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**LEGISLATORS  
AND LIVESTOCK:  
PASTORALIST  
PARLIAMENTARY  
GROUPS IN ETHIOPIA,  
KENYA AND UGANDA**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a serious information gap on the role of parliamentarians in natural resource management and development. This is despite their increasing importance as many developing countries democratise, and despite the recognition that many of the important questions of natural resource management are actually questions of policy.

This report looks at the potential of specialist groupings of Members of Parliament for promoting pastoral development and overcoming pastoral poverty and vulnerability in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. The main challenges in pastoral development are related to policy and governance: conflicts and insecurity, livestock marketing, land rights, inadequate provision of services and infrastructure, drought and dependence on food aid. These challenges also depend on policy implementation; parliamentarians, who are involved both in making and overseeing policies, could play an important role.

The research found that along with civil society organisations, the three case study pastoralist parliamentary groups have brought about specific improvements in pastoral well-being, and helped to raise awareness of pastoral issues. But they have made only a very modest contribution to major policy debates. Reasons for this include:

- The complex political circumstances of each country
- Parliamentary procedures and the PPGs' limited ability to use them
- The limitations of individual MPs, in terms of both motivation and capabilities
- Poor continuity and institutional memory, and the patchy nature of MPs' linkages to civil society organisations
- The acute need for information on a variety of topics, including technical and policy options in the drylands, and actual conditions in far-flung rural constituencies.

The authors offer some challenges for pastoral parliamentary groups, and some guidelines for donors and NGOs who are considering funding or working with such groups:

- Become accurately informed of the political context
- Be pragmatic about the quality of MPs and their representativeness
- Work with key individuals
- Work regionally, but in a way that supports the PPGs' national mandates
- Build capacity in information provision and training as well as equipment
- Strengthen continuity and institutional memory
- Build alliances with civil society, international NGOs, the media and local government.

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# LEGISLATORS AND LIVESTOCK: PASTORALIST PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS IN ETHIOPIA, KENYA AND UGANDA

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Mohammed Mussa<sup>1</sup>

*“The wind is now blowing towards the pastoralists, but it has not yet rained.”*

There is increasing acceptance that the major obstacles to pastoral development are related to policy and governance; issues such as conflicts and insecurity, livestock marketing, land rights, inadequate provision of services and infrastructure, drought and dependence on food aid. These obstacles are not issues of policy alone but also of its implementation. Parliamentarians, who have roles in both policy-making and oversight, may be well-placed to contribute, and this paper explores three attempts to organise such contributions.

The growing importance of parliament and parliamentarians has not been reflected in literature on natural resource management. It has become commonplace to talk about “policy-makers” as the key audience for much research on natural resource management, but this phrase is surprisingly rarely defined,<sup>2</sup> and when it is, the assumption is often that it means senior civil servants (or indeed the staff of donor agencies). There is therefore a serious information gap on the role of parliamentarians in the development of pastoralism, as there is with other forms of natural resource management, which now needs to be addressed.

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**1.** This paper is based on the Final Report of the NRI/PENHA Research Project on Pastoralist Parliamentary Groups, funded by DFID’s Livestock Production Programme and the CAPE Unit, African Union’s InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources. The full version of the report (Morton 2005) and case studies are available at: <http://www.nri.org/projects/pastoralism/parliamentary.htm>. The research was funded by the Livestock Production Programme of the UK Department For International Development and the Community-based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiology (CAPE) Unit of the African Union Inter-African Bureau of Animal Resources. However, neither DFID, AU-IBAR, NRI, PENHA nor the many individuals who gave their time to be interviewed or give written comments bear any responsibility for the views and interpretations in this document. These are our responsibility alone.

**2.** For example, the otherwise excellent and groundbreaking study on environmental policy-making in Africa by Keeley and Scoones (2003), which will be drawn on below, makes no mention of parliaments and parliamentarians.

This paper summarises a research project on pastoralist parliamentary groups (PPGs) in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. It was a joint venture between the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) and the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA). The objective of the project was “to assess the circumstances in which pastoralist parliamentary groupings can be an effective lobby for pro-poor, pro-pastoralist policy change, and what external assistance they require in this role”. This paper draws on the three country case studies carried out under the project in 2004 and 2005 (Mohammed Mussa, 2004; Livingstone, 2005a and 2005b). These studies were based on semi-structured (and structured in the case of Ethiopia) interviews with PPG members and other stakeholders, as well as document review.

