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Delivering the agenda

Addressing chronic under-development in Kenya's arid lands

Due to economic and political marginalisation, the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) are today the most under-developed areas of Kenya. The pastoral inhabitants of these lands have both the right and the ability to maintain a decent livelihood but have been denied an appropriate and effective development policy for decades. The current drought-related crisis has put their plight into the international spotlight, and now is the time for the Kenyan government to deliver on its long-promised development agenda.

Summary

Three and a half million people are currently suffering one of the worst drought-related crises in Kenya's history. The trigger for this was low rainfall but the underlying cause is a history of under-investment and neglect by central government. Without government action to drive its plan for the sustainable development of the arid lands through the political system, more lives will be lost to worsening, recurrent drought and chronic under-development.

The arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of Kenya make up more than 80 per cent of the country's land mass, and are home to more than 30 per cent of the population and nearly half its livestock. Nomadic pastoralism, the predominant livelihood in the ASALs, is the only form of productive land use through periods of poor and erratic rains; indeed, it is difficult to conceive of a livelihood more suited to this environment.

The livestock sector in the ASALs accounts for 90 per cent of employment and 95 per cent of household income, and contributes roughly five per cent of GDP. Pastoralists are also the custodians of the dryland environments inhabited by Kenya's world-famous wildlife, which contribute to a tourist trade worth more than 50 billion Kenyan shillings (\$700m) each year. If supported by the effective implementation of the right policy framework, pastoralists could make a substantially larger contribution to the national economy.

Years of economic and political marginalisation, coupled with inappropriate development policies, have resulted in the ASALs being the most under-developed areas of Kenya. Sixty-four per cent of people in the arid north-eastern province live below the poverty line, compared with a national average of 53 per cent. Basic services are not adequately provided nor adapted to the population's needs, which means that the inhabitants have poorer health and lower levels of education than people in the rest of the country. There has been a severe lack of public and private investment in infrastructure and economic development, combined with poor access to markets. The net effect is increasing insecurity, in which the more vulnerable in society — pastoralist women in particular — are the greatest losers.

Added to this chronic under-development is another problem characteristic of the ASALs — cyclical drought. As women traditionally bear the responsibility to feed their family and to collect and manage water, the impact of the current crisis has hit women the hardest. The acute conditions of the current drought-related crisis have caused massive livestock losses for pastoralists, with cattle losses as high as 95 per cent anticipated in the worst-affected areas before the April/May rains arrive. The forecast for total livestock losses in the ASALs stands at 70 per cent. The immediate losses have provoked a collapse of local markets, with as many as three-quarters of local outlets already closed. The gravity of the current situation stems

from the erosion of the traditional coping mechanisms by which people sustain themselves, which is a product of shorter recovery periods between droughts and years of neglect by central government. If an appropriate ASAL development policy framework and the subsequent investment that it would bring were in place, the current — and previous — drought-related crises would not have been so disastrous for pastoralist communities.

If one merely adds the projected livestock losses of \$546m and the \$258m cost of responding to the humanitarian emergency, the immediate and direct economic cost of the current crisis is at least \$800m. Indirect economic costs will push the figure far higher. In comparison, the government estimates that a figure of \$3bn is required for the development of the ASALs over a period of 15 years. It is clear that investing in long-term development is much more cost-effective than providing funding for recurrent large-scale humanitarian emergencies.

The government's current National Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya was produced following extensive consultation and is widely accepted as an effective policy for the development of the ASALs. The involvement of local communities in their own development is at the heart of the policy. The government proposes that pastoralism and agro-pastoralism will be supported through improvements in water provision, grazing, rangeland management, animal health, and marketing, but diversification of livelihoods for men and women is also a vital component of the plan. The policy recommends essential support for the tenure systems of land use and ownership, including well-defined conditions relating to the quality of use and the provision of a legal framework through which land- and resource-use disputes can be resolved. The ASAL areas will receive improved provision of basic services such as education, health, and water. Mobile schools and outreach clinics will be used where appropriate. Interdependence with non-ASAL areas and, therefore, improved communication networks and infrastructure will also be key, as will the provision of appropriate financial services, particularly for pastoralists. Reducing people's vulnerability to natural hazards and food insecurity is a central part of the plan, and the ASAL development policy will be clearly linked with the national disaster management framework.

The policies in the ASAL plan will not eradicate poverty completely and certainly not immediately. However, they will significantly reduce the incidence of poverty, eliminating the disparity with other parts of the country, and, equally importantly, they will increase the resilience of people to drought-related crises.

