

# Critical reflections on safety net policies and practices with respect to social protection among pastoral peoples in Sub-Saharan Africa

Bereket Tsegay

**Abstract** Social protection ranks high on the global development agenda, with linked concerns about poverty, resilience and sustainable development. Over the past decade, there has been increased attention to social protection in policy dialogues and programmes - across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), however, there has been relatively little systematic analysis and research review work with a focus on pastoral livelihood systems. In addressing this gap, this paper re-examines current debates and practices in SSA's emerging social protection agenda, focusing on pastoral communities and their livelihood systems. Emphasising the concepts of inclusive growth, sustainable development and a rights-based approach to societal crises, the author argues that in designing safety nets, social protection policy needs to consider the specific circumstances and livelihoods of a particular socio-economic group, rather than applying generic instruments that ignore important elements, such as the indigenous knowledge systems of the target population, and their level of vulnerability and resilience to shocks. Moreover, in addressing the basic and acute needs of vulnerable groups, during emergencies situation and systemically, and in seeking to strengthen their resilience through robust social protection policies and in their governance mechanisms, the countries of the region should ensure that there are inter-state social policy transfers, whereby mutual learning is developed. Furthermore, in systematising safety net policies, state and non-state actors should work together closely in developing social welfare systems that consider inter-generational gaps.

**JEL Codes:** I38, O15, O55, I21; I12; I38; J12; J13; O15; C93

**Key words:** climate change, pastoralism, poverty reduction, resilience, social protection

**ISBN:** 978-1-911614-02-9

*Citation:* Tsegay, B. (2017). *Critical reflections on safety net policies and practices with respect to social protection among pastoral peoples in Sub-Saharan Africa*, SPIDA Working Paper Series- ADU/PENHA/DPU-UCL SPIDA/WPS/103/2017

## 1. INTRODUCTION

FOR the last five decades, frequent natural and manmade disasters in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) [African countries, excluding North Africa - see UNSTATS] have been posing serious challenges to the resilience of the pastoral communities. These challenges have been exacerbated by, among other

things, dysfunctional national policies; marginalisation from political centres and development processes; a general misunderstanding of pastoral livelihoods' contribution to food security, national economies and ecological sustainability; climate shocks; conflicts and violence. These circumstances demand alternative or supportive coping mechanisms, in order to bolster pastoral livelihoods, but these have proved

As part of the Social Protection for Inclusive Development in Afar Ethiopia (SPIDA) Working Paper Series, this paper is a peer reviewed work. SPIDA is research project implemented by a consortium of the Development Planning Unit (DPU), University College London (UCL) of the UK, Adigrat University of Ethiopia and the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA) of the UK. This work was supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). All views expressed in this working paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SPIDA research consortium members or NWO.

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to be beyond the capacities of these communities. Given the inadequacy of previous approaches to risk management, and in the face of these enormous challenges, emergency programmes and the development models employed have had mixed results, in terms of reducing the loss of both human lives and livestock assets. As Moyo (2009) argued, food aid can be seen as an out-dated mode of social security delivery, which failed to build a robust and long-term approach that positively contributes towards pastoral communities' resilience capabilities. But, as these old emergency relief approaches that do not address root causes (see Ali and Hobson, 2009) phase out, it would be natural to see the evolution of alternative models. Countries in SSA, along with their development partners, have long been in search of such alternative modes that could potentially bring risk adaptation and mitigation approaches together, through social protection. Devereux *et al* note that this has been an emerging, 'yet fastest-growing' concept on the international development agenda since the end of the last millennium (2015:13). This emerging policy approach, one that is beginning to assume a central role in national development plans, has been considered by governments and other development partners as an essential part of an effective development model aimed at addressing the aforementioned challenges.

In this case, it is important to consider traditional forms of social protection. Societies in SSA have deep-rooted, community-based welfare and social protection practices, which evolved through practical experience. Until a few decades back, predominantly traditional, self-sustaining informal social networks made very significant and quite effective contributions in helping people and communities to adjust to adverse socio-economic situations, as well as in creating livelihood equilibriums. However, the magnitude of the challenges that these communities have faced in recent decades has brought about the institutionalisation of a welfare system, for the vulnerable, for the elderly or for children, or in response to man-made and environmental catastrophes.

Social protection, framed as broad, national socio-economic policy, has involved the use of various policy instruments, including infrastructural development, pension and insurance schemes, and safety net support in-kind or in cash. However, as a

plethora of reports and empirical studies shows, most of the safety net and social protection policy instruments adopted by countries in SSA have a nation-wide focus and ignore the specific needs of pastoral livelihood systems (see Devereux and Getu, 2013). Empirical assessments conducted by prominent authors have revealed that policies tend to follow generic approaches and usually attempt to address a particular episode, a catastrophe or emergency, or are event-triggered (short-termism) than need-responsive, reflective and tailored to the peculiarities of certain societal groups (long-termism) and they are not fully integrated into inter-generational development agendas (Fre and Tsegay, 2016). Pastoralists and pastoralism livelihood systems suffer from this short-termism and the 'generalisation' of social protection policy.

Broadly speaking, current social protection models are mainly being promoted in urban Africa and focused on employees with formal sector jobs, considered by those in authority as being important political instruments in securing political capital at election time (Devereux and Getu, 2013). This is revealing of a rural-urban social protection policy design bias. These initiatives largely ignore social groups who operate within the informal sector (FAO, 2017:26) and are far from political centres, including pastoralists and other dryland groups. So, in the absence of a protection system, of effective safety nets and emergency relief, and with the magnitude of the challenges posed by droughts and declining resilience in the rural areas (African Union, 2010:12; Ali and Hobson, 2009), pastoralists find themselves in very difficult circumstances and exposed to the risk of losing their most precious assets - their animals – or to famine.

In most of the reports produced on social protection by governments, researchers and think tanks, pastoralism is rarely mentioned, with a few exceptions with respect to Ethiopia and Kenya. Devereux and Tibbo (2013) note that there is a lack of systematically analytical literature on pastoralism, highlighting the gap in policy and development knowledge that this review partly aims to fill. Indeed, current social protection debates with respect to the pastoral communities have an acute need for a solid theoretical base.

Proceeding from this reflection, the core objective of this research review is to look at current debates, explore some of the experiences in different SSA

countries with social transfer policies and enhance mutual learning on pastoralism-oriented safety net policies. Thus lessons can be drawn, highlighting some country-based experiences that help to explore successes achieved and challenges faced in taking pro-active measures and developing responsive social policies; reviewing institutional and governance practices for long-term sustainable impacts; and assessing the implications of nationally grown, project-based or donor-induced programmes in addressing pastoralists' socio-economic challenges. The author would like to emphasise, at the outset, that the objective here is neither the creation of a generic social protection policy that transcends countries or social groups, nor to provide a prescriptive approach. Rather, it is to understand the policy design development and implementation dynamics and the transition from ad hoc or 'event' triggered models to systems that are constituted as an integral part of pastoral development processes.

Methodologically, this study pursues a qualitative approach, based on an extensive literature review, re-examining forward-looking academic papers, policy and strategy documents and incorporating observations from fieldwork conducted for the Social Protection for Inclusive Development in Afar of Ethiopia (SPIDA) research programme. This involved six rounds of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) among the Afar pastoral communities of Ethiopia, in relation to Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), one of the biggest programmes in Africa. The study is based on both a critical, theoretical exploration of the literature on social protection and on an assessment of the empirical evidence and the practical context, making use of the research carried out under SPIDA.

Moreover, in critically engaging with the concepts, a nexus approach is used to examine the interdependencies, tensions and trade-offs between resilience, pastoral development and safety net transfers. In its analysis, the paper explores the nexus that exists between social protection, pastoralism and resilience by looking at institutions and governance; the interplay of national and global actors (interests and influences), and policy implications. As a frame of analysis, the paper puts the nexus framework and social protection discourses together, with the aim of deriving theoretically grounded policy implications. Beyond

making a contribution to the current debate, this work aims to produce findings that could inform policy makers, academics and practitioners who play key roles in designing, implementing and assessing social protection policies in SSA.

## 2. THE PASTORALISM, RESILIENCE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION NEXUS

The emergence of a Nexus approach during the 1980s (see Sachs and Silk 1990) led to experiments related to its implications across multiple sectors. Later, the Stockholm Environment Institute's Bonn2011 conference with the participation of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), emphasised the energy-food-water nexus and helped it to become a mainstream approach to global issues. Promoted by GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) and the European Union, the Nexus approach highlights the interdependencies between water, energy and food security, in pursuing sustainable resource use and development. It emphasises the inadequacy of a purely sectoral approach and the need to understand synergies and negotiate fair trade-offs between competing uses and users of resources. The approach can readily be extended, in considering a range of environmental issues, where different nexus exist connecting sectors, and different factors. This paper makes use of an adapted functional definition developed at UNU-FLORES - The United Nations University Institute for Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and of Resources. According to this definition, a Nexus approach to pastoralism 'examines the interrelatedness and interdependencies of livestock production systems and their transitions and fluxes across spatial scales and between compartments'. Pastoralism is seen as a complex system that encompasses various sectors, functionalities, and scales of governance. The approach can promote the sustainability of pastoral development, as Hoff (2011:5) argues, by 'reducing trade-offs and generating additional benefits that outweigh the transaction costs associated with stronger integration across sectors'. Hoff further advises that 'business as usual' and working in 'silos' do not help, in developing policy and programmes. Rather advancing integrated approaches and recognising the nexus around pastoralism can ensure synergies among sectors and sustainability (Ibid:7).

