



## Managing Development Challenges in the Pastoral Regions of Ethiopia

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### Abstract

*An attempt is made to identify the various challenges to the promotion of development in the pastoralist regions of Ethiopia which include among others, Environmental Challenges, Policy and Strategy Challenges and low level infrastructural development which brought about frequent draught, conflict, prevalence of human and animal disease and food insecurity. In Ethiopia, it is found that food security & hunger remains the greatest concern in almost all pastoral regions of the country. This in turn implies that the poverty situation in these areas doesn't show significant changes for years compared with non-pastoral regions in the country. The paper highlighted a number of alternative strategies for the promotion of development in the pastoral areas of the country. These include sedentarization of mobile pastoralists on voluntary basis, consolidate and stabilize those who are already settled or semi-settled through improved water supply, pasture and social services, carefully select viable and reliable river courses for future sedentarization based on irrigation and link these places through roads and other communication lines, respect livestock mobility, Livelihood diversification; and also a number of technical interventions which include Improve Water Supply & Irrigation Development, Livestock & Range resources Development and Strengthening infrastructures, Institutional Support and*

*adequate representation. Highlighting the current status of pastoral life, the paper suggested valuable recommendations which are deemed necessary instruments to the promotion of development in the pastoral areas of Ethiopia.*

### Key Words:

Managing; Development; Challenges; Pastoralism; Ethiopia

### 1. Introduction

‘Pastoralism is the finely-honed symbiotic relationship between local ecology, domesticated livestock and people in resource-scarce, climatically marginal and highly variable conditions. It represents a complex form of natural resource management, involving a continuous ecological balance between pastures, livestock and people. (WISP, 2007)

Pastoralism supported the livelihoods of millions of people living in harsh environments where alternative land use systems are highly risky or simply not possible. Livestock reared in pastoral systems also contribute significantly to national and regional economies and provide important environmental services such as carbon sequestration, and biodiversity conservation. Extensive pastoral production is practiced on 25% of the global land area,

from the dry lands of Africa (66% of the total continent land area) and the Arabian Peninsula, to the highlands of Asia and Latin America. (Nori, et al, 2008). Pastoralists in Africa are widespread encompassing North Africa, the west to east of the Saharan zone and Southern Africa. The pastoralist population in Africa is estimated at 268 million, over a quarter of the total population of the continent. In general, pastoralism contributes 10-44% of the GDP of African countries. In the Horn with the highest area and the pastoralist population is estimated to be more than 20 million and the geographical coverage accounts for more than 45% with some countries dominantly pastoralists (African Union, 2010)).

There is a wide range of literature on the rationality of pastoralism as a farming system and way of life under arid and semi-arid climatic zones. A study by the World Bank has also forecasted that due to climate change many African farmers will be shifting from crop to livestock production (Spore, 2008). Moreover, the African Union Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa has also underlined the rationality of pastoralism and the need to empower pastoralists to assure food security and sustainable development

Pastoralism supports tens of millions of people, makes the best use of harsh environments and provides many economic and social benefits. Over much of Africa, livestock convert grass into protein in areas where other agricultural activities would be risky or impossible. However, policy-making tends to favor sedentary populations and marginalize pastoralist communities, many of which are threatened by drought, fragmentation of their grazing lands, restrictions on mobility and poor access to basic services.

Despite the suitability of mobile livestock-herding to the vast arid lands that cover East Africa, and the evidence of its productivity and value, many pastoralist people are among the poorest and most vulnerable in Africa. All too often the direct economic value generated by pastoralists is not retained in their communities, and the indirect value is un-rewarded and even unacknowledged by decision-makers. (Oxfam Briefing Paper, 10)

Pastoralism has been overlooked by policymakers over the past years and as a result they were excluded from development world. Furthermore, pastoral areas have remained marginalized. This needs understanding and significant attention must be given to the pastoralists, which are huge in population so as to reverse their vulnerability and identify the challenges they encountered to fasten the pace of their development. This paper seeks to emphasize a few keys to understanding the dynamics and challenges of development in the pastoral communities of Ethiopia.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

