**Accumulation in the Pastoral Livestock Production System**

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What makes the discussion on pastoralism, pastoral development and a strategy thereof, difficult is the fact that it constitutes a ‘new’ terrain in development discourse. The discussion on pastoral accumulation is even more so because it is unheard of. That by itself warrants resistance as the mainstream development discourse has always been dis-informed by the dominant discourse on development. It is simply not in the books. Not Adam Smith not Marx nor the contemporary champions of neo-liberal economics has ever written about it. It is not in the holy books of classical economic theories. But, pastoralism has always been there. The dominant discourse, the holy books simply did not recognize it, they did not even look at it as something worthy of anything. On the contrary, pastoralism was condemned: condemned to extinction. Who would ever care about it, how it survived and how viable it could become? Who would then care about the notion of accumulation out of pastoralism? How can a system condemned to extinction ever be a basis for wealth accumulation? It is such notion that makes any discussion on pastoralism and pastoral accumulation difficult.

However, it is the contention of this paper that pastoral accumulation is possible and is likely to be more feasible and contributive to the national economy than other traditional economies if equal attention is paid to its development and the necessary support it deserves is rendered. Needless to say that, pastoralism as threatened than ever deserves support particularly at the macro level as a conducive policy environment backed by implementation of concrete government measures are crucial links to pastoral accumulation. In other words, pastoralism needs similar attention and support that the farming community is accorded with by the government.

**Livelihood Diversification**

The process of accumulation in traditional formations as pastoralism and the peasant world begins with livelihood diversification. Livelihood diversification has become the catchword these days. But, livelihood diversification cannot be attained without a comprehensive approach and without the necessary support mechanism put in place. The most crucial element in enabling livelihood diversification is assuring ownership of the most important component in the means of production; i.e. livestock in the case of pastoralists and land in the case of peasants. Ethiopian pastoralists are placed in a much better position than their peasant counterparts as livestock is still in their hands (not nationalized) and the land is not privatized though the traditional form of communal ownership has not yet been restored.

Secondly, after more than a century of systematic marginalization by the central governments actively supported by the modernization projects of the World Bank and African Development Bank, pastoral life has been severely threatened without the alternative being provided. Because pastoralists were pressured to change their way of life, the institutions of governance and social life that passed as modern and other enterprises such as commercial farms and wild life parks were all alien to pastoralists. Neither did the pastoral communities benefit from these institutions in terms of employment and social services. This alienation has created a situation where pastoralism, though threatened by modernity, was maintained.

It is important to stress that pastoralists are not resisting change. They are only resisting a change that is imposed on them. Otherwise, like all societies, pastoral society is also dynamic and passes through change. The riddle in terms of thinking social change within pastoralism is to recognise the tempo of this organic change and adopt a policy that is acceptable by the community on the one hand and realistic enough to generate economic surplus on the other. What is crucial in generating livelihood diversification is precisely the recognition of this fact: a policy that is accepted by the community.

In the process of livelihood diversification, individual members of a given pastoral community will only resort to move towards another form of life and/or production system when they have some form of confidence and trust, or a form of social contract if you like, on the existing macro-economic policy. In other words, the individual pastoralist who has a large herd of cattle must say to herslf/himself: “Yes, now I can move to a different trade.” This trust is absolutely essential to the process of diversifying means of livelihood.

It is indeed clear that the process of pastoral accumulation that needs to start with the process of diversifying means of livelihood first of all requires a conducive policy environment. In other words, freedom and democracy are at the core of the process. As one of the chief maladies in Ethiopia is the disparity between policy rhetoric and the implementation on the ground, the good governance that is crucial to pastoral accumulation in turn requires the institutions of good governance in place. One cannot have good governance with a pious wish on the part of policy makers. This by itself is a huge undertaking which cannot be in place in the sense that the accumulation process requires it. It is precisely this fundamental weakness on the part of the government that calls for rapproachment and mutual recognition and dependence between governments and pastoralists. Such modus Vivendi and modus operandi between the two is the key to other chronic problems that impact on the process of accumulation as well as on social development in general, namely conflict.