The approach is widely considered to be an innovative and effective approach in addressing multiple socio-economic and ecological problems. More than just a buzzword, the model is gaining influence in both corporate and global governance systems, and being utilized in making business cases and in decision-making. The approach is commonly used in the water, energy and natural resources sectors, but this paper extends its use, applying it in the pastoral livelihoods, resilience and social security policy domains. However, it should be acknowledged here that, despite its growing prominence, the approach has some drawbacks. As Reinhard (2017:20) notes, a ‘holistically complicated ... approach costs more time, [and requires greater] capacity’.

The nexus of household and community resilience among pastoral groups and the social protection measures being injected into their livelihoods requires critical re-engagement. The framework below helps to conceptualise the terms and their interconnectedness in ensuring the desirable inclusive and sustainable pastoral livelihood systems, while creating an equilibrium that balances trade-offs and generates synergy at both policy and governance levels. Within its Pastoralism-Resilience-Social Protection (PRSP) nexus approach the paper assesses the implications of actors, institutions and policies, the issue of affordability, performance and impact, and making use of technological advancements.

### Framing the Nexus Approach

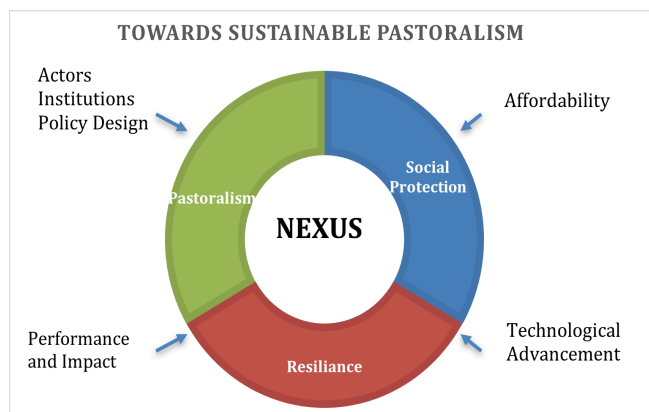


Fig. 1. Framing the Pastoralism-Resilience-Social Protection (PRSP) Nexus model (Adapted from the Nexus approach and Hoff, 2011:16)

### 2.1 Broad Policy Domains: Underlying Approaches for Safety Net Instruments

The global financial crisis in 2008–09, as Devereux *et al* demonstrated, was detrimental to the advancement of the social protection policy setting agenda ‘to protect the most vulnerable from economic shocks and instability’ (2015:13). The measures taken to address the crisis in the global North and South included various safety net components, though their level of maturity differed from North to South. For instance, unlike the consolidated approach of the middle income countries, most countries in SSA have had ‘limited coverage ... with high needs but limited fiscal resources’ [See figure 2] (Ibid:5) and are still in the process of learning from their recent experiments.

With this global trend, there has been a great effort to make social protection part of a critical overarching development agenda, as shown in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1, an outcome document *Transforming Our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, clearly establishes the need for social protection mechanisms, where SDG Goal 1, ‘End poverty in all its forms everywhere’ in general and 1.3 in particular, stipulates the relevance of nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and sets the goal to ‘by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable’ (UN, 2015). Similarly, SDG Goal 2 specifies the need to ‘end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture’ by 2030. Both goals are linked to resilience, to pastoralism and to having a system to achieve ‘no-one left behind’. The progress indicators include increasing social protection coverage that is reaching out to the up to 5.1 billion people who do not have access to human security and live in uncertainties (Murphy and Walsh, 2014:261) and reducing the losses from climate and non-climate shocks.

Although it is too early to beat a victory drum, it is ‘incontrovertibly one of the success stories of development policy in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century’ (Devereux *et al.*, 2015:7). According to *The State of Social Safety Nets 2015*, a recent World Bank report, there is evidence of progress on safety net policies as most countries of the global North and South have ‘at least one’ programme, and

‘an average developing country has about 20 ongoing programmes’ (Honorati *et al.*, 2015). This report drew its findings from data collected among 136 countries, which enabled it to examine trends and coverage and to assess the performance of safety net programmes. The report’s recommendations included calls for ‘better-coordinated systems to increase efficiency’, so as to guarantee the interests of the poor. The report showed that about 1.9 billion people benefit from safety nets, of whom ‘44% receive in-kind transfers, 37% receive cash-based transfers, and 19% receive fee waivers’ (Ibid). However, despite such progress in coverage, there are still concerns, as the majority of the poor do not have access to safety nets, particularly in SSA and South Asia, where, respectively, only 10% and 20% of the poorest have access to social safety nets (Ibid).

#### Social Protection Policy Designs and Patterns

There are three types of social protection, based on local ownership and institutionalisation in national processes, developed by Gentilini and Omamo (2011) and cited by Devereux *et al* (2015:14).

**‘Consolidated’ social protection** is institutionalised in national domestic budgets and political processes, as well as linked to formal labour markets. It includes both contributory social insurance and non-contributory social assistance, with the main challenge being to maintain and reform these systems and keep them financially sustainable.

**‘Emerging’ social protection** can be found in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. There are wide differences in the specific models, but usually international assistance plays a minor role in funding their set-up and most systems are domestically funded. The main focus in these countries lies on expanding social protection, particularly formal contributory social security, and improving the coordination, coverage, effectiveness and efficiency of the programmes.

**‘Limited’ social protection** is found in countries where the need for social protection is high, but national fiscal capacity is limited. In some countries, social safety nets are donor-funded or basic longer-term social protection systems are slowly scaled up, as in Ethiopia.

Fig. 2. Social Protection Policies and Patterns - developed by Gentilini and Omamo (2011)

A coherent and comprehensive system should start with a well-crafted plan and a policy framework to guide multiple social protection interventions. The efficient implementation of a social protection system requires institutional capacity and tools to facilitate the selection of beneficiaries, service delivery, and monitoring of both processes and outcomes. Reflecting on the relevance of the policies (as nationally grown policies), Devereux *et al*, however, stated that in practice efforts have been ‘dominated by projects and programmes, often externally designed and financed, with little traction in the domestic political discourse’ (2015:13). This gives a clear understanding on the lack of national policy ownership.

There is another argument that looks at the safety net as a formal insurance function. However, as Alderman and Hague argue, if it is going to serve the purpose of providing insurance, a safety net needs to have a ‘flexible budget that can be scaled up rapidly to meet unanticipated circumstances’ and focus on ‘transitory need rather than more chronic correlates of poverty’ (2006:372). Moreover, both authors note that countries do not prefer ‘formal insurance financing (weather-based or not)’ as ‘insurance works best for low-frequency, high-cost events rather than relatively high-frequency events [droughts and floods]’ (Ibid:374). In order to function effectively, the system requires flexibility rather than permanently institutionalised safety net packages.

As SSA’s documented experiences show, safety net policies and programmes rely on several fundamental elements of development approaches, which are seen as constituting a ‘centrepiece ... in managing risks and addressing poverty and vulnerability’ (Rawlings *et al.*, 2013:1). Among various approaches put forward, there are two emphasised here that aim to provide overarching policy directions for the establishment of safety nets. These are the ‘*Rights Approach*’ and the ‘*National Development Approach*’. The argument for safety net needs varies, depending on the values, principles, motives and expected outcomes of the approaches chosen by politicians, policy makers and their development partners. Highlighting these two approaches would provide adequate elucidation, in showing the links between the overall national political and development agenda and the instruments generated out of the available options.

*The Rights Approach* looks at social protection as part of a set of fundamental and constitutional rights of a citizen, where access to food, water, shelter and political participation are considered as inseparable human rights. Thus, providing citizens with either in-kind support or cash transfers would be an obligation for governments, in order to assist to those who are incapable of helping themselves. This implies that national social protection measures first achieve legislative support and then ensure citizens' entitlements. A number of researchers have examined the implications of enhanced social service provision for the relationship between citizens and the state. In providing broader social responsibility from state to citizens, Samuels and Jones (2013), referring to a Department for International Development (DFID) funded study conducted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (covering countries including Kenya, Mozambique and Uganda), observed that programmes with a rights approach were able to cultivate positive attitudes towards, and perceptions of, the state. Moreover, pursuing such an approach further could potentially lead to a 'transformative' model that considers social justice, which refers to the redistribution of resources, opportunities and powers (Sabates-Wheeler *et al.*, 2008). This transformative approach attempts to break the cycle of persistent poverty among pastoralists, while promoting more state engagement with local civil society organisations and going far 'beyond social transfers' (Devereux and Cipyk, 2009:26).

*The National Development Approach* views social protection in its broader perspective and centres its agenda on realising long-term impacts. One aspect of this is a strong shift in the approach from maintaining welfare to the goal of developing human capital. This approach looks at the long-term pay-off of investments in communities, and especially in children. As Agüero *et al* notes, there is a move from cash transfer flows to human capital stocks (2007:19-21). For example, supporting children with nutritious foods during their formative years can go beyond meeting their immediate welfare needs and contribute to both physical and mental development. Such actions go 'beyond redressing the contemporaneous poverty' and build the 'human capital stock of the next generation' (Ibid:19-21). Moreover, Akresh *et al* (2016) argue that Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) can contribute towards the 'accumulation of human

capital and stop the intergenerational transmission of poverty'. Indeed, this approach is growth-oriented, with safety nets used a means to achieve long-term growth.

