

Challenges in institutionalization of governance of group ranches in West Pokot District, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper discusses the challenges facing institutionalization of governance of group ranches in Kenya. The Study makes use of the government group ranch interventions in Chepareria and Kong'elai Division in West Pokot District as a case study. The time frame taken into account is the colonial and post independence times since the group ranch concept was introduced in the colonial era. This paper unearths a low institutionalization of governance of group ranches in the district. This low institutionalization is attributed to transhumance and poverty which constrain the practice of the state prescribed measures of governance. Transhumance is an obstacle to the practice of governance because when ranches are due to hold annual general meeting, they are in the dry season grazing far away from ranches. On the other hand, the presence of poverty makes it difficult for ranches to accept ranch measures like employment of accounts clerk, opening of bank account and postal address because this will drain the meagre resources of the ranch. The conclusion from this paper is that sometimes what is known to be good governance is not necessarily a tool of poverty reduction. It is recommended that in order to improve the productivity and quality of animals, water should be available in ranches. In addition, financial capital should be made accessible to the ranchers through availing of credit facilities if the group ranch governance is to be institutionalized in West Pokot District.

Introduction

This paper seeks to understand the challenges facing institutionalization of state prescribed ranch governance in West Pokot District in Kenya. The state prescribed governance is captured in Cap 287 – group representative Act (Kenya, 1968), which stipulates that every ranch committee must call an Annual General Meeting after every twelve months. In addition, the committee must open a postal address and a bank account. Besides, each committee must have books of account, apart from employing an accounts clerk. In this way the government of Kenya sought to decentralize power to the grassroots communities in pastoralism area. In this arrangement, the communities get the opportunity to practice collective management of their own resources.

This government initiative was meant to aid in resource governance, a role that most modern states in Africa have not succeeded to practice (Kenya, 2003; Grieco, 1999; USAID 2004; Shikwati, 2005). Indeed the current preoccupation in Africa is that with good governance in place the African continent can easily prosper to developed status (Ashley & Eliot, 2003; UN, April 24, 1999; FWA, 2004). Again, good governance is seen as the key to increased investment and trade. Additionally, improvement in governance is known to facilitate a more equitable distribution of economic assets and access to social services particularly with the delegation of power to the grass root communities.

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Group Representative Act was first applied in the Maasai districts (Kajiado and Narok), and since then group ranches have been established in other ecologically similar areas in Rift Valley and Coast Province. In West Pokot, the first group ranch, Kong'elai, was registered when special Rural Development Programme (SRDP) was applied to the District (Dietz, 1987). In total thirteen group ranches have been registered in this district located in North Western Kenya and bordering Uganda. Some more ranches are yet to be registered (Kenya, 2001). The group ranch concept is not unique to Kenya. Other countries in Africa have made similar attempts. Examples are Tanzania (Pratt & Gwyne, 1977) and Botswana (Hitchcock & Nkwe, 1986).

In West Pokot District, areas with group ranches face serious poverty problems (Matui, 2004). This implies that even with ranches, West Pokot experiences poverty problems common in pastoralist's areas that have no ranches as revealed in recent studies (IRNI, June 21, 2002; Umar, 1997; Mwangi, 2002). These areas are the least developed parts of Kenya with poor or non-existent socio-economic infrastructure. Besides, the areas rely on relief food due to successive rainy season failures (IRIN, June 2002; WFP, Relief web, August 2004). Even this relief food is not enough due to shortfall of donor pledges (IIN, June 21, 2002). Drought or period of unusually low rainfall also affects the areas.

From the foregoing, there is need to understand the reason as to why group ranches in West Pokot District have not been tools for socio-economic development. This paper assumes that the reason for this scenario is that the group ranch committee has not been able to institutionalize the state prescribed ranch governance. The study is justified given that the group ranch concept started in the colonial days – in the 1950 – when controlled grazing that took the character of groups were initiated (Kenya, 1954; Kenya, 1960); and evidently, this has been a long time. To achieve its goal the study adopts the following objectives.