After a lengthy period of consultation, the ASAL policy was produced and sessional papers were ready in April/May 2005 for submission to the Cabinet and then for parliamentary consideration. However, almost one year later, it still has not reached the Cabinet's agenda. There are a number of reasons behind the current stagnation in the political process, including a generally sluggish legislative process and an absence of consensus within government regarding the policy. It is imperative that the government wins the arguments for the need for ASAL development amongst key ministries, and that it holds the ministries accountable to this decision. Furthermore, if implementation of the policy is to be a success, the government has to be able to rely on long-term assistance from donors, in addition to its own

funds. In providing long-term funding, donors will also be playing a critical role in keeping the issue of ASAL development on the political agenda beyond the current period when the crisis is acute and getting international attention.

The people of the ASALs have been denied an appropriate and effective development policy for decades. It is time for such a policy to be delivered. After more than 20 years of analysis of the problems of the ASALs, the delay in policy-making cannot be due to a lack of understanding, but rather to a lack of political engagement and prioritisation.

Oxfam is calling for:

- **The Kenyan Parliament to pass legislation to endorse the current National Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya by the end of 2006;**
- **Rapid implementation of the National Policy to begin before the end of 2006.**

In the short term this will require:

- **Renewed effort from the Kenyan government to push the current policy through the political system during the current national emergency;**
- **Immediate action within the Kenyan government to ensure that key implementing ministries accept the current policy and are able to demonstrate a united front in tackling ASAL development;**
- **Immediate budget prioritisation for arid lands development within the Kenyan government, and ministries to be held accountable to this decision; and**
- **Active support from the international donor community for the funding and implementation of the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya.**

1 Introduction

This paper seeks to reveal the human and economic costs and causes of the continued under-development of Kenya's ASALs. Without government action to drive its current National Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya through the political system, more lives and more government revenue will be lost to worsening, recurrent drought and chronic under-development. The paper starts by giving a brief description of Kenya's ASALs and the importance of pastoralism as the dominant livelihood in these areas. The next section examines in detail the consequences of not having an ASAL policy in place, i.e. the impact of decades of under-development and of cyclical drought. The third section gives a brief overview of the solutions proposed for the ASALs by the government policy document, which has been widely accepted. The final section outlines what actions government and donors need to take to ensure that ASAL development becomes a reality.

2 The characteristics of Kenya's ASALs

What are the ASALs?

The arid and semi-arid lands of Kenya make up more than 80 per cent of the country's land mass, and are home to more than 30 per cent of its total human population and nearly half its livestock population.¹ Eleven districts in Kenya are classified as arid, 19 as semi-arid, and six as having pockets of arid and semi-arid conditions. This means that, in total, the government classifies 36 out of Kenya's 70 districts as ASALs – see Table 1 on the next page.

Table 1: ASAL districts classified by extent of aridity

Category	Districts	% Total of ASAL area
A. 100% ASAL	Turkana, Moyale, Marsabit, Isiolo, Wajir, Mandera, Garissa, Ijara	62%
B. 85-100% ASAL	Kitui, Makueni, Tana River, Taita Taveta, Kajiado, Samburu	25%
C. 50-85% ASAL	Machakos, Mbeere, Tharaka, Laikipia, West Pokot, Kwale, Kilifi, Baringo, Meru North	8%
D. 30-50% ASAL	Lamu, Narok, Malindi, Keiyo, Marakwet	3%
E. 10-25% ASAL	Nyeri (Kieni), Rachuonyo, Suba, Kuria Thika, Koibatek	2%

Source: Adapted from the 1992 ASAL development policy, Government of Kenya.

The arid districts are hot and dry, with low and erratic rainfall. These districts are predominantly pastoralist and agro-pastoralist, with large areas of land suitable only for supporting livestock grazing systems. The semi-arid lands have more diverse characteristics. They are also a mixture of agro-pastoral and pastoral, but include some extensive irrigated areas, wetlands, and protected areas such as national parks. Overall, in the 36 designated districts pastoralism is the predominant livelihood, involving 70 per cent of the population in these districts. The fate of Kenya's pastoralists, therefore, is inextricably linked with that of the arid lands they inhabit.

Pastoralism in the ASALs

After many years of a push towards sedentarisation there is now growing recognition that mobile pastoralism is the most viable and sustainable form of production and land use in Kenya's ASALs. Nomadic pastoralism is well adapted to the arid environment, being the only form of productive land use through periods of poor and erratic rainfall. The UNDP reports that where mobile livestock management continues unhampered, it has helped in the conservation of biodiversity, improved livelihoods, and resulted in sustainable land management. Where it is constrained by land use/land tenure changes, sedentarisation, and policy disincentives, it has led to serious overgrazing, land degradation, and poverty.² Furthermore, it has been estimated in the past that the costs involved in putting rangelands to other uses could be 50 times higher than the

costs of supporting current land use systems, i.e. pastoralism, in the ASALs.³

Pastoralists in the ASALs supply the majority of the meat consumed in Kenya. Livestock production – of which around 50 per cent nationally is concentrated in the ASALs – contributed ten per cent of Kenya's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2002 and 25 per cent in 2001.⁴ There is clearly room for growth in the sector, as hundreds of thousands of head of livestock are sold into Kenya from Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Somalia each year.⁵ Opportunities for increasing trade flows between Kenya and its neighbouring countries are huge, if supported by improvements in market access and infrastructure.

