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# INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

PASTORALISM



IWGIA

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## NEWS FROM IWGIA

IWGIA has throughout 2009 supported indigenous peoples' involvement in climate change policy discussions. The 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) concluded on December 18, 2009 with a weak political agreement known as the Copenhagen Accord. The Copenhagen Accord does not present any clear new commitments to solving the climate crisis and the 194 countries that are party to the Convention were scarcely able to agree to it, merely deciding to 'take note' of the Accord rather than adopt it. After a year of intense negotiations that were, at least at the outset, supposed to lead to a legally binding instrument, this is a very poor outcome indeed.

Indigenous representatives the world over have been intensely engaged in the negotiation process leading up to the COP. Throughout the year, they have gained increasing support from state parties to recognizing indigenous peoples' human rights in the negotiation texts. With references to the UN

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the outcome documents from the negotiations on REDD, and to the UN Human Rights Council's resolution (10/4, March 2009) on human rights and climate change in the outcome document on a Shared Vision for long-term cooperative action, it was expected that the Copenhagen Accord would specifically recognize the obligation of states to respect and protect indigenous peoples' human rights in all climate change policies and actions. It was thus a serious disappointment for the approx. 200 indigenous representatives present at the COP to learn that the Copenhagen Accord makes no reference whatsoever to the rights of indigenous peoples. The Accord does not, in fact, mention human rights at all.

COP 16, which will take place in Mexico in November-December 2010, is now supposed to result in the legally binding instrument that the COP 15 process was unable to produce.

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This issue of Indigenous Affairs focuses on the situation of the millions of indigenous peoples who are nomadic pastoralists. Nomadic pastoralists have unique cultures and make unique and productive use of harsh environments. Nomadic pastoralists the world over are, however, the subject of an unusually large number of myths and misconceptions that have led to inadequate, often hostile development policies, entrenched pastoral poverty, discrimination and human rights violations. Pastoralists have much to offer in terms of unique indigenous knowledge, economic contributions, cultural diversity etc., but in order to realize their full potential, misconceptions need to be corrected and supportive policies and programmes put in place.

### The importance of pastoralism

Nomadic and transhumant pastoralists may number between 100 – 200 million people globally.<sup>1</sup> Pastoralists live in many parts of the world, including Africa, Central Asia, the Arctic and southern Europe. In sub-Saharan Africa alone it is estimated that more than 50 million people live as nomadic pastoralists. Pastoralist cultures and livelihoods – based on livestock such as cattle, goats, sheep, yak, oxen and reindeer – are uniquely adapted to surviving in and making productive use of harsh geographical environments such as semi-arid and arid lands and deserts.

There is an increasing body of scientific research that demonstrates that pastoralists and pastoralism make significant contributions to local, national and regional economies. As described in the articles by Ced Hesse and Joseph Ole Simel, research into African pastoralism shows that pastoralism is considerably more productive per hectare than commercial ranching or sedentary livestock keeping in similar environmental conditions, and that the high productivity of livestock in pastoral systems not only supports millions of pastoralists but also contributes significantly to other sectors of national and regional economies in Africa.

### Mobility

As emphasised in all of the articles in this issue of Indigenous Affairs, the key aspect of nomadic pastoral-

ism is mobility. The areas in which pastoralists live are most often harsh and non-fertile, with extreme environmental conditions, and it is therefore imperative for pastoralists to be able to move over large areas to find grazing and water to sustain their herds. The space and scope for mobility becomes even more important given the serious consequences of climate change that are exacerbating the already extreme climatic conditions that pastoralists have to cope with. Such consequences are described in the articles by Joseph Ole Simel, Stephan Dudeck and John Isom, focusing on East Africa, Russia and Tibet respectively. Pastoralist representatives participating in the recent COP 15 in Copenhagen also strongly underlined the serious consequences of climate change for pastoralists and the need to develop visionary adaptation strategies.

The space for mobility for nomadic pastoralists is, however, rapidly diminishing and pastoralists the world over are increasingly suffering from land and natural resource dispossession. Pastoralists are being evicted from areas which they have lived in and utilized for centuries in order to make way for sedentary farming, large-scale commercial farming, natural resource extraction, environmental conservation initiatives, commercial wildlife hunting, tourism development, etc.

