

Jumping on the train: the pastoralist experience in Kenya's PRSP

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Introduction

The World Bank and IMF now require countries to prepare a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) to identify country priorities through wide consultation, and to serve as an instrument to get funding from these international institutions. The first PRSP document in Kenya was prepared very rapidly, in June 2000, and was approved by the World Bank and IMF, allowing Kenya to receive some money on the basis of that interim document. Unfortunately the document contained all the country's priorities except those of pastoralists.

Pastoralists in Kenya make up about 25% of the population and occupy 75% of the land. They hold almost all livestock: 100% of the camels, 60% of the cows, and 80% of the goats and sheep. About 90% of all tourism occurs in pastoralist areas, in the game reserves. Pastoralists occupy Kenya's border areas, which makes them a critical entity in terms of security issues. Therefore it is vital to Kenya as a nation – politically, economically and socially – to include pastoralists in the PRSP.

Bringing pastoralists' issues into the PRSP

Pastoralist groups came together for a workshop in northern Kenya in late 2000. The workshop was a *shirka*, a gathering of people with a pastoralist background from all of East Africa, as well as development workers and agencies working in pastoralist areas. At the workshop it was pointed out that PRSPs are very important instruments for getting development agendas on the table, and pastoralist people became conscious that Kenya's rushed document included nothing for them.

At the *shirka*, some Kenyan pastoralists and development workers formed a small group aimed at including pastoralists in the final PRSP in Kenya, which was then unfolding. The group comprised pastoralist people themselves, civil society groups doing advocacy on behalf of pastoralists, pastoralist people working with international agencies in pastoralist areas (such as ActionAid, Oxfam, and UNICEF), and people from government departments working in pastoralist areas. It had support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and from the participation team at

the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Sussex. Later government ministries joined, and eventually the group grew larger and included many researchers and people interested in pastoralist issues, including businesspeople and religious leaders. This gave birth to the Pastoral Thematic Group (PTG).

The group had to submit a document to the PRSP secretariat in Nairobi to justify why it is extremely important to Kenya as a nation to take care of its pastoralist population. This document was readily accepted. The group then went to IDS in the UK to get some exposure on PRSPs both at the international level and in other countries' contexts, which gave them some first-hand insights. This experience proved very valuable and also gave the PTG credibility. It was the first of many thematic groups in Kenya to go outside the country to get experience of what was happening at the global level.

The PTG then met with the PRSP secretariat who agreed that it could form a thematic group – an official team which is allowed to submit a document on a cross-cutting issue for consideration in the PRSP. There were 18 thematic groups, on issues such as HIV-AIDS and gender. The pastoralist group was enlarged to include the Permanent Secretary in charge of Ministry of Livestock and Agricultural Development, and the Economic Secretary, under whose docket came the whole organisation and the nitty-gritty of handling the PRSP. Thus the group was accepted into the official system that runs the PRSP process for the whole country.

From that point the PTG had to develop a strategy to get pastoralists to participate directly in the process, to allow them to identify their priorities and talk over issues. To do this, it got involved in the government's sector working groups. Ministries were grouped into about eight sectors. The group approached people in all those sectors that were considered important, and then engaged with the secretariat on a constant basis. The programme was rushed against time, with everybody competing for the secretary's priorities. It was like a train moving; you had to jump on it!

Pastoralists live across vast areas of the country, and there were enormous logistical problems in meeting with them. At workshops and meetings, pastoralists identified their

priorities in the northern, north-central and north-western regions of the country. After meeting with pastoralist people, the group went through a consultation process at the national level. This led to a pastoralist poverty reduction strategy document, with the help of specialist groups who assembled what came from the pastoralist people into a strategy for inclusion in the PRSP.

The challenges

The process of compiling raw information from pastoralists into a policy document was challenging. The PRSP had to be structured in a way that was acceptable both to pastoralist people and to the World Bank. The PTG had been asked to structure documents in a certain fashion, so that what came out of their consultations would fit the structure of the PRSP. There were experts to help, some of them from amongst ourselves, and some were outsiders who were well-versed in writing documents. The whole consultation had to be organised into eight themes, such as security, conflict, livestock marketing, social services, and so on. This made the document more readable and understandable by people in development agencies and in the government.