Pastoralism is the biggest income provider in the ASALs, with the livestock sector accounting for 90 per cent of employment and 95 per cent of household income.⁶ In fact, the Kenyan Pastoralist Thematic Group estimates that pastoralism provides direct employment and livelihoods for over 3.5m Kenyans.⁷ Pastoralists are also the custodians of the dryland environments inhabited by Kenya's world-famous wildlife, areas that contribute to a tourist trade worth more than 50 billion Kenyan shillings (approximately \$700m) every year.⁸ Unfortunately the pastoralists themselves retain hardly any of this income. However, it is clear that pastoralism is a viable livelihood and that it contributes significantly to the national economy. If supported by the implementation of an effective policy framework, this contribution could be substantially larger.

The need for special treatment

It is widely recognised – within the Kenyan government, Kenyan civil society, and international aid agencies – that the ASALs need special attention within national poverty reduction plans. The Kenyan government openly states that its own experience has shown that addressing the ASALs within other policy frameworks obscures the special needs and requirements of these areas.

An example of the government's broad-brush approach to development policy can be found in its allocation of the development budget. In the past, the majority of the funds available have been allocated to so-called 'high-potential' areas of the country. These districts have received up to ten times the amounts allocated to the arid districts, because it was believed that they were more productive and that wealth would somehow 'trickle down' to the arid areas.⁹ This has not happened. However, the government accurately sums up the problem faced by the ASALs, and states its intent:

*'Because of their fragile ecosystems, unfavourable development policies, and historical marginalisation, these areas represent a major development challenge for the Government and the entire people of Kenya. What has been lacking for years is adequate attention to the ASALs, a proper understanding of the needs and potential of the ASAL communities, coupled with inadequate investment. But the Government is now committed to reversing these negative socio-economic trends in the ASALs and to bring about true development.'*¹⁰

3 The consequences of not having an ASAL policy in place

Chronic under-development

Years of economic and political marginalisation, coupled with inappropriate development policies, mean that the ASALs are today the most under-developed areas of Kenya. Taken together, the pastoralist areas have the highest incidences of poverty and the lowest level of access to basic services of any in the country.¹¹ Census statistics indicate that some 64 per cent of people in the north-eastern province live below the poverty line, compared with a national average of 53 per cent.¹² More recent studies indicate that pastoralist wealth in the north-eastern province area has declined by more than 50 per cent over the past ten years.¹³

Despite having some strong social institutions, in general the pastoralist areas are politically weak and disorganised, due to their political marginalisation and a lack of leadership skills. Pastoralist communities are denied a voice in decision-making because they have little political representation. Traditional land rights have not been respected by development policies in the past and greater pressure has been put on grazing lands and water resources, as populations have increased and grazing land has been taken for cultivation, conservation areas, and state use.

The net effect is one of increasing insecurity, in which the more vulnerable people in society — pastoralist women in particular — are the greatest losers. Women's traditional tasks have become more difficult and time-consuming, due to the scarcity of resources caused by environmental degradation in ASAL areas. On top of this, increasing numbers of men are seeking employment away from

home in order to supplement progressively more fragile incomes. As a result, more responsibilities are falling on women, who are often unable to cope with the increased workload. In addition to their many domestic tasks such as caring for children and fetching water and firewood, women now have to take on responsibility for herding and livestock rearing. In spite of their increased responsibilities, women still have less access than men to resources such as education, credit, and land.

Basic services are not adequately provided nor adapted to the population of the ASALs, which means the inhabitants have poorer health and lower levels of education than people in the rest of the country. Existing service provision does not take into account the nomadic nature of pastoralism. Mobile schools and outreach clinics could solve this problem, but so far these have not been delivered in sufficient measure. Education is critical in creating alternatives for the pastoralist population, so that some of them at least have the opportunity to go on to further education and to take jobs in other sectors. As much as pastoralism is in itself a viable economic activity, there is also a need to find ways of alleviating the growing population pressure on the land, as well as increasing the range of cash sources available to pastoralist families, many of whom currently rely on remittances sent from family members working elsewhere.

