

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report synthesises the findings of three case studies carried out under the NRI/PENHA research project on Pastoralist Parliamentary Groups (PPGs) in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. The objective of the project has been “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”. In general, despite the increasing democratisation in Africa, the importance of MPs in the development of natural resource management, including pastoralism, has not been sufficiently addressed.

There is an increasing acceptance that the major issues in 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 issues are not issues of policy alone but also of its implementation, and parliamentarians, who have roles in both policy-making and oversight, may be well-placed to contribute.

The establishment of the PPGs has to be seen in the context of the overall wave of democratisation in Africa, but also the very specific ways in which that has been played out in the case study countries. But in general, in all three countries, there is a trend to the establishment of working parliamentary systems with standing committees and some resources available for MPs to do their work, even if the PPGs have not taken full advantage of these systems. The evolution of effective parliamentary systems, and of the PPGs, also has to be seen in the context of the development of civil society and free media.

Several methodological and substantive issues of importance in analysing the role of the PPGs are identified, including:

- The uncertainties involved in reconstructing the often controversial histories of the groups
- The limits of MPs’ “representativeness”, but also the limits of this as a sole criterion for their effectiveness
- The uneven spread of new thinking on pastoralism, and the need for local variations of, and continued debate on, the new paradigms
- 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.

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, without a written constitution, open to MPs concerned with pastoral development. In practice its 30 active members are all drawn from traditionally pastoralist constituencies. 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 Ethiopian Pastoral Affairs Standing Committee is in contrast an entity established by Proclamation of Parliament, in 2003, and has eight pastoral and five non-pastoral members chosen by Parliament as a whole.

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 to a National Park in the drought of 1999. The group also contributed to alleviating, though not stopping, armed conflict between pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in 1997- 2001. In Ethiopia, the PASC has a statutory duty of oversight of 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 contributed to raising awareness of pastoral issues. But the groups seem to have made a very modest contribution to the major policy debates – the PRSP processes and the Ugandan PMA.

Some of the most important determinants of this limited success are discussed:

- Most importantly, the complex political circumstances of each individual country
- Parliamentary procedures and the PPGs’ limited ability to use them
- The role of individuals, particularly “policy entrepreneurs” able to network across different parties, NGOs and academia.
- The limitations of individual MPs, in terms of both motivation and capabilities
- The unmet need for 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.

Some challenges for the PPGs themselves are outlined:

- 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, to exchange experience of organising themselves and influencing policy, while guarding against the possibility of these networks descending into talking shops.

The PPGs are worth supporting, as one front in a broader initiative of empowering pastoralists through strengthening civil society organisations, the media, communications and decentralised local government. General guidelines are given for donors and NGOs, who are considering funding, or working with, the PPGs in the countries we have studied, or future PPGs, or “PPG-like organisations” elsewhere, or indeed parliamentary groupings that are concerned with other development topics:

- Analyse the options in a real-world political context, using expert knowledge of each country
- Be pragmatic about the quality of MPs and their “representativeness”
- Work with individuals, particularly “policy entrepreneurs”
- Work regionally, but in a way that supports the PPGs’ national mandates
- Build capacity; particularly through information provision and training, but not necessarily neglecting “hard” capacity, such as vehicles and office equipment.
- Address the issues of continuity and institutional memory
- Build alliances with civil society, international NGOs, the media and local government

The last three issues are interrelated, but different institutional strategies for addressing them will be appropriate in different circumstances.