Objectives of study

- To understand the history of group ranch intervention especially in West Pokot District.
- To determine the factors that hinder institutionalization of the group ranch governance in the ranches of West Pokot District.

Literature Review

History of the institutionalization of the Group ranch concept in the West Pokot District

To discuss institutionalization of group ranches and their governance among the Pokot is to talk of institutional intervention in the use of arid and semi-arid land in West Pokot. First this was undertaken by the colonial governance in the early 1950s and early 1960s and modified by the post independent Kenyan government in the 1970s. The history of the institutionalization of the group ranch concept can be analyzed in two phases.

Phase I: Colonial times 1950 – 1963

During his period, the colonial government introduced grazing schemes. This was meant to contribute to controlled grazing, since wanton grazing had been blamed for land degradation (Kenya, 1956). At this period the Swynnerton plan that was in effect had come up with the Arid land development (ALDEV) programme with funds allocated to arid and semi-arid areas to initiate and enforce rotational grazing. Consequently here can be seen a colonial attempt to bring meaningful development among the communities whose livelihood depended solely on pastoralism.

The first scheme to be registered in West Pokot was the Riwa grazing scheme (Kenya, 1954). The area initially selected was approximately 26,000 acres, and was located in Riwa location although a smaller portion was in Mnagei. Survey of the area was completed in February 1954 and between June and December, the area had been divided into 4 equal blocks of 6,500 acres each. The plan was to graze each block for four months; giving the other three a one-year rest each. This plan was to graze each block for four months; giving the other three a one-year rest each. This plan was implemented from first January 1955. With the success of this initial plan, the scheme was extended eastwards to Koboch and Westwards to Cheptuimet escarpment, thus bringing the whole of Riwa plains of 48,000 acres under control (Kenya, 1956). In the successive year other blocks were established in Kipkomo, Batei, Chesra, Masol and Nakwijit (Table 1). To effect the rotational grazing, grazing guards were employed and arrests made for “grass poaching” offences. Also a stock tax based on the livestock holding of each individual was exacted (ibid).

Table 1: Grazing Schemes in West Pokot 1955 – 1960

Grazing scheme	Acreage	Date Implemented	1959 stock population	No of stock owners	Ration of Beast to Acreage
Riwa	56,000	1.1.1955	5,142	167	1:10.8 acres
Kipkomo	43,000	1.1.1957	3,077	221	1.3.9 acres
Ratei	30,000	1.1.1957	2,680	135	1.10.48 acres
Chesra	23,000	1.1.1959	861	46	1.26.7 acres
Masol	142,000	1.1.1959	2,388	41	1.59 acres
Nakwijit	56,000	1.1.1960	-	-	
Total	350,000				

Source: Kenya, 1963

To effect controlled grazing in each block, water was supplied through construction of Dams and reconditioning springs with the help of ALDEV funds; equally veterinary services were provided; galleys’ were filled up, pasture grown, dips and sale yards constructed, and rotational grazing effected using the same funds. To effect controlled number of stock, branding was done for cattle, while sheep and goats were ear clipped (Kenya, 1957).

There is overwhelming evidence that the grazing scheme as an institutional intervention had an acceptance by the Pastoralist community (Kenya, 1950; Chesang, 1971) and this could be because the target people, the Pokot, understood the concept. Indeed most pastoralist in North Western Kenya had reserved grazing area for use during dry spells of weather for a very long time (Young & McClanahan, 1996). Equally, after the schemes became operational, people saw the advantages: milking the cows all year round, and fetching of good price for their livestock (Kenya, 1958). Indeed the success of the initiative is captured vividly in the following words.

“The results of the return of the grass to the area already controlled are becoming apparent in the improvement of stock and regeneration of nature – the game returns, the birds find cover to breed, and the gullies close up. The picture is of land which had been stripped to its bare slowly return to life” (Kenya, 1958).