## **PASTORALISM, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE**

International development agencies are concerned with pastoralists as one of the core groups of the rural poor (Jazairy *et al.*, 1992). While some pastoralists can be regarded as wealthy in terms of numbers of livestock, many are not. For example, 59% of pastoralists in Afar Region, Ethiopia fall below a fairly conservative threshold of a subsistence livestock holding (Negussie Dejene *et al.*, 2005).<sup>3</sup> But even wealthier pastoralists are vulnerable to drought, conflict, animal disease, sudden changes in international livestock trade regimes and other shocks and trends. And beyond vulnerability lies the fact of pastoralist marginality: environmental, economic, socio-cultural and political (Lesorogol, 1998).

Donors and researchers are increasingly accepting, though developing-country governments less so, that the major constraints to pastoral development are related to policy and governance (see Hogg, 1992; Pratt *et al.*, 1997). External attempts to improve pastoral livestock production systems through technical interventions such as re-seeding, exclosures, rotational grazing and improvements in husbandry have had little positive impact. There have been significant improvements in animal health, particularly in preventive animal health, but the key constraints lie in policy and institutions: how to design delivery systems that make the best use of vets, community animal health workers and private-sector operators such as veterinary pharmacists; how to enshrine these in veterinary regulations; how to create a physically secure environment for the operation of veterinary services; and how to ensure that pastoralists have enough surplus cash to allow cost-recovery. In livestock marketing, attention has shifted away from the provision of local-level infra-

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3. 4.8 Tropical Livestock Units per human adult equivalent.

structure (markets, slabs, trek-routes) to policy questions: the trade-constraining effects of national and international veterinary regulations, and national-level infrastructure provision at terminal markets.

In our case studies, MPs themselves identified very similar priority policy issues to these. In Kenya, for example, the priority issues were (Livingstone, 2005a):

- conflict and insecurity; the unholy entanglement of traditional raiding culture, civil war and criminality that is displacing and impoverishing thousands of people, and denying them access to productive rangelands.
- livestock marketing; mitigating the negative impacts of the demise of the parasitatal livestock marketing system
- land rights; preventing the encroachment on rangelands by arable agriculture, protected areas and commercial interests
- inadequate provision of social services
- inadequate provision of transport and communications infrastructure
- inadequate provision of water points and animal health services
- drought and dependence on food aid.

But as all the case studies show, especially the Kenyan one, it is unhelpful to view these solely as *policy* issues. Policies can be formulated, but also need to be implemented. In far-flung, marginal pastoral areas, with high communication costs, low population densities and high costs per beneficiary, there are many reasons, good and bad, for governments not to implement these policies. Corruption and poor local governance were the main concerns of the Kenyan pastoral MPs. Thus a key role for parliamentarians and PPGs could be to oversee policy implementation.

## **DEMOCRATISATION AND PARLIAMENTS IN AFRICA**

The evolution of the PPGs has to be seen in the context of the wave of democratisation that swept Africa in the early 1990s, though the countries we consider here have all experienced markedly different trajectories of democratic change (Box 1).

### Box 1. The shift to multi-party politics

Following a prolonged rural guerrilla struggle, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government brought a federal system based on ethnically defined regional states to Ethiopia.<sup>4</sup> However, there is an incomplete separation of government and party at all levels, including the local levels where many of the most important government functions of allocating goods and services are managed. In the pastoral areas, however, the regional parties have a more arms-length relationship with the EPRDF. MPs play an important role in oversight, and, less clearly, in policy-making.

In Uganda, Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) was also born in 1986 following prolonged rural guerrilla struggle. Against the continent-wide trend, the NRM instituted and maintained throughout the 1990s its own form of "no-party", but parliamentary, system. To the surprise of some observers, very little pressure was brought to bear by donors in favour of a multi-party system, because Uganda was in other ways demonstrating good development policies and good governance, including very thorough decentralisation, and because of fear that Uganda would once again fall into instability. However, in 2003 a Supreme Court decision required a return to open multi-party politics, and the NRM, known as "the Movement" was forced to operate as one party among many.

