



## Women and pastoralism

Today, nearly 200 million<sup>1</sup> nomadic and transhumant pastoralists throughout the world generate income and create livelihoods in remote and harsh environments where conventional farming is limited or not possible.<sup>2</sup> This number rises sharply when extensive agropastoralists are included.<sup>3</sup>

However, despite these figures, and the growing recognition of pastoralism as a valuable and sustainable natural resource management system, pastoral communities remain socially and politically marginalized.<sup>4</sup> Pastoralists' livelihoods are frequently undermined by unfriendly policies and laws and by competition for resources from more politically powerful neighbours and other interest groups. Understanding these dynamics and the importance of pastoralism is an essential element of efforts to reduce poverty.

Pastoral women are key agents in livelihood development. They engage in socio-economic and cultural activities, and in the conservation and management of natural resources. Despite the many challenges they face, pastoral women are resourceful in finding ways to ensure that their households' basic needs are met. However, their valuable role is only partially recognized. Pastoral women are particularly disadvantaged by the limitations they face within their own societies, for example in owning property or participating in decision-making processes. Increasing awareness of women's concerns and the value of their specific inputs is a step towards strengthening women's role in pastoral communities, thus reducing their vulnerability to external shocks.

1 World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism (WISP): [http://iucn.org/wisp/pastoralist\\_portal/pastoralism/](http://iucn.org/wisp/pastoralist_portal/pastoralism/).

2 Worldwide, livestock – including through pastoralism – contribute to the livelihoods of about 70 per cent of the rural poor – between 600 million and 1 billion people.

3 MARAG, 2011.

4 Rota and Sperandini, 2010b.

Within this context the first ever Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists (the Global Gathering)<sup>5</sup> was an important opportunity to: (i) highlight specific challenges faced by women pastoralists; (ii) promote the exchange of experiences and learning to strengthen the role of women pastoralists in decision-making (including policymaking); and (iii) contribute to the development of a global forum for identifying major social, economic, political and ecological challenges facing women pastoralists.

This paper focuses on empowerment as a process for enabling pastoralist women to achieve better lives for themselves, their families and their communities. This emphasis is consistent with IFAD's strategic mandate and emerged clearly from the feedback received from women interviewed at the Global Gathering.

Highlighting issues arising from the Global Gathering, the paper provides an overview of the challenges faced by pastoralist women and girls, and their potential opportunities. It aims to support development practitioners in planning specific interventions and in mainstreaming the issues that affect pastoralist women into the implementation of development initiatives.

The paper should be read in conjunction with the IFAD Livestock Thematic Papers on *Livestock and Pastoralists* and *Gender and Livestock*, which offer a view of the broader context.

The focus is on women and girls, but engaging men is also critical. The geographic scope is intended to be global, although it is clear that there are no universal solutions – major variations can occur in the situations of women and girls in different communities, even within the same country. Nevertheless, some broad conclusions can be drawn as a starting point for more thorough analysis of potential interventions.

## **Main issues from the Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists**

The Global Gathering – the first of its kind – took place in Mera, a rural area of India in the province of Gujarat, in November 2010. Sponsored by IFAD, the event brought together more than 100 pastoral women and men from 31 countries across the world. The goals were to work towards empowering women pastoralists to participate equitably in decision-making within their communities and in government and other national, regional and international forums, and to raise awareness of the specific challenges faced by women pastoralists in the shifting social, economic and ecological environment.

There was great diversity in the situations faced by women at the gathering, with women from highly marginalized and patriarchal communities sharing their experiences with women from relatively well-organized women's groups. However the women also had much in common as pastoralists and as women, from problems with land rights and marginalization to the need to keep their children fed and healthy. Participants included men.

Key themes identified by participants and discussed in interest groups included:

- Natural resource management and climate change
- Access to markets
- Women's decision-making at home, in their communities and more widely
- Advocacy
- Engaging men
- Women's health
- Education
- Human rights

Important outcomes included:

- The Mera Declaration of the Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists (box 1)

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<sup>5</sup> Details on the next page.

<sup>6</sup> CFS was established on the recommendation of the 1974 World Food Conference, in response to the food crisis of the 1970s. It serves as a forum within the United Nations system for the review of and follow-up on policies concerning world food security, including food production and physical and economic access to food. In 2009, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reformed CFS to focus its vision and role in coordinating efforts to ensure universal food security. Civil society organizations (CSOs), NGOs and their networks were called on to establish an autonomous facilitating body for CSO/NGO consultation and participation in CFS. CFS:2009/2 Rev.2, para.16: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/018/k7197e.pdf>.

## Box 1

### Mera Declaration of the Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists

“We, the women pastoralists gathered in Mera, India, from November 21-26, 2010, representing 31 countries, have met to strengthen alliances and forward practical solutions to issues that affect us.