Discussing the aforementioned approaches, Devereux *et al* see a flaw in contemporary social protection thinking, arguing that it assumes 'two potentially contradictory directions... rights-based versus growth-oriented' (2015:7). Reflecting on current debates that give due attention to the post-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) development framework, Roelen *et al* emphasised the need to foster forms of 'Inclusive Social Protection' that 'guarantee universal access to social protection and ... address the structural causes of poverty and vulnerability, rather than merely responding to the symptoms' (2013:1). The authors recommended 'legislation to underpin a rights-based and demand-driven social protection approach' and identify the need for better integration with national socio-economic development policies (Ibid).

Whether they complement or negate the philosophical or political underpinnings of social protection, these two overarching conceptual frameworks are likely to continue dominating the social security policy discourse in SSA.

### **Existing Forms of Social Protection in Pastoral Areas**

Social protection mechanisms among the pastoral communities can be seen from two divergent, but potentially convergent, conceptual understandings – understandings of informal networks, on one hand, and formal social protection networks, on the other. Pastoral communities' resilience depends greatly on their indigenous knowledge systems and on the social capital that promotes mutual support during periods of hardship or support that enables community members to maintain independent livelihoods. However, with the weakening of their resilience to disasters, and with the unprecedented magnitude and the systemic nature of the shocks affecting pastoralists, as well as the lack of government investment in the pastoral sector and past failure to put in place support mechanisms, governments and donor communities have been attempting to devise and consolidate formal protection methods (see Odhiambo, 2012). This section briefly reviews the nature and patterns of these networks, informal and formal.

*Informal Social Protection Networks:* Most pastoralist societies in SSA are organised on the basis of either ethnic or clan-based systems, or else are characterized by other forms of living that transcend communal organisation modes, where informal social protection is embedded in their values, principles and traditional way of life. Given this communal social organisation, the forms of mutual support, in-kind or in cash, that are most commonly used means among these communities are those which can be fulfilled by parents, close or extended family members and neighbours. This includes remittances and faith-based such as *Zakat* – in which Muslims contribute part of their resources to poor community members. These traditional social assistance networks have existed among these communities for centuries and have become a routine part of their way of life, whereby an individual feels a sense of responsibility to help others who are less well-off. It is an intertwined web of support that stems from the collective behaviour of the community, which shapes its members accordingly. For instance, it is normal to see pastoralists helping each other by re-stocking families and rebuilding their assets after a severe drought and the loss of livestock. Some elaboration on these practices can help us to understand the wider implications of informal safety nets (Devereux and Cipryk, 2009:4-7). Among pastoralists, the traditional practice of fostering is helping communities to look after a large number of orphans. Moreover, as experiences across SSA show, HIV affected people are being supported with the provision of anti-retrovirals (ARVs) and financial support. However, it is the responsibility of parents and close family members to take care of HIV positive people when they are sick, and to arrange funeral services when they die, which is creating huge financial pressures for poor families. And, naturally, capable family members are relied upon when it comes to looking after the elderly. Watson (2016:5) provides further examples of informal social protection from the Sahel region, principally from Mali, Mauritania, Senegal and Chad, showing the breadth and depth of social capital in pastoral societies.

*Formal Social Protection Networks:* These interventions, in most cases, are externally induced support mechanisms, led by governments, NGOs or international organisations, to support those in need of help through the provision of food aid, cash, or support for interventions such as asset building.

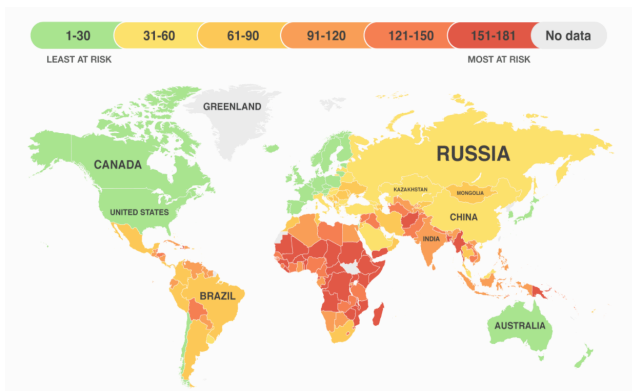
Devereux *et al* (2015:5) describe the origins and growth of the social protection literature, going back to the 1980s, and show how the agenda has been evolving from ad hoc emergency interventions to an integrated and systemic approach that addresses several cross-sectoral and societal problems. Examples of this more integrated approach include the rights-based ‘Social Protection Floor’ of the International Labour organisation (ILO), launched in 2012, and the ‘Integrated Social Protection Systems’ of UNICEF’s policy framework. In addressing the acute support needs of the pastoral communities during severe droughts or other catastrophic events, policy makers and their partners have been implementing different forms of social protection programmes. These include cash transfers, in-kind support or insurance schemes, with the aim of responding to shocks and rebuilding pastoral livelihoods, involving measures such as restocking households with cattle, supplying animal fodder or providing veterinary services (Holleman *et al.*, 2017:64). However, as Kenya’s experience shows, for successful productive cash transfers, an effective local economy and market is a necessity (Daidone *et al.*, 2015:100).

## 2.2 Resilience

The conceptualization of resilience in redefining the sustainable development and vulnerability agenda has been dominant, and as noted by Béné *et al* among others, it includes ‘social protection, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation’ (2012:3). However, resilience is a contested concept, and some argue that the attempt to substitute ‘resilience building’ for poverty reduction serves no purpose and is not relevant to the poor (Ibid). Nonetheless, engaging with conceptual narratives, as we will do below, can help us to grasp the central function of resilience in promoting pastoral development. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) emphasises the implications of resilience to climate change related risks and the importance of ‘reducing exposure and vulnerability and increasing resilience to the potential adverse impacts of climate extremes’ (2012:2). Mitchell and Harris (2012:2) define resilience as the ‘ability to resist, recover from, or adapt to the effects of a shock or a change’. Undoubtedly, resilience is linked to key adaptation approaches and it is important to underline the need for the concept to be understood within the context of the vulnerability dynamics of pastoral systems and social protection.

The SSA countries, and especially those listed as least developed nations, are at high risk in terms of the impacts of climate change. ‘The Eco Experts’, a UK-based research team, present data for an index, the DN-GAIN index, which measures and ranks countries by their vulnerability to and readiness to adapt to climate change. The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, ND-GAIN, index is an outcome of a programme at the University of Notre Dame, in South Bend, Indiana, USA. The Eco Experts highlight SSA’s exposure and in their ranking they note that ‘ten countries in that region take the worst survivability spots, with Somalia labelled as the nation least likely to survive climate change’, followed by Chad, Eritrea, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo. As the diagram below illustrates, most SSA countries face an alarming situation, unless they take bold measures and introduce effective mitigation policies.

### Countries Highly Affected by Climate Change



Source: The Eco Experts DN-GAIN Ranking ([www.iea.org](http://www.iea.org))

This macro-level viewpoint is complemented by studies at the household level. At micro-level, the vulnerability of poor households to climate variability and disasters is higher than that of those who are better-off (Béné *et al.*, 2012:9). Outlining issues around the level of impact on resilience and the relationship to poverty, and looking at the degree of robustness, the authors observe that households that are relatively wealthy are more able to quickly rebuild their assets, while this takes longer for the lower wealth groups, who also feel the impacts more acutely. This strongly suggests the need to explore the resilience paradigm as an approach to boosting pastoral communities’ productive capacity and reducing the negative impacts of shocks. In comparison to more intensive livestock keepers, pastoralists who practice

extensive livestock keeping, with large herd sizes, can lose more stock during droughts, but have a greater likelihood of remaining with enough surviving animals to enable them to rebuild their assets. This reflects the classic rationale for pastoralism. Furthermore, as a risk mitigation approach, resilience is being integrated into the emergency and development policy domains. Pastoralists are exposed to a variety of levels and types of risk – including systemic or idiosyncratic risks and covariate shocks. In pastoral systems, systemic shocks can be caused by droughts that lead to the loss of livestock or to famines, or they might be triggered by epidemic animal diseases or facilitated by the lack of effective emergency preparedness mechanisms.

There are risks associated with a variety of natural and man-made events and shocks, including civil wars, local conflicts and resource-based conflicts (RBCs), economic and price shocks, droughts and natural catastrophes, earthquakes or volcanic eruptions like the 2011 Nabro eruption that hit Eritrea/Ethiopia Afar pastoralists. Recently countries across the Horn of Africa region, including pastoralists in Ethiopia, Somalia and other countries, were hit by severe and protracted El Niño related drought, with a high risk of livelihood loss. Recurring, high-level risk frequency and intensity associated with extreme climatic conditions have produced situations that ‘exhaust informal coping mechanisms’, and are such that ‘rebuilding livelihoods after disasters at shorter intervals may prove impossible’ (Kuriakos *et al.*, 2012:6).

In this context, there are several key drivers of change in the development of social protection policies and strategies for rural SSA, not least of which is the urgency engendered by the overwhelming of traditional mechanisms. In line with the observations made above, Devereux and Cipryk (2009:3) note that prolonged and persistent food insecurity, coupled with a high degree of vulnerability, have triggered both emergency and longer-term interventions. Our recent PRA study among the Afar pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in Ethiopia showed that higher frequency and magnitude of drought, rain variability, and other associated direct and indirect risks, had crippled these communities’ informal coping mechanisms (Fre *et al.*, 2017). Hence, Ethiopia’s PSNP has become more relevant than ever, given that the current drought has left the



more than 10 million Ethiopians with chronic food needs.

