Future Challenges to International Funding Agencies in Pastoral Development

An overview

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Key words: International Funding, Pastoral Development, Future Challenges

The Historic Perspective

International funding agencies have had a long, although not always successful, involvement in pastoral development. International support started in the mid sixties for ranching, with rather heavy capital investments in fencing, water development and marketing and processing, through para-statal companies in Kenya, the Sahel and the Southern cone of the Americas. With an increased awareness regarding the need for more attention to people and institutions, attention in the late seventies and the early eighties shifted to creating pastoralist institutions for range management and increasingly for other services, such as veterinary health and water. In the early nineties, it was felt that more holistic approaches, involving also arable farmers in resource management, were needed, which led to a shift to community based natural resource management (Pratt and al., 1997 and de Haan, 1994).

Evaluations of the earlier phases were generally critical. Steven Sandford, first in 1981 in a widely quoted confidential report to the World Bank, and later in his book (Sandford, 1985), emphasized the lack of attention to organization and management issues, the need to build coalitions with all stakeholders involved, over capitalization, and the lack of attention to social aspects and prevailing land use as important weaknesses in internationally funded pastoral development activities. The second evaluation, which probably had the most profound effect on support for pastoral development in the World Bank was carried out by the Operations Evaluation Department (OED,1985). This evaluation highlighted the low economic profitability of livestock development investments, because of inappropriate attention to the incentive framework, inappropriate systems of land tenure, and the lack of capacity of the implementing agencies, especially in the required interdisciplinary approaches. As a result, support for livestock development dropped from its peak in the late seventies and early eighties of about US $ 1 billion2 per year, of which about US $ 200 million per year for range-livestock production, to about US $ 200 million per year now, of which US $ 20 million for pastoral development.

New Concepts

Concurrent with these evaluations, a number of new concepts about development in general, and pastoral development in particular, emerged. Five concepts, which have significantly influenced the content and scope of the investments in pastoral development by the World Bank and probably also by other international agencies, are:

- The high level of efficiency of traditional pastoral production systems. The outstanding work by Breman and de Wit (1983), which showed that the production of animal protein per hectare

1 The views expressed in this paper, are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the policies and views of the World Bank, or its affiliates.
2 All monetary amounts are quoted in current dollars.
in the Sahel was two to three times higher than that of areas with similar climate and soils in Texas and Australia, implied that the potential for large incremental benefits from pastoral production systems was rather limited. These findings have led to a more general awareness that pastoral production systems were not as antiquated and backward as often assumed. On the other hand, they meant also that the high incremental benefits, projected by many development planners in the early phases of pastoral development, were overly optimistic, or even unrealistic. More recently, on-going World Bank sponsored work in the Sahel, which tests an holistic approach to rangeland use, investigates whether further rangeland productivity increase is feasible. More information is provided by Le Gall in this Congress.

- The non-equilibrium nature of pastoral production in arid environments. The work by Ellis and Swift (1988), followed by Behnke et al. (1993), which showed that under most arid conditions, the vegetation at any given time is more the result of previous climatic conditions than of previous grazing pressure, also greatly affected thinking on pastoral development in the international agencies. This work provided the basis for “opportunistic management” and challenged previous efforts to regulate the stocking rate. Its focus on mobility in stock management and flexibility in grazing pressure adjustment, made an important contribution to a change in direction in pastoral projects in Eastern and Southern Africa, where ranch development had been more pronounced. The non-equilibrium work explained the remarkable resilience of arid rangelands, as documented by many (for example, Tucker et al., 1991). A later World Bank sponsored publication (Pratt et al., 1997) stressed the limitations of opportunistic management under conditions of uniform landscapes without key resources sites, with predominantly shrubs, and where range condition is still near its natural state.

- The much stronger emphasis on understanding pastoral systems, prior to starting development activities. Over time, a growing awareness of the complexity of pastoral systems and the wide diversity of pastoral objectives has emerged. Driven by the political objectives of providing cheap meat to the urban areas, earlier range-livestock development concentrated on increasing meat output from the pastoral systems. As this was often contrary to the objectives of the pastoral population, adoption of those technologies to promote increased meat offtake almost generally failed. Understanding the production objectives of a particular system also explains the different supply response to price changes, i.e. whether a system is mostly trade or mostly subsistence oriented (Pratt et al., 1997), and is thus a critical element in determining the economic feasibility of any investment.

- A much sharper distinction regarding public and private sector roles in development. Structural adjustment, fiscal austerity and decentralization brought about a strong reduction of public involvement in productive and commercial activities. Public sector intervention would be only justified, where there is a significant market failure or externality and/or social inequity. This increased emphasis on international funding for public sector roles, in principle, benefits pastoralists, as pastoral production is carried out on communal areas, produces environmental goods and services such as bio-diversity and watershed functions, and focuses on marginal populations.

- The strong move towards decentralization and local empowerment. There is now substantial evidence showing that decentralized and community based approaches to natural resource management lead to a greater share of the resources reaching the intended beneficiaries, and to
better sustainability when outside funding dries up. The emphasis is therefore on strengthening local government and local land user groups, and village committees in land management.