There has been a severe lack of either public or private investment in infrastructure and economic development, combined with poor access to markets. There are few opportunities for income diversification and this has led to the stagnation of incomes and to unemployment. Pastoralists have survived until now without the support of appropriate development policies at the national level, which is in itself a testament to their resilience. However, their livelihoods have been considerably weakened. On top of this chronic under-development comes another characteristic of the ASALs: recurrent drought. These two threats together are threatening to eclipse the pastoralist way of life.

Worsening impact of cyclical drought

The impact on the population of recurrent drought-related crises in Kenya is rising exponentially (with the exception of 1995-6), as Table 2 on the next page demonstrates:

Table 2: Numbers affected by drought in Kenya, 1975–2006¹⁴

Year	Number of people affected
1975	16,000
1977	20,000
1980	40,000
1984	200,000
1992	1.5 million
1995–6	1.4 million
1999–2000	4.4 million
2004–06	2.5 million initially to 3.5 million currently estimated

Sources: National Disaster Management Policy, Republic of Kenya, 2004; and rapid food security assessments by the Kenya Food Security Steering Group.

Peak drought conditions recur about every four to five years,¹⁵ but it is now arguable that drought conditions are becoming the norm and non-drought years the exception, especially in the ASALs. The rapid recurrence of drought-related shocks leaves inadequate recovery time before the next shock occurs. This means that increasing numbers of households, the majority of them pastoralists, are losing their capacity to participate economically. The progressive exhaustion of resources leaves people with little capacity to sustain themselves in either critical or normal times, and for many this leads to destitution. As their vulnerability has deepened as a result of repeated crises, pastoralists have become increasingly reliant on wild foods, firewood and charcoal production, and petty labour as means of survival.

As women traditionally bear the responsibility to feed their family and to collect and manage water, the impact of the current crisis has arguably hit women the hardest. Oxfam reports from Wajir have suggested that the loss of donkeys, which are key for the transport of water, has made this task much more onerous and time-consuming for women. There are also anecdotal reports that more women are being forced to seek casual employment away from home in order to meet their responsibility for feeding their family. In some cases, prostitution is the only form of employment available to them. With the men travelling further afield to look for pasture, the risk of sexual violence to the women and girls left behind increases, particularly in times of hardship when inter-family tensions might be augmented.

The acute conditions seen in the current drought-related crisis have led to massive losses of livestock among pastoralists, with cattle losses as high as 95 per cent anticipated in the worst-affected areas before the rains arrive in April/May. The forecast for total livestock losses in the ASALs stands at 70 per cent. The immediate losses have provoked a collapse of local markets, with as many as three-quarters of local outlets already closed.¹⁶ The independent capacity of pastoralists is severely undermined and their recovery over the longer term, following such massive losses of assets, is an enormous challenge.

The current crisis has already pushed the worst-affected people into compromises on health and nutrition, and the situation threatens to deepen over the coming months. Malnutrition rates¹⁷ in north-eastern Kenya are approaching double the WHO emergency threshold of 15 per cent global acute malnutrition. In real terms, this means that as many as one-third of children under five in these areas are already nutritionally compromised and in a highly fragile physical condition. Moreover, such alarmingly high rates of malnutrition have become the norm in this area. As the principal carers, women bear the burden of rising malnutrition rates within their family. Furthermore, pregnant and breast-feeding women will be particularly susceptible to malnutrition.

Poor rains do not inevitably equate with crisis. In the current case they are the trigger rather than the cause of the emergency. Obviously, low rainfall causes difficulties for pastoralists, but the gravity of the current situation stems more from the erosion of the traditional coping mechanisms by which people sustain themselves through periods of drought. This is a product of shorter recovery periods between droughts and years of neglect by central government. If an appropriate ASAL development policy framework and the subsequent investment that it would bring were in place, the current – and previous – drought-related crises would not have been so disastrous for pastoralist communities.

Without investment in development, the people of the ASALs will find it increasingly difficult to sustain themselves through recurrent drought-related crises. The impact of these crises will increase in severity and each time recovery will take longer and longer. In reality it will take some time to implement an ASAL development policy. Even if legislation was to be produced and implementation commenced immediately, the benefits of the policy would not be felt by the people of the ASALs for at least a year or so. Cyclical drought, which has led to the current humanitarian crisis in Kenya's ASALs, needs to be addressed by the government in a timely and effective

manner and in a way that complements its approach to ASAL development.¹⁸

The cost for Kenya of such neglect is both human and financial. Emergency response on the scale that is required to tackle the current crisis will cost hundreds of millions of dollars, and part of this will have to come from central government funds. However, funding an emergency response is not the only financial loss associated with the lack of a development policy for the ASALs.