It is a paradox that drought, famine, conflict, migration and chronic dependence on food aid among the pastoralist of the horn of Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular are becoming a rule than exceptions. The problem has been compounded with the land grabbing of pastoral areas for commercial farming and national parks. The factors for the economic and ecological crises in pastoral areas is usually related to population pressure, drought, poor land management and backwardness of the society (Pavenello, 2009, Markakis, 2004, Adano and Witsenburg, 2005, Anderson, and Broch-Due, 1999). Furthermore, pastoralism as a way of life has been marginalized at the



policy level (Behnke, 1985, Hesse and Macgregor, 2006, Devereux, 2006, HPG, 2009, FAC-CAADO, 2012)). In Ethiopia, where we find over ten million pastoral people and whose contribution to the national economy is substantial, is characterized by a complex set of challenges which range from environmental to policy level development challenges. These constraints made development in the pastoral areas of Ethiopia inadequate and of course negligible. The impact of the policies devised to overcome these challenges on the life of pastoralists in Ethiopia has remained controversial and an area of scholarly debate with contradicting comments from different experts and state officials. Hence, this paper tries to address this gap by undertaking a detailed analysis of the impact of the above mentioned challenges on the pastoralist regions of Ethiopia.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

- 1) To identify the major challenges in the pastoralist regions of Ethiopia
- 2) To explore possible alternative strategies for the promotion of development in the pastoral areas
- 3) To assess the current status of pastoral livelihood in the pastoral areas
- 4) To suggest sound, context specific and achievable recommendations to stakeholders

### 1.4 Significance of the study

This paper is very much significant for those scholars who want to carry out further demand driven studies in the topic of pastoralism in Ethiopia and in the

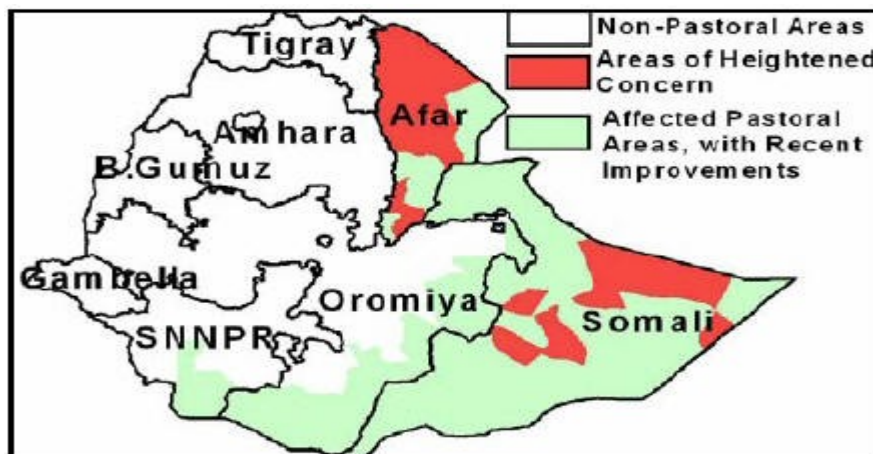
surrounding border areas. It also provides a very good insight to those Non-Governmental organizations operated in the horn of African region. Furthermore, it will also contribute a lot to development policy planners of the state agencies. Finally, graduate and undergraduate students who wish to conduct their thesis on the issue under discussion will find it helpful.

### 1.5 Materials and Methods

The study has relied completely on secondary data sources. The sources of data are mainly from different national and international institutions like Pastoral Forum Ethiopia (PFE), Feinstein International, Humanitarian Policy Group, African Union pastoral policy framework, and many others. The method followed throughout this paper is qualitative and descriptive in nature

#### 1.5.1 Description of the Study Area

Ethiopia, one of the member states of the horn of Africa, is known for its substantial number of pastoral population who tend to cover 60% of the total landmass of the country (PFE 2010). There are approximately 10 million pastoralists in Ethiopia who make up almost 14 percent of the total population. Coming from at least 29 different nations and nationalities, Ethiopian pastoralists live in more than 133 Woreda (districts) in seven National Regional States. Somali, Afar and Oromo pastoralists are in the majority in their states and constitute 87 percent of the total pastoralist population. Pastoral communities in SNNPR (South Omo and Bench-Maji Zones), Benishangul-Gumuz, Dire Dawa and Gambella make up the remainder.