We are part of a world-wide community of pastoralist peoples that is 300 million strong. We pledge that we will continue to live in a way that is environmentally sustainable and protects biodiversity and common resources for generations to come. We will continue to network and share our best practices and lessons learned to build capacity amongst ourselves and the global community.

We experience first hand the leading edge of climate change and its associated problems, and we have much to share with the world about adaptation, mitigation and living sustainably on planet earth. Recently, pastoralists have been increasingly vocal at the international level but, as women, our voices have yet to be fully heard. We have unique and equally valuable contributions to make to our own communities and the global community.

We will work with men to build strong and equitable pastoralist societies and we will contribute to greater social equality within our families, our communities, our countries and around the world.

We present this declaration as a guiding political document to inform and support the development of pastoralist policies.

We call on governments, governing agencies of the United Nations, other relevant international and regional organizations, research institutes and our own customary leaders to support us and to:

1. RECOGNISE the essential role of pastoralists in global environmental sustainability, including the conservation of biodiversity, mitigation of climate change and combating desertification.
2. ENSURE the equal rights of pastoralist women and recognise their key role in society. This includes the recognition of the work of women pastoralists as a valid profession and as a fundamental component of pastoralism.
3. RECOGNIZE pastoralist mobility as a fundamental right.
4. ENSURE and defend pastoral access to resources, including our traditional grazing lands.
5. PROTECT the rights of pastoralists and provide security in nomadic areas including the enforcement of laws that guarantee the safety of women.
6. RECOGNISE pastoralists who identify as indigenous and respect the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights.
7. MONITOR the development and implementation of policies affecting and protecting pastoralists.
8. SUPPORT the development of an international organization in charge of considering complaints about violations of pastoralist rights. This organization needs the ability to hold countries accountable and must include pastoralist women as members.
9. ADAPT existing legislation to take into account the specificities of pastoralist ways of life and differentiate nomadic and transhumant pastoralism from intensive livestock production.
10. PROMOTE regional policies and treaties that take into account trans-border pastoralism and respect traditional grazing territories and migratory patterns. These are to be negotiated in consultation with pastoralist women.
11. DEVELOP specific policies that promote the sustainability and welfare of pastoral ways of life and the ecosystems we rely on for survival. The policy-making process must include meaningful participation, and consultation, with pastoralist women.
12. DEVELOP legislation that restricts development that harms or threatens pastoralist livelihoods.
13. ALLOW year-round access to grazing lands, including some lands that are currently within wild life preserves and conservation areas. These grazing spaces are to be established in consultation with pastoralist women.

14. PROMOTE and recognize Indigenous Community Conservation Areas (ICCAs).
15. ENSURE proportionate representation of pastoralist women in all levels of governance.
16. RESPECT the right of pastoralist women to education, both formal and informal, and including secondary education. Provide support to shift perceptions around the full educational needs of girls.
17. DEVELOP accessible and appropriate programmes for pastoralist children to access education. Special emphasis is to be given to pastoralist girl children. These are to be developed in consultation with pastoralist women.
18. DEVELOP mobile facilities that respect pastoralist realities and are in line with the needs of pastoralist women.
19. DEVELOP and implement programmes that support women's health in pastoralist communities. Information and training on health, particularly reproductive health, should be given priority.
20. CREATE and support programmes that promote the economic development and diversify economic opportunities for pastoralist women, including micro-credit financing. These programmes must be developed in consultation with pastoralist women.
21. SUPPORT pastoral women through capacity building, including direct access to markets and training to improve the quality and marketability of their work and managerial skills.
22. SUPPORT training programmes focused on leadership and communication to enable pastoralist women to effectively participate in negotiations in all issues affecting their ways of life.
23. SUPPORT and fund research into new technologies that further improve the efficiency and environmental sustainability of pastoralist ways of life. These technologies should be attuned to the needs and realities of pastoralism and should take advantage of renewable and easily accessible natural resources.

We women pastoralists want our children, and our children's children, to have the tools and opportunities they need to adapt to the realities and changing conditions of the modern world while retaining their traditional cultural legacies and lifestyles.

**This is our right and it is by remaining pastoralists that we can be of greatest service to the entire human community.”**

*Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists, Mera, Gujarat, India, November 2010.*

- The appointment of two women pastoralists, elected from gathering participants, as focal points at the Civil Society Mechanism for the Committee on World Food Security (CFS),<sup>6</sup> to call for more local, national and international networking
- Calls for a follow-up meeting and for making the Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists a regular event

The gathering was the brainchild of the Maldhari Rural Action Group (MARAG), a voluntary organization established in 1994 to educate, organize and empower the Maldharis – a marginalized pastoral community from Gujarat in India.