Loss of income and revenue for the Kenyan economy

The ASALs are home to 30 per cent of Kenya's population and, even without achieving its full potential, pastoralism makes a significant contribution to Kenya's GDP. This means that the effect of the under-developed and drought-ravaged ASALs on the country's overall economic growth is huge.

Due to the lack of reliable, even basic, statistical data coming out of the arid lands, it is difficult to calculate the full impact of under-development in terms of lost revenue. The absence of precise data is certainly an issue the government will have to address if it is to effectively monitor the progress of development in the ASALs. Nevertheless, a crude calculation of the losses of revenue associated with cyclical drought and the related under-development that underpins these repeated crises is informative.

Livestock production – of which around 50 per cent nationally is concentrated in the ASALs – contributed ten per cent of Kenya's GDP in 2002 (although this figure changes from year to year), so we can assume that livestock production in the ASALs contributes roughly five per cent of national GDP. Livestock losses during the current crisis were estimated by Oxfam to be 70 per cent by the beginning of April 2006. The revenue lost can therefore be estimated by calculating 70 per cent of 5 per cent of GDP. Taking the 2004 GDP figure of \$15.6bn, which is the latest available, lost revenue due to livestock mortality amounts to \$546m, or 3.5 per cent of GDP.¹⁹

Combine this with the Government of Kenya's existing appeal for the sum of \$258m to cover the direct costs of responding to the current drought over a 12-month period (which does not include direct funding for NGOs or money from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund²⁰ or the regional consolidated appeal), and the figure reaches at least \$800m.

The investment plan attached to the government's ASAL development policy recommends spending approximately \$3bn (217 billion Kenyan shillings) over 15 years, so this estimated loss of over \$800m in one year is a hugely significant amount. It is clear that providing funding for recurrent large-scale humanitarian emergencies is far less cost-effective than investing in long-term development in order to lessen the extent and impact of such crises.

Of course, this \$800m figure does not take into account lost income in marginal agricultural areas affected by drought nor does it include indirect (or what the Overseas Development Institute terms 'secondary flow') impacts of disaster shock spreading through the economy. These include the impact on output and consumption of goods and services, the balance of payments, the government budget and, ultimately, economic growth, income distribution, and the incidence of poverty.²¹

The loss of both economic output and purchasing power of the 3.5m Kenyans affected by the current drought – ten per cent of the population – cannot be so easily estimated, but it will inevitably have a negative impact. The ODI estimates that in the drought during the 1980s in Zimbabwe, the drought-related loss of stature in pre-school children was associated with a loss in lifetime earnings of 7–12 per cent.²²

It is clear that a development policy that supports existing livelihoods, offers pastoralists more life choices through improved access to education and training, and encourages the creation of employment for the people of the ASALs would result in a considerable boost to Kenya's GDP, as well as going some way to reducing the human and financial impacts of recurrent drought-related crises. The government understands the importance of the ASALs to the rest of Kenya's economy:

*'Kenya will not achieve sustained growth in the national economy as long as the ASALs and their enormous resources are not factored into effective national planning and development.'*²³

Now is the time for the government to act on this understanding. If it does not act, worsening humanitarian crises, deepening poverty, and the inevitable loss of revenue that accompanies these trends will be the result.

4 Solutions to the problem: the ASAL development policy

The final draft of the government's National Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya was completed in February 2005, with further revisions made in January 2006. The document was produced after extensive consultation within government, UN agencies, international NGOs, and Kenyan civil society, and it is widely believed that it is an effective policy for the development of the ASALs.

In the document, the government sets out a comprehensive framework plan outlining policy, implementation, and investment for ASAL development. At the centre of the plan is a policy of involving the communities of the ASALs in their own development. This will require support for the development of local institutions and organisations, as well as improved local government and more decentralised planning. The government proposes that pastoralism and agro-pastoralism will be supported through improvements in water provision, grazing, rangeland management, animal health, and marketing, but diversification of livelihoods for men and women is also a vital component of the plan. The policy recommends essential support for the tenure systems of land use and ownership in operation amongst pastoralist groups, with well-defined conditions relating to the quality of use and the provision of a legal framework through which land- and resource-use disputes can be resolved. Gender concerns must be taken into account to ensure that women are given equal rights over land and other critical resources. In addition, changes in land use policies and planning will be necessary to halt further encroachment by farmers and nature conservationists onto pastoral land.

It is the government's stated intention to ensure that the ASALs are no longer disadvantaged in terms of national resource allocation and that they receive the attention they deserve, both in terms of the provision of basic services such as education, health, and water, and with regard to wealth and employment creation. Mobile schools and outreach clinics will be used where appropriate. Improvements in education for women will also require awareness-raising on the importance of girls' education, increased employment opportunities for women, and a reduction in childhood pregnancies, which inevitably leads to girls dropping out of the education system.

