# Essay on Pastoralism

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## Title

Where the cattle go the pastoralist follows: Looking back critically inside the box to understand eco-migration of pastoralists in the unending quest for water and pasture through a livelihood mirror

## Introduction

Briefly introduce the context of the practice – geographic, economic, social and political (max. 350 words)

Pastoralism which refers to the seasonal movement of pastoralists from their homesteads in search of pasture and water for their herds has been in existence for several centuries. However, as a result of climate change, urbanization, economic challenges and other conditions, the practice of pastoralism which has been a way of life for communities especially within Africa and the Middle East is quickly disappearing. Pastoralists are specialists according Behnke whose practice is a rational, adaptable, tried and tested production system uniquely suited to the drylands and yet still widely practiced today and remains a dominant feature of rural East Africa. Pastoralists live in some of the harshest, most climatically variable landscapes, and many still manage to exercise their traditional way of life despite efforts to settle them and to ‘modernize’ their livelihood system. They respond to and use, even choose and profit from, variability. Highly variable, unpredictable and often scarce rainfall dictates where and when they move. They are mobile, allowing them to respond quickly to fluctuations in resource availability and thereby to maintain their herds and other assets. Until we have a plan to change the ecosystem inhabited by these great people, I think it’s not rational to try and change them nor their livelihoods. What we have now is close if not the best way to turn dry waste lands into meat and white gold. For example according to Kirkbride and Grahn; dry lands occupy 70% of the Horn of Africa – ranging from 95% in Somalia, more than 80% in Kenya, 60% of Uganda and approximately half of Tanzania. Most of the contribution of the livestock sector to GDP in Uganda is accounted for by pastoralists. This is because pastoralists and communal grazers hold about 95 percent of all the cattle. Cattle owned by pastoral and communal grazers also produce some 85 percent of all the milk in the country yet the legislative systems in the countries of the Horn and East Africa are largely based on those of the former colonial powers. The customary rights and pastoral social institutions are not recognized by law.

## Description of the Practice

Describe the practice showcasing how unique/innovative it is as well as how it has contributed to solving livestock producers’ needs (max. 500 words)

**Climate change is already a sad enough reality but it is deemed to get worse**

Even though the dry lands are known for their unpredictable and variable climate,’ the unprecedented rate and scale of human-induced climate change is beginning to pose more problems.’ says Kirkbride and Grahn. Erosion, landslides and land degradation have gone hand in hand with the more frequent and severe floods and droughts. The communal land ownership tenure system mostly evident in pastoralist areas provides everyone an equal right of exploiting the resources where the lands are
traditional tribal grazing areas, such that migration in search of pasture and water by one tribe into areas that belong to other tribes often causes conflict between pastoralists. Besides, livestock movements into grazing lands and watering points that stretch into crop-growing areas also result in conflicts so says Dietz.

**Pastoralists in the eyes of policy: The law of man versus the law of nature**

Mortimore clearly shows that strategies for ‘modernizing’ the pastoral sector, such as allocating parcels of land and controlling stocking rates, increasing off-take for markets and providing in-situ services like water, and veterinary care have performed poorly. Ranching fails to accommodate environmental variability and the livelihood objectives of pastoral communities. It has also been clearly demonstrated that pastoralism yields higher productivity per hectare in dry lands than in intensive ranching and is a much more sustainable use of rangelands. Often, the policy focus has been on the transformation and modernization of livestock agriculture which has resulted in the alienation of pastoralists leading to lack of investment in institutions to support pastoralism as a livelihood and as a rational land use system in dry lands and caused absence of appropriate financial services, like, to lessen the impact of forage seasonality and a lack of appropriate safety nets in times of drought to protect assets.

**Looking back into the box after examining the motives and attitudes**

Access to markets in situations where pastoralists are more vulnerable to livestock losses, such as in settlements, does not improve well-being and settled pastoralists are worse off than their mobile counterparts according to Little. In Ethiopia’s Somali region, for example, there is no difference between settled communities and mobile pastoralists in terms of general levels of education, despite the government’s argument that sedentarisation will facilitate the delivery of basic services. Settlement has led to severe livestock losses as escape from the effects of drought is hampered as recorded by Devereux whereas areas surrounding settlements are severely overgrazed, and the economic alternatives practiced in settlements are still dominated by unskilled casual labour which largely continues to rely on the natural resource base.

Therefore let us look back into the box and see how pastoral communities have managed to get the best out of their harsh ecosystems throughout the previous centuries. Magrath suggested a ‘freedom’ to take action approach, whether they choose to remain in pastoralism, or to diversify their livelihoods and ensure economic well-being; the choice is theirs.

**Author’s Interaction with the practice**

Elaborate how the author of essay has interacted with practice (max. 150 words)

Am a Veterinary Doctor, the founding director of Veterinary Practitioners without borders, an NGO which works with poor and vulnerable farmers above all to promote both health and production of humans through livestock interventions. We have also been involved in projects to reduce Zoonotic diseases around herding and non-herding communities the Lake Mburo National park in Kiruhura district in the cattle corridor, sensitization campaigns for zoonotic infections in Karamoja region, Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) training in Kotido (Karamoja region) with all District Veterinary Staff and policy officials from the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries. This was funded by Food and Agricultural Organization in a bid to increase to increase resilience to impacts of climate change especially in the pastoral systems, rabies vaccination and advocacy.
Where the cattle go the pastoralist follows: Looking back critically inside the box to understand eco-migration of pastoralists in the unending quest for water and pasture through a livelihood mirror

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My experience in relation to pastoralists and migration

I have touched base with the above practice as Veterinary Doctor, the founding director of Veterinary Practitioners without borders, an NGO which works with poor and vulnerable farmers above all to promote both health and production of humans through livestock interventions. We have also been involved in projects to reduce Zoonotic diseases around herding and non-herding communities the Lake Mburo National park in Kiruhura district in the cattle corridor, sensitization campaigns for zoonotic infections in Karamoja region, Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) training in Kotido (Karamoja region) with all District Veterinary Staff and policy officials from the Ministry of Agriculture Animal
Industry and Fisheries. This was funded by Food and Agricultural Organization in a bid to increase resilience to impacts of climate change especially in the pastoral systems, rabies vaccination and advocacy.

My brief profile

Am a Veterinary practitioner, a lecturer, a trainer, zoonotic disease ecologist (rabies specialist), an advocate for climate change and pastoralists and a youth mentor. Am a trained veterinary surgeon and molecular technologist a number of certificates in climate change and Negotiation from UNITAR. I have also been trained by Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards with one training to go before I get certified. Am very knowledgeable and skilled in managing non-profits, project management cycles, research and advocacy. Am also a social entrepreneur with a number of agribusiness startups in the line of ICT and agribusiness. I love networking and collaborating with like minds.

Pictorial

We were being entertained by masai pastoralists after a sensitization session on zoonoses
After donating $100 to the group, they crowned me a Masai elder and gave me to ladies.

Demonstrating the ‘RAP’ method of spraying to pastoralists in the cattle corridor.
Mass vaccination of brucellosis in Kiruhura

Vaccination of dogs against rabies in the cattle corridor
Training on LEGS in Kotido district (Karamoja region)

Participants sing songs on cattle during an energizer session