### **Major issues facing women pastoralists**

Women pastoralists are increasingly recognized as key agents of change in the fight against poverty. A literature review and feedback from women interviewed at the Global Gathering indicate that this powerful role has often been underestimated and under-recognized in their societies. The following are the most common issues of concern.

**Marginalization by national development agendas.** Pastoralists are socially, economically and politically marginalized in many countries. Women pastoralists are marginalized further because of their limited decision-making role and the scarce attention they receive within the national development framework.



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## Box 2

### Sedentarization in Azerbaijan

“Now, we only have three cows, compared with 50 cows, 6 bulls and 100 sheep previously. Before there were three cows and ten sheep per hectare of land, but now there are 300 cows to a hectare.

We now have to buy milk, whereas previously we sold it, as well as made cheeses and animal products for sale to nearby villages. We also made carpets, but now only my eldest daughter has this skill – probably to be lost as she gains university education. Now we no longer have enough wool or any equipment to make carpets.

I dream of a return to a nomadic way of life, but the dream is fading after 18 years of living like this. I am wondering how to keep the skills alive in my girls.”

*Taman, Ketbajar village, Azerbaijan and Global Gathering participant. Taman's family was forcibly sedentarized during the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which is occupying the lands in which her community used to lead a transhumant pastoral life.*

**Sedentarization** is an increasing phenomenon affecting all sectors of pastoral society. Negative impacts on women and girls include increased domestic and income-generating burdens, especially when men need to stay away from the household to graze livestock at distant communal sites or to seek alternative employment because of government policies restricting land access, environmental degradation or conflict. Settled pastoralists are often unable to keep their livestock close by, and sometimes lose their animals completely. For women, this translates into the need to find alternative cash incomes for their livelihoods (which not infrequently include prostitution). Nevertheless, many pastoral women appreciate the benefits of sedentarization, which can include increased access to health care and education, and new market opportunities.

**Climate change.** Harsh climatic conditions are not new to pastoralists, whose way of life is recognized as one of the most sustainable in terms of conserving the environment. However, increasing degradation in many traditional pastoral lands, compounded by encroachment, has many negative impacts on women and children, including:

- More time spent grazing animals, searching for water and gathering fuelwood and other fuels further and further from home, which is also less safe;

- More frequent moving of homesteads, which takes more time and reduces regular access to education and health services;
- Increased domestic burdens when men are forced to look for alternative employment;
- Dwindling natural resources for use in economic activities and traditional medicine.

**Conflict** can result in the division of traditional pastoral lands, restricting access to the lands and increasing domestic burdens on women when men go to war – not to mention the increased physical threats that conflict brings to pastoral women and girls.

**Lack of voice** – in national or local politics, in their communities or homes – is a common issue for pastoral women. Stories of individual women's success in politics testify to the potential of able pastoral women when they are adequately supported, but support is often minimal, resulting in a high turnover of women pastoralists in politics. In addition to the difficulties faced by all pastoralists, women face cultural and practical barriers, such as lack of financial capital and/or time for effective campaigning, and pastoralist women (and men) may prefer to distance themselves from their roots once elected. These women's success stories need to be publicized, to guide and encourage future generations of women.

### Box 3

#### Pastoral women in political decision-making

“I was born as one of three sisters, so the traditional elders’ council forced my father to divorce my mother for not bearing a son. My mother was from a humble background and depended on the pastoralist community for food, milk – everything. I first saw a classroom at age 15, and after very many setbacks, eventually I became a teacher.

But I wanted to do more and so I started an NGO called Womankind Kenya and started talking to everyone. Most people treated me as if I were mad – I simply wasn’t behaving as a girl! I decided to stand for Parliament and when I got elected, the most powerful community people told the president that an indigenous pastoralist woman could not become a member of parliament – and he cancelled my election. My supporters were harassed, and I stayed out of politics for ten years, until my political party chose me to represent pastoralists.

Even as I was entering Parliament, I was harassed! There is a Pastoralists’ Parliamentary Group composed of representatives from different tribes. There are 22 women in Parliament and there is also a Kenyan Women’s Pastoralist Parliamentary Group, of which I am the Vice-Chair. Both groups work closely together, and the women’s group obviously advocates for issues affecting women such as female genital mutilation. Through joint lobbying we have had successes in developing a nomadic people’s education policy, for example, which makes mobile schooling available, especially for girls.

In August 2010 Kenya had a new Constitution, to which I am proud to have contributed. It starts to address historical injustices against minorities and indigenous peoples; 2.5 per cent of the national budget is for restitution to the disadvantaged and it now stipulates that each of the 47 counties must elect a woman – this will help ensure good representation by women pastoralists. It also provides special measures to get young women aged 18 to 35 into Parliament, as we want to hear young people’s concerns.”