Interdependence with non-ASAL areas and therefore improved communication networks and infrastructure will also be key, as will the provision of appropriate financial services, particularly for

pastoralists. Reducing people's vulnerability to natural hazards and food insecurity is a central part of the plan, and the ASAL development policy will be clearly linked with the national disaster management framework. Finally, there will be further investment in peace committees to promote conflict reduction.

Numerous specialists in the field of ASAL development echo the policy guidelines outlined in the plan. International NGOs, UN agencies, and most importantly pastoralist groups themselves raise similar issues and put forward similar solutions. All of the top ten priority intervention areas for poverty reduction specified by pastoralist groups within the Pastoralist Thematic Group Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) are included in the policy document.

The policies in the ASAL plan will not eradicate poverty completely and certainly not immediately. However, they will significantly reduce the incidence of poverty, eliminating the disparity with other parts of the country, and, equally importantly, will increase the resilience of people to drought-related crises. Women should have improved access to land, credit, and basic services with progress made towards income equality between men and women.

The voice of pastoralist communities should be strengthened within Kenya and the pastoralist way of life better supported through improvements in land use and ownership, better service provision and access to markets. However, due to population pressures on the land and the need for income diversification, development will mean that some pastoralist individuals and families find employment in different sectors.

While on the whole the policy document is recognised as putting forward good policy, there are some concerns. For instance, the policy applies to a period of 10–15 years of investment and development, and it is critical therefore that all government departments and international donors are committed to its long-term roll-out, otherwise it is destined to fail. The next section looks in more detail at some of the barriers to the successful adoption and implementation of the ASAL development policy, and how they could be overcome.

5 Making it happen: the need for political consensus

The need for full government support

Since 1979, a number of ASAL development policies have been produced, but have subsequently failed because they did not address the special characteristics of the ASALs and the communities who live in them.²⁴ Nor were those communities involved in the formulation of such policies. The architects of the current government policy document have learned from these past failures, and as a result the document has won wide acceptance. After a lengthy period of consultation, the ASAL policy was produced and sessional papers were ready in April/May 2005 for submission to the Cabinet and then for parliamentary consideration. However, almost one year later, it still has not reached the Cabinet's agenda. After more than 20 years of analysis of the problems of the ASALs, this delay in policy-making cannot be due to a lack of understanding, but rather to a lack of political engagement and prioritisation.

There are a number of reasons behind the current stagnation in the political process. To begin with, the legislative process in general has been sluggish since the current government came to power in 2003. In the past three parliamentary sessions, 25 bills have been presented but only seven passed. This slowness is due to factors such as the recent referendum on the constitution, which took up about a year of parliamentary time, a five-month parliamentary recess due to corruption investigations, and the internally competing priorities that coalition governments traditionally face. Driving through legislation without a strong majority for the ruling party will always be problematic, but the government must make renewed efforts to speed up the process. It must establish a mechanism for the prioritisation of policy documents awaiting consideration by cabinet. Given the current emergency and the years of neglect by government, the ASAL policy document should be at the top of the list.

Another reason for the lack of political movement is the absence of proactive support from key ministries responsible for the implementation of the ASAL policy. Sitting in the Office of the President and funded by the World Bank, the Arid Lands Development Resource Project, which drew up the policy document, is viewed with a certain resentment by some parts of government. There is generally low awareness regarding the ASAL policy and, reportedly, key implementing ministries are not fully on board. However, this is not a reason for further stalling the progress of the

policy through the political system. Opening up the policy to political debate should help cabinet members to air their concerns and to resolve them. The arguments for the implementation of an ASAL development policy must be won right across government. It is the responsibility of the Office of the President, as the origin of the policy document, to make sure that this happens. Not only is it necessary in order for the policy to be passed through Parliament but also to ensure the long-term success of development in the ASALs.

The government will have to make a significant financial commitment to the implementation of the policy document. The estimated cost of implementation over a period of 10–15 years is 217 billion Kenyan shillings (\$3bn). Kenya is by no means a donor-dependent economy – according to the World Bank, only around 16 per cent of the government's income is donor-funded²⁵ – and in 2005 Kenya had a GDP growth rate of five per cent. Therefore, it should be able to generate a substantial proportion of the necessary funding itself.

However, the problem is that government ministries have little room to manoeuvre within their budgets. There are large recurrent costs and therefore a lack of capacity for funding development projects. Also, as the Ministry of Finance is not able to hold other ministries to account regarding their budget priorities, there is nothing beyond the personal commitment of ministers and permanent secretaries to ensure that agreed plans will be followed.