### **2.3 Pastoral Livelihoods Systems: Socio-economic Dynamics and Peculiarities**

In the SSA region, millions of people and their livelihoods depend on pastoral and agro-pastoral production systems, which contribute greatly to both national and global economies. Crucially, the food security of many countries depends on the availability of protein - meat, dairy and its by-products - produced by pastoralists themselves (see FAOSTAT for relevant data), as well as on the market value addition in other, linked, sectors (see CELEP, 2017:1). Across large swathes of the region, pastoralism is the dominant socio-economic and cultural livelihood system. But pastoralism's relative weight, expansion and scale differ widely across SSA countries. Looking at some figures can help to comprehend its regional and global role. Globally the number of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists is estimated to be about 500 million (UNEP, 2016), where the SSA region comprises a big slice of the total figure. Rass (2006:1) noted the predominance of pastoral production and livelihood systems in the East African region. Furthermore, according to the CELEP report of 2017, Kenya's pastoralism sector has an estimated value of €750 million, with an annual marketed value of €50–80 million (CELEP, 2017).

Despite consecutive droughts and increased rainfall variability, in most cases, the pastoral production system has proven to be resilient to climate change, as well as to human-induced disasters (African Union, 2010:21; see also CELEP, 2017:3). In pastoral production systems, mobility and resilience are clearly linked. Mobility is key in enabling pastoralists to systematically exploit the available scarce natural resources in pastoral areas (Odhiambo, 2012:16; Ali and Hobson, 2009; CELEP, 2017:3). Therefore, in rural livelihoods and economies, and especially among pastoral communities, Béné *et al* argue that contextualising resilience within 'system and holistic thinking' is getting 'resonance', given that it is 'inextricably linked' to the ecology and its governance systems, which aim both to help vulnerable groups and to enhance environmental rehabilitation (2012:44). That is, pastoral communities' livelihood dynamism has a unique way of ensuring livelihood continuity, through the ability to move around in search of

grass and water points. This movement enables households to cope with or evade droughts or severe dry seasons when they appear in one area. In contrast to sedentary rural communities, where livelihoods depend largely on the available local resources, pastoralists are able to sustain themselves by being resource-sensitive, by exploiting rangelands that are marginal for arable farming, and do so predominantly without much outside assistance. Within the coping process, families use their social capital in assisting each other as they move from one grazing land to another. The uniqueness of this livelihood system, as Fre and Tsegay (2016) argue, is its ability to use mobility as an adaptive socio-economic and cultural mode of living. Pastoral livelihoods rely on the availability and accessibility of assets including pasture land and animal husbandry services, and also on the natural and political ecologies (Rass, 2016:2). These factors greatly affect their level of production, in particular the level of policy support that they get from the political centre.

However, despite its contribution to the national economies and its role in increasing the level of food security, the pastoral sector has been facing numerous challenges. Rass (2006:1) outlined governments' reluctance 'to invest' in the sector, which reflects policy-makers' misconceptions about the robustness of these livelihoods. This approach produces a particular set of policies and strategies supposed, or intended, to ensure pastoral development by addressing the communities' vulnerability. The pastoral system is one of the most climate-sensitive production systems, but in extreme cases, a vector of factors combine to produce a negative resultant that can erode the livelihood system. This highlights the need to integrate climate change, risk and social protection in the broader pastoral social policy spectrum.

The politics of poverty and inequality among the pastoral communities are highly significant elements in the development of both policy and practice. The multidimensional needs of the pastoralist communities require a degree of harmonisation at policy level and the development of effective partnerships. Over the last three decades, there have been positive developments in terms of pastoralism-related legislation and progressive policy changes with respect to national economies as well as natural resource management (African Union, 2010:15-16; Blench, 2001:69), yet

there is more to be done, as the policies widely pursued are, arguably, as inequalities are sharpening and poverty persists. Still, in some countries, national policies lack the social justice element that would entail recognition of the role of rights. Underlying this, the politics of poverty play a key role in domestic political dynamics, wherein the level and extent of poverty are exploited by politicians in pursuing their political agendas (for further discussion on this, see Midgley, 2013:15). Notwithstanding the stated or positive motives, in some cases, political leaders introduce social support programmes in order to control the people, while in other cases they use safety net instruments to attract electoral support. For instance, when a programme is introduced supporting pastoralists with animal feed, that might result in the state being seen as a saviour, rather than as discharging its legal duties. Describing the politicisation of social protection, Devereux and Cipryk observed that ‘benefits are diverted towards constituencies that support the ruling party, or to population groups whose votes are being sought in upcoming elections’ (2009:21). But, the same authors argue that ‘politicisation is not necessarily negative’, as it can give pastoralists political currency. Across the African continent there are multiple examples of electoral politics allowing particular groups to secure favourable policies or programmes in return for their votes. For instance, in Zambia’s 2006 election farmers secured a subsidy of 60% on fertilisers (Ibid).

### 3. THE SAFETY NET UNDER SCRUTINY IN SSA

It is necessary to explore current debates around the safety net within the social protection discourse in order to unpack the broader agenda. This section aims to examine the underlying causes for interventions, the nature of safety nets in SSA, and the instruments deployed for resilience and vulnerability reduction among the pastoral communities. In addition, this section analyses the concept of the safety net constructively with a view to identifying its impacts among this social group.

Though the underlying causes behind safety net interventions are substantively justified in SSA countries, their multifaceted nature and impacts require closer scrutiny. In comparison to Latin America and Asia, social protection policy in Africa lags behind. There has been ‘a rapid proliferation of unconditional cash transfer projects, [though]...

#### Overview of social protection in the Sahel: Key points

- In the early 2000s, the African Union and International Labour Organisation led efforts to establish Africa-wide declarations on social protection. In sub-Saharan Africa, the Sahel was one of the last regions to consolidate social protection systems.
- The series of major crises in the last decade have led to an intensification of efforts to expand social protection to the poorest and most vulnerable.
- Each country now has a national social protection strategy or policy, formulated with support from UNICEF and with an emphasis on multi-sectoral action.
- Subsidies for food or fuel products are tending to be complemented with, or replaced by, long-term cash transfers, public works programmes, school feeding programmes and health fee waivers. Of the six countries studied, Senegal's cash transfer programme is the most institutionalised within government systems; Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are all implementing programmes, though at a smaller scale; Mauritania and Chad are starting to elaborate similar schemes.
- As part of a drive to consolidate social protection into a more unified system, national governments are all looking at common issues which will also have an effect on the use of social protection to respond to emergencies: these include targeting, payment mechanisms, grievance management, social registries and management information systems (MISs).
- Until recently levels of public expenditure on social protection in the six countries have been low, between 0.5% and 1.6% of GDP. The introduction of cash transfers, in particular, has brought about a rise more recently.
- With the introduction of a non-contributory social assistance programme in each country in the last five years—and the expansion of other types of social protection—the range of options for the introduction of shock-responsive social protection is now much greater; however, coverage in these programmes remains low.

Source: O'Brien *et al* (2017) study on six countries of the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal)

Fig. 3. Social protection in the Sahel

coverage remains extremely low’ (Devereux *et al.*, 2015:5). The conceptualisation of social protection in the context of SSA has involved a fusion of

domestic realities and transnational development discourse agendas. Initially infused with emergency and relief experiences, and then with a move towards integrated social policy, and also with the expectation of showing a ‘demonstration effect’, as Barrientos *et al* (2010:5) note, there has been a large number of pilots in SSA.

The Livingstone Call for Action launched by African state leaders in Zambia in 2006 served to provide strategic direction in advancing social protection policies in SSA (African Union, 2006). Looking at the different forms of social assistance, one sees that, after the ‘first generation’ safety net programmes, such as school feeding and in-kind transfers that remained stable, cash transfers are becoming increasingly popular (Akresh *et al.*, 2016). Forty countries in Africa now have Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCTs), while Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs), with requirements such as enrolling children in schools and attending regular medical check-ups, are available in 64 developing countries (Honorati *et al.*, 2015). In the share of expenditure under cash-based transfers, ‘poverty-targeted transfers’ rank second, after ‘social pensions’ (Ibid). Moreover, in order to avoid promoting a culture of dependency, while creating household and communal assets and boosting local economies, most countries in the SSA region prefer public works to unconditional cash or in-kind transfers (Devereux and Cipryk, 2009:16). Within the conditional social transfers, some target groups prefer to have in-kind support and not cash transfers. Hence, the case of the Afar communities in Ethiopia provides a good example here, whereby community members said that they preferred in-kind support under the PSNP which includes the public work component, fearing that the cash would decline in its real value or purchasing power due to the ever increasing the rate of inflation (Fre *et al.*, 2017).

In southern Africa a legislative approach has been undertaken. Regionally, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) established mechanisms to promote social and economic growth in the region whereby member states have been able to ratify treaties aiming to ensure their citizens are accessing a ‘minimum level’ of social protection services (Rawlings *et al.*, 2013:10). Mozambique introduced constitutional legislation known as the Law on the Social Protection System (Law 4/2007), and the decree followed Regulations

of the Basic Social Security Subsystem (Decree 85/2009) and others (Republic of Mozambique, 2010). In West Africa, in contrast to the experience of most SSA countries, Ghana’s social protection policy did not come out of a crisis, but rather was ‘the result of on-going trends and nationally identified problems’ (Rawlings *et al.*, 2013:14). Ghana introduced, in succession, two poverty reduction strategies (GPRS I and II), with the first considered as a base for the national social protection regime, while the second pushed the agenda ‘towards a more sophisticated and comprehensive system’ (Ibid) (for other west African countries experiences see fig. 3).