*Adapted from interview with Hon. Sophia Abdi Noor, Member of Parliament of Kenya and Global Gathering participant.*

Situations vary widely across pastoral communities and homes, and many communities afford varying degrees of voice and/or power to women, although women pastoralists generally have less voice than their male counterparts.

**Health and physical integrity.** The issues facing women pastoralists vary widely in different parts of the world. In general, women and men pastoralists have poor access to government health-care facilities, and maternal mortality rates are far higher among women pastoralists than other women in the population. Female genital mutilation and other harmful practices such as early marriage, rape and abduction are prevalent in some regions, such as the Horn of Africa. Even where special mobile services or health clinics have been developed for mobile communities, they are often of poor quality and not well

promoted. When food and dairy products are scarce, women usually allocate them to children (boys before girls) and other family members before themselves, which – coupled with women’s generally greater workload compared with men’s – can have very negative impacts on women.

**Education** is often highly prized by pastoral women, partly because they see it as a means of escape from a harsh and marginalized life for their children. However, girls frequently have less access to education than boys because the investment is not considered worthwhile, or because of economic and cultural reasons. In early marriage, for example, girls soon belong to another family or community, which is a strong disincentive against educating them, as is the lack of employment prospects for pastoral women with formal education.



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## Box 4

### Practical education strategies: experience from the Global Gathering and work with pastoralist children in India

In 1990, the World Declaration on Education For All (EFA) identified nomads as one of the groups facing discrimination in access to education services, and demanded “an active commitment” to removing disparities. Twenty years later, in 2010, the EFA Global Monitoring Report *Reaching the marginalized*<sup>7</sup> found that pastoralists continue to face extreme educational disadvantage, and repeated the need for urgent action.

Education has long been a human right, but pastoralists’ inclusion in formal education is generally very limited and is characterized by low enrolment and retention rates. This is largely a problem of service provision rather than faltering demand from pastoralists. The Global Gathering demonstrated a high demand for formal education among women pastoralists, linked to their desire to gain literacy and numeracy skills, to press for their rights to land and information, and to be included as full citizens of their countries.

However, women pastoralists also see *schooling* as a problem because sending their children to school often means forgoing the home- and family-based learning those children need to become productive and successful pastoralist producers. Is it inevitable, participants asked, that schooling equates to educating *out* of pastoralism, rather than educating *into* it?

If education is to meet pastoralists’ rightful expectation of inclusion, policy communities must investigate the unequal and unfair terms on which current systems – designed for sedentary people – offer educational services to mobile pastoralists. The Global Gathering seeks a way forward that recognizes the following:

- Policy communities must accept mobility as a livelihood strategy, and must not seek to use education as a way of sedentarizing mobile communities by educating children *out* of pastoralism.
- Educational marginalization occurs because the mainstream is so narrowly framed that many learners fall outside it. A more inclusive system, capable of providing education *into* pastoralism, requires a broader vision of formal education, based on acceptance of mobile livelihoods and recognition that formal education does not have to be provided at the same place every day, or require a building.
- Mainstream provision that recognizes these preconditions can free learners from the burden of fixed-place schooling that comes at the cost of not learning about their own livelihoods. The most flexible way forward lies in making open and distance learning part of mainstream provision, rather than a lower-status alternative.
- Such provision will respond to pastoralists’ needs, be delivered in local languages, use innovative formats of the national curriculum, provide national qualifications, and rely on interactive educational media such as radio and mobile phones.

In India, the universal elementary education project Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan emphasizes the inclusion of migrating children, and positive discrimination for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities. Current policy strategies prioritize un- or semi-skilled seasonal labour migrants and people in specified groups for affirmative action by the state. The following make this problematic for mobile pastoralists:

1. Pastoralists’ migratory patterns are complex and not amenable to simple place-based solutions, such as providing alternative schools when they migrate; this would require village schools along migrating routes to make considerable additional efforts when they already face challenges with reaching acceptable quality thresholds.
2. Many pastoralist groups are not designated as Scheduled Tribes and fall below the radar of state provision, which is based on broad identity labels.

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7 EFA, 2010.

3. Pastoralists who seek formal education currently have to become sedentary to gain access to schools. Schooling thus removes them permanently from pastoralism and, over time, undermines the future of pastoralism by reducing the pool of available labour.

Consistent with the newly enacted right to education, practical strategies in India would require, for example:

- Research with pastoralists, using approaches such as scenario planning to develop flexible and responsive education provision that identifies pastoralists' development needs, helps to ensure their livelihoods and fulfils their legal rights;
- Reviews of where national and state-level policy and institutional practices are oriented towards educating children out of pastoralism, identifying the underlying reasons for this orientation and the steps needed to address the situation;
- Identification of the limitations of place-based educational planning norms by recognizing, for example, that even a school within 1 kilometre of habitations excludes mobile learners, and mobile learners move within and across the jurisdictions of individual districts and states – and developing appropriate alternatives.

