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Pastoralism and social protection From the margins: findings and avenues for reflection on social protection policies in Africa

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Diapo 1

This presentation builds on our long-term experience of research in West African drylands, where we have extensively been working on the dynamics of social change of Fulani pastoralist populations and changing trends in development policies implicating complex configurations of international, national and local actors.

Diapo 2

Sources

The working paper we present today is a literary review on SP schemes' in pastoral settings in SSA African drylands. This paper is based on the analysis of a corpus of research works (social studies on pastoralism and/or social protection) and institutional development literature.

This work builds on the trajectories of our research experience and some works of reference we conducted together (changes on institutions of livestock property sharing in Senegal; development vulnerability models and their discrepancy with pastoralist livelihoods in central Mali, 2006 and 2010).

But it also draw from our work experience in international institutions of development in the last five years both as researchers and experts. Particularly, the working paper follows a research fieldwork on the urban mobilities of pastoralist youth in Burkina Faso (2019, 2020).

This research enlightened demands for civil, social and political rights as well as the growing context of inequalities and injustice that fuel conflict dynamics and insurgencies in the country.

Therefore, social policy has come to our attention as a key element of a possible renewal of the relationship between the State and marginalised peasant population, whose pastoralists in the Sahel are an illustrative exemple.

Outline

In part 1, given the central role of development institution in social protection in SSA, we present our analysis of the policy context in which models of intervention are designed (key narratives, assessments, debates). We show the need to historicise and rethinking SP in relation to contemporary changes in rural areas, beyond dichotomic positions (universal/targeted).

In part 2, we propose a review of SP implementation in pastoral settings in their diversity, enlightening their operational modes and the way they enroots in local contexts. We draw attention on endogenous redistribution institutions as dynamic and socially-embedded institutions, a dimension which is often overlooked in social protection debates.

In part 3, we conclude by suggesting three avenues to define an alternative agenda.

Diapo 3

Despite a general commitment to universal access to social protection, institutional debates are drawn by two ideological positions.

One approach is promoted by UN ILO and is based on the universal right to social protection, citizens' rights enshrined in national legislations. This approach combines contributive social insurance schemes (health insurances, pensions, agricultural insurance) and non-contributory social assistance schemes

based on the life-cycle (social pensions, childcare allowances, disability pensions). Major critics : impractical (impossible to fund) and out of step (urgency).

The second approach is primarily promoted by international financial institutions (WB). It prioritises contingent, transitional support through pro-poor non-contributory social assistance (cash transfer linked to food aid, training, credit, productive inputs). It presupposes the development and implementation of targeting methods aimed at identify the poorest as beneficiaries. Major critics points to issues of effectiveness and ethicality (high implementation costs, low predictive value, high exclusion rate among eligible households).

Both these approaches come with downsides : i) a decontextualised model of welfare state as developed in Europe in last century through social claims and struggles, that doesn't take into account major trends in contemporary Africa (resources alienation, precarious work, unemployment, informality). Those trends reflect the challenge of conceiving redistributive arrangements beyond wage labour.

On the other side, we can identify a narrow conceptual framework that present current transformations in rural areas as inevitable, linear processes (from one stage to another) and that conceive social protection as tools for those, a "minority", left behind.

This lead to ignore the social, political factors and the power dynamics underlying resource alienation dynamics (land grabbing, enclosures of land, unfair competition on food crops, etc.).

Pastoralisms is particularly affected by public policies driving privatisation of the commons, concentration of means of production, growing inequalities between classes, genders and generations.

Diapo 4

Those gaps also help understanding why pastoralists often are considered as unsuitable recipients of aid in general and social protection policy in particular (mobility and socio-political organisation adapted to exploit environmental variability that also require a shared seasonal access to resources).

This mismatch is also reflected in the frequent idealization of endogenous redistributive pastoralists' institutions.