Future Challenges

Demand for meat and milk is expected to increase dramatically in the developing world. The International Food Policy Research Institute projects that from now till the year 2020, the demand for meat and milk, in the developing world will increase by respectively 2.8 and 3.3 percent per year (Delgado et al, in press). It is quite clear that the contribution from pastoral production systems to satisfy this greater demand, will be limited. Globally, over the last decade, off-take from grazing systems has increased by only 0.4 percent per year, and no further increase is expected, certainly not from the arid zones (de Haan et al, 1997). Pastoral development will therefore be guided by social and environmental objectives, and the focus will be on preservation of environmental goods and human welfare. Within this perspective, key future challenges in pastoral development would be:

First, to achieve a better incorporation of pastoral peoples in the consultative process and sustainability of pastoral institutions. Urban dwellers and crop farmers are often better represented in discussions on land use rights and access to other resources than the mobile and remote pastoral producers (Waters-Bayer and Bayer, 1994). More over, globally there is clearly a declining social cohesion at the higher level of traditional pastoral organizations, as traditional institutions and discipline are eroding. Some customary pastoral institutions in Central Asia show something of a comeback after decades of state intervention, however, even they have not emerged unscathed from successive collectivization and economic liberalization (Swift, 1995 and Schillhorn van Veen, 1995), and show fragmentation and return to the family or small group of families as the dominant decision unit. This fragmentation has weakened the input of the pastoral sector in consultative processes. This lack of social cohesion at the aggregate level is probably also one of the main reasons behind the limited sustainability of pastoral organizations. Pastoral organizations at local, regional and/or national level in Senegal, Mauritania, Niger and Central African Republic, have shown poor post-project sustainability. Key constraints in the sustainability of pastoral institutions concern the lack of support at the national level because of government apprehension of herder empowerment, the confusion between social and commercial activities in many associations (and donor perceptions), and the short time span allocated by project activities to pastoral institution building.

Second, to maintain adequate access to land and water. Increased population pressure, also in the arid lands leads to increasing encroachment of crop farming into the higher potential areas of the arid lands (river valleys, run-on areas, etc.) used for dry-season grazing etc. In any given area, such encroachment can undermine the viability of the entire pastoral system. This is exacerbated by current land titling projects, for example in Central Asia and Southern Africa, which promote individual titling over communal areas. The arable background of many development planners and the desire for national land titling procedures are main reasons for this. Major range degradation can result. A concerted effort to preserve or restore such critical higher potential areas for pastoral production will be a main challenge. Creating greater awareness at the level of the decision maker regarding the special resource access features of mobility and flexibility that the pastoral systems require is a critical challenge for the pastoral development community.
Third, to develop appropriate drought preparedness strategies: Drought is an overriding attribute of environmental degradation and social upheaval in arid pastoral systems. There is now a good body of knowledge on pre-drought early warning systems, food aid programs during drought, and post drought re-stocking work. However, there is still little knowledge on how to increase the indigenous resilience of pastoral populations to drought. Government and international donor assistance often still includes the provision of free concentrate, thereby undermining the non-equilibrium principles of pastoral systems. Finding ways to de-stock rapidly when droughts are imminent, and re-stock when rains appear, even if it requires subsidy, might be less costly and cause less human suffering, than the classical food aid and other emergency operations. Drought preparedness is still a major gap in pastoral development. Food aid programs must also take into account the need of mobility before organizing food delivery network.

Fourth, to diversify income and employment. The potential to increase meat and wool production and income from arid range lands is limited. Policies aiming at achieving economic sustainability of pastoral production should therefore have employment generation outside the pastoral sector as a key component. Unless a substantial part of the growing human population finds full or part-time employment outside the pastoral sector, it will be difficult to provide acceptable income levels to all. The search for alternative employment should be combined with more attention to diversification of range land production. Alternative plant products (resins, medicinal plants) and agro-eco-tourism (especially if integrated with wildlife tourism) can be important sources of income. The latter is already an important income-earner on many ranches in the developed world (Walker, 1996), and by some seen as surpassing beef production as the main income generator over the next decade. Possibilities might also be explored for the payment to pastoralists for the ecological services, such as bio-diversity conservation and carbon-sequestration that rangelands can provide. For both services, the design of appropriate benefit sharing and monitoring mechanisms is crucial for their eventual success.

Fifth, to continue to ensure adequate access to key services. The introduction of appropriate veterinary, water management and other services for pastoralists in low-density and marginal areas has received considerable attention from international donors, as well as Non-Government Organizations. Most of the systems relied on para-professionals and user groups, working on a private basis. While some good results have been achieved, the sustainability of these systems is still uncertain, and more needs to be done, to integrate those systems in the private and public professional systems. In addition, except for the quite successful educational programs in Iran, little has been done to prepare specific education programs for mobile pastoralists, although this is also a key requirement to ensure a better integration of these populations in the consultative process.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to give a brief overview of current developments in pastoral funding, and what I see as the main challenges for the future. There is an increasing interest, and justification for pastoral development. However, there are still numerous issues of participation, institution building, resource access, drought preparedness and diversification to be resolved.

References