*Dr Caroline Dyer, Senior Lecturer, Development Practice, University of Leeds, United Kingdom and Global Gathering participant.*

As with health care, the formal education available to pastoralists can be poor in quality and/or difficult to obtain. Box 4 gives an example from India. Adult women interviewed at the Global Gathering commented that they needed practical and informal education to increase their basic literacy and understanding of financial transactions.

**Lack of social capital.** Social capital includes the “norms, social relations and organizations that enable people in a society to coordinate action to achieve their objectives.”<sup>8</sup> Women pastoralists generally have limited access to social capital, including networks. Box 5 demonstrates the potential of social capital and networks to empower women pastoralists.

The issues outlined in this section are only some of the many factors that combine to create a challenging outlook for women pastoralists. Challenges come from external factors, such as national policy and environmental issues, as well as from within the pastoral communities. Challenges also arise from within women themselves, particularly from their lack of confidence. This does not mean that pastoralist women are weak – they can be immensely resilient,

resourceful and strong in addressing harsh daily conditions.

### **Pastoralist girls and elder women**

Pastoralist young people are often caught between several worlds, but again girls face even greater challenges than boys. Some issues have already been discussed, such as early – and sometimes forced – marriage, FGM, taking second place to boys and men in precious food allocations, having even less voice in their homes and communities than their mothers have, and lacking access to education.

A central issue for development practitioners is considering whether the aspirations of young people, their mothers and fathers, their communities, their teachers and the government match. International donor agencies often see young people as key to ensuring the sustainability of pastoral ways of life, but in interviews mothers felt that many young people dream of leaving behind their difficult and marginalized way of life.

Elder pastoralist women often hold relatively privileged positions in their communities, and can have some voice if they are considered to be wise and to put the

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8 IFAD, 2009.

## Box 5

### Women's networks change social customs

In the Maldhari community of India, the formation of groups of women around a common cause has facilitated women's open discussion of social issues confronting the community and hampering women's progress. A major social evil was child marriage and the practice of bride purchase.

MARAG helped set up the Maldhari Vikas Manch, a forum where community leaders discuss ways of stopping bride purchase. Participants agreed that the practice was ruining the community economically, with each marriage costing between 100,000 and 200,000 rupees (Rs.). Community leaders also noted that in the past two to three decades individual marriage ceremonies had become more common, replacing the previous practice of community marriages with several couples getting married at one function.

The community leaders agreed to revive the old practice of community marriage. After initial hesitation, the families of several young women agreed to this and, following meetings and door-to-door campaigning, a committee with representatives from 12 villages was formed to organize a community marriage. The committee collected Rs. 164,729 to fund the ceremony.

For the first time, women rather than religious leaders set the norms for wedding expenditures, gifts for brides and bridegrooms, and number of guests to be invited.

*Adapted from the MARAG website <http://www.marag.org.in/>*

community's interests foremost. Widows and their children are often taken in by the dead husband's brother or family and have different status in different pastoral communities.

Pastoral women are not a homogenous group, and it would be useful to analyse the various issues faced at different life stages before starting any intervention.

### Economic empowerment

Women interviewed at the Global Gathering demonstrated great eagerness to improve their income-generating potential for bettering their lives and coping with unexpected environmental and economic shocks.

Whether they want to send their children to school or make up for lost income when men migrate, women pastoralists are increasingly keen to make the most of available resources in generating alternative and additional income from livestock-related or other activities, such as handicrafts.

Women felt that contributing to their communities and families would help to improve their status. Although it could also

create conflict (for example, disagreement over how income is spent), most women felt that the benefits of generating income far outweighed the negative consequences.

Economic empowerment can help build women's self-confidence, experience, networks and access to social capital, thereby supporting their empowerment in a broader sense. While many initiatives either fail or are successful for only a limited time – women's response is often to try again, using similar skills and inputs, but with different products or in a different place.

Several factors have an impact on the establishment of income-generating activities, including:

- Access to productive assets, such as livestock and land
- Illiteracy
- Expertise in running a small business
- Access to credit linked to lack of collateral
- Capacity to understand and exploit value chains for sustainable economic profit
- Access to markets (box 6)
- Time to engage in income-generating activities

## Box 6

### Access to international markets in Mongolia

“In order to access international markets, we need credit to set up a central processing, finishing, training and networking “incubator” that nomadic tribes can access; help in developing a business plan if we are to progress from being an NGO to becoming a sustainable business; help to access international markets, including value chains and design. We also need to understand how we can gain advantage over competitors who want to copy or undercut us. We also want to find better technologies to help production processes. We are very enthusiastic but still at the start of this journey.”

