

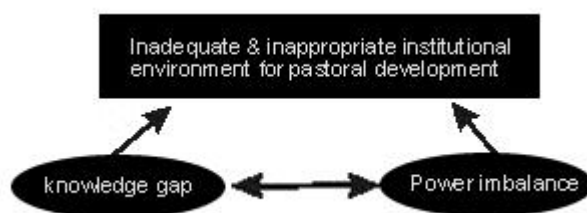
# Reinforcement of Pastoral Civic Society in East Africa

Working with pastoral civic societies to strengthen their capacity to articulate their members' vision of their own development – this is the overall objective of the regional programme on Reinforcement of Pastoral Civic Society in East Africa. It involves helping pastoral groups better understand the dynamics of their own livelihood system in relation to the broader policy environment so that they can identify their own solutions to current problems, challenge outsiders' perceptions of pastoralism, and advocate in an informed and authoritative manner on policy issues of concern to them.

## The Continuing Marginalisation of Pastoralists

Many people believe that the crisis facing pastoralists in East Africa is a result of their production system. Extensive pastoralism, characterized by seasonal or annual mobility of livestock in search of pasture over a large area of rangeland, is widely believed to lead inevitably to desertification and land degradation. Taking these assumptions as fact, the call is for pastoralists to change their system, to "modernise" and settle down, and even to convert to agriculture.

While it is true that pastoral production systems are increasingly failing to provide sustainable livelihoods, it is also true that pastoralists' poverty and vulnerability are exacerbated by inappropriate policies and development interventions. Poor understanding by policy makers of pastoral systems, and the lack of political leverage by pastoralists to influence policy processes are the main reasons for this situation.



*Main causes of inappropriate pastoral policy in Africa*

## An Agenda for Action

Pastoralists, if they are not to remain vulnerable to other people's interpretation of what is best for them, need to be able to convince policy makers of the rationale of their livelihood systems, and the benefits they bring to the local national economy; and they need strong organisations to make their voices heard and defend their interests in the face of government priorities and other powerful forces.

This is not an easy task. Pastoralists first have to overcome the widespread ignorance and even hostility that many policy makers and development workers have towards them. As a group they are divided and do not share a common vision of their future, which limits their ability to develop the political leverage needed to

influence policy effectively. Poverty, conflict and periodic drought are problems endemic to many pastoral groups thus severely limiting their ability to tackle the fundamental causes of their marginalization.

### **An Implementation Strategy**

The programme on the Reinforcement of Pastoral Civic Society in East Africa is an “enabling programme” providing an overall strategic framework for pastoral groups, and the organizations that support them, to work together collectively in support of the empowerment of pastoral civic society. The programme builds on the comparative advantages of different players to work simultaneously on three broad fronts:

- Responding to the immediate needs of pastoralists and building local organizational and managerial capacity
- Addressing the “knowledge gap”
- Building political leverage

Working in partnership with a broad range of pastoral civic societies, NGOs, donor development projects, regional organizations, research and teaching institutes, government departments, local government bodies and the media; and commitment to a long-term approach based on an incremental learning process that responds to partners’ needs and changing contexts, are key principles underpinning the programme.

### **Programme Activities**

**Phase 1 (2002 – 2006)** of the programme on the reinforcement of Pastoral Civic Society in East Africa focuses on two key areas: improving policy makers’ and development practitioners’ understanding of the rationale and dynamics of pastoral production systems; and building the capacity of pastoral leaders to articulate the “outside world” how these systems work. Through training, collaborative policy research and networking activities this phase will establish a favourable environment for the promotion of pastoral self-determination in subsequent phases of the programme.

**Phase 2** will extend the process developed in Phase 1 to two different levels. First, it will build the capacity of pastoral groups to promote – among their members – greater understanding of the dynamics of pastoral livelihood systems in relation to the policy environment in order that local people, rather than those outside the system, frame the context in which pastoral development is designed and implemented. Second, the programme will institutionalise greater understanding of pastoralism within the formal education system in East Africa in order that future generations of policy makers and development practitioners fully understand the rationale of pastoral land use.

**Phase 3** will see the gradual emergence of a strong and viable pastoral civic society movement with a shared vision of how pastoralism should develop in the future, playing an active and informed role in the design and implementation of policies to improve livelihood opportunities for their members.

## **Come and Join Us!**

Although the Resource Conflict Institute (RECONCILE) and the Drylands Programme of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) are responsible for the implementation of the programme, its success depends on developing strong partnerships with all organisations working on pastoral issues in East Africa.

If you would like to know more about the programme, participate in its activities, or join the mailing list to receive the programme's newsletters, please contact us:

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