**Institutions of democracy are key to livelihood diversification that generates social development to end poverty and prevent famines. According to the current federal form of ‘state’ and given the low level of human capacity in pastoral regions, it is indeed essential to back the institutions of governance with professionals from other regions or change the ethnic criteria for placement of officials and professionals altogether. In fact, as pastoral regions have been forgotten for decades, they are the most marginalised therefore impoverished therefore prone to any natural disaster. It is precisely for this reason that pastoral regions must be staffed with the best professionals that the country has as there is a lot to be done there. [On the Reporter newspaper of June 22, 2003 we read that the head of the Afar region has only completed grade five.]**

**Putting Market Mechanisms in Place**

**Developing the scope of the market in general:** In the process of diversifying livelihood systems, the market plays a pivotal role. Without the mechanism to develop the market in place, individuals with the potential to be entrepreneurs cannot move on to a different livelihood. It is essential to put the market mechanism in place. This requires a number of undertakings on the part of the government. Let’s not forget that we are here assuming good governance and its institutions in place. Good governance by itself dispels the potential for conflict which in turn positively affects the flow of primary goods and commodities. Being lenient to let the market flourish with essential goods and commodities is important. It is necessary to create the atmosphere of the prevalence of the market. This can be supplemented with human capital, a trained human power on managing small scale business. That in turn will introduce and boost increasing social necessities. The government can even learn from the South Korean experience and literally give cash to few enterprising individuals to start business and show by way of example that one can succeed in business. The creation of such a mechanism coupled with the general conducive climate can attract pastoralists to move on to such business.

**A livestock market mechanism**

Throughout, the fundamental demand of pastoralists has always been market for their cattle. Because, their demand for a market was not heeded, they are compelled to sell their cattle to market sights far away from their places and even resort to cross-border trade to neighbouring countries. This way of cattle trade has never been beneficial to them that they still persist in their demand for a market that is beneficial to them. Lack of market and other mechanisms of trade associated with it such as processing dry meat (for the local market) and modern meat processing (for export) have debilitating effect when calamities such as long drought occur that wipes out cattle sometimes up to more than pastoral cattle. In terms of cash and property, this is a huge loss.

The fact that an effective livestock marketing mechanism is crucial to pastoral communities is indisputable. But why is livestock marketing so crucial? It is crucial for three main reasons; (1) for pastoral food security at normal times, (2) as a lee way at times of drought and (3) for pastoral accumulation.

**I**. Pastoralists lead their life by entering trade with other communities by exchanging their cattle for grain and for other necessities. In view of the dynamic nature of pastoral life in face of an increasingly changing surrounding, pastoral communities will feel secure if they acquire cash that enables them to cope with the changing environment. Sending their children to school and having access to modern medical facilities are among the requirements to cope with the change. That in the final analysis will entail change in the way of life of their children.

From the right perspective too, pastoralists must have equal right with farmers who are accorded with all the support that the government can muster in terms of enabling them with access to the market. To lead a normal life, pastoralists need a market mechanism just like anybody else who is disposed to sell whatever surplus she/he has.

**II**. At times of a long drawn drought, pastoral cattle will be at the risk of being wiped out. In the 1997 drought, the Borana pastoralist community lost close to 97% of its cattle. At that point on time the worry was not to save the cattle, which was too late to do so, but to save even a few of them for breed for the future. The big problem that pastoralists face is how to dispense with their cattle in face of such disasters. A few NGOs tried a project to process dry meat in exchange for cash to pastoralists.

Setting up a market mechanism for pastoral livestock is also helpful at such times of disaster. That will also reduce the urge on the part of pastoralists to over-stock and encourage them to try another trade.

**III.** The most important necessity of an effective livestock mechanism for pastoralists is for the process of diversification of means of livelihood that leads towards accumulation. There are quite a number of conditions that may drive pastoralists towards diversification namely, the threat that pastoral life faces as a result of external dynamics and the dynamics of change within itself. If good governance is institutionalized imbued with a pedagogic mission that we are going to describe later, the pastoral confidence and trust will grow and that is an ideal factor for resorting to move towards a different trade. The mentality of traditional communities is not easy to change and from a distance. Pastoralists want to see that institutions of governance are there for them, to help them and their children and the community. And where governance has been associated with an administration completely alien and unpopular, there is so much expected from the government in terms of policy and concrete practice to prove that it stands for the community.