But the success of the projects experiences serious setbacks particularly in the early 1960s. This was occasioned by certain socio-cultural and natural factors. These grazing schemes were not popular among certain political parties fighting for independence, particularly Kenya

African National Union (KANU) (Kenya, 1963). Secondly, drought forced illegal “grass poachers” to enter into schemes leading to overstocking. A good case of these poachers is the Karasuk-Pokot, who were formerly administered from Uganda, but after independence became Kenyan. Moreover, Pokot from East Baringo would move with large number of stocks to the grazing schemes. The fourth problem was insecurity, which particularly affected Masol- the largest scheme with 142, 0000 acres. Victims of fights between Pokot and Turkana sought refuge in the scheme paralyzing the rotational grazing system (Kenya, 1971). Fifthly, the ALDEV funds were not adequate particularly to provide water and infrastructure in schemes (Dietz, 1987). With this setback, rotational grazing system collapsed, thus bringing to an end an otherwise noble initiative.

Phase II: Post-Independent Times 1963-2003

The colonial government never thought of giving Africans legal ownership of land by way of registration. Hence the post independent government’s first task after independence was to carry out land reforms in the African reserves. This it did through coming up with a legal framework in the name of Land Adjudication Act cap 284 and Land (Group Representative) Act Cap 287 to seek for individual and group ownership of land respectively. Both of these came into effect in 1968. It was thought that upon registration, the title deed would be used to access services (Kenya, 1972).

In West Pokot, public meeting were held in 1969 on pastoralist areas to educate the pastoralist on the need for grazing associations, group ranching and the building of self help dips. Initially, the people’s attitude was negative, but later on, the attitude changed and individuals of grazing schemes requested to be registered as group ranches along the boundaries of grazing schemes (Kenya, 1969). The idea of registering group ranches came in earnest when special Rural Development Programmes (SRDP) was applied to the District (Dietz, 1987). The first group ranch, Kong’elai was registered in 1971, and by 1973, five group ranches had been registered (Kenya, 1973); 1975). West Pokot District has 13 registered group ranches and more are likely to be registered (Kenya, 2002). The ranches already registered are Kong’elai, Nakwijit, Chesra, Serewo, Kanyarkwat, Chepkobegh, Morubus, Ortum East, Ortum West, Pana A. Chemwochoi, Orwa and Pachu.

Although a sizeable percentage of grazing schemes were registered as group ranches and that members had the benefit of title deeds, and therefore legal ownership, nevertheless, the ranches inherited many of the problems from the grazing schemes. For instance, human population increased in the schemes due to the seeking of refuge by those running away from drought in Karasuk and ethnic fights both among the Kenyan tribes (Turkana vs. Pokot) and cross-border (Pokot vs. Sabiny and Karamajong) (Kenya, 1972).

Conceptual Framework

This paper assumes that at the core of low institutionalization of governance of group ranches in West Pokot is *degradation-demand induced scarcity* as a social fact (Matui and Kwonyike, 2006). In West Pokot, degradation-demand induced scarcity is first a product of water and pasture degradation; and secondly, population human/livestock increase. The pasture and water degradation is in part an upshot of failure in group ranch as an intervention because of collapsed rotational grazing system (Dietz, 1987).

Degradation-demand induced scarcity, constraints the practice of state prescribed governance in the following ways: 1) the poor state of the ranch, imply that pastoralist practice transhumance so that ranchers may not be available when annual general meeting is due; and 2)

the poverty of ranches is a social force that constraints the adoption of positive governance mechanism (employing accounts clerk, opening bank account and postal address, etc) that ends in more impoverishment of ranchers.

Data and Methodology

Data for this study was collected in the arid and semi arid pastoralist areas in West Pokot in the year 2002. A sample size of 240 was adopted for the study; while 240 structures questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. Additional 24 structured questionnaires were used to collect data from ranch committee (3 from each ranch selected for study) who acted as key informants for the study. To come up with the list of respondents a simple random sampling technique was adopted. These 240 respondents selected for interview were representative of the two divisions selected for the study- Kong'elai and Chepareria of West Pokot District. In addition Information workshops were held. In these workshops chiefs and other relevant stakeholders were invited. Information obtained from these consultative workshops was on poverty categories and the average value of a cow and goats sheep, as well as on, the practice of state prescribed group ranch governance. Chi-square, correlation coefficient test and frequency distribution are used to analyze the data.

