to consider the different actors and their various problems, potentials and interests. Pastoralists are often marginalised and do not receive adequate support through governmental structures and technical cooperation. Particular attention should therefore be given to local and national arrangements to negotiate resource access and resolve conflicts. Development programmes in pastoral areas need to identify their potential impacts, the winners and losers, and means for compensating the losers.
- Development programmes should aim at enhancing the efficiency and productivity of existing **livelihood strategies**; they should also attempt to diversify the mix of livelihood options available to communities. Development programmes often have a negative impact on pastoral communities as they support settlement and provide services, which are not adapted to mobile lifestyle. It is therefore important that strategies are demand-driven by the communities and integrated into existing local development plans. Examples are enhanced access to and fairness of pastoral product marketing mechanisms, and strengthened pastoral participation of men and women in policy decisions.
- Targeted efforts to strengthen pastoral social and political capital can help communities adapt to change and integrate into the broader societal frame. Synergistic **relationships** within and between pastoral, farmer and urban communities need to be reinforced. Both traditional and formal-administrative mechanisms for managing conflict have an important role to play. Their respective roles and the interaction between them need clarification.

This includes women who traditionally play important but informal roles within the household that impact on the behaviour of men and on the conflict. Women's participation in formal processes needs to be ensured as well as enhanced in a culturally sensitive way.

- Livelihoods of pastoral communities are vulnerable to sudden or gradual changes in social or ecological conditions (shocks and stresses). Mobility remains a highly effective coping strategy in such an environment. Development programmes should therefore strengthen and **safeguard mobility** as it is the main pastoralist coping mechanism against drought, conflict and disease.
- As pastoralists often move across intra-national and international **borders**, development programmes must foster regional approaches and harmonisation of treatment across borders.

INTRODUCTION

Despite their vital role in global food security and production on lands otherwise unsuitable for agriculture, pastoral communities around the world are in a state of crisis. In many societies, pastoral communities remain among the politically, socially and economically most marginalised groups. Customary rangelands and migratory transit routes are shrinking in the face of spreading cultivation, nature

conservation areas and hardening international borders, even as rural populations rise. Herds are threatened by lengthy droughts and diseases, while modern weaponry has made traditional confrontations more explosive. Preventing pastoral conflicts and resolving underlying drivers should be a priority for development assistance in arid and semi-arid regions.

KEY CONCEPTS

Pastoralism is the finely-honed symbiotic relationship between people, domesticated livestock and local rangelands in fragile and highly variable ecosystems, often existing at the threshold of human survival. Pastoral groups inhabit arid areas where soil, rainfall and temperature conditions constrain land use options. This means that groups with their herds have to move between regions seasonally in search of grazing opportunities and freshwater sources. To reduce risks and maximise the productivity of variable and widely dispersed resources, such communities depend upon flexibility (through seasonal mobility, temporary rangeland exploitation and herd diversification) and social capital including social and gender relations and divisions of labour (within and between pastoralists and other groups) to ensure access to these resources.

The specific interactions between the natural resource system, resource users and the larger geo-political system define pastoral livelihood strategies, vulnerability levels and capacities to adapt to change². Given the high reliance of pastoralists upon a limited natural resource base, these processes are critical in that they can 1) increase resource scarcity (as a product of shrinking rangelands and rising demand), and 2) reshape power distribution and resource management mechanisms. A **sustainable livelihoods³ perspective** (Box 1) therefore offers useful insight into the emergence of (violent) conflict as a consequence of interactions within and between pastoral communities and other land users and economic interests.

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Box 1**What are the Principal Drivers of Conflict in Pastoral Areas?**

Livestock is fundamental to each form of pastoral capital. It is the pastoralist's means for the production, storage, transport and transfer of food, wealth and other services. Any threat to livestock – such as lack of fodder or water, raiding, price variation, and disease – is therefore a direct threat to pastoral livelihoods.

