



Regional Learning & Advocacy Programme for Vulnerable Dryland Communities

Why a Substantive Ministry/Cabinet Position for the ASALs is essential for Kenya's future December 2012¹

The formation of the Ministry of State for the Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands (MDNKOAL) in 2008 was a milestone in the Government of Kenya's commitment to addressing the unique challenges facing the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). **However the progress made threatens to be undermined if a cabinet position to continue the work is not secured after the 2013 elections.**

More than 80% of Kenya's landmass is either arid or semi-arid, but the nation's economic development is skewed in favour of the more humid highlands. The ASALs are disadvantaged by inequalities in their access to resources and power. Despite the substantial contributions to national coffers from the livestock-based economies, tourism and mineral exploration, of the drier lowlands, poverty was worse in the arid lands in 2009 than in 2005 (unlike other areas of the country). **A rebalancing of regional development is now seen as critical to securing social justice, economic prosperity, and national stability.** This is essential for the achievement of Kenya's Vision 2030—the government blueprint for medium-term development from 2008 to 2030—and also Kenya's Constitution of 2010 which guarantees the social and economic rights of marginalised groups, including pastoralists.

The Ministry of State for Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands (MDNKOAL) has **made substantial progress** in recent years including: the approval of the ASAL Policy and Ending Drought Emergencies country programme paper by cabinet, contribution to the incorporation some ASAL concerns in the Vision 2030 strategy and the 2010 Constitution, as well setting up of innovative partnerships to develop good practice models and promoting consultation of ASAL peoples in policy formulation.

The MDNKOAL has also been instrumental in progress towards setting up of a series of specialised institutions to deal with ASAL issues including: the ASAL Cabinet Sub-Committee, the ASAL Secretariat, the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), National Drought & Disaster Contingency Fund (NDDCF), the Livestock Marketing Board, the National Council on Nomadic Education, the Northern Kenya Education Trust, Northern Kenya Investment Fund as well as strengthening government and Non State Actors liaison and building the capacities of ASAL oriented organizations.

However, many of these institutions are in formative stages or are in process of being established. Also with devolution much more attention needs to be paid to strengthening governance in the ASALs and building the capacity of local government to implement policies effectively. Only appropriate Cabinet level representation will ensure that these issues are followed through. If not, drought, conflict and other disasters are likely to continue to threaten Kenya economic prosperity and stability for years to come.



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