As Barrientos *et al* (2010:8) explain, social assistance programmes in Africa can be divided into two categories. The first category is composed of ‘*Pure Income Transfers*’. These are: i. Social assistance - transfers to poor households (Zambia, Namibia, Sierra Leone); ii. Child and family allowances (Botswana, South Africa) and iii. Social Pensions - including old age and disability pensions (Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland). The second category is composed of ‘*Income transfers plus*’. These include: i. Employment guarantee schemes or long-term public works (Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa); ii. Human Development (Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda); and iii. Asset protection and accumulation (Ethiopia, Nigeria and others); iv. Other in-kind transfers (Lesotho, and Malawi). The same authors, however, did not note the existence of a third category. This includes ‘*Integrated Poverty Reduction Programmes*’ in SSA countries, which are programmes of a kind already implemented in Argentina, Chile, Bangladesh, India, Panama, and Uruguay. However, amidst all of this development in programmes and policy, it is striking that most of SSA’s social protection policy documents rarely, if at all, mention pastoralists as a special group requiring tailored policy designs.

The social protection policy discourse in SSA aims to build upon the existing knowledge, practices and systems of the communities. However, a critical question is being raised as to how much the modern interventions – the ‘first generation’ of programmes (World Bank, 2015), either designed by governments with the help of global development partners or vice versa - are able to boost existing practices, or whether they might instead destroy

them, leaving the communities unable to fall back on their old social systems. That is, in other words, do safety net approaches complement or destroy the existing traditional risk coping mechanisms, systems, values and practices? Undeniably, as Fre and Tsegay (2016) argue, mobility has substantially helped pastoral communities to cope with most lower-scale, or lower intensity, adverse situations, and adopt ‘a third way’ of alternative coping mechanisms. This is particularly evident among the pastoralists of Eastern Sudan, who have combined both mobile and semi-sedentary livelihoods, within an urban-rural continuum. As this process of evolution unfolds, there is a fear that informal community support systems will be eroded. Devereux and Cipyryk (2009:7) highlighted this concern and called for social protection programmes to consider supporting these practices, and strive to avoid abolishing their ‘positive features’. Augmenting this argument, Rawlings *et al* (2013:13) stressed that the new systems need to ‘avoid the displacement of well-functioning informal arrangements, compensate for their failures, and provide an enabling environment for their functioning’ (see also Ali and Hobson, 2009). Indeed, the underlying question is how to create a viable safety net system that brings both methods into one and establishes a synergy, such that each fills the other’s gaps, rather than having an overreliance on a single approach that may not work at all or might collapse, with the loss of pre-existing, proven and time tested practices.

#### **4. DISCUSSION: WHY FOCUS ON THE NEXUS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE PASTORALISM?**

In the context of sustainable pastoralism, resilience is closely linked to the multiple coping mechanisms the pastoralists take where its wider implication spanning from the household to community or national levels. Pastoral production systems have been in a constant state of challenge – by both human-made and natural catastrophes. Pastoral production and livelihoods are highly influenced by changes in rangeland dynamics, which can be brought about by ‘drought, ecological disturbances and degradation, land-grabbing and sporadic violent conflicts’, such that the denial of access to pasture resources can lead to a gradual depletion of pastoralism’s ‘self-sufficiency’ (Odhiambo, 2012:16). Despite the challenges, pastoralism and agro-pastoralism are functioning as livelihood

safety nets for many households by providing employment opportunities on a very large scale in arid and semi-arid rural areas (ASAL). In Eastern Africa, pastoralism provides employment for up to 20 million people and in Kenya’s ASAL alone it accounts for ‘90% of the employment opportunities and 95% of family income and security’ (CELEP, 2017: 2). Still, given the prevailing resilience challenges, pastoral systems need to have certain supportive elements in place in order to maintain these livelihoods.

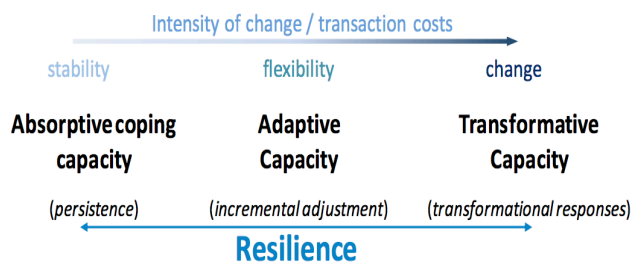
Consistent drought has been undermining the traditional coping mechanisms of pastoralists and this is affecting their entire way of life, their livelihoods as well as the underlying values (Aklilu and Catley, 2009:28). This was confirmed by a multi-country study conducted by Odhiambo on pastoral communities in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, which found that ‘restrict[ing] access to strategic natural resources [mainly rangeland and water points]’ has been adversely affecting ‘traditional systems of social exchange’, and this in turn undermines the communities’ coping mechanisms (2012). On the basis of interviews with key informants in Kula Mawe (Borana) Kenya, Odhiambo stated that ‘even in times of peace livestock grazing is restricted to a radius of 15 kilometres for fear of raids orchestrated by either the Somali or Samburu’ which led to the concentration of pastoralists in a limited area of rangeland and resulted in ‘overgrazing and general degradation of the environment’ (Ibid). This further exacerbated their situation. Assessing the Ugandan case, the same author observed that the forced settlement of pastoralists in concentrated areas led to overgrazing and ecological degradation, undermining livelihoods and communities’ ability to cope with droughts and other shocks (Ibid).

*The worsening impact of natural disasters, especially droughts, is contributing to the increasing levels of destitution in pastoral areas. Although risk-based approaches to managing drought, such as drought cycle management, were developed many years ago in East Africa these approaches have not been institutionalized. Emergency aid responses to drought are still dominated by food aid. (African Union, 2010:22)*

Resilience is key to coping with shocks, stressors and conflicts that may lead to food insecurity and human and non-human losses. According to

Holleman *et al* (2017), resilience is a combination of three capacities which determine the ability of pastoralists and their institutions ‘to cope with and adapt to conflict impacts’. These capacities are adaptive (coping strategies, risk management, and savings groups), absorptive (use of assets, attitudes/motivation, livelihood diversification, and human capital) and transformative (governance mechanisms, policies/regulations, infrastructure, community networks, and formal safety nets). A similar analysis provides the basis for the resilience framework of Béné *et al*, presented in the diagram below.

### Resilience framework



Source: Béné *et al* (2012:21)

Similarly, FAO, UNICEF and WFP have identified three interlinked groups of strategies that promote resilience in the Horn of Africa: (1) strengthening the productive sectors, (2) improving basic social services, and (3) establishing productive safety nets (2012). Therefore, safety net measures can play their role in reducing the risks of human and animal losses and human livelihood insecurity while providing basic food supplies, and establishing a system that protects the pastoral communities in both current crises and potential crises and disasters that may lie in the future. That is to say, such safety nets can provide a stable basis for resilient, community-centred sustainable development. If there was any doubt about the need for such action, a recent UN report noted that, globally, bucking a trend that had seen a consistent reduction in hunger, the ‘estimated number of undernourished people increased to 815 million in 2016, up from 777 million in 2015.’ This reflects the compounded effect of conflicts and climate-related shocks and is evidence of the need for long-term oriented safety net interventions (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2017:1).

But, resilience is also about making behavioural and attitudinal changes, and pastoralists need to learn new ways of living. This also relates to changes at

the levels of the individual household (sources of incomes and choices about assets, family composition and the number of children) and at the communal level (systems of collective and mutual support). Some thinking is needed on what safety nets can bring to each household and on how to build communal capacity to withstand shocks. Many scholars agree that adaptive capacity can be restricted if the continuous depletion of assets occurs among the pastoral communities. Moreover, according to Holleman *et al* (2017:39), transformative capacity becomes ‘weak if government capacity is also weak and the provision of basic services and social protection [formal or informal] has been disrupted’ and this weakening can be exacerbated by conflicts or violence. To establish an effective social protection mechanism, Ali and Hobson (2009) advise that UCT programmes be allied with the provision of social services and infrastructure investments.

With the reframing of social policies within the agenda of resilience and climate change, approaches are evolving. Two such approaches are that of ‘climate-responsive social protection’ (Kuriakose *et al.*, 2012) and the ‘Adaptive Social Protection’ framework (Béné *et al.*, 2012:9). The first approach looks at climate change’s severe challenges and risks, along with variability and vulnerability, aiming to embed the fundamental principles of building resilient communities in well-crafted long-term climate responsive policies. The second approach, of Béné *et al*, looks at the three dimensions of ‘disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and social protection’ in order to understand their interplay and connections (Ibid). A basic point here is that, as long as pastoralists continue to be highly dependent on the natural environment, the harmonisation of climate policies and national development policies will remain indispensable. Where livelihoods depend on the environment, social protection policies that are based on strengthening livelihoods will have to take climate change into account.

