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## **Wind bring prosperity – but not without a fight**

A Dutch windmill park is supposed to bring power and prosperity in a desolate north of Kenya. Up to now, the project mainly creates conflict between rivaling pastoralists.

“If those wind turbines do not live up to what has been promised, we are prepared to act, at whatever price. We will bring the project developers to court, or worse,” says Lenguyan Lolokoria, the village chief – dressed in a khaki uniform – with a threatening voice. The circle of men grunts in agreement with the words of the leader of their village Mount Kulal. Around thirty village elders are sitting and lying in the shade of a tree, their thin walking sticks and guns next to them in the grass, their mobile phones in their hands.

The daily meeting of the elders of the green mountain village revolves around the crisis: the increasing violence between rivaling Samburu, Turkana and Rendile nomadic groups in the heart of Marsabit County, in the arid plains of northern Kenya. In this area, pastoralists still live according to their traditions, wandering from place to place with their cattle, including the ancient custom of cattle raids and subsequent retaliation by the group concerned.

In this desolate, harsh, pastoral area west of Lake Turkana, 353 wind turbines will arise on an area of 40 thousand hectares by next year. These turbines should be generating 300 megawatts of green electricity – 20 percent of Kenya’s total energy needs. The construction of the “largest wind park in Africa” will cost over 630 million Euros and will be funded by, among others, the Dutch Development Bank FMO, the European Investment Bank EIB and the African Development Bank. A perfect example of clean and private-sector social entrepreneurship, the financiers of the Lake Turkana Wind Project (LTWP) already sing the praise.

Pastoralists’ representatives claim the opposite. According to them, the LTWP is simply another example of land grabbing, as often happens when governments offer land to firms. “Pastoralists are not taken seriously and their land rights are not recognized by the Kenyan government”, explains Alba Espinoza Rocca, land rights specialist for the Dutch development organization Cordaid. “As always, communal land is easily reallocated for other purposes. Despite promises, we are still waiting for legislation to regulate the use and transfer of communal land, which includes the rights of the local population to be consulted and compensated.”

Nevertheless, the Dutch development bank FMO, which recently came into disrepute in relation with financing of a dam on indigenous land in Panama, says that it does not doubt the intentions of the project developers. “We have not seen such an elaborate consultation process before”, says Maarten van Renssen, social and environmental specialist at FMO. “Discussions took places with all tribes, also with women and youth. And everybody has been involved in the implementation of the social programmes. We can put our trust in this group of entrepreneurs that know Africa like the back of their hand.”

The idea for LTWP originated from the Dutch entrepreneur Willem Dolleman, who often visited Lake Turkana to fish. The strong wind that consistently whistles from the direction of the lake over the barren plains seemed ideal for generating wind energy. When the oil price started to increase in 2004 and alternative energy sources became more attractive, the moment was there to turn his fantasy into reality. Together with five other European entrepreneurs, who have also been working

and living in Kenya for years, he elaborated his plans and could convince the Kenyan government about the importance of cleaner and cheaper energy. They leased 150 thousand hectares of land and the government promised to construct a 428-kilometer transmission line to connect the wind park to the national electricity grid in Nairobi. Nothing seemed to be in the way at the time of final signatures at the end of last year.

But after the first activities started – the construction of a road and the foundations for the 352 wind turbines by the Danish company Vestas (type V52) – the tensions between rivaling pastoralist groups increased. During an attack last month on the village of Sirima, in the middle of the wind turbine project zone, women and children were killed in their huts – an unprecedented brutal revenge on the Turkana, who were said to have killed a Samburu women one month before. The Turkana took revenge vis-à-vis the Rendile, whom they regard as being of the same tribe as the Samburu, and killed ten people, amongst them women and children, and took four thousand animals. And now it is only a matter of time before the next act of revenge; men on both sides are armed and ready.

Some people relate the violence to cattle rustling that got out of hand, but increasingly the wind project is mentioned as the cause. It would create a division between rivaling tribes who all claim to have rights to (most of) the land and thus to the benefits the project will bring: infrastructure, services such as electricity, water, schools, clinics and social investment programmes and – above all – employment.

### **Jobs**

“Where are the jobs?” village chief Lolokaria wonders aloud at the end of the meeting in Mount Kulal. “A lot has been promised to us, but I have not seen anything happening. We have trained people here: drivers, mechanics, and construction workers. We have been applying, but we are all still here, sitting jobless under the tree. We were one hundred percent supporting this project, but now we are having doubts.”

The mood has changed not only in the relatively green Samburu village of Mount Kulal. Also the Rendile, in the dusty village of Kargi, 200 kilometers further up, are not amused, in particular about the relocation of Sirima village, which had to give way for the project. The majority of inhabitants are Turkana. Brand new huts, all equipped with a solar lamp, have been built about 500 meters away. They now possess their own water pump and soon a school, solar panels, a health clinic and a real shop will be provided by the project developer, who will also teach them how to exploit the shop.

Rendile village chief David Wambile, sitting on a wobbly, green plastic chair in the sand in front of his house, points to a land map of 1914, on which land rights are clearly indicated: Sirima is unmistakably located in Rendile area. Turkana thus have nothing to do here and should thus not benefit from increasing prosperity.

When the sun starts burning, the last herds of camels and goats are driven to the plains. Skinny men in shawls trudge behind them with their thin walking sticks, while women with their thick necklaces and babies on the back carry jerrycans on their daily trip to the well. Along the dusty track, the last schoolchildren run towards their classrooms. And after that, except for the crowing of a single rooster, absolute silence reigns.

Wambile admits with a laugh that the map from 1914 is not totally representative anymore. “The Turkana do not need to go away”, he says, “but it should not be made too easy for them either. Before we know, they take over everything.”