Source: Pastoral Forum Ethiopia, 2010

**Table 1 Profile of Ethiopian pastoral Regions**

No	Region	Total Surface Of the Region	Pastoral Areas Only	Pastoral Districts	Population Of 122 Pastoral Districts	Livestock of 122 Pastoral Districts
1.	Afar	90,400	90,400	29	1,301,000	621,700
2.	BSG	48,290	8,410	3	40,640	10,100
3.	Dire Dawa	1,200	1,200	1	108,570	39,200
4.	Gambella	25,800	17,330	5	133,600	288,900
5.	Oromya	353,000	152,070	34	4,007,950	4,996,300
6.	SNNP	112,340	30,370	6	219,670	693,900
7.	Somali	325,070	325,070	44	4,002,170	2,533,300
	Total	956,030	624,880	122	9,813,600	9,183,500

Source: World Bank Report No. 38662-ET, April 2007.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Significant Challenges for Development in the Pastoralist Areas of Ethiopia

#### 2.1 Contemporary pastoral policy and development challenges

Despite considerable progress towards supportive policies, pastoralists continue to suffer from cultural and spatial isolation, and political marginalization in many parts of the Ethiopian pastoral areas. Human

development and food security indicators remain low, and the provision of public services in pastoral zones is still weak, and generally far lower than in other areas of a given country. Basic infrastructure also falls behind other areas, and in common with service delivery, is relatively costly to provide and maintain in large and remote pastoral areas. Conflict continues to have a major impact on human welfare and limits



economic development. Borena area is a counter example facing such vulnerability.

### 2.1.1 Environmental Challenges

A lot of researches, reports, conference papers and workshops have widely documented and discussed about the growing environmental challenges for development and sustainability of pastoral areas in Ethiopia. Among the major difficulties these pastoralist communities has been facing is the recurrent drought with its devastating effects on the rangelands, livestock, and the general livelihood of pastoralists. In some areas of the pastoralist communities, on the other hand, floods have been disastrous. In fact, drought being a natural shock that have been occurring in the past, the aggravating factor for drought incidence in Ethiopia has been lack of proper management of the natural resources, and lack of disaster oriented development strategy and policy in the areas which are prone to such natural shocks like drought.

The global climate change and resulting unfavorable weather pattern is also a great worry for the sensitive pastoral ecologies. The increasing population and livestock pressure coupled with the disruption of the traditional management system and alternation of land uses has also lead to significant rangelands degradation. Other major cause of the rangelands degradation and loss of productivity is the impact of bush encroachment that reduced rangelands utility. For instance, an estimate by ILCA (1993) shows area affected by bush encroachment in the Borena rangelands is about 40% (Bruck, 2004).

### 2.1.2 Policy and Strategy Challenges

It is only very recently that Pastoralism in Ethiopia tends to attract adequate policy and development strategy attention. The efforts of development in the pastoralist communities were marginalized throughout the history. Although there were some development interventions they remained to

be simply extractive without considering a holistic development for the pastoral communities.

Although government has designed development programs and strategies, it is not yet clear what the future development vision and direction will be. Very recently the discussion and argument around resettlement of pastoral communities is becoming an issue.

### 2.1.3 Basic Services and Infrastructural Challenges

Remoteness characterizes Pastoralism in Ethiopia whereby road and communication infrastructures are at low level. Un balanced development services, poorly developed market and urban centers, lack of market information, harmonized cross -boarders trade are the major bottlenecks to the pastorals development. Access to education, health and other social services is in general at low level. It is within the circumstances of these challenges that Pastoralism strives to create value and livelihood of millions of people.

### 2.1.4 Recurrent conflicts and threat to livelihood

The prevalence of conflicts among the Ethiopian pastoral communities also characterizes Pastoralism and its distorted growth in the pastoralist regions of the country. Conflicts largely stem from resource competition where the traditional tolerance, sharing and conflict resolving mechanisms fail to mediate the competition. Not only do conflict lead to disasters that include loss of life and asset, they also contribute to inefficient range lands resource use by hindering the traditional management and mobility.

## 2.2 Major Challenges to the Pastoral Livelihood and Low level Development

The pastoral people are poverty stricken, with minimal literacy rates, poor social services and a fragile ecosystem, submitted





to unsustainable resource use practices. Range and herd yields, the mainstay of local livelihood, are declining, under the pressure of demographic growth and livestock disease and drought. In Ethiopia pastoral areas cover seven Regional states and 122 Woredas. Table 1 above provides profiles of the Ethiopian Pastoral regions.