Threats to Natural Capital | Together with the degradation of soil, water and plant resources, any limitation to accessing specific natural resources or migratory routes represents a major threat to pastoral livelihoods. These changes may result from excessive pastoral use (overgrazing) or from external encroachment, use by other groups, erroneous development investments (e.g. poorly planned and designed water schemes) or state policy and law (e.g. land privatisation). Wild fruits, fuel wood, gums, resins, and salt are critical supplemental resources for pastoralists during times of scarcity or crisis. Threats to their access may generate tensions in such times.

Threats to Human Capital | Problems of violence, displacement, migration and HIV/AIDS can seriously affect social mechanisms related to resource access rights, decision making, knowledge transfer, and contingency exchanges. Variations in prices of critical staples may have repercussions on pastoralists' nutritional and health status, especially that of children. The absence of appropriate service delivery, e.g. mobile health services and mobile schools, is a recurrent impediment to the well-being of current and future pastoral generations.

Threats to Financial Capital | The herd is the community's financial capital. Any change affecting the herd or the integrity of the group/clan can undermine this asset. Specific economic risks include variations in market prices and problems in accessing remittance income and urban or market-based opportunities. Lack of access to alternative sources of income – such as government employment – can be perceived as evidence of injustice.

Threats to Physical Capital | Access to infrastructure, facilities for water, communication, migration or grazing and exchange opportunities with markets or urban environments are critical for the protection and advancement of physical capital. It is important to avoid obstacles to the use of these assets as they connect remote rangelands with other areas and provide for complementary resources that are especially vital in times of crisis.

Threats to Political and Social Capital | Group cohesion is traditionally strong, allowing individuals, families and communities to spread risk, practise common resource management, and provide support to each other in times of crisis. Tensions may nevertheless emerge in pastoral societies over leadership and succession, due to generational and gender struggles or through external drivers (such as market integration, state regulation, privatisation processes, etc.) These may result in a breakdown of customary structures based on trust, reciprocity and mutual exchanges.

Each of these forms of capital is affected by power, politics and gender issues. Such issues can be politicised or exacerbated when combined with historical, cultural or ethnic differences.

KEY ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN GETTING INVOLVED

1. Analysing the Problem: What are Conflict Drivers, How do Communities Respond to Change?

Agro-ecological conditions and livelihood strategies: Identify threats to and opportunities for pastoral capitals (Box 1). Understand the mix of livelihoods practised, how these vary seasonally, geographically and ethnically, as well as according to sex, age, etc. What are the coping strategies applied during crisis? Assess patterns of resource access rights and their link to environmental conditions.

Context-specific socio-economic, political and cultural issues: It is necessary to identify and analyse the root causes of poverty, vulnerability and marginalisation of pastoralists in a specific given locality. This is best done in a participatory manner. Understanding the diversity and intra- and inter-connectedness of local societies is paramount. Pastoral rights and duties are usually set on a collective rather than individual basis. Economic studies (i.e. terms of trade) may help understanding the degree to which herders are compensated for the sale of their products. Political power analyses may

help identifying the capability of pastoral groups to represent their interests vis-à-vis external interests and agents. Analysis of group perceptions regarding each other, the state, and development actors should shape programme design. Gender analysis that looks at the social dynamics of the community can provide insight into the roles of both men and women as victims and actors of conflict, and can help design more effective and sustainable programmes. Analysis of conflict issues should differentiate between internally and externally induced conflicts or threats, as partly the pastoral societies themselves, partly the outside world, are responsible for escalations in conflict.

Local customary arrangements aimed at preventing, managing or resolving conflicts: These include the (at times competing and partisan) roles of traditional chiefs, elders, women, local administrators and the judiciary. Changes in context affect these dispute resolution mechanisms (e.g. small arms availability, gender-related roles and responsibilities, water points). A principal challenge remains how to reconcile customary and modern decision-making structures and governance processes – building upon ‘local knowledge’ while strengthening external protection of pastoral resource use and access rights, such as through formal legal rights (Pastoral Codes) and land-titling (cadastrage).

Mapping the political economy of development programme impacts: Who gains from the proposed activities and who loses? Development programmes seeking to introduce new services – such as third party conflict resolution facilities, health clinics, or water management teams – have had little success in being perceived as impartial and equitable. Many of those that do gain community trust have demonstrated little long-term sustainability without continued external support.