To arrive at ranches ability in governance index, computation was done as follows:- 1 -4 (is not able), 4-8 (is fairly able) and 9-11 (able), by awarding points as follows:

- (i) Ability to hold Annual General Meeting - 2
- (ii) Has a group postal address for correspondence – 1
- (iii) Has accounts officers - 2
- (iv) Has a form 4 level of education - 2
- (v) Has a bank account – 2
- (vi) Amend the register according – 2

Once the index for land committee for each ranch was computed, this was credited to the respondents. Finally, Chi-square test was undertaken to find out association between it and the ranch performance. On the other hand, average monthly income index (AMII) as a measure was constructed using the following indices in Kenya shillings: poor (0-63,000), non-poor (64,000-130,000) and the rich (130,001 and above). To arrive at the index, the number of livestock was turned into an income by assigning an average value of Kshs 8,000 to the cow while a goat/sheep was given a value of Kshs 800. These average values were arrived after consultation with chiefs and ranch committee. The category of income; poor, non-poor, and rich were also arrived at during the consultative meetings.

Results and Discussion: Descriptive Analysis

Majority of respondents (99.2%) were men, while women represented a smaller fraction (0.8%) of the sample. This implies that compared to men, few women owned group ranch land. This scenario can be understood from the cultural factors in Pokot society, as is the case in many African societies where women do not inherit land. In addition, the culture assigns men the role of the owner, claimant and defendant of the family land (Amuguni, 2001). It is therefore expected that, because of their small number, women should not be in the management committee of ranches. The average age of members was 40.8 with youngest respondents being 21 years of age and the eldest being 102 (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of Age of Respondents

Age groups	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
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20-24 years	3	1.3	1.3
25-29 years	10	4.2	5.5
30-34 years	15	6.3	11.8
35-39 years	15	6.3	18.1
40-44 years	18	7.5	25.6
45-49 years	28	11.7	37.3
50-54 years	48	20.0	57.3
55-59 years	27	11.2	68.5
60-64 years	27	11.2	79.7
65-167 years	49	20.3	100.0
TOTAL	240	100	

The age bracket 20 to 44 accounted for about twenty six percent (25.6%); while the age bracket forty-five and above comprised about seventy-four percent (74.4%) of the total respondents. This result is expected in this study since in Africa, the control of pastoral economy has been the monopoly of the older age set; and therefore, this finding may be revealing antagonistic interests between age sets (Baxter, 1979, Kratli & Swift, 2002). In addition, this study reveals that the majority of ranch officers (80.0%) are in the older age group of 45 and above.

Furthermore, the analyzed data reveals that about sixty nine percent (69.2%) of the respondents had not gone to school (Table 3). Only about twenty seven percent (27.2%) had gone through primary school education. In addition, a smaller percentage (3.3%) had either secondary or post secondary qualifications. What is more, the respondents in the study area tended to have an average education level of 1.8 years of schooling with the range of 1 to 15 years, which means that a lot of people in the study area had not gone to school. Considering that the figure is higher than the average Kenya National figure of 16.8 percent for the age group of 1.8 and above, the area can be said to suffer from grave illiteracy.

Table 3: Distribution of Educational Levels (Number of years in School

Number of Years in school level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
0 (None)	166	69.2	69.2
1-8 (Primary)	66	27.5	96.7
9-12 (Secondary)	7	2.9	99.6
< 13 (Post Sec)	1	0.4	100.0
TOTAL	240	100.0	

The level of education is crucial in an individual's life (Kenya, August 2004). In ranches, it determines the capacity of members to plan and manage the ranch resources for the benefit of all. Since ranch officers are elected from amongst ranch members, the low level of education among ranch members implies that majority of ranch officers had low or no education. The low level education in turn implies that ranch officers do not have the necessary managerial skills to conduct the business of the ranch as outlined in CAP 287 Laws of Kenya.