A recent report produced jointly by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017*, shows how food insecurity, food price spikes and droughts can cause ‘violence and instability, particularly in contexts marked by pervasive inequalities and fragile institutions’ (2017: 52). Pastoralists depend on scarce natural resource and competition to access

resources and ensure food security can potentially cause conflicts. In Ethiopia's Afar region, as a coping strategy, many hard-pressed pastoralists have taken to generating alternative incomes from the cutting of trees for charcoal production. But many others in the same region reject this practice, as it is considered a taboo for men to sell wood (Fre *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, the large-scale felling of trees for charcoal undermines the environmental basis of pastoral livelihoods. According to Holleman *et al.*:

*'People may feel forced to engage in reversible coping strategies with short-term effects, such as making modest dietary adjustments and skipping meals. However, when such coping mechanisms are exhausted and food insecurity worsens, households may shift to irreversible and more damaging survival strategies, such as distress selling of livestock or farm tools.'* (2017: xii)

Effective social protection can prevent the resort to damaging coping strategies. That is, social protection, beyond creating food secure families, as Brinkman and Hendrix argue, can 'offer valuable peace dividends and contribute to restoring trust in governments and rebuilding social capital' (2011). This illustrates the potential wider benefits of social protection mechanisms, in addressing human insecurity, inequality and in helping to promote social justice among pastoral communities.

Looking at the history of disaster interventions, timeliness and risk preparedness are the most frequently raised concerns with respect to previous, induced, programmes. The African Union (AU) has played a leading role in policy development, promoting '*risk management rather than emergency response for pastoral areas*' (2010:22). Nevertheless, the impacts of disasters have consistently been exacerbated, as human beings have repeatedly failed to learn from episodes of famine and associated catastrophes (Seal and Bailey, 2013). Among pastoralists, there is a basic weakness in failing to prepare adequately and well ahead of the occurrence of drought. A recent example of this was the emergency call put out by Somaliland's semi-autonomous but unrecognised government in 2016. The situation deteriorated progressively, with successive failed rains over 2015, but government scrambled to act only after the crisis materialised fully. Communities and civil society had also been passive.

As Béné *et al* argue it is important to analyse carefully the links among 'poverty, vulnerability and (climate-induced) vulnerability', with resilience policies and programmes focusing on the 'capacity to recover' and a 'degree of preparedness' (2012:9). Programmes such as stocking and restocking, social transfers and insurance are common elements of packages in pastoral communities, where targeting can be either income or non-income based or a mix of both. But programmes must take into account pastoral mobility, and modalities cannot be the same as those employed with sedentary communities. Pastoralists' mobility demands that programme managers understand and anticipate their seasonal patterns of movement, particularly when in-kind is provided. In the case of Ethiopia, support to pastoralists is mainly provided in-kind. This calls for resilience-sensitive development planning that is compatible with the safety net programme.

In sum, there is a nexus of tightly connected elements, with complementarities between the three key concepts of pastoralism, the safety net and resilience. But, as Molyneux *et al* (2016:1) argue, in the current system, programmes are 'failing to incorporate transformative elements into their programme design'. In light of this, pastoralism, resilience and safety nets should be considered together. Focusing on one element alone can mean missing out on the benefits that could be realised by taking the different elements together. At the same, taking steps to deal with potential trade-offs requires a strategic approach and the careful design of policies that can be transformative, rather than simply maintaining subsistence livelihoods.

## **5. TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE SUSTAINABLE PASTORAL DEVELOPMENT NEXUS**

Given the nexus between pastoralism, resilience and social protection, national pastoral development strategies should focus on creating an integrated approach – with technical and financial support - and foster its role in creating climate resilient pastoral societies. Indeed, in promoting the coping mechanisms of these communities a number of tailored approaches can be used. However, safety net policies are difficult to put into a single basket, as they reflect a multiplicity of national and global actors and their intertwined interests, as well as policy and institutional gaps specific to each context, with other questions related to

affordability, measuring performance and embedding technological facilities.

### **5.1 Critical policy and institutional gaps, and state capacity to deliver safety nets**

For an effective nexus that brings a synergy among the components and creates sustainable pastoralism, strong policy and governance modalities are required. Putting social protection within the broader set of development policies, Barrientos *et al* argue that ongoing pilot projects on social transfers are highly politicised, as they deal with both ‘the economic and technical issues of poverty reduction’ (2010:7). Institutional infrastructure plays a determining role in the success of a particular social transfer intervention and the idea of framing social protection as part of public service delivery has been gaining momentum. In recent years, there has also been a trend towards recognising the importance of institutionalising safety net interventions as part and parcel of a national policy agenda aimed at helping those who are incapable of coping with shocks and disasters and rebuilding their assets and livelihoods. Increasingly, there is a recognition that the overarching policy agenda is facing critical challenges of fragmentation and a systems approach is expected to help in building robust national social protection policies and measures. Thus, Rawlings and her colleagues highlighted the issues of sustainability, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, as well as the need for systematic approaches.

*‘In a number of countries in SSA much of the social protection response was catalyzed as a response to threats of food insecurity and HIV and AIDS. Over the last decade, there has been an attempt to shift from largely humanitarian approaches to predictable crises by supporting more sustainable social protection responses that can reduce the risk of future shocks and ensure more efficient and cost-effective responses.’ (Rawlings et al., 2013:14)*

As we have noted, emergency support interventions, from the 1980s and for decades, were mainly ad hoc, event based, full of specificity, and largely donor-devised. However, the social protection programmes introduced more recently have been moving away from such deficiencies, becoming more coherent and systemic, and attempting to establish institutionalised governance. Moreover, government is being recognised as a lead

actor in resource mobilisation and there is an endeavour to integrate programmes into national budgetary frameworks. This partly emanates from a broader understanding of government’s duty to ensuring citizens’ right to meaningful livelihoods which is embedded within the *Rights Approach*. However, the multiplicity of national and global actors in the sector, SSA governments’ overreliance on foreign social protection funds, low political will and the prevailing weak institutional systems have combined to prevent governments from owning a strong national system that reaches the various marginalised groups. Notwithstanding these realities, the governance of safety net programmes and their functional status within the state system are beginning to be addressed in different experiments across the region – two significant examples of this trend are Ethiopia’s PSNP and Kenya’s Hunger Safety Nets Programme (HSNP). However, it is worth noting here that there are opposing views. Some argue that in the absence of continued shocks, predicted to recur continuously, a permanent system would not be necessary. Instead, it would be adequate to devise tailored intervention packages that fit the emergency at hand, dealing with these (relatively rare) occurrences as and when they arise. Still, in order to understand the prevailing dynamics, it is necessary to examine the challenges and opportunities associated with the process of institutionalising safety nets among the pastoral communities.

Addressing risk and vulnerability in a particular social group requires tailored, context-based and adaptive safety net policy. This is true even within the different regions of one country, let alone across different countries. Emphasising the need to develop context-based safety net policy, Rawlings *et al* (2013: i) put forward the principle of ‘no one-size-fits-all’, which allows different countries to take their own pathway that consider their own ‘contexts, capacity and needs, and approaches’ (see also Holleman *et al.*, 2017:64). Moreover, programmes should also take social differentiation into account. In the case of cash transfers, it is important to ensure their fair distribution. Otherwise programmes may treat some groups unfairly, favouring others, and this may ‘exacerbate existing tensions in conflict or post-conflict situations’ (Holleman *et al.*, 2017:64). This strengthens the argument for the design of safety net policies to be context-based and also points to the need to develop

tools to ensure that assistance is distributed fairly and addresses the needs of the specific groups.

With a view to expanding the learning process, Rawlings *et al* advised governments and development partners to advance ‘South-South Cooperation’, which can contribute in promoting knowledge and policy transfers and also enhancing institutional capacity (2013: i). In respect of this, though safety net policy diffusion and transfers among SSA countries are proceeding at a slow pace, there are attempts to promote learning. There is, however, a counter-view that regards safety nets as an unpromising avenue, and such attitudes are having a retarding effect, promoting policy divergence. Devereux and Cipryk explain that ‘governments often prefer to invest in agricultural production or employment creation’ and, in some cases, supporting unproductive citizens with cash transfers is seen as ‘an unaffordable luxury’ (2009:20). The emphasis is on efforts to invest in ‘productive sectors’ and not in social welfare, which is labelled as unproductive. Despite the prevalence of pro-pastoralist national policies that might promote the functioning of the pastoralism-resilience-social protection nexus, these have not necessarily been translated into practice. In the case of Mali, government policy favours ‘agricultural expansion at the expense of pastoralists’, denying them access to valued resources, and government has even used repressive force in doing this (Holleman *et al.*, 2017:51). As a consequence, many Tuaregs have been pushed into extreme poverty and food insecurity. With no relief system, and a dearth of alternatives, many have opted to ‘steal and loot’.

In order to get a full understanding of ongoing social protection efforts, it is important to look at the gaps that exist in both the designing and the implementing of policies. In their study, Rawlings *et al* observed that, under the current social protection approach, there are a number of critical gaps with regard to policy, programmes and administrative aspects (2013:2). Current policy making aims to take an integrated approach to ‘multi-dimensional vulnerabilities’ and to consider ‘heterogeneous needs, as well as promote opportunity by building and protecting human capital, skills and productivity’ (Rawlings *et al.*, 2013: i-ii). But there are risks associated with the introduction of a systems approach, as the practical implementation of such an approach can affect the

entire political economy of a country, with effects on the institutional and financial set-up and power sharing arrangements. Therefore, context-specific measures and caution are necessary in scaling up social protection programmes, while ensuring both horizontal and vertical institutional coordination, encompassing the policy, programme and administrative levels.