*Ms Munkhbolor Gungaa, NGO worker, Mongolia and participant at the Global Gathering.*

- Lack of self-confidence
- Lack of access to family and community decision-making, including the design of development interventions

As Rota and Sperandini (2010a) recommend, *labour-saving devices* merit special attention, as lack of time is often a major constraint to women’s engagement in income generation activities that support economic empowerment. Carr and Hartl (2010) end their review of labour-saving technologies and practices for rural women by recommending that development workers ask whether the labour-saving technologies and practices introduced through development projects or commercial channels really represent an improvement: Are they acceptable to the community, accessible and appropriate? Do they meet a priority need? A detailed gender analysis of important tasks is essential for understanding the division of labour between men and women in terms of roles, time spent on activities, opportunity costs and potential benefits.

Starting income generation activities is difficult; running a successful business is even more difficult, and often involves complex market dynamics, which are often better understood and exploited by larger commercial businesses.<sup>9</sup> Even successful women earners may lack *control over how income is spent*. At the Global Gathering, Maseto – a Maasai woman pastoralist from

Kenya – explained that in Maasai society men make most of the major decisions. Recently her women’s network started an income generation initiative based on livestock trading, which suffered setbacks from resistant men who took over the income from one successful transaction. Maseto added that over time the women came to be appreciated and used this small-scale activity to negotiate space for developing a degree of financial independence from men (box 7).<sup>10</sup>

Many women, even when they have the power to decide how to spend income, choose to invest in their families. A man pastoralist from the Niger at the Global Gathering commented, “my wife makes money from selling handicrafts, and I let her choose how to spend it – but she always spends it on the children or other household needs, never on herself.”

### Control over livestock resources

Control over livestock resources is central to economic empowerment, as well as being important for nutrition and sociocultural reasons. Many of the income-generating activities in which pastoral women engage are based on livestock, whether they involve trading livestock or marketing livestock products and handicrafts. Nori (1994) and others have documented the many activities for which women are responsible.

<sup>9</sup> Flintan, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Rota and Sperandini, 2010b.



©IFAD/Antonio Rota

## Box 7

### Summary of recommendations on entitlements and access to livestock

1. The roles and responsibilities of women (and men) in relation to livestock can be complicated, flexible and dependent on other factors, so full understanding is necessary before planning interventions that focus on livestock.
2. Women and men pastoralists have great knowledge of livestock and production, particularly in the areas where they have direct contact with the animals, such as milking, or tending young or sick livestock, which are more likely to be kept near the homestead. This knowledge should form the basis for decisions about livestock development, and women should play a central role in decision-making processes. Valuing women's knowledge will result in not only a better livestock production system, but also increased self-esteem and confidence among women.
3. The daily challenges that women face, such as illiteracy and lack of capital and access to resources, should inform the design of livestock interventions.
4. Training and extension support should be oriented to the men and women who are directly involved. Training needs to be carefully planned, practical and 'hands-on'. It may be necessary to hold separate training sessions for women and men, but not always – it can be more effective to train men and women together, without creating artificial gender divisions. It may be better to bring the training and extension services to the pastoralists, rather than expect the pastoralists to come to training centres.
5. The technology introduced should be affordable, easily maintained, socially acceptable and low risk. It should not be assumed that only men can handle tools and machinery: women are also capable with the right training and support.
6. The dynamics and function of livestock ownership and access (actual, usufruct and nominal) for various household members need to be fully understood to ensure that women's rights are not undermined or overridden – for example, who has access to livestock products such as milk, and what are those products used for? Rights to and ownership of livestock, particularly cattle, can be complex, embedded in tradition and firmly held. It is especially important to identify women's livestock roles and responsibilities in the local context, and to incorporate these into planning.
7. Although livestock assets might seem to be unequally shared between men and women, they are more equitably distributed than other assets such as land and capital. In many pastoral societies, women can own and have rights to diverse livestock and livestock assets, and may have sole responsibility for decisions about their own herds – although decisions regarding sales of livestock are usually made by husbands and wives together.
8. Customary and government bodies can protect or restrict women's access to and rights over livestock. The right institutional arrangements need to be identified and supported.
9. Selling meat and other livestock products can have a negative impact on household food security, particularly if activities that are currently controlled by women are transferred to men, or if men's adoption of new activities results in women losing control of assets and benefits. When the objective of an intervention is to increase pastoralists' incomes, care should be taken to avoid compromising nutritional and social objectives, which may need their own interlinked programme to ensure that they are met.
10. The processing and marketing of livestock products offer women a suitable vehicle for increasing their economic and social empowerment, and are often regarded as culturally acceptable occupations for women. When well organized and linked to sustainable market development, these activities can promote growth. However there may be constraints to overcome, and if men are not included in planning and providing approval and support, they may feel marginalized as women gain more power.
11. NGOs, particularly international ones, can play an important role in the development of markets by creating linkages with international clients and supporting innovative schemes such as Internet marketing.