The document then had to be presented to the PRSP secretariat, and be accepted by the sector working group. The PRSP works in such a manner that the consultation process and the sector working group are not working together, as they are independent bodies. But at some point they are expected to converge and produce the same document. The sector working group included input from technocrats in government, with ministry priorities, and the group was contributing with priorities from the people. Those two had to conform into one. It was hard work, and entailed a great deal of engagement with permanent secretaries and their ministries on a one-to-one basis.

The PTG then faced the challenge of how to present the pastoralist issue in the PRSP document. Is it cross-cutting, presented in a chapter of its own, or does it have to fit in with each ministry's priorities? This turned out to be a quite difficult task which required many meetings that went on till late at night. In the end, the group lost on some things. It was agreed that the pastoralist issue was cross-cutting, and it was included in almost all the ministries. But much of the group's contribution came under the ministry of livestock and agricultural development, as the government assumed that they had the greater expertise.

The PRSP itself was to be written by a small group of people, and of course some people from Washington had to look at it closely. The PTG considered itself very lucky up to that point, as its needs were being included. The final product that came out was a great improvement compared to the first PRSP, which had no reference to pastoralist people. Issues such as infrastructure

development, livestock marketing, conflict, health services, and education got a lot of prominence, and there was recognition of pastoralists as an important sector in the country needing attention. They even allocated resources, identified roads to be developed, and slaughterhouses to be built for the marketing of livestock. All these things were included in the PRSP.

Although the World Bank looked at and approved the Kenyan PRSP, this did not elicit or trigger any flow of funds into the nation. This was due to larger problems that Kenya had (and still has) with its donors in terms of corruption and politics, which were beyond the group's making. No funds have yet flowed as a result of the PRSP, and nothing tangible has changed on the ground for pastoralists. But the PTG has not despaired. It continues with a monitoring plan to push the implementation phase.

As a result of the PTG's efforts, the government has included some pastoralist priorities in its budget. But much had been left out, and in any case the government has no money to do any development programmes. It will be up to the group to follow up implementation, because government's priorities might change. Although the government has only gone as far as budgeting, it is remarkable that it has considered and incorporated pastoralists' voices and views in its planning strategy. This is the first time that this has happened since Independence.

Lessons learned

Despite the setbacks, the PTG has achieved a lot. Pastoralists have succeeded in changing the thinking of people in the government at very senior policy-making levels. The group has been able to work closely with members of the Dream Team (high-level civil service reform team in the Government of Kenya). Kenya's political process swallowed it up and that's the thing. It learned valuable lessons from those engagements with the PRSP and the government at large. It found out that opportunities really do exist when marginalised people realise they have some rights, organise themselves, and dedicate themselves to addressing their own issues. They can accomplish a lot. People accepted the group and provided space for it, and it fitted into those spaces. It was then up to the group to come up with issues.

The challenge, therefore, was thrown back to the PTG. To complain you are marginalised is one thing, but to come up with proposals of how you want to help yourself is something else. The PTG did not achieve a perfect score, but succeeded in building linkages with many people who were ignorant of issues of importance to pastoralists – ministers and powerful people who are now working with pastoralist people as allies. It also raised awareness of pastoralist issues at senior levels in the government.

At the same time, there were many officials with a pastoralist background who did not respond. President Moi is a pastoralist, as are many ministers. When people reach a certain level of power, they no longer belong to the people and the place they come from, they belong to the power class. Whilst these people share the same identity with pastoralists, it is difficult to make them empathise with their own people.

This process also demystified what had been seen as mysterious and powerful – institutions like the IMF and World Bank, and top-level government decision making, and how they work together. The group realised that this was a process like any other, and so walked in and out of those processes and meetings with greater confidence. It realised that small people at the ground level who are very marginalised can be a part of things. Lots of space opened up for the group, and their issues got prominence at the political level out of the PRSP process.

There were also some negative things about the PRSP process itself. Everybody is talking about PRSPs, and they are being done throughout the world. The PTG was responding to a process, which had been designed and tailored elsewhere. The group had no options to change anything. Time schedules were set, and each week and day was programmed. If the group had had no capacity to fit into that programme then it would have been doomed. It was a very rushed, very top-down, straightjacket programme.

In spite of this, the group did fairly well in getting pastoralists to participate. It had the advantage that it already had networks among pastoralist people, and all the people from PTG are from pastoralist areas. Links in pastoralist areas allowed the group to mobilise the people and get them participating very quickly, with very short notice. If that was not the case, then time would have worked against it. Participation requires more time than any other thing. The PTG would have liked more time to participate and really digest and develop all the issues.

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Note

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