Kenya shifted from a one-party system to multi-party democracy in 1992, but President Moi proved uniquely able to cling on to power using the advantages of incumbency and patronage, as well as ethnic divide-and-rule tactics and the deliberate fomenting of inter-ethnic violence, intimidation and corruption. Despite this, the 1990s saw a narrowing of the gap in parliamentary strength between the ruling KANU and the opposition, and the emergence of more independent voices within KANU, as well as an emboldening of civil society. The 2003 election victory of the National Rainbow Coalition set the seal on this trend, although strong tensions between its constituent parties persist.

Parliamentary democracy is not only a matter of free and fair elections every four or five years: this can still lead to "elective dictatorships" if ruling party MPs only follow the government line. The effective functioning of parliaments also matters and this depends on quite specific procedures and parliamentary institutions, most importantly an independent Speaker (at least in parliamentary traditions derived from Britain), parliamentary committees, and guaranteed resources for individual parliamentarians and those committees.

In all three countries, a working system of parliamentary committees is evolving. These positive developments in parliament have been assisted by parallel trends in the development of civil society organisations and free media, and in donor assistance. Kenya especially has seen the growth of true civil society organisations, including think-tanks and independent research institutes that are not simply outgrowths of international NGOs or donor programmes. In all three countries

<sup>4</sup> The most thorough incorporation of ethno-regionalism in any African system, according to Young, 1996.

very active umbrella groups have been formed for civil society organisations and international NGOs involved in pastoral development. Uganda especially, but also Kenya, has seen the burgeoning of a very free press, not afraid to attack the government, and other media such as FM radio. In all three countries donor programmes have helped parliament: capacity-building of MPs in Kenya and Uganda, capital expenditure on offices in Kenya, and the very innovative Pastoral Communication Initiative in Ethiopia, which has provided training for members of the PASC as well as a broader, and rather NGO-like, programme of fostering communication between stakeholders in pastoral development. Overall, in all three countries, in pastoral development but also far more broadly, there is a growing sense that “parliament matters”.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE PPGS**

### **Perspectives and challenges**

The PPGs, situated as they are at the intersection of politics, policy and pastoral development, need to be understood from a range of perspectives and their analysis raises a number of analytical issues and methodological challenges:

- The uncertainties involved in reconstructing the often controversial histories of the groups
- The uneven spread of new thinking on pastoralism, and the need for local variations of, and continued debate on, the new paradigms (Box 2)
- The complexities of the policy process, and the need for the use of multiple frameworks in analysing it
- The need to examine carefully both the formal and informal workings of parliaments
- The need to look at national parliaments alongside systems of regional and local government
- The need to look at the contexts of history, ethnicity, and real and perceived national security in the various countries.



## Box 2. Differing approaches to pastoral development

There have been profound changes in thinking about pastoral development over the past two decades typified by the “new range ecology” (Behnke *et al.* 1993, Scoones 1995). This approach highlights the essential environmental rationality of mobile pastoralism based on collective land tenure in the dynamic environments which characterise much of dryland Africa. It:

- questions many previously established concepts for looking at rangeland ecology and pastoral development, including fixed carrying capacities, “overgrazing”, “desertification”, “the tragedy of the commons”, “perverse supply response” etc.;
- questions the policies most associated with those concepts, including sedentarisation and privatisation of land tenure;
- highlights the negative political and economic context of pastoralism, including external encroachment on rangelands and the erosion of traditional pastoral institutions;
- promotes more participatory development practice on the rangelands, and a returning of responsibility for natural resource management to pastoralists.

By the late 1990s this new thinking was being incorporated into major public documents by multilateral donors (Pratt *et al.*, 1997; de Haan *et al.* 1997).

However, it has filtered through to African governments much more slowly and unevenly. There has also been something of a scientific backlash against it (see for example Illius and O’Connor, 1999) and some of its scientific supporters are careful to point out that it is far more relevant in arid than in semi-arid rangelands (Ellis, 1995). In addition, there are specific local factors: the pastoral lowlands of Ethiopia are better favoured than most of dryland Africa with major perennial or near-perennial rivers, and the Government of Ethiopia’s policy of voluntarily settling pastoralists along those rivers cannot immediately be dismissed as unreasonable. In south-western Uganda, where pastoralism was historically maintained for socio-political reasons in what is in fact a relatively high-potential area, pastoralists themselves are now keener to sedentarise and adopt mixed agriculture. Some also question whether the new thinking on pastoralism has adequately included the desire of pastoralists themselves to diversify, access services and generally “modernise” (Livingstone, 2005b). In short, the intellectual basis of pastoral policy is still in flux, which increases the complexity of how it is incorporated into development policy and practice. Not surprisingly, the views of PPG members on these key questions, the “vision” of pastoral development, are diverse, sometimes prone to systematic divisions (pastoral vs. non-pastoral members of the Ethiopian PASC, Westerners vs. Karimojong in Uganda), and sometimes contradictory.