Conflicts over land rights are the rule rather than the exception in developing countries when foreign investments come into play. Negotiations usually take place between the company and the government, while the local people are hardly involved.

There are countless examples of citizens who have been expelled from their land and completely missed out. In Indonesia and Malaysia, thousands of farmers who have been expropriated for the establishment of palm oil plantations, are waiting in vain for years already for their promised compensation. In Kenya, local organizations are fighting against land grabbing by oil companies, plantations for producing food or biofuel, but are also targeting operators of safari tourism.

A major problem in developing countries is the lack of cadastral data; illiterate and uninformed citizens are thus not able to claim property rights over their land. This is even more complicated when people do not have a permanent residence, but are migrating from place to place like the pastoralists in Kenya and Tanzania. Lobbying groups are not opposed to commercial investments, but demand that the traditional land rights of pastoralists be recognized. This will give them a say and allow them to profit from the benefits that are generated from natural resource extraction on their land – even a resource as elusive as the wind.

“If no clear arrangements are made, conflicts will arise, like in the case with the Lake Turkana Wind Project”, according to Shadrack Omondi, land rights lawyer. “Everybody abuses the fact that the local population is not well-informed. On top of that, more and more violence is being used.”

Omondi works with the Coalition of European Lobbies on Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP), initiated by Cordaid. Celep is committed to strengthening the rights of pastoralists in Eastern Africa. “Young people here should have the choice whether to continue the nomadic lifestyle of their parents or to settle permanently and try to earn money from their livestock and with agriculture,” according to Omondi. “There are several opportunities for the processing of milk and meat that now remain untapped.”

On the barren plains, where the wind turbines should be running by next year, not a breath of wind can be found these days. The wind-bent trees and arid bushes are motionless. Only a rare truck causes a cloud of dust in the landscape while jolting over the rocky track to construct the 200-kilometer road from Laisamis to the project site – a contribution of ten million Euros from the Dutch government. At the construction site, the first eighty people from surrounding villages have just been trained to operate the excavators to pulverize stones for the foundation. Young Turkana, Samburu and Rendile in uniform and with worn plastic sandals are harmoniously manning the small security stations on the access roads to the project site. The fixed salary of 150 Euros monthly compensates for the endless silence and emptiness during their long shifts.

### **Women**

Just like these youths, the women rather look at what connects instead of what divides them. The Rendile women in the mixed village Loiyangalani are fed up with the violence of men. “If we would be in power, this would not happen. But well, nobody listens to women here”, says Nangiso Mirarkona with a laugh. She is sitting among a group of women, wearing a beaded headdress around her shaved head, in front of her hut in the manyatta, a circle of huts where cattle are kept safe during the night. “Because of all these violent reprisals, we lost everything – 1500 animals in my family alone – and we can start all over again. My son cannot even go to school anymore because I can’t afford to pay school fees.”

The manyatta is almost deserted. The Turkana fled out of fear of revenge; only older people remain. According to the women, the violence has nothing to do with the wind project. “It is just old-fashioned tribalism”, says Mirarkona. “Those men are acting aggrieved because they didn’t get any jobs, but they simply do not have the right papers”, she continues, while all the women laugh. They are embracing economic development in their region. “We do not want to be dependent on livestock that dies during droughts. I prefer to receive money so I can start my own business”, she says, pointing at her little purse under her armpit.

Setting up businesses is one of the pillars in the social programme Wings of Change, linked to the wind park. Over a period of twenty years, a fund of about 500 thousand Euros annually is available for schools, health clinics and enterprise development. Furthermore, the LTWP will pay emission rights to the population – an estimated five million Euros per year.

“We are not obliged to do this”, says board chairman Carlo van Wageningen, who has worked his whole life in Africa, like founder Willem Dolleman. “We truly believe that those rights belong to the local population in Kenya. We do not want to deprive them of their resources. On the contrary, we will bring power and prosperity to them.”

Local politicians doubt these apparently good intentions. The contract with LTWP came into being before the Kenyan government decentralized into 47 counties in 2013. Now, the local politicians want written proof that the LTWP money will be transferred to their county. They also want new negotiations to take place about the remaining 110 thousand hectares that LTWP has leased and claims to keep as a buffer zone, to test wind turbines, for extensions or to fend off competitors.

Meanwhile, the county of Marsabit has taken the government to court. “We do not want a tip, we just want to have a fair share of the benefits that will be generated from our land,” says Daud Tamasot Arkhole, a Samburu representative in the county government of Marsabit, between the roaring trucks at the gas station in Marsabit.

In the re-located village Sirima, LTWP project coordinator Nick Taylor, sitting on a tree trunk in the shade, tries to dispel the concerns of the local population. “Now the work has been started, people get impatient. Everybody wants to see immediate results, but we can only pay the social profit when the wind turbines are operational in 2018. We have already explained that one thousand times, to all stakeholders. Unfortunately, local politicians who want to profile themselves towards their constituencies are inciting this debate again.”

In a cloud of dust, a truck full of Turkana drives back to Sarima, where the Turkana who fled try to restart their life again. The first signs of the approaching civilization are visible. The ground is full of empty bottles of beer, men with reddish eyes hang around expressionless while chewing qat. Amongst the traditional Turkana women, the sexily dressed women who hope to earn money from the incoming laborers clearly stand out. “Prosperity unfortunately does not come without its side effects”, sighs director Carlo van Wageningen.

This is the third and last article on the role private parties can play in the realization of the development goals, leading up to the UN Summit for Development on 13–16 July in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. During this summit, billions of Euros have to be found in the business sector to finance and achieve the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The SDGs will replace the Millennium Development Goals that were set for 2015.