2. Entry Points: What Should Development Agencies Do?

Development and humanitarian programmes that do not exercise due care and long-term focus are more likely to threaten the sustainability of pastoral livelihoods instead of strengthening them. Recognising that the context of each intervention is unique, and that local cultural and environmental realities should shape decisions, development programmes should deploy a mix of the following strategies in attempting to prevent and resolve pastoral conflicts:

Restore or ensure access to resources fundamental to livelihoods and coping strategies. Resource access rights – to pastures, migratory corridors and water – are often interlinked and are vital to pastoral survival. Access rights to some resources may involve competing users and change from one season to another. Thus policies and laws (land use rights) which allow pastoral communities to maintain their way of life need to be developed.

Enhance the efficiency and productivity of existing livelihood options – Through the provision of animal health services, innovative techniques for production, preservation and storage (e.g. dairy processing, dry meat schemes, granaries), and exchange (e.g. market access).

Expand the mix of available livelihood options – identify and absorb surplus labour, diversify income streams, and reduce exposure to shocks. Financial assets, such as community micro credit schemes and urban-to-rural remittances can be useful means to promote diversification. Schemes that rely upon semi-sedentarisation and increased reliance on seasonal farming have often failed to improve local food and environmental security in the longer term.

Reinforce synergistic relationships among different land users. Enhancement of crop-livestock interactions such as the ‘manure contract’ between herder and farmer communities, increased trade, inter-marriage, animal and other exchanges can help to strengthen positive relationships between groups and facilitate peaceful dispute resolution in times of crisis. Co-management of development projects between diverse stakeholders, enhancing communication opportunities (e.g. radio networks and transportation routes), and establishing shared public services (e.g. animal health) are specific examples.

Strengthen the capacity of the community to cope with ecological shocks and environmental stresses. Map coping strategies deployed by communities in times of crisis, scarcity or disaster. In a conflict-sensitive manner, restore ‘common resource pools’ (i.e. forests, pastures, wells) drawn upon by communities during such times.⁵ National and international agencies involved in a pastoral area should draft appropriate strategies to deal with specific crises and shocks (e.g. contingency funds for crises, safeguarding mobility as a coping mechanism, early warning mechanisms on national or regional level). Traditional security forces may be needed to prevent the escalation of hostilities during such times.

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Reinforce traditional and administrative mechanisms for non-violent dispute resolution to maximise opportunities for 'win-win' interest-based negotiation between groups. Where local traditional leadership and decision-making structures are effective, their relevance and resilience should be recognised and supported. A principal challenge remains how to reconcile traditional institutions with modern institutions and governance processes. Any capacity building for conflict resolution needs to be culture-sensitive.

Strengthen access to and fairness of market mechanisms. Projects that expand options for safe processing, storing and transportation of pastoral products and integrating them into the broader economy are effective ways to develop more equitable market relationships. Further projects in this line can enhance information and communication facilities, support exchange mechanisms, development of new markets for pastoral products and support communities in timing sales to maximise returns. Such projects need to be based on a national and international/regional socio-political context analysis.

Foster regional approaches and harmonisation of treatment across borders. The migratory nature of pastoralism collides with national or international borders, as rangelands are often frontier lands, and pastoral movements as well as exchanges often cross geo-political demarcations. Legal harmonisation and special rights of passage need to be negotiated across state lines, and monitoring mechanisms need to be put into place to ensure equitable treatment.

3. Moving Forward: What Should Guide Future Programme Design?

Experience shows that successful peacebuilding interventions meld technical and social components and spur wider processes of social change⁵. Capacity development and empowerment (enabling participation in decision making processes, gaining information etc.) are important, both for conflict prevention and transformation. Support by NGOs or development programmes may, however, be contra-productive: There are a number of examples where supporting pastoral communities had negative impacts, especially when emphasis was placed on short term activities (for example introduction of high yield breeds) with a negative impact on the self-help capacities of the pastoral communities.