## The evolution of the PPGs

The PPGs have been evolving through informal activities since around 1996, and have influenced each other at key moments. The Kenyan PPG was formally launched in 1998, but operated at a low level in an unfavourable political environment until its relaunch in 2003. It is an informal group of 30 members from pastoral constituencies and has no written constitution. The Ugandan PPG was formally established in 1999, with seven stated goals and a constitution. Membership was in principle “open to all MPs who feel their constituencies have pastoralist related issues that the group should address”, but active membership was in

practice restricted to MPs from the Karimoja, Teso and south-western regions of Uganda. It became dormant from 2001 until its relaunch in November 2003.

The Ugandan PPG's goals, as distilled by Livingstone (2005b) are to:

- Raise the profile of pastoralists' issues and change negative attitudes towards pastoralism and pastoralists
- Influence national policy, specifically the PEAP and PMA
- Lobby for additional budgetary allocations to pastoral areas
- Promote improved and cooperative relations between neighbouring pastoralist and agriculturalist communities
- Involve pastoralists more in consultation and decision-making, acting as a bridge between government, CSOs and communities
- Raise awareness in the pastoralist communities across a broad range of social and development issues.

The Ugandan case study shows how the visions of pastoral development held by PPG members range widely from support to traditional mobile systems to modernising and sedentarising villages. This to some extent, but not wholly, correlates with their regional origin as Karamoja MPs, who, having been often exposed to NGO thinking, are more "pro-pastoral".

In contrast, the Ethiopian Pastoral Affairs Standing Committee was established by Proclamation of Parliament in 2003 and has eight pastoral and five non-pastoral members chosen by Parliament as a whole. It therefore has much greater powers of formal parliamentary oversight, but is much less independent of government. Its *legislative* responsibilities include:

- To ensure that pastoral issues are included when national policies are formulated
- To ensure that subsidiary budgets are allocated for various pastoral activities as a form of affirmative action

- To influence the poverty reduction strategy of the country in the direction of improving the livelihood of pastoralists
- To encourage a higher level of pastoralists' participation and responsibility.

It also has responsibilities to *oversee* the *pastoral-related* activities of eight ministries, commissions and authorities. This includes the Pastoral Areas Development Department of the Ministry of Federal Affairs. PASC members also feel their role is to represent pastoralists, in and outside parliament, and they have adopted the principle they call the '7 Ps' (pastoralist-centred, pastoralist rights, pastoralist strength, pastoralist knowledge, pastoralist skills, pastoralist attitude, pastoralist participation) (Mohammed Mussa, 2004).

### **How do they work?**

The PPGs, and especially the voluntary groupings in Kenya and Uganda, operate very largely through informal mechanisms and informal contacts. The Kenya case study in particular stresses that "personal relations with powerful individuals may well be more important in getting things done than debates on the floor of the house or even detailed submissions to parliamentary committees" (Livingstone, 2005a).

The Kenyan PPG rarely meets formally as a group. Generally PPG members confer among themselves, in small groups, either before speeches, key votes in parliament, or meeting ministers or permanent secretaries. PPG members also delegate colleagues to meet with key members of parliamentary committees, but the level of engagement with the committees, especially in areas like trade (which is in fact vital to pastoral development) is not high, and the Kenya case study suggests pastoral MPs need more training in how to make the best of parliamentary procedures. There is, however, a pattern of more senior members, with more experience of parliament, "mentoring" more recently-arrived members (who may in turn have better familiarity with conditions in the pastoral areas). MPs, individually or in small groups, also meet with the press, and some also with contacts from NGOs or academia. Individual MPs have participated in workshops outside parliament, and other activities, such as CAPE's cross-border peace initiatives with Ugandan counterparts, and the PPG informally keeps a watching brief over these individual activities.