The current Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) and the Strategy for the Revitalisation of Agriculture (SRA) exemplify this problem. Reportedly, neither policy is being effectively implemented, as line ministries are not conforming to the recommended funding allocations. If ASAL development is truly a government priority, then the budgeting decisions of all key implementing ministries will need to reflect this and the ministries must be held accountable to these decisions.

The most recent draft of the ASAL policy document mentions the establishment of an 'authority' on ASAL development to be established within the government to act as the implementing power. There are concerns within the international community that the creation of a new authority would lead to the marginalisation of ASAL development within government. An alternative solution is that the Office of the President should remain as the ultimate decision-maker, given the power it has to convene key implementing ministries. The correct approach will need to be agreed between government and donors but, whatever system is chosen, it must be guided by one crucial factor. It is imperative that whoever is given

formal responsibility for the implementation of the ASAL policy has sufficient power to be able to hold implementing ministries to account. If this does not happen, implementation will fail.

Corruption within government has hit the headlines in Kenya in recent months and has led to a temporary paralysis of cabinet and parliamentary activity. It is imperative that the government tackles corruption and takes the necessary steps to prevent it from recurring in the future. Winning the battle against corruption and the misappropriation of government finances should free up some of the resources necessary for investment in ASAL development. By investing in good development policies, the government can begin to build the trust of its people.

Whilst Kenya's arid lands are in the international spotlight, and whilst donor support is forthcoming, now is the time for the government to deliver on its development agenda for the ASALs. The government must demonstrate unity and use the opportunity presented by the current crisis to drive the ASAL development policy through the political system.

Donor commitment

Although the Government of Kenya should have the resources to fund a significant part of ASAL development itself, the majority of its income is tied up with recurrent costs, including the servicing of debt, which means that donor support will be necessary. Figures for 2003 put Kenya's total debt at \$5.3bn, which represents 15.8 per cent of the value of its exports of goods and services.²⁶ Approximately 4.8 per cent of Kenya's GDP is spent on servicing debt, in comparison with 2.2 per cent of GDP spent on health and 6.5 per cent on education.²⁷ If implementation of the policy is to succeed, the government has to be able to rely on long-term assistance from donors, as well as its own funds. In providing long-term funding, donors will also be playing a critical role in keeping the issue on the political agenda beyond the acute, and more visible moment of the current crisis. The funding decisions of international donors are guided in part by the commitment of their respective governments to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Kenyan government recognises that many of the challenges to realising the MDGs are at their most acute in the arid and semi-arid areas. It follows therefore that investment in the ASALs is the best way of ensuring country-wide achievement of the MDGs. For example, the goal of universal primary education will not be achieved in Kenya unless education provision is adapted to the needs of nomadic pastoralist communities, through initiatives such as mobile schools. In some

areas of northern Kenya, only 20 per cent of children currently have access to an education.²⁸

Such an approach challenges a common perception among some donors that the fastest way of achieving the MDGs in Kenya is to invest in so called 'high-potential', predominantly agricultural areas that are more densely populated, are politically better represented, and where an improvement in development statistics is easier to realise. If such an approach were pursued, it would create a false picture of development in Kenya as, in geographic terms, 80 per cent of the country would be excluded from MDG success. There are no short cuts to comprehensive poverty reduction or to long-term development. In Kenya, this means long-term donor commitment to the development of the ASALs, together with the involvement of the communities who inhabit them.

Furthermore, investment in the development of the ASALs should mean that the level of short-term emergency support required from donors in times of drought will decline. As livelihoods are rebuilt and support systems established, the impact of drought-related crises in the ASALs should diminish. Donors therefore have an added incentive for funding the development of Kenya's arid lands.

Clear links with existing policies

Since coming to power in 2003, the current government has made a significant commitment on paper to developing the ASALs and to supporting pastoralism as a livelihood system. This is well articulated within the PRSP, the ERS, and other policies that are undergoing reform at the moment, such as the National Water Policy of 1999 and the SRA.²⁹ The ERS contains a whole chapter dedicated to development of the ASALs.³⁰ There are also policy proposals under discussion for a National Disaster Management Policy and a National Drought Contingency Fund. Such initiatives have the potential to support the development of Kenya's ASALs, but all of these policies must be mutually complementary if they are to work effectively in practice.

The government clearly states within the ASAL policy document that in order to avoid duplication and contradictory policy frameworks, there needs to be a very strong link between the ASAL policy and other existing policies that have relevance to ASAL development. This is encouraging, though exactly how the government will approach this harmonisation of policies is not made explicit. This will need to be addressed if ASAL development is ultimately to succeed.