Emphasising the comparative size of the challenges that these governments face, Barrientos *et al* note that they must contend with ‘[a] higher incidence of poverty; lower capacity ... and less developed administrative and financial systems’ (2010:5). State capacity to prepare in advance of possible shocks is generally limited and the crises faced are often of a systemic nature, such that the particular shocks and events that must be dealt with reflect a broader and deeper set of development problems. This was the case with Ethiopia’s famine in the 1980s, with the Horn of Africa’s 2008 food security and drought crisis, with Madagascar’s flood in 2000, and with the continent-wide economic shocks and sharply increased food prices of 2008/9. State capacity is generally limited by a weak fiscal base, due to both poor revenue generation and chronic poverty, and states lack the capacity to fund safety nets using domestic resources (see Devereux and Cipryk, 2009:22; Rawlings *et al.*, 2013:16). A consequent overreliance on donors prevents governments from owning and influencing the policy process, and from creating suitable policy spaces. Indeed, governments’ ineffectiveness and the prevailing institutional framework have left space for the third sector, including NGOs, to deliver services, including food aid distribution. NGOs have also played a role in project implementation and analysis with respect to social protection (for a discussion of social protection efforts with Oxfam GB in Kenya, see Beesley, 2011). But as noted above, governments have been moving away from such ad hoc efforts, and working to devise centralised social protection systems that are allied to national development plans. Although modes of safety net delivery at local and national levels are taking shape in a few SSA countries, there is still a long way to go and the requisite multi-level, tailored governance frameworks are complex and require funding. So, in creating enabling state policy and institutional infrastructure, the task of building government capacity is an



essential part of the social protection process (Rao, 2014).

It seems clear, then, that in order to have an effective pastoralism-resilience-social protection nexus, supporting sustainable development and enabling pastoralists to be resilient and thrive within their livelihoods, it is necessary to put in place policies that promote pastoralism and create a conducive environment for it, as well as to promote institutional systemisation and the harmonisation of fragmented initiatives, and build state capacity.

## **5.2 The Interplay of National and Global Actors: Interests and Influences**

Both national and international actors have been the driving forces at the different levels of the initiatives, and at different times. The full support provided for the social protection agenda by the international community has been behind the emerging prominence of the concept at global level. Global actors, especially the international financial institutions, have been playing a key role in shaping policy discourses, providing financing and also technical assistance to state and non-state initiated schemes. They have integrated social protection components into their programmes. For instance, the World Bank launched the *Rapid Social Response Programme* with the aim of building workable systems in developing countries. Generally, among SSA governments, there is a high expectation of donor support for national safety net programmes. Approved in 2013, Mali's \$70 million Emergency Safety Nets project (*Jigisémejiri* – meaning *Tree of Hope*) which also target pastoralists is financed by the World Bank.

Notwithstanding this solid international backing for social protection in SSA, there is a critical gap within the donor-recipient relationship. Recipient governments are creating their own policy spaces in negotiations and are also selling their own political agendas within international development dynamics. However, Rawlings *et al* (2013:6) argue that donors still perceive the issue as an 'acute emergency response as opposed to a chronic long-term developmental challenge', a perception that might reflect these actors' own vested interests. This is, perhaps, reflected in the lack of interest among these actors in supporting the scaling up of programmes in the pastoral communities. Donors tend, mainly, to provide support for emergency interventions and those addressing episodes of

severe drought, aiming to reduce the adverse impacts, in terms of the loss of lives, assets and livestock and the associated risks to production systems. In relation to this, Kuriakose *et al* emphasised the need for 'flexible funding' that can improve the timeliness and predictability of the transfers (2012:27). However, the donors' paradox is, as Devereux and Cipryk put it, that although they push the SSA countries to scale up and expand their programmes, they 'provide no financial or technical support to the majority of the[se] government-led initiatives' (2009:11). The same authors mention Malawi, Zambia, and other countries, who wanted to expand their cash transfer pilots, but in the end did not do so, as they felt unable to take on the long-term commitments involved (Ibid:20). Another case, from Uganda, shows the difficulty of securing long-term funding for such programmes. The Expanding Social Protection (ESP) programme was considered to have been a success. This \$80 million cash transfer pilot was supported by the UK, Ireland and the Ugandan government, but the latter is finding it difficult to maintain the programme without an external funding (Nicho Moto, 2017). But, in spite of these failings, there have been some very positive and significant moves. DFID, an important global development actor, has for some time aimed to move out of 'emergency aid to regular forms of support in Africa' (Barrientos *et al.*, 2010:5). It is also worth noting here that DFID has provided substantial and consistent support for Ethiopia's productive safety net programme that also target pastoralists in Afar, Somali, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's, and other regions of the country.

## **5.3 Safety Nets and the Question of Affordability**

The question of safety net affordability by low-income countries and their ability to permanently sustain the system is still a fresh debate, one that is critical to the functionality of the pastoralism-resilience-social protection (PRSP) nexus. Globally, looking at safety net related government spending, a recent World Bank (2015) report showed that 'low-income and middle income countries devote approximately the same level of resources ... (1.5% and 1.6 % of GDP, respectively), while richer countries spend 1.9%'. Moreover, the report revealed, '[C]ash transfers constitute the highest share of spending in all regions except SSA, where food and in-kind transfers dominate (27% of total safety net spending, on average)'. A basic point

made here is that the amount of government spending is linked to the level of poverty impacts. Devereux and Cipryk underscore the difficulty of realising ‘long-term development’, given the limitations on budget allocations, as well as ‘the potential for fragile markets to respond negatively to cash interventions’ (2009:3). Oxfam GB’s review report on the ‘Hunger Safety Nets’ programme in Kenya also highlights the question of affordability. This DFID funded safety net programme was only a pilot and the review noted that its ‘long-term sustainability is dependent on the Government of Kenya’s financial and logistical support’ (Beesley, 2011).

The question of the long-term financial affordability of safety net schemes is a critical one for SSA countries as the balance between spending and revenue and governments’ own financial sustainability can be affected. Generally, the countries are highly indebted and state budgets are already in large deficit, so that the cost of safety nets cannot easily be funded. Finding cost-effective ways of utilising scarce public funds is critical in designing safety net policies, as sustainable financial support is needed. There are tight constraints on government budgets, already overstretched in providing basic social services, including education and health services, while also seeking to make long-term public investments that catalyse economic growth. African countries are rarely able to develop policy on the basis of predictable budgetary projections, and are having to contend with fluctuations in revenue that complicate the management of public funds. As Devereux and Cipryk observe, ‘[m]any African governments are reluctant to introduce national cash transfer programmes, fearing their cost, the administrative complexity of delivery, and possible negative impacts on beneficiaries’ (2009:20). It is clear that the permanency of a social protection policy has multiple implications for affordability, as well as for the target groups and the associated political underpinnings of a taxpayer-funded programme.

*‘Social protection programmes need to be politically as well as financially sustainable. Programmes that are home-grown rather than imported – i.e. conceived, implemented and financed by national politicians and policy-makers rather than introduced, managed and paid for by international donors and NGOs –*

*tend to be more successful at mobilising domestic political constituencies.’ (Devereux and Cipryk, 2009:22)*

Reviewing the capabilities of SSA governments, Pal *et al* (2005), in their ILO study, argue that governments can develop the sustainable financial resources to fund safety nets if they are able to develop effective governance systems. However, this is still a distant prospect and programmes remain dependent on external assistance. Describing some of the challenges associated with donor sponsored funds, and the delays in funding that occur, Alderman and Hague note that due to the ‘administrative requirements, mismatch of fiscal years and the timing of disasters, and the dearth of data permitting an early prediction of the scale of an impending crisis’ these countries are not in a position to make their own policy decisions (2006:374). There may be delays in transferring programme funds and funding provided by donors is linked to their own preferences. For example, the US has often preferred to support in-kind emergency interventions, rather than providing cash support (Ibid:374).

#### **5.4 Measuring Safety Net Impacts in Pastoral Communities**

The performance of the safety net programmes is key to having an effective pastoralism-resilience-social protection (PRSP) nexus that enhances pastoralists’ resilience and also builds evidence. Broadly, the evidence, provided by various actors and independent consultants, from assessments of the impacts of social assistance programmes shows mixed results. Measuring effectiveness appears to present particular difficulties because of the fact that social protection targets the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society. That is, efforts to measure short-term and long-term livelihood improvements at the same time have been found to conflict with each other. There are multiple objectives. The safety net approach to shocks aims to address immediate food and water supplies, to improve food security levels, to provide basic social service and to boost the confidence, or ability, of the target group to recover from disasters. Evidence produced by the World Bank from safety net impact evaluations in 2014, assessing 168 projects, showed ‘positive and significant impacts on education, access to health, household economic empowerment and, in the case of cash transfers,

positive spill-over effects on the local economy’ (2015).

The safety net appraisal methodologies undertaken include standard programme evaluation tools (input-output), assessing efficiency and effectiveness, participatory evaluations, social audits, and the tracking of hard economic or statistical data (Rawlings *et al.*, 2013:16). All have been used in SSA, at different times and to differing extents, depending on the size and scope of the safety net programme concerned and the particular objectives set. For example, some studies have set out specifically to assess the relationships between social protection programmes and electoral politics. If the motive of politicians in establishing programmes is to gain political capital, there is evidence showing a strong correlation between safety net policies and election results. Browne argues that outcomes in local-level politics may be determined by the presence of effective social assistance, enabling local leaders to secure re-election and thus providing a political incentive for the introduction of programmes (2014:2; see also UNDP and UNCDF, 2011).