The first Ugandan PPG set out in 1999 to inform itself of conditions in pastoral areas and hold discussions with pastoral communities through a series of joint

tours. It then settled into a pattern of regular meetings (eight times a year), plus caucus meetings to decide a stance and parliamentary tactics on particular issues that were to be debated in full parliamentary session. Where issues of concern were due to be discussed in sectoral committees, PPG caucus meetings delegated senior members to talk informally with key members of the committee.

The modes of working of the Ethiopian PASC have been dictated by the formal responsibilities given it by parliament, particularly regular meetings with the ministries and agencies it oversees. The manager of the former Livestock Marketing Authority was very positive about the PASC's role in regularly reviewing plans and budgets, although with other ministries there were issues about whether the PASC could communicate directly with departments at sub-ministerial level. PASC members have also participated in meetings and workshops on pastoralism run by NGOs and other organisations; the PASC has considered organising its own workshops for awareness creation on pastoral issues but has not yet been able to do so. The PASC also benefited from a tour of pastoral areas organised and funded by USAID.

In the Ethiopian case study, the PASC members were asked to rank a number of different possible tasks of MPs, as specified by the researchers. In order of priority, from highest to lowest, the overall results were:

1. Influencing government policy on pastoralism
2. Following-up implementation of policy
3. Improving government services in the constituency
4. Bringing government investment to the constituency
5. Mobilising support for the party.

While these answers probably represent MPs' views of what they should be doing rather than what they actually do, the views of the ten MPs interviewed were broadly similar, and at least show some theoretical commitment to their legislative and oversight roles.

## SUCCESSSES AND FAILURES

The PPGs have so far had a mixed record of achievement. In Uganda PPG members played an important role in pursuing corruption in the valley dam scandal of 1998, and securing exceptional access by pastoralists to a national park in the drought of 1999. The group also helped alleviate, though did not stop, armed conflict between pastoralists and agro-pastoralists between 1997 and 2001. In Ethiopia the PASC has a statutory duty to oversee the Livestock Marketing Authority and the pastoral activities of eight ministries, which in general it implements effectively. In Kenya, parliamentary procedures have allowed less of an oversight role, but the group was able to increase budgetary allocations to boarding schools in pastoral areas. All three groups, alongside civil society organisations, have helped raise awareness of pastoral issues. But the groups seem to have made a very modest contribution to the major policy debates—such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP) processes and the Ugandan Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA).

We now explore some of the reasons why the PPGs have had the successes they have had, and why they have not had a more generalised impact on pastoral development.

### National political contexts

The impact of particular national circumstances on the effectiveness of the PPGs cannot be emphasised enough. In Uganda, these include the unique experience of “no-party democracy” and its sudden end at the hands of the judiciary, as well as the limits that Museveni needs to observe in directing resources to western Ugandan pastoralists, his own community, and the way armed conflict between the government and the Lord’s Resistance Army has affected the Karimojong and the Teso peoples. In Kenya they include the use by Moi over many years of pastoralists as a vote bank and in some cases as shock troops, and the current domination of parliament by his (in some cases belated) opponents, while pastoral constituencies are still generally represented by his former ruling party KANU. In Ethiopia, the context undoubtedly includes the severe limits on regional autonomy and on the real “representativeness” of MPs posed by the dominance of the EPRDF. In all cases, the marginality of pastoralists, living on the countries’ borders and vulnerable to charges of ambiguous national identity, is obvious (Box 3).

### Box 3. Cross-border realities

The existence of pastoralist ethnic groups within the countries concerned is loaded with significance within the politics and political cultures of those countries. Firstly, most of the major pastoralist groups move across national boundaries: the Afar between Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti; Somalis between Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somaliland, Somalia and Kenya; Borana between Ethiopia and Kenya; and the “Karamoja cluster” between Kenya, Uganda and Sudan.

The effect of these border-crossing identities is to render pastoralists marginal and politically vulnerable in the political cultures of nation states. Many pastoralists do undoubtedly engage in economic and political activities in more than one country,<sup>5</sup> and some can be considered to have divided loyalties. But whatever the reality, it is equally important that pastoralists are *believed* by their fellow-nationals to have divided loyalties, and are highly *vulnerable* to the accusation of divided loyalties when such accusations suit other political interests—as with the constant insinuation by their opponents that the Movement leadership and President Museveni himself are less than wholly Ugandan.