Four options to support empowerment and recognition of pastoral communities with a specific focus on conflict resolution and peacebuilding are:

Strengthen trade networks to support peace by bringing men and women from competing or conflicting groups together and demonstrate the mutual benefits that arise from trade. The potential of such opportunities to establish collaborative relationships has seldom been integrated into programme design.

Engage women in peacebuilding, as women experience conflict differently than men and their participation in the peace process can increase its effectiveness and sustainability. In addition, their multi-group kinship ties, primarily non-combatant status, and vulnerability as individuals, mothers and wives, can enable them to enlist the support of the elites, traditional leaders, warriors, elders and the government in resolving conflict in ways not open to other actors. Peacebuilding programmes can also build on the ceremonial roles and duties of women, like e.g. in blessings. During post-conflict reconstruction, women's participation is vital for reconciliation efforts, for the revival of local economies, and for the rebuilding of essential local services and networks.

Work through 'civil society'. 'Civil society' in this context often refers to CBOs/NGOs that seek to support pastoralism, even if they are not made up of pastoralists. With this difficulty in mind, they may yet play a crucial role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives, in establishing a political voice for pastoral groups, and in sharing experience between regions.⁷

Strengthen political capital. Social and political capital that allows pastoral groups to interface with external groups or forces within the wider political framework is often weak.⁸ Long-term peacebuilding requires development of pastoral 'political capital' at the national, regional and global levels. Conflict risks that are inherent when helping groups to organise politically should be taken into careful consideration.⁸

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Preventing Resource Scarcity Conflicts

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – PASEL. The Support Programme for the Pastoral Herding Sector in Niger (“PASEL” in French) was established by SDC to reduce the incidence and intensity of conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturalists on key transhumant routes. It has reduced violence by integrating all relevant levels of government and traditional authorities within a hierarchy of progressively senior dispute resolution processes; by demonstrating win-win benefits for both bordering communities and pastoral users of transhumant corridor preservation; by clearly marking the resulting borders; and by working in concert with community leaders and administrative authorities to ensure that when disputes emerge, they are resolved transparently and equitably. Ehlhadji Moutari Mansour, SDC – Niger (communication in French only) pasel@intnet.ne

Women and Pastoral Peace-building

AU/IBAR “Women’s Peace Crusade” in the Karamojong Cluster: The traditional social institution of the alokita (‘a group of women united for a purpose’) was revived through the Women’s Peace Crusade, which enables women to act as ambassadors of peace, bearing messages through songs, poems, dances and speeches performed for neighbouring communities. It has helped initiate dialogue and provide opportunities to create a common bond among different conflicting groups.

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IIED/Jam Sahel “Enhancing Local Capacity to Manage Conflicts”: The IIED/Jam Sahel programme undertakes a gender-sensitive participatory approach to facilitate complementary male and female natural resource conflict management capacities. By improving women’s confidence, awareness and participation in the peace process surrounding NR conflicts, more possibilities for conflict resolution are available, and broader social change in other areas of gender concern are promoted.

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CAPE – Community-based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiology Unit, OAU. «Pastoral women as peacemakers». The role of pastoral women in peace and conflict is assessed along with the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to working with these women on conflict issues. www.eldis.org/dbtw-wpd/ 2003

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Strengthening Pastoral Political Capital

IIED – Reinforcement of Pastoral Civil Society project: The IIED Drylands Programme is developing a training programme in partnership with pastoral civil society groups to help pastoral communities identify the value of their livelihood systems for broader society, and to use this in negotiation with authorities. Once complete, it is hoped that the pastoral civil society will have the tools to go into pastoral communities and teach them how to negotiate to meet their interests on the basis of more equitable knowledge without having to resort to violence.

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UN-OCHA/IDS Horn of Africa Pastoral Communication Initiative: The Horn of Africa Pastoralist Communication Initiative (PCI) is an independent facilitation unit that seeks to develop receptive reaction to pastoralist voices and effective articulation of pastoralist interests, innovations and ideas at the global level. It believes that effective communication between pastoralists, government and international organisations is key to forming policies and programmes that will work for the livestock sector and thus reduce poverty in rural areas.

