



Pastoralists Development Network of Kenya

Which Groups and individuals experience stigmatization?

Kenya is located at the east coast of Africa; the total area of the country is 580,370 square Kilometers (km²). The country is subdivided into 47 administrative counties and the altitude varies from sea level to the peak of Mt. Kenya, situated north of the capital Nairobi, which is 5,199 meters (m) above sea level.

According to a world Bank report 2000, Kenya is a water-scarce country, with surface water coverage of only 2% and registering a water scarce category of 647m³ per capita against the global benchmark of 1 000m³. The Ministry of Environment and National Resources, Kenya National Assessment Report shows that the annual surface water potential is estimated at only 19 590 million cubic metres and groundwater potential estimated at 619 million cubic metres.

Out of a total area of 583 000 sq. km. (225 000 sq. miles), only 20% is medium to high potential agricultural land and the rest mainly arid or semi-arid. Interestingly, it is important to note that approximately 75% of the country's populations live within the medium to high potential agricultural land while 25% live in the arid and semi-arid lands. (Draft National land policy)

Kenya is divided into high potential and low potential areas; high potential regions consist of Highlands and fertile lands and low potential areas mainly comprises of Arid and semi arid areas. Pastoralist communities in Kenya are numerically insignificant and are among the marginalized communities in Kenya due to colonial legacy, legal and policy disenfranchisement. They occupy arid and semi-arid parts of the country, and face myriad of climatic conditions.

Due to their peripheral position in the country, the pastoralist communities have been treated as a national after-thought by the Government. Their territories are described by poor infrastructure, lack of health facilities, inadequate schools and poor communication.

In Kenya, the water Act came into force in 2003 and this lead to the establishment of the water management board and institution to manage water and sanitation services. The Government therefore committed itself to provide water and sanitary services and thus adopted a rights based approach in provision of this resource. A number of key policies were also developed later as part reforms in the water sector. These policies include the National Water Resources Management Strategy (2005-2008), the National Water Services Strategy (2007-2015), the Water Services Regulatory Board



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Tariff Guidelines and Model (2007) and the ecological interests and the Pro-Poor Implementation Plan for Water Supply and Sanitation (PIIP - WSS) 2007.

Through these policies the mandate of water distribution has been devolved and thus allows other stakeholders to get involved in this process to ensure increased accessibility and accountability in the water sector. However this has not been achieved since the marginalized groups such as pastoralists, the poor, slum dwellers, women, the aged and the people with disability have not been able to access and utilize this resource to meet their needs.

How are different groups and individuals affected?

Pastoralist way of life involves mobility in search of pasture as an environment sustainability strategy. Therefore these mainly present many challenges to the communities to access water. Water being a scarce resource in Arid and semi arid lands, the pastoralists communities walk for long distances in search of water. As a result therefore they might lose their lives or even livestock before they get to the next watering point because of competition for the resource among communities, clans, stock and wildlife.

It is also important to note that pastoralist communities get their water from wells and rivers. These water bodies are neither hygienic nor for human consumption. This situation leads to water borne diseases thus leading to deaths since there is no immediate medical attention. Through water contamination several livestock also spread diseases to others leading to high number of deaths. Since health facilities are located far away from these areas, nothing is actually done to prevent the spread of water borne diseases and therefore leading to immense suffering by these communities.



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Photo: Herders walk pass of their dead cows in Northeastern Kenya. By Shadrack Kavilu.

Women in the pastoralist communities are further marginalized when it comes to accessing water. They are the best managers of natural resources because of their closeness to and high dependence on natural resources and especially water. Pastoralist women must therefore work longer and harder than men, fulfilling 'female' roles in the household, such as fetching water. This labour is in such demand that girls are often removed from school in order to work. Women do not attend many of the social occasions at which men make decisions that affect the whole community. They are excluded from the societal roles and are also not consulted in decision making.