The implication is that donors or NGOs who wish to engage with parliamentarians need to do so with an in-depth and expert understanding of the national political systems they are operating in, and to avoid approaches or programmes that ignore the differences between those systems.

### Parliamentary procedures

It is clear from both the Uganda and Kenya case studies that PPG members have failed to make the most of the formal procedures of parliament: in particular the opportunities presented by active membership of parliamentary standing committees, but also, in Uganda, of the possibility of initiating private members’ bills. This does point to the need for training in these procedures, even though more general support programmes, aimed at parliament as a whole, have already attempted to address this.

### Leadership and the role of individuals

The successes of the PPGs in building themselves across party and ethnic lines and in influencing development are inescapably linked to the roles of key individuals. Successful individuals act as “policy entrepreneurs”, putting together and then operating within networks linking them to actors in other parties or outside parliamentary politics; in NGOs, academia, the bureaucracy. Perhaps another aspect, less commented on in the literature, is that the most effective operators are sometimes those that have non-political, or at least non-parliamentary, careers to fall back on.

5. An example is the former chair of the Ethiopian Pastoral Affairs Standing Committee, who has close family and business interests in Somaliland—although he is himself one of the few ethnic Somalis to achieve high rank in the Ethiopian military.

“Leadership” in the sense used in management writing, can be taught, and there is mileage for including leadership training (not just of MPs, but also of civil society leaders) in programmes for pastoral development. But those wishing to work with parliamentarians must also learn to recognise and foster the individual talents of policy entrepreneurs.

### **The capacity of parliamentarians**

Besides the leaders and the policy entrepreneurs, hard questions must be asked about the rank and file membership of the PPGs. Some of the commentators contacted during the Kenyan study were particularly scathing about the educational level and motivation of MPs in Kenya. Minimal educational qualifications, such as the requirement for schooling up to the age of 18 for MPs in Uganda, can only do a little to raise the quality of parliamentary candidates, and raising MPs’ salaries can be a distinctly two-edged sword. The Kenyan case study shows how the PPGs themselves blend the individual talents of MPs, matching the knowledge of pastoral conditions but lack of formal education and parliamentary experience of the newly arrived, with the greater canniness, but lesser drive of the old hands. But outsiders wishing to work with the PPGs must be conscious of the existing capacity of the “raw material” with which they work, and education provision and capacity-building for MPs will be important investments.

### **Continuity, and linkages to civil society**

Throughout the region there is a very high turnover of MPs at each election, leading to poor institutional memories and weak continuity. A linked problem is the lack of institutional connections between the PPGs and civil society. As argued persuasively in both the Ugandan and the Kenyan case studies, parliamentary groups can only ever be one small part of a drive for pastoral development that includes empowering and involving pastoralists themselves, community-based organisations, NGOs and the media. Individual parliamentarians may have networks that include civil society organisations (and other sources of information such as international NGOs, researchers, and donor-funded projects), but the PPGs lack such linkages as PPGs. The PPGs need linkages to civil society to assist their own efforts for continuity and institutional memory, to access information (see the next subsection) and to play their part in a wider coalition for pastoral development.

### **Information**

In all three countries it was clear that the multiple demands on MPs’ time, as well as their lack of technical background, would constrain the ways in which infor-

mation could be made available. But it is not only information on technical and policy issues that is needed. All the groups mentioned their need for information about conditions and problems in the pastoral regions, including their own constituencies. The special circumstances of pastoral constituencies make information gathering particularly difficult: many are very far from the national capitals and occupy vast areas. The Kenyan and Ugandan case studies suggest extending telecommunications into pastoral constituencies (cell phone networks are already expanding fast into some Ugandan pastoral areas) and ensuring that MPs and those who need to contact them have access to these. In Ethiopia, USAID has already arranged vehicles for a study tour of the pastoral constituencies by the PASC. Such approaches will be vital for keeping MPs in contact with their constituencies.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Challenges for the PPGs**

The PPGs themselves must rise to various challenges:

- Engaging with policy questions and influencing the big debates on policy
- Mastering parliamentary procedures, both formal and informal, to influence government
- Maintaining their own continuity as key individuals do not return to parliament: the groups should explore more formal arrangements for civil society or research organisations to provide ongoing advisory and/or secretariat services, and ways of co-opting ex-MPs and non-MPs as honorary members.
- Accessing appropriate information for the debates they engage in and their capacities
- Mobilising their own resources, and those of parliament and government: this will be important to avoid fatiguing donors with demands for support
- Overcoming local, clan and ethnic particularism
- Making use of the potential synergies between members of different backgrounds, generations, regions, standings within government: “mentoring” less experienced MPs.