Effective and, if possible also efficient, livestock marketing mechanism plays a crucial role in the pastoral accumulation process. The existence of such mechanism will encourage pastoralists to start diversifying their livelihood and through time start accumulating in a different trade. This paper contends that pastoral accumulation has a better chance of success that other subsistence economies due to some leverage that pastoralism has. What are these advantages?

* 1. In the first place, Ethiopia has the largest cattle per head in Africa. Nevertheless, whether we are first or second is immaterial to the discussion at hand. What is important is that this is the wealth that Ethiopia has and is well known for. This is a huge wealth that one has to appreciate and try to make use of it. As an Amharic saying has it: “A bronze at hand is equivalent to having gold.” Livestock is the gold that Ethiopia has. The best that the country does to make use of this wealth is only natural. Developing a strategy of accumulation on the basis of availability of wealth is again a natural course.
  2. Compared to the process of accumulation based on crop cultivation, what pastoral accumulation requires in terms of capital investment is much less. What pastoralists all have to do is bring their cattle to the market and all what the government has to do is set up a market mechanism.
  3. Compared to the peasant sector and given the required assistance form the government in terms of water harvesting, pastoral livestock production is much less precarious.
  4. If properly strategized, there exists a vast natural resource to support pastoral accumulation. So many of the great rivers of the country pass through pastoral land and there exist a vast natural resource to complement and support livestock trade.
  5. If the government succeeds to export cattle, given the high demand for organic meat in industrial countries, Ethiopia can have a high foreign exchange earning through cattle export.
  6. If the government invests itself or encourages investors to invest in meat processing plants and other plants accessories to livestock such as leather, that can accelerate the rate of pastoral cattle entering the market thereby boosting the financial capacity of the community enabling it to diversify livelihood, send their children to school and have access to modern medication.
  7. Having witnessed the precarious nature of peasant agriculture, there is increasing interest on the part of donors on pastoral development. That can enable the government to access donor money if it comes up with a proper pastoral development strategy.

**Tasks of the government**

Indeed, what we described above cannot be realised without the active and conscious role of the government. There are crucial areas where government can make interventions to assure the success of pastoral efforts towards livelihood diversification and accumulation. We cannot help but be naive when it comes to expecting the government to do what it has to do. Let’s broadly enumerate these tasks that are strategic and historical.

**Policy consultation:** It is absolutely imperative that the government forms policy forums where pastoral development strategies and policies be discussed at the federal as well as at regional levels. At the federal level it is important that the government forms a national pastoral development policy forum where all stakeholders of pastoral development including academics participate. At regional levels, pastoral development policy forums can also be established to look closely at the development process in the respective regions.

**Conducive environment:** As described above an enabling policy environment is a crucial component for the pastoral accumulation process.

**Livestock Trade Promotion:** The government needs to conduct an intensive, effective and professional trade promotion particularly in Western Europe and the Arab World as regards livestock, leather and associated commodities. It has to target specific countries where it can have access to their market. Needless to say that this task is difficult as European Countries follow a policy of protecting their agriculture. That in turn requires lobbying through civic organizations in Europe.

In the Arab World and in the Gulf countries in particular, there was livestock trade boycott against Ethiopia for fear of Rift Valley Fever that beset neighbouring Kenya. Under such circumstances it is important to launch trade promotion campaign assuring that so and so cattle disease does not exist in Ethiopia.

**Livestock health:** In face of the existence of various forms of cattle diseases that can also affect humans, it is absolutely crucial to launch a large-scale and permanent campaign to assure livestock health. The government has to invest in training programmes to produce veterinarians and community animal health workers; liberalize its rules and allow veterinary privatization through a credit system, institutionalize a system of surveillance of diseases, and so on.

**Supporting programmes:** Like it does to peasant communities through its agricultural extension programmes, the government also needs to support the pastoral livestock- production system. It has to promote human health services, education system and mobile schools in particular, water development and so on.

**Cooperation with NGOs:** NGOs have an immense role to play in pastoral development. The government has to recognise this and come into active cooperation with them. NGOs have the expertise and experience in pastoral development that the government can tap and cooperate with.

**Dairy industries**

**Strategic interventions** (quality staffing, specialized education, conscious investment)