6 Conclusion

The under-development of Kenya's ASALs has left 30 per cent of the population facing economic and political marginalisation. Taken together, the pastoralist areas of Kenya have the highest incidences of poverty and the lowest level of access to basic services of any in the country. This chronic under-development has also eroded the ability of local communities to cope with the recurrent drought that ravages the arid lands. Losses are registered not only in terms of human suffering but also in economic revenue. The ASALs and the men and women who inhabit them have enormous economic potential that is not currently being fulfilled.

Whilst Kenya's arid lands are in the international spotlight and whilst donor support is forthcoming, now is the time for the government to deliver on its development agenda for them. The people of the ASALs have been denied an appropriate and effective development policy for decades. After more than 20 years of analysis of the problems, the delay in policy-making cannot be due to a lack of understanding, but rather to a lack of political engagement and prioritisation. The government must demonstrate unity and use the opportunity presented by the current crisis to drive the development policy through the political system.

Oxfam is calling for:

- **The Kenyan Parliament to pass legislation to endorse the current National Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya by the end of 2006;**
- **Rapid implementation of the National Policy to begin before the end of 2006.**

In the short term this will require:

- **Renewed effort from the Kenyan government to push the current policy through the political system during the current national emergency;**
- **Immediate action within the Kenyan government to ensure that key implementing ministries accept the current policy and are able to demonstrate a united front in tackling ASAL development;**
- **Immediate budget prioritisation for arid lands development within the Kenyan government, and ministries to be held accountable to this decision; and**

- **Active support from the international donor community for the funding and implementation of the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya.**

Notes

- ¹ National Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya, Fifth Draft, May 2004, Government of Kenya.
- ² Niamir-Fuller, M. and C. Ponziani (2004) 'BDP/EEG Human Development Viewpoint', UNDP.
- ³ Pratt, D.J. and Gwynne, M.D. (1977) Rangeland Management and Ecology in East Africa, London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- ⁴ Simpkin, P. (2004) 'Regional Livestock Study in the Greater Horn of Africa', ICRC, p.31; see also National Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya, *op. cit.*
- ⁵ Umar, A. (2000) 'The Organization of Livestock Marketing in Northern Kenya and Southern Somalia, and its Potential for Pandemic Control', report of study for the Terra Nuovo and the OAU/IBAR/PARC, Nairobi, Kenya.
- ⁶ Simpkin, *op. cit.*
- ⁷ Pastoralist Thematic Group Poverty Reduction Strategy, Kenya Pastoralist Thematic Group, 2005.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ National Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya, *op. cit.*
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.9.
- ¹¹ Pastoralist Thematic Group Poverty Reduction Strategy, *op. cit.*
- ¹² Central Bureau of Statistics, Geographic Dimensions of Well-Being in Kenya; www.cbs.go.ke (last checked by the author March 2006).
- ¹³ Pastoralist Special Initiative Research Project, Oxfam *et al.*, July 2005.
- ¹⁴ There was a serious drought in 1973-4, affecting a large number of people, but there are no official figures available before 1975.
- ¹⁵ Gommès, R. and Petrassi, F. (1994) 'Rainfall Variability and Drought in Sub-Saharan Africa since 1960', FAO Agrometeorology Series Working Papers 9.
- ¹⁶ These statistics are drawn from 'Wajir Food Security Situation', December 2005, Oxfam internal report.
- ¹⁷ MUAC surveys by Merlin and MSF in December 2005; weight/height survey by UNICEF in October 2005.
- ¹⁸ See Oxfam International Briefing Paper, 'Making the Case: A National Drought Contingency Fund for Kenya', May 2006.
- ¹⁹ World Development Indicators Online, World Bank, 2006; web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,menuPK:232599~pagePK:64133170~piPK:64133498~theSitePK:239419,00.html (last checked by the author March 2006).

²⁰ ochaonline.un.org/webpage.asp?Site=cerf (last checked by the author March 2006).

²¹ 'Aftershocks: Natural Disaster Risk and Economic Development Policy', ODI Briefing Paper, November 2005, p.3.

²² *Ibid.*, p.5.

²³ National Policy for the Sustainable Development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya, *op. cit.*, p.4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.15.

²⁵ From a discussion with the World Bank, 21 March 2006.

²⁶ World Development Indicators Online, *op. cit.*

²⁷ 'Eye of the Needle: The African Debt Report', Jubilee Research, November 2004.

²⁸ From a discussion with the World Bank, 21 March 2006.

²⁹ Pastoralist Special Initiative Research Project, Oxfam *et al.*, July 2005.

³⁰ Economic Recovery Strategy, Government of Kenya, 2003–2007.

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