12. Milk can be a contested commodity because of its many functions, with conflicting demands from calf rearing (mainly by men), feeding the household, or generating income (mainly by women). When herd and household needs allow, milk is a good source of cash that can be converted into grain (which has a higher equivalent energy value) or other necessities. Milk selling tends to be the domain of women, who have developed complex marketing strategies to ensure that milk and milk products reach markets in time. Where women's role in milk marketing has grown, it has given them the opportunity to participate in the public sphere and increase their autonomy.

13. Development programmes place a disproportionate emphasis on livestock, particularly large livestock, and miss opportunities in other sectors such as hide processing (and marketing), meat processing (including dried meat), wool processing, and manure production and sales. These money-earning activities can benefit and be controlled by women.

14. Women can become skilled community animal health workers. Training programmes that use non-literate and practical learning-by-doing methodologies run by women can overcome some of the barriers that women face, and provide a good entry point into other activities.

15. Women may not participate in project activities because of their household commitments, and may need to provide inputs without being present at project sites and meetings. Where possible, committees linked to livestock activities should include women and facilitate their participation.

16. The livestock sector can be an entry point for promoting gender issues because of its relatively good access arrangements; the involvement of all household members in production, which facilitates shared goals and working relations; the interrelations between livestock and other sectors such as marketing, the environment and the provision of basic needs; and evidence that long-term gender promotion through livestock interventions can lead to sustainable development. Livestock projects that include or target women can have empowering impacts, including increased self-confidence, well-being, security and purchasing power.

*Adapted from Flintan, 2008.*

It is important to understand the extent of women pastoralists' rights and decision-making power over these critical resources, which varies among pastoral communities. The IFAD toolkit for project design<sup>11</sup> contains thematic papers that provide a fuller discussion of this topic, while *The Livestock and Poverty Assessment Methodology: A Toolkit for Practitioners*<sup>12</sup> suggests a possible framework for factoring in gender considerations. Box 8 is based on work with women pastoralists by Flintan (2008), and offers a summary of the main considerations for project design.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations apply to interventions that specifically target women

and girl pastoralists and those that require the mainstreaming of women and girl pastoralists' needs. They should be read in conjunction with the *Framework for Gender Mainstreaming in IFAD's Operations*.<sup>13</sup>

### Policy

- Ensure that issues highlighted in the Mera Declaration from the Global Gathering, the Segovia Declaration<sup>14</sup> of men and women pastoralists and other major statements are systematically consulted when designing policy interventions that have direct or indirect impacts on women pastoralists.
- Advocate for ensuring that the concerns of pastoralist women and girls are specifically addressed in international conventions to which governments are held accountable.

<sup>11</sup> Rota and others, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Heffernan et al., 2003.

<sup>13</sup> [www.ifad.org/gender/framework/framework.pdf](http://www.ifad.org/gender/framework/framework.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Adopted by the World Gathering of Nomads and Transhumant Herders at La Granja, Spain in 2007.

[http://data.iucn.org/wisp/wisp\\_events\\_gathering\\_2.htm](http://data.iucn.org/wisp/wisp_events_gathering_2.htm).

<sup>15</sup> Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm).

<sup>16</sup> Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007. [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/drips\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/drips_en.pdf).



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These concerns are addressed in the EFA initiative, but not in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)<sup>15</sup> or the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>16</sup>

- Understand the attitudes of national government to pastoralism and gender.
- Understand the main external factors – environmental, economic and social – that have an impact on pastoral communities.

### Project design

- Build on women's aspirations and achievements as far as possible – even small steps can greatly improve self-confidence and social capital. Analyses of motivation such as that by Nielsen and Heffernan (2002) provide a useful starting point.
- Building on this analysis, consider the issues that affect women pastoralists at different stages of their lives. In particular, ensure a clear understanding of the motivations of and possibilities for young women and girls, who could be an entry point for ensuring the sustainability of pastoralism as a valuable and sustainable way of life.
- Using participatory rural appraisal methods, carefully research women's daily roles and aspirations in their households and communities, especially in relation to livestock, water, fuel and income generation. Avoid assumptions about women's roles within pastoral societies, which can vary widely. Invest time and effort in effective strategies for hearing from women themselves, working round their workloads and social constraints.
- Identify the right institutional national, customary and international frameworks, which may conflict with each other and be male-dominated and resistant to women's empowerment. These frameworks could include women's groups and the national "machinery" for women, such as gender focal points in local ministries of rural development and agriculture.