- Maintaining effective regional networks of PPGs and similar groups to exchange experiences of organising themselves and influencing policy (but ensuring these networks do not become expensive talking shops).

### **Lessons for donors and NGOs**

The three case studies have shown that while the PPGs are institutions with great potential to contribute to pastoral development, they have hardly begun to do so. Thus the PPGs are worth supporting as one facet of pastoral development, but they can only ever be part of the picture. Strengthening the PPGs must be one aspect in a broader initiative to empower pastoralists through strengthening civil society organisations, the media, communications and decentralised local government.

Within that general approach, we propose guidelines for donors and NGOs who are considering funding, or working with, these, or similar, PPGs, or indeed parliamentary groupings concerned with other development topics.

- *Acknowledge political realities.* Donors and NGOs seeking to work with PPGs must make themselves aware, by careful study carried out by those with expert knowledge, of the context in which the PPGs work, not only of politics and formal institutions, but also of deep historical trends and of the strategies of individual actors.
- *Be pragmatic.* All the parliamentary systems we studied, and systems in Africa in general, are far from perfect as democracies. There are profound questions about the motivation and the ability of MPs to represent their constituents, and the extent to which the real systems of power in their countries will allow them to do so. But “representation” should be seen as a process, rather than an either/or state of “representativeness”. It should also be remembered that many useful functions, particularly parliamentary oversight, are only partially related to the representative functions of MPs.
- *Work with individuals.* As shown in the case studies, individual personalities can be key to successful initiatives by the PPGs. Leadership abilities count, but the PPGs, and the cause of pastoral development in general, can particularly be furthered by individuals who can network across the different worlds of political parties, NGOs and academia.
- *Work regionally.* The problems of pastoral development, like pastoralists themselves, cross national borders, and need to be considered regionally. The differ-

ent PPGs have influenced each other at key points in their evolution, and they continue to meet at intervals. In a globalising world the fact that pastoralists and their MPs can move across frontiers and work across frontiers is an asset, not a liability. These regional exchanges could be supported, but the PPGs are primarily national bodies, formed within and in order to influence national parliaments. Assistance given to them should be tailored to those national mandates, and, as stated above, tailored to a deep understanding of their national circumstances. A regional approach to assistance needs to be highly focused on beneficial mutual learning, and not to encourage talking for its own sake.

- *Build capacity, hard and soft.* The PPGs have several important capacity constraints. Foremost among these are their needs for information and the weak capacity of PPG members to use that information. Training in leadership, in planning, and in the procedures of parliament itself will all help in this area. The PPGs also need more material support: administrative staff, telecommunications and office equipment, and vehicles. Given the issues of continuity and alliance-building and the communications difficulties that are intrinsic to pastoralism, carefully-appraised programmes for material capacity building may be useful, though perhaps parliament itself should provide these things.
- *Address continuity.* Given the high turnover of MPs in virtually all developing-country parliaments, it will be a very important task of donors and NGOs to assist PPGs to develop an institutional memory.
- *Build alliances.* Support to parliamentarians can only ever be one strand in pastoral development. It will be essential to assist parliamentarians to develop their linkages with civil society, with international NGOs, with researchers, with sections of the media sympathetic to pastoral development, and with other stakeholders.

The last three guidelines/objectives are closely interrelated, but there is no single blueprint for addressing them. In some circumstances, a formalised institutional linkage with an NGO, an NGO umbrella group, or a research organisation may help provide a flow of useful information, build capacity among PPG members, create broader linkages, and ensure basic administrative systems and an institutional memory. In other circumstances, it may be more important for the PPG to take some or all of these functions in-house, by employing not only administrative staff, but also researchers. Donors and NGOs need to work with the PPGs, in full knowledge of their contexts, their strengths and their weaknesses, to find the best models of support.

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