### 2.2.1. Increases in Population

There is population influx in the pastoral areas compared to the last ten years. One of the reasons for population increase in Borena area is due to the Gari-Somali and Borena border conflict. The Borena claim that the Geri-Somali took large part of their rangeland and traditional water wells. Due to this some pastoral households moved to the neighboring Oromo communities and created over population. The increase in population can be signified by the increase in the number of Ollas from 10 to 58. (Nori M, 2008)

### 2.2.2 Cross Border Trade Restriction

Informal cross border trade is also banned negatively affecting the income of the pastoral communities. As there is limited employment opportunity other than livestock production, low price of the livestock in the domestic market reduces the income of the pastoral community. **2.2.3**

### Decline in Range Productivity

Reduction in rangeland productivity is the most important negative change the community members recognize in the pastoralist areas. Due to increased bush encroachment, reduced rainfall, termite infestation, and expansion of cropland, pasture production is getting smaller and smaller over years. This resulted in continued Forage. The impact of reduced rangeland productivity on livestock productivity is obvious. It has direct implication on the household food security. As it affects the supply of milk and other livestock products, the product to which women and girls have access and control,

reduced rangeland productivity has direct implication on gender based empowerment.

### 2.2.4 Decline in Livestock Productivity

On the other hand, due to frequent drought in the pastoral communities, livestock productivity declined in the past decade. Milk and meat production and productivity reduced due to the decline in rangeland productivity. Unwanted bushes invaded the pasture land which led to decrease in rangeland productivity. The 1999/2000 drought also highly affected the livelihood of the pastoralists. Large number of livestock died. For instance, there were certain households who lost a thousand of livestock due to the drought. It was reported in the various study discussions that some persons committed suicide, as a result of such a disaster. As a result of the loss of livestock, household income declined drastically and they became vulnerable to food insecurity. This led the vulnerable households to cutting trees as an alternative source of income affecting also the environment.

### 3.1 Envisaged Development Approaches/Interventions in Pastoral Areas

As already indicated, development efforts should be integrated & co-coordinated. Besides, the adequacy of the proposed programs to the target population needs to be scrutinized. The need for grass-root participation in the design as well as implementation phase of projects and programs is currently well recognized. Pastoralists have considerable expertise and know-how developed over many years of practical experience. Ignoring this reality would lead to failure. Introducing new techniques to the pastoral communities should be preceded by a detailed assessment of traditional practices and identify their merits and demerits. There is a need for developing technology packages, which help

to strengthen the useful traditional practices and do away with harmful ones.

Extension workers and their training should focus on livestock breeding and husbandry. The extension service delivery system needs to be consistent with the pastoral life and community structure of the people living in these areas.

The pastoral communities are not always on the move. Although the frequency and extent of such human movement varies from region to region, there are situations when the people manage to stay in one place for several months. Also, the movement of household members other than family heads is typically limited. During seasons when family members tend to stay in one place for a considerable period of time, it is possible to create the opportunities for these people to engage in specially identified agricultural development activities and projects. Such development activities have important positive implications for improving the standard of living of the pastoral communities and these need be given priority.

Although a number of short and medium term programs could be designed to deal with problems of the pastoral communities, provisions of the necessary infrastructure for sustained development and radical transformation of their livelihood is a real challenge and long term agenda. Such a development agenda could well be effected only if the people can somehow be settled. Selective settlement programs are believed to be the only viable options in the long run. Settlement programs within these areas should be directly linked with the development of irrigation projects. Otherwise, they are bound to fail. Hence, the selection of areas for Sedentarization in these regions hinges on the availability of surface or underground water. In drought-prone settled areas, the settlement program entails only a change of location of farmers,

who are used to sedentary farming. In pastoralist regions, the change goes beyond a change of location and alters their cultural life. This complicates the Sedentarization programs and requires training and initiation work. It would also require a significant cultural transformation.