Often development narratives overlook that these institutions are historically, politically and socially-embedded systems. First, values and conceptions of solidarity and reciprocity rely on mechanisms of enforcement and sanction. Second, access is linked to forms of social relationships that must be maintained. Third, all of this changes under broader transformations (migrations trajectories, economic changes, access to wage labour, policy affecting access to resources).

For instance, social protection schemes intersect with local institutions and give rise to mutual changes.

In the paper we show that SP schemes implementation are historically linked to emergency response to catastrophic events (particularly droughts – distribution of food and feed, destocking – restocking, grain or feed banks).

Here, I will focus on more innovative tools. With regard to cash transfer, examples from Ethiopia and Kenya show that targeting procedures have required substantial adjustments in pastoral settings (indicators of income and assets, kinship organisation, polygamy). And also that often conditionalities

(obligation of participation in public works, schooling and use of water infrastructures in specific places) conflict with pastoral activities (mobility), sometimes putting pressure on already short labour resources.

With regard to livestock insurances, examples from Mongolia, Kenya and Ethiopia show that indexes of variation of biomass are often inaccurate, ill-adapted to the high variability of dryland environments (which spatial scale? agroecological diversity?). They also overlook key aspects of pastoralists' agency (ability to move, entitlements to key seasonal resources) which make the effects of a drought very different.

Nevertheless, both cash transfers and livestock insurances have also shown positive impacts in terms of food security, asset's preservation even if not for all and not only for certain events.

In this sense, it's central to understand how these tools interact with endogenous institutions, sometimes serving to support poorer kin, through livestock sharing and loans, mutual funds as tontines, and so to defuse tension among families and genders (they enter and feed collective networks).

And finally, a few words on health and education services often overlooked in the institutional framework of social policy. Still paying the consequences of structural adjustment programs, these public services play a key role in protecting rural population against contingences (education x access to positive diversification, good wages and positions; but also access to political representation ; health x preventing loss of labor and economic assets in case of illnesses).

Alternative approaches that have had good results : adapting school programs and curricula, valorising pastoralist culture, alternate face-to-face, distant learning ; mobile health services, mixed medical and veterinary services, inclusive attitudes to local knowledge and practices. Despite positive results and high appreciation, these approaches remain marginal in public action programs.

Diapo 5

- Poverty and vulnerability are more linked to structural political, economic and social factors than to short-term hazards
- This implies to consider the full range of social protection tools. Findings and recommendation all point to the development of social protection policies that are enshrined in law and aim for broad coverage.
 - Mongolia : facilitate access to the national contributory insurance system on the base of the recognition of professional status (child and maternity allowances, retirement schemes), through subsidies and flexible payments, a decentralised system (mobile multiservices).
 - SA : cash transfer programs at different stage of the life cycle (elderly, mothers with children, people with disabilities), low conditionalities, designed to exclude the 'haves'.

Diapo 6

- Beyond technical data, focus at the political processes (conflict, compromise, negotiation) which set the conditions necessary for the possible future of social protection systems in Africa.
- Break the conceptual deadlock : funding is impossible (options : taxing extractive industries, introduce more progressive tax regimes, transnational financial taxation or international gas emission offsetting). **Example : the Sahel.**
- Fully funded national and regional agricultural, environmental and commercial policies protecting and supporting peasant agriculture ; legislative judicial and political support for forms of natural resource management, shared and complementary access, integration of spaces; containing dynamics of enclosure and land grabbing.

Diapo 7

- In order to preserve the potential for relative social cohesion and protection of local redistributive institutions is central to :
- Understand the characteristics and modes of operation of endogenous institutions, and their transformations in relation to socio-economic changes, public policies and forms of governance on a wider scale.
- Understand how social protection tools enroot within local contexts rationales and practices, how do they influence social relationships and networking, and so be able to act on exclusion.
- At the end, this means change the epistemology of SP intervention : from individuals as recipients of aid, to societies and political subjects.