Practice of Ranch Governance

Analyzed data (Table 4) reveals that few ranch committees did practice the state prescribed ranch governance. This view is reached because only twelve percent (12.0%) of them did have books of account; none had employed accounts clerk; still none had postal address; and only fifty two percent called annual general meeting as stipulated in Cap 287 laws of Kenya. When asked the reason for not having books of account, about thirty nine (38.9%) revealed that they were ignorant that these books were required.

Besides, the ranch committee did reveal that did not have books of account, did not employ accounts clerks; did not open bank accounts, and postal addresses because they did not have finances to warrant them. On top of these, those who did not hold annual general meeting (AGMs) frequently gave non attendance by members due to transhumance. The implication of all these is that group ranches in West Pokot suffer from insufficient state prescribed governance. The reason for this deficiency in governance is transhumance by ranches and general ranch poverty. Table 4 indicates the respondents of ranch committee on the practice of state prescribed governance in ranches of West Pokot.

Table 4: Response by Ranch Committee on Practice of ranch Governance

Ranch Governance category	Percent of those who practice	Reason for non compliance
Possession of books of account	12%	Ignorant that book were needed
Employment of account clerk	0%	Poverty little/ income
Possession of postal address	0%	Poverty little/ income
Call annual General meeting	52%	Transhumance
		n=24

Discussion

Table 5: Monthly average income and Ranches ability in Governance

Ranches ability governance			
Average monthly income	1-4 (not able)	4-8 (able)	Total
Very poor (0-63, 700)	98	15	113
Non poor (64,000-130,000)	46	9	55
Rich (\geq 130,000)	65	6	71
Total	209	30	239
$\chi^2 = 1.870$	df = 2		Sign = 0.393
R = 0.050			Sign = 0.393

The chi-square test (Table 5) to understand association between ranches ability in governance (independent variable) and average monthly income revealed a value of 1.870 with 2 degree of freedom and significant level of 0.4. This indicates a low degree of positive association between ranches ability in governance and average monthly income. It implies that a good ability in governance should generally lead to more average monthly income.

This scenario is understandable given that in the ranches there is little governance measures being practiced. A more institutionalization of ranch governance would yield more positive impacts for it will increase the income of ranches and hence reduce poverty. The

obstacle to institutionalization of ranch governance appears to be both natural and human. It is natural because of drought which rendered rotational grazing unworkable (Dietz, 1987). This scenario has forced out of ranch grazing in dry season and in times of weather vagaries. This has led to low on- ranch livestock productivity and transhumance that militate against the practice of state prescribed ranch governance. The human weakness is revealed by the chronic poverty which in part is due to lack of market for animal products in Kenya (Kenya, September, 2001). Consequently, re-establishing of the Kenyan Meat Commission, which the Kenyan Government has started to undertake, is a mandatory measure this 21st century. In the ranches, poverty constraints the practice of state prescribed governance, by diminishing the possibility of ranchers' purchasing services (e.g. of accounts clerk, postal address, etc) that would enhance their productivity.

Conclusions

This study has revealed that in the presence of acute poverty and certain environmental conditions, what is prescribed as good governance may not be practiced in the ranch setting. For instance annual general meetings (AGMs) cannot be practiced because of transhumance that makes members absent when the annual general meeting is due. Secondly the practice of certain measures (employing accounts clerk, and opening bank account etc) will mean draining off the meagre income from the ranchers. The situation creates a phenomenon in the ranch called ranch governance crisis. The phenomenon is a product of two coinciding circumstances in the ranch: 1) high levels of poverty, and 2) Transhumance. The high level of poverty and Transhumance constraints the practice of prescribed state-centric governance. In such a situation achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly reduction of poverty is a pipedream unless drastic interventions are taken to remedy the situation.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that more water should be availed in the ranches. Furthermore, financial capital should be made accessible to the ranches through affordable credit facilities. Even more crucial, a number of strategies including rotational grazing should be re-instituted in the ranches so as to increase on ranch productivity. Included in these strategies is encouraging pastoralists to adopt more species of livestock that can withstand the arid and semi arid ecosystem. These measures will go a long way to institutionalize governance of group ranches in West Pokot District.

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