### **3.2 Strategies of pastoral development in Ethiopia:**

The following strategies should be adopted for pastoral development in Ethiopia:

- a) Sedentarization of mobile pastoralists on purely voluntary basis.
- b) Consolidate and stabilize those who are already settled or semi-settled through improved water supply, Pasture and social services.
- c) Carefully select viable and reliable river courses for future Sedentarization based on irrigation and link these places through roads and other communication lines.
- d) Provide mobile social services including health and education holistically for those that continue to be mobile.

### **3.3 Technical Interventions in pastoral development**

#### **3.3.1 Improve Water Supply & Irrigation Development**

- Water harvesting technique such as construction of ponds, birkas.
- Construct water points adjacent to range resources for dry season utilization.
- Utilizing roadside run off water for crop & forage production.
- Divert rivers & streams flooding during rainy season and supporting local & traditional irrigation practices.
- Supply appropriate crop varieties and pest control techniques.

#### **3.3.2 Livestock & Range resources Development**

- Improve the Indigenous breeds.
- Improve Veterinary Services.

- Improve forage production through the provision of adaptable forage species such as grass, shrub, tree & leguminous,
- Improve livestock marketing.
- Create awareness & control encroachment to marginal lands
- Strengthen livestock early warning system.
- Initiate and conduct community-based rangeland management demonstration practices.

### 3.3.3 Strengthening infrastructures and Institutional Support

- Improve the infrastructure (road, communication) market, access to education & training and human health services.
- Strengthen and revitalize local traditional institutions.
- Encourage the establishment of viable pastoral associations.
- Establish research institutions and rural technology promotion centers etc.
- Improve the provision of appropriate and strong extension services creating strong linkage between research institutions and the pastoral community.

### 3.4 Pastoralism, poverty reduction and development

Despite commonly held views that pastoralism fails to maximize the productive potential of livestock production, the value of pastoralism should not be underestimated. In fact, pastoralism contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of many developing country economies: for example, approximately 8.5% in Uganda, 9% in Ethiopia and 10% in Mali. These proportions are lower than the estimated contribution of pastoralism to the economy of Central Asian Countries like Kyrgyzstan, where pastoralism represents about 20% of

GDP (WISP 2008). However, the contribution of pastoralism to poverty reduction and development should not only be seen as a question of economics or market values. In fact the very nature of pastoral systems means that they often operate beyond the bounds of market economies and are slow to react to market conditions such as changing prices. Rather, supporting pastoralism offers a unique opportunity to ensure the continued survival of the cultural relationships between people and land as development continues. Furthermore, given the relationship between pastoralism and the sustainable use of biodiversity, many non-valued benefits can be attributed to pastoralism such as the continued provision of ecosystem services including nutrient and water cycling.

### 3.5 Natural Resource and Environmental Management Considerations and Climate Healing Steps in the pastoralist areas in Ethiopia

Despite this brighter wish, pastoralists are still vulnerable to climate change since their customary laws and practices are being undermined due to various factors including population growth, private and government investment initiatives, outside pressure and climate change. These situations are threatening and endangering the livelihoods of a majority of pastoralists and agro pastoralists. There have been no conservation prioritization exercises that apply specifically to arid and semi-arid zone ecosystems, but areas at high risk of desertification due to impending climate change and other factors have been identified.

### 3.6 Integrating indigenous and local knowledge, innovations and practices as Management techniques

Many pastoral systems are steeped in traditional management and practices. Pastoralism is a livelihood system tied to



ecosystem services with complex systems of social, political and economic organization. Centralized decision -makers are often unaware of the challenges pastoral communities face in achieving and/or maintaining sustainable livelihoods as there are few mechanisms for local communities to transmit their knowledge to outside decision makers, and the communities are often economically and politically marginalized. In fact the erosion of indigenous and local knowledge, innovations and practices can reduce both the environmental and economic sustainability of pastoralism. As such, when managing pastoralism for biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction, it is important to ensure that the appropriate policy framework is in place to support and preserve indigenous and local knowledge, institutions, innovations and practices.