An effective safety net initiative can promote productive capacity (by providing pastoralists with productive assets) and enhance adaptive capacity (by enabling people to avoid asset depletion and access cash or in-kind resources). FAO’s recent *Social Protection Framework* report presents ample evidence from Latin America and SSA showing ‘overall positive impacts ... in terms of improving food security, nutrition and human capital development’ (2017). Assessing a cash transfer programme, a two-year randomized control trial conducted in rural Burkina Faso showed positive impacts among various social groups. The study found that,

*‘Compared with the control group, cash transfers improve children’s education and health and household socioeconomic conditions. For school enrollment and most child health outcomes, CCTs outperform UCTs. Giving cash to mothers does not lead to significantly better child health or education outcomes, and there is evidence that money given to fathers improves young children’s health, particularly during years of poor rainfall. Cash transfers to fathers also yield relatively more household investment in livestock, cash crops, and improved housing.’* (Akresh *et al.*, 2016)

Sustainability and the scaling up of pilot projects are two critical issues for the largely donor-supported programmes that have been able to attract substantial financial and technical support. Small-scale pilots have generally produced results. There are ‘positive impacts being recorded on a range of outcome indicators’ (Devereux and Cipyryk, 2009:10). But can project-level success be readily translated into success in scaled-up programmes? And can programmes produce transformational or longer-term results? Longer term success relates to broader development policy. An effective social protection framework can reduce poverty by pursuing pro-poor ‘inclusive growth and development’ (OCED, 2009:11; Samson, 2015:20). Thus, a fundamental question being raised here is how sustainable would these pilot projects be when promoted to the status of nationally institutionalised policies that are assumed to be part of the national budget with a reduced level of donor support? This is a vexed question that is now being faced in some countries, including Ethiopia. There is a need for rigorous evaluations, at the micro and macro levels, and for more learning around the empirical work that is being conducted in the region. A final point here is that, reflecting on the various approaches to assessment, well designed and implemented participatory assessments can add significant value and should not be neglected. Importantly, the introduction of participatory monitoring and evaluation helps pastoral communities to engage in and reflect on programme implementation and can also promote accountability within programmes and for their impacts (Bassett *et al.*, 2012 make a strong case for the use of social audits).

### **5.5 Spillovers from technological advancements: Speedy Response and Enhanced Accountability**

Mobile banking is becoming a key social transfer tool in getting the cash to the targeted populations. The extension of mobile phone services across rural and pastoral areas has produced a range of very significant benefits, enabling continuous access to information on livestock prices on local and distant markets, facilitating communication processes, and making it easier to find water points and grazing land. In addition, assessments of some pilot mobile payments projects have shown improved accountability in safety net delivery, with cash transferred directly from financial institutions or designated government agencies to targeted pastoralist households. This also appears to

diminish bureaucratic hurdles in accessing services. Mobile banking and payments systems ‘enable low-cost financial transactions to and from remote areas’ (African Union, 2010:31), making significant efficiency gains possible. Various e-cash systems across SSA make it possible to transfer money directly to families that are in need. Kenya provides, perhaps, the best example with the use of smart cards with fingerprint identification of targeted individuals receiving cash transfers under the Hunger Safety Nets Programme (HSNP), which began in 2008 in the four poorest, and predominantly pastoral, districts of northern Kenya (Turkana, Marsabit, Manderu and Wajir). In the absence of formal banking and credit systems, such digital initiatives can facilitate the financial inclusion of pastoralists, and enable them to get the right support at the right time. Similarly, Senegal was able to embed this innovative technology in its Safety Net System and in 2016 about 30,000 families were able to access cash assistance through this mode of payment (see the World Bank website for programme).

## 6. LESSONS LEARNED, POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Reviewing safety net experiences across SSA gives a broader spectrum of analysis that helps in understanding the various instruments being deployed in the pastoral communities to promote sustainable and inclusive growth, with social protection. Some of these instruments are insurance based while others tend to work with an insurance function. However, it is worth looking on the main instruments used, the nature of the programmes and the lessons that can be drawn in relation to the pastoral communities. Holleman *et al* (2017:63) make the point that ‘[F]lexible, regular, predictable and scalable social protection systems allow for a dynamic and adaptable response to fluid crises as they evolve’. This is an attractive vision.

This section adds some critical policy and governance elements to the discussion and analysis presented and will also put forward some conclusions. These include suggestions for further research interventions aimed at developing social protection systems that are appropriate for pastoralist communities, as well as supportive of inclusive growth and the sustainable development of pastoralism.

## Lessons Learned and Policy Implications

Within broader policy frameworks, in pursuing successful safety net policies and versatile coping mechanisms for disasters and shocks in SSA in general and pastoral communities in particular, the following critical aspects need to be considered:

- *Critical elements for effective pastoralism oriented safety net policy and programmes*

Pastoralism, resilience and social protection are tightly bound together in a nexus, and accordingly there should be a continuous review of their linkages and interactions. Pastoralists depend on the natural environment and are also influenced by the resilience and safety net policies being pursued by governments. Thus, in seeking to boost pastoralists’ resilience, an integrated policy package that consider the nexus approach should be devised. In addition, as the policy process has a political dimension, high-level political will and a favourable political climate are required. The establishment of legal frameworks that secure equitable access to land and resources, reduce corruption and promote accountability and professional integrity should be given due attention.

- *Understanding pastoral livelihoods’ dynamism and the specific needs of different social groups*

Safety net policies need to reflect the specific needs of pastoralists, and respect their traditional and informal coping mechanisms, indeed, modern interventions should be designed to boost rather than erode these. As pastoral livelihoods depend on mobility, a flexible approach, one that accommodates mobility, is needed in designing and implementing safety net policies. In social protection interventions, women, youth and especially teenagers ‘are often overlooked’ (Devereux and Cipryk, 2009:8). Thus, in targeting the beneficiary groups within pastoral communities, the specific needs of these groups, as well as the nature of social relations, should be considered.

- *Systemisation and effective safety net governance structures*

Building nationally-led social protection systems requires following an integrative institutional approach. The process of systematising the interventions undertaken in pastoral areas requires careful thinking and step-by-step action, as there are associated with risks and transaction costs.

Furthermore, establishing an effective bureaucratic structure is important in providing a basis for the development of robust emergency and risk preparedness mechanisms and in order to enable the effective implementation of social protection policy and programmes that can respond to unexpected crises, help people to maintain or build their assets and reduce poverty. Such structures, extending from national to the local levels of government, also need to promote peace and stability among pastoral communities. Indeed, local government capacity building is an essential part of social protection programmes. An understanding of the pastoralism-resilience-social protection nexus can help to foster a broad systemic approach.

- *Learning, knowledge and experience sharing*

At the continental, regional and country levels, the promotion of learning from the current ‘first generation’ programmes (as the World Bank’s 2015 document highlighted) needs adequate emphasis. Creating a platform for sharing and exchanging can promote mutual learning and address the lack of knowledge about policy and practice across SSA countries. It is important to facilitate learning across countries and among the different stakeholders operating in the pastoral communities. These efforts should promote inter-state policy transfers, and involve both state and non-state actors.

- *Rethinking on the role of the global development partners*

Given that current arrangements do not allow to provide long-term support for social protection policies in SSA countries, donors should consider new ways to provide support through predictable grants or finances that enable systemic and large-scale interventions. While donors have been reluctant to support the scaling-up of pilot projects in several SSA countries, the provision of long-term financial and technical support could enable governments to build their domestic revenue generation capacities and eventually result in affordable social protection programmes.

- *Towards building sustainable pastoralism-specific social protection*

In order to create viable social protection policy that addresses the needs of pastoralism, it would be necessary to i) carry out a thorough context analysis, encompassing the socio-economic as well as political conditions and the cultural ecology of

each pastoral community), ii) identify the core purposes of each intervention (and specify the intended end results), iii) put pastoralists at the centre, throughout the process, and iv) develop specific plans to achieve the requisite levels of financial and institutional capacity, building the domestic constituency for programmes, while also enhancing efficiency and effectiveness by fully exploiting modern technological advances (in particular mobile banking and e-cash transfers).

## Conclusions

This re-examination of the literature on social protection and safety net policies and programmes in pastoral communities was enhanced by the experience gained in carrying out participatory assessments with pastoralist communities, which provided a deeper understanding of some of the pastoral societies and social groups concerned. The concept of the safety net is a relatively new element in an emerging paradigm in development policy. As such, its application requires further, systematic study, in particular with respect to specific circumstances of the pastoral communities. As this paper has emphasised, the dynamics of pastoral livelihoods are unique, and safety net interventions in pastoral communities should be tailored to fit their specific conditions. These tailored interventions should robustly address both short-term shocks and the requirements of long-term poverty reduction. There are opportunities to create complementarities and synergies between pastoral development interventions and social protection, which can foster sustainable pastoral development. There are sound arguments for deploying social protection as a means to reduce vulnerability and boost pastoralists’ productive capacity and resilience. But, effective implementation requires a very substantial strengthening of domestic institutional and financial capacity, as well as progressively fostering domestic ownership and political commitment. Careful attention to the nexus and complex political, economic and cultural aspects would be important in establishing systems that can contribute towards sustainable pastoral development over the long term.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author is grateful to Dr. Zeremariam Fre of the Development Planning Unit (DPU), University College London (UCL) for his guidance throughout the writing of the paper, to Dr. Julie Newton of the Royal Tropical Institute of the Netherlands for her constructive comments and to John Livingston of the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA) for critically reviewing the paper - adding his wealth of experience based on his work among pastoral peoples in the Horn and East Africa. All views expressed in this working paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SPIDA research consortium members or the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).

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