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WISP, World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism: a UNDP-GEF Project being implemented by IUCN – The World Conservation Union. The UNDP has launched this coalition of international development agencies and NGOs to bring together pastoral groups from around the globe, share knowledge and build support for sustainable pastoral development. WISP seeks to dispel myths undermining pastoralists and recognises the central role of land rights in conflicts involving pastoralists.

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International Land Coalition Forum on Pastoralists. A group of Bellanet, DFID, Hivos, ICA, IICD, One-World, UNAIDS, and World Bank.

Reinforcing mechanisms for non-violent dispute resolution

Oxfam – Wajir Peace and Development Committee, Kenya: Oxfam has supported individual and group peace efforts by facilitating the organisational process that eventually produced the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC), in 1995. This was done with modest financial input, but significant moral support. The multi-stakeholder formation of the WPDC has proven to be effective in developing a systematic and institutionalised community-led mechanism for managing conflict. Through it, customary practises and formal institutions can complement and reinforce each other.

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PAPF: GTZ supported the Projet Autopromotion Pastorale du Ferlo (PAPF) in Senegal. They produced training instruments for conflict resolution in cooperation with a Senegalese NGO (Ared).

IGAD: The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development in East Africa has developed a very innovative technical and political early warning and early action mechanism with the explicit aim to help prevent regional conflict escalation in agro-pastoral societies.

Systematising pastoral land use rights

Organisation de Développement des Zones Arides – Code Pastoral Experience in Mauritania: The West African countries of Mauritania, Niger, and Mali have each established a 'Code Pastoral' to systematise pastoral land use rights within a system of legal protection. This Code seeks to regulate traditional forms of open access to rangeland resources, while also taking into account modern legislative measures to protect individual and group-specific land rights.

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LINKS

- War-Torn Societies Project (WSP) – (www.wsp-international.org/)
- Reconcile (Resource Conflict Institute) – (www.reconcile-ea.org/)
- African Union/Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU/IBAR) – (www.cape-ibar.org)
- Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) – (<http://www.itdg.org/>)
- International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED): Drylands Programme – (www.iied.org/drylands/)
- ENDA GRAF Sahel – (<http://www.enda.sn/graf/>)
- SoS Sahel – (www.sahel.org.uk/)
- Oxfam UK (www.oxfam.org.uk)

Footnotes

- ¹ Developed by Michele Nori, Alec Crawford, Jason Switzer, International Institute for Sustainable Development, www.iisd.org/natres/security
- ² Pratt, D. J., F. Le Gall and C. De Haan 1997. Investing in Pastoralism: Sustainable natural resource use in arid Africa and the Middle East. World Bank Technical Paper 365. Washington DC: World Bank
- ³ Livelihoods are “the capabilities, assets (including both social and material assets) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.” D Carney, Sustainable Rural Livelihoods – What difference can we make?” DFID, London, 1999.
- ⁴ Cf. M. Österle/M. Bollig, 2003, Continuities and Discontinuities of Warfare in Pastoral Societies. In: Entwicklungsethnologie 1+2, p. 109 ff. (eds.: U. Kievelitz/R. Poeschke)
- ⁵ Opening protected areas to contingency pastoral grazing (India) and establishing ‘emergency wells’ with access limited to times of critical environmental stress (Somalia) are two examples.
- ⁶ Spencer T., 1998. A Synthesis of Evaluations of Peacebuilding Activities Undertaken by Humanitarian Agencies and Conflict Resolution Organisations. ALNAP, <http://www.alnap.org/pubs/pdfs/tspace.pdf>
- ⁷ The ‘Association pour la Redynamisation de l’Elevage au Niger’ (AREN), for example, was established in 1990 to represent Nigerien pastoral communities in local, national and international debates, resolving territorial disputes between herders and farmers and building a shared voice for pastoral groups.
- ⁸ Refer to Woodcock, M. and Narayan D., 2000. Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research and Policy. World Bank Research Observer, World Bank, Washington, DC.

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