- Consider livestock as a good entry point for empowering women pastoralists, using its potential in food security, economic empowerment and social capital. However, avoid assumptions about motivations – women may be interested in owning livestock rather than following a pastoral way of life.
- Invest in labour-saving initiatives that are accessible to women, low-cost and low-maintenance and that genuinely save time.
- Ensure that training and outreach activities reach pastoral women, who may have limited mobility and time. Training should be hands on and literacy should not be assumed. Avoid assumptions about separate training for men and women, and research the benefits of these in advance. Box 7 offers some considerations for organizing training and similar activities for women.
- Consider partnering with NGOs, especially ones that are organized by pastoral women. Partnerships can include support in project management or documentation practices.
- Avoid overly rigid project designs, and plan to allow considerable flexibility. This is a challenge as many donor project frameworks are risk-averse and follow set timings. Small grants and rapid response mechanisms may be as or even more effective than large-scale interventions and also avoid possible conflicts between donor and government priorities.
- Engage and involve men as much as possible in all stages, as their approval is often essential to project success.
- Employ culturally acceptable ways of seeking inputs from women, directly or indirectly.
- Support women's access to high-quality inputs and services such as breeding and veterinary services.
- Support income-generating activities – such as processing and selling of livestock, forage, aromatic and medicinal plants, and wildlife products – as a way of enhancing pastoralist women's socio-economic position in their households and of empowering them to take a greater role in the community.

- Enable pastoral women to become more market-oriented by, for example, supporting market access and pro-poor livestock value chains through improved livestock marketing services.
- Support women's access to knowledge and innovations by, for example, fostering exchange of experiences and practices among women's groups.
- Promote women's income generation activities by providing training, appropriate technology, credit and access to networks through locally managed credit schemes,<sup>17</sup> and support for running small businesses, including understanding of value chains and access to markets. Ensure that credit schemes are accessible to women, do not expose them to increased risk, and include management of any inevitable risks.
- Consider including project components that focus on pastoral women in wider rural interventions; such components may prove useful entry points for working with pastoral people in general.
- Identify and address issues of unequal access to land and land tenure, as this is fundamental to supporting pastoral women's empowerment. These efforts should distinguish among the de jure and de facto usufruct rights and the right to own land of women and girls.
- Have realistic expectations of sustainability, as women and girl pastoralists are among the most disenfranchised people in the world and are increasingly vulnerable to environmental and socio-economic shocks.

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<sup>17</sup> See IFAD guide for practitioners *Gender and rural microfinance: Reaching and empowering women*. Mayoux, L. and Hartl, M., 2009.

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From the mid-1990s, especially since 2007, there has been growing interest in making women pastoralists direct target beneficiaries of projects or parts of wider interventions. This section provides signposts to some useful resources.

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#### Useful websites

Marag India: [www.marag.org.in/](http://www.marag.org.in/)

*Website of the India-based organization that organized the Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists in 2010.*  
Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists: <http://www.marag.org.in/>

International Land Coalition (ILC): <http://www.landcoalition.org/global-initiatives/indigenous-peoples-and-pastoralists>

*Key portal on land-related issues that are central to supporting pastoral people. Resources include the report from the IUCN/ILC Workshop on Organization of Pastoralists to Defend their Land Rights, Arusha, 2008.*  
[www.landcoalition.org/pdf/08\\_wisp\\_arusha\\_workshop\\_report.pdf](http://www.landcoalition.org/pdf/08_wisp_arusha_workshop_report.pdf)

League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development (LPP): [www.pastoralpeoples.org/](http://www.pastoralpeoples.org/)  
*An advocacy and support group for pastoralists who depend on common property resources. LPP works and conducts research with pastoral communities, primarily in India. The website documents the challenges faced by pastoralists and facilitates networking with similar agencies.*

World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP): [www.wamip.org/](http://www.wamip.org/)

*A major stakeholder and a global alliance of nomadic peoples and communities practising various forms of mobility as a livelihood strategy while conserving biodiversity and using natural resources sustainably.*

World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism (WISP): [www.iucn.org/wisp/](http://www.iucn.org/wisp/)

*A global initiative that supports the empowerment of pastoralists in the sustainable management of dryland resources. The Segovia Declaration of the World Gathering of Nomads and Transhumant Herders, at La Granja, Spain (2007) is an important call to action by men and women pastoralists and should be read in conjunction with the Mera Declaration, which is by women pastoralists.*

[http://data.iucn.org/wisp/wisp\\_events\\_gathering\\_2.htm](http://data.iucn.org/wisp/wisp_events_gathering_2.htm)