Resource based conflicts also arises when water becomes scarce. Neighboring pastoralist communities fight each other to acquire these resources. Pastoralist women who are mainly seen as the mothers of future generations of 'the enemy' are therefore at risk of abduction, rape and murder. They also bear the burden of supporting their households in times of war.



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A pastoralist woman going to fetch water; source PDNK

In Kenya the pastoralists communities are not aware to their right to water and sanitation, this is because they lack the vital knowledge on the Government's obligation to ensure access and also its role to guarantee their access to this resources. Therefore they are not empowered to demand for their rights to access these services from their Government; this leads to further marginalization, neglect, under production of both income and livelihoods.

How is stigmatization relevant to access to water and sanitation?

According to sessional paper number 10 of 1965, Kenya is divided into high potential areas and low potential areas according to its production rate. The high potential areas are mainly the fertile land, where farming of mainly cash and food crops are carried out. Low potential areas include arid and semi arid areas where there is little farming activity



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since the topography of these lands are characterized by poor terrains, low rainfall and infertile soils. These regions are classified by the Government as waste lands; this is because the Government did not see any economic significance of these lands this is despite the fact that 90% of livestock herd and eco tourism interests are within the ASALs. While pastoralism has endured the harsh climatic conditions for millennia, the situation is being worsened by the climate change and global warming which is affecting nearly the whole world.

Since these lands are mainly at the periphery of the country, the Government has done very little to ensure sustained development in these areas. There are also notions of stigmatization where the occupants of these lands are seen as barbaric and uncivilized due to their nomadic way of life and adherence to their traditions and cultures.

There are few watering points which have been established by Government and the few existing ones are also drying up because of rainfall scarcity in Kenya. The rivers are also seasonal and thus dry up during the drought. Affordability is also another issue in provision of water and sanitation in Kenya. Most pastoralist communities mainly depend on their livestock as their source of income and therefore when they lose their livestock which is their main source of livelihood, poverty strikes them. This makes it impossible for them to afford these services. Today poverty index among these communities range between 65-80%.



A man fetching dirty water for drinking. Source UN news centre

The Kenyan Government does not also recognize pastoralism as a viable way of life. However this is not the case because pastoralism contributes to the country's GDP by providing milk, skin, meat and fat. A study commissioned by IGAD in 2011 established



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that the contribution of livestock to the GDP is under valued by over 120% hence the minimal Government investment in the sector.

What Measures are being undertaken to address and overcome stigmatization?

The Government of Kenya has been involved effortlessly in ensuring safe and accessible water for all and adhered to WHO guidelines to provide quality water and sanitation services. However access in ASAL areas is still a big burden to the Government. As the country moves towards devolved governance in the ASALs, water and security is emerging top on the list of priorities due to marginalization.

The water Act has a section which addressed the issue of non-discrimination and inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups. The existing policies have also put in place several policies to curb discrimination and physical accessibility of water and sanitation services. However there has been disconnects between several stakeholders who are involved in provision of water thus leading to implementation problems.

Pro-Poor Implementation Plan for Water Supply and Sanitation has also been established to ensure the poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups have access to water. However these groups have little information on this sector because they were not consulted nor participated in the initial processes.

Several NGOs have tried to conduct several studies to show the importance of pastoralism to the country's GDP for instance IGAD, Livestock policy initiative, WISP, IIED e.t.c. A lot has also been done to change the attitudes of other communities towards pastoralists. However the results yielded are not substantial due to stereotypes. Some stakeholders have also participated in providing water in these areas by digging dams, wells and water pans; but their efforts are mainly unsuccessful because underlying issues such as drought also plays a role to limit access to this resource.

Through policy advocacy, the civil society organizations have also tried to ensure that these policies also do take into consideration the issues of pastoralist communities in Kenya. However policy formulation is not just a matter of drafting laws and strategies but also mobilizing requisite resources to implement them. And on the other hand it's



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really useless for a Government to recognize the right to water and sanitation and do nothing to realize the same.