### 3.7 Guidelines in Managing Development in Pastoral Areas:

- Notification and public consultation of proposed development or policy;
- Identification of indigenous and local communities and stakeholders likely affected by the proposed development or policy;
- Establishment of mechanisms for indigenous and local community participation;
- Establishment of an agreed process for recording the views and concerns of the members of the indigenous or local community whose interests are likely to be impacted by a proposed development or policy;
- Identification and provision of sufficient human, financial, technical and legal resources for effective indigenous and local Community participation in all phases of impact assessment procedures;

- Establishment of an environmental management or monitoring plan, including contingency plans regarding possible adverse cultural, environmental and social impacts resulting from a proposed development or policy;
- Identification of actors responsible for liability, redress, insurance and compensation;
- Conclusion of agreements or action plans on mutually agreed terms between the proponents of the proposed development or policy and the affected indigenous or local community;
- Establishment of a review or appeal process.

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusions

Despite the attraction of the interests of development policy planners very recently in Ethiopia, Pastoralism has been overlooked by policymakers over the past years. Consequently, they were excluded from the development arena politically, socially and economically. Furthermore, pastoral areas have remained marginalized. This needs understanding and significant attention must be given to the pastoralists, who account for 10-15 million of the total population and about 60% of the total land mass of the country. Therefore, development policies should tend to identify the challenges and reverse their vulnerability as part of the growth and transformation plan of the country. This calls for an integrated approach that enables the pastoral society themselves to be active participant in the policy making process as the primary stakeholders which directly make them drivers of change rather than being simply recipients of change.

It is found that droughts and ethnic conflicts are a common occurrence in almost all of the pastoral areas of Ethiopia. In the past, a

major drought was expected every 10 years. But because of factors such as natural and manmade factors including global warming these are more frequent-every 5-7years that resulted in pastoral livelihood systems in poor recovery situation. As a result, any small shock such as a prolonged dry spell has a much bigger impact on people's livelihood strategies than in the past. This situation is made worse by insecurity, rising poverty and declining asset levels (natural, human, social, financial and physical assets)

#### 4.2. Recommendations

- ➔ **Recognize the links between natural resources management, conflict and resilience.** Peace initiatives which ignore the institutional dimension and its link to natural resources management are unlikely to bring long-term impacts. Support to peace initiatives needs to address the problems of conflict at a much more fundamental level and understand natural resources management as inextricably linked to conflict and conflict management. The 'technical' side of natural resources management cannot be addressed in isolation from the institutional and governance aspects, which together are the main determinants of how rangeland users relate to each other.
- ➔ **Establish clarity on 'developing' pastoral areas.** The development of a broad vision and strategy for supporting pastoralism to guide the efforts of all actors working in pastoral areas is needed. The African Union Pastoral Policy Framework for Africa provides a useful framework for this.
- ➔ **Recognize the cross-border nature of pastoralism.** International and national development partners need

to find ways to translate their recognition of the need for a regional (and cross-border) approach to pastoralism into practical support on the ground that is designed, planned and implemented with a regional perspective.

- ➔ **Develop a legal and policy framework.** The governments of Kenya and Ethiopia need to establish a clearer policy and legal framework that recognizes the cross-border nature of pastoralism. This must be a concerted effort by all stakeholders including the Kenyan and Ethiopian governments at all levels, cross-border committee representatives and other civil society actors, with regional bodies playing a prominent, catalytic coordination role.
- ➔ **Land tenure:** A legal framework that recognizes the nature of communally owned private property in pastoral areas is needed.
- ➔ **Involve customary land institutions:** Formal legal support is needed for customary institutional frameworks governing natural resources. This involves legal recognition of customary institutions, and agreement on the respective roles and responsibilities of state and customary institutions.
- ➔ **Water and Rangeland management as an entry point:** Water is a life for pastoralists who lead lives in fragile ecosystems. Without the integration of water and range land, development in pastoral areas is in conceivable. Ongoing external interventions to enhance the productivity of the rangelands must be informed by a deep understanding

of the institutional picture rather than by technical perspectives alone. If natural resources management is seen both as a technical and as an institutional issue it will be easier to ensure that rangeland support is not constrained within administrative boundaries, but rather follows ecosystems and grazing/livelihood systems.

- ➔ **In-depth understanding of cross-border committees:** As social and communal relations are bound up in arrangements for sharing rangelands, the role of cross-border 'peace committees' in natural resources management and land administration should be understood. Any external support to these committees should be premised on a thorough understanding of their roles, functions and rules, their accountability and representation, their impact on other institutions and the underlying development vision towards which they are working.

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