### Negative stereotyping

Governments and mainstream societies are unfortunately largely ignorant of the dynamics and contributions of pastoralism, and pastoralists suffer from entrenched negative stereotyping and discrimination. Despite being useful for promoting tourism, and appearing as exotic and colorful attractions in commercial advertising, pastoralists and pastoralism are generally perceived as backward, irrational, unproductive, conflictual and environmentally destructive.

Moreover, pastoralists are often insufficiently represented in national decision-making bodies and not well organized at either local, national or regional level. They therefore tend to be in a weak position when it comes to conflicts and competition over land and natural resources.

Misconceptions and a lack of will to listen and learn on the part of governments lead to inadequate

and hostile development policies. Such is the case in Tanzania, for instance, where – as described in the article by Edward Porokwa – the current government is clearly anti-pastoralist and has adopted a number of policies which have a negative bearing on pastoralism. Tibet and Russia are further cases in point where, as described in the articles by John Isom and Stephan Dudeck, the livelihoods and future existence of the nomadic pastoralists have been undermined by disastrous development policies.

The negative stereotyping of pastoralists leads to severe human rights violations. These take many forms such as, for instance, the forcible evictions of pastoralists described by Edward Porokwa in his article on the situation in Tanzania. In some cases, the negative stereotyping cultivates a culture of ethnic intolerance and hatred. Such is the situation in Burkina Faso and Niger and, in his article, Issa Diallo describes the horrific massacres taking place towards Peul pastoralists in Burkina Faso.

Pastoralists in general suffer from marginalization but pastoralist women suffer from double marginalization, being both pastoralists and women. Many pastoralist cultures are profoundly patriarchal and this – combined with modern forms of development and decision-making, which are also male-dominated – suppresses pastoralist women. In their article, Rebecca Lolosoli and Johnson Ole Kaunga describe the situation of pastoralist women in northern Kenya and highlight serious issues such as widespread violence against women.

## Ways forward

Despite the many challenges, it is important to note that pastoralist communities are increasingly taking action to improve their situation and demand their rights. Self-organization and capacity building are key elements and, in his article, Dodo Boureima describes how pastoral organizations from West Africa have formed a regional network to defend the economic, political, social and cultural interests of pastoralists in West Africa.

As highlighted by Ced Hesse, an increasingly vocal and well-organized pastoralist civil society is emerging – notably in East Africa – and contributing to keeping pastoralism on the political agenda. In order to further develop successful advocacy aimed at obtaining conducive pastoralist policies, it is – as argued by Ced Hesse – important for pastoralists and their supporters to conduct sound field-based research into the total economic value of pastoralism in

order to gather hard evidence of the multiple contributions pastoralism makes to local and national economies.

It is important in this regard for pastoralists to engage in developing national climate change adaptation strategies and to remind policy makers of the economic, social and cultural benefits of supporting pastoralists' own adaptation strategies as defined by themselves. In addition, those donors who support states' climate change adaptation initiatives must be reminded of their duty to pay special attention to the most vulnerable groups. Such advocacy can draw support from the "Resolution on Climate Change and Human Rights and the Need to Study its Impact in Africa" issued by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on 25 November 2009, which emphasizes the need to include the rights of indigenous peoples in climate change adaptation initiatives.

The right of pastoralists to maintain and develop their own identity, cultures and livelihoods is a human rights issue and it is important for pastoralist organizations to make use of relevant international law in their domestic advocacy work. One key document is the recently adopted UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which provides for the individual as well as the collective rights of indigenous peoples, including rights to lands, territories and resources and the right not to be forcibly removed from their land and territories. In a regional context, pastoralists in Africa can make use of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the indigenous peoples' policy framework of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), which emphasize the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples in Africa – including land and natural resource rights.

It is to be hoped that pastoralist organizations will be strengthened in the coming years and their advocacy capacity further consolidated. They are up against strong forces and they need sharp and convincing arguments. Hopefully, over the coming years, we shall see a growing global pastoralist civil society that is able to promote their cause on the basis of solid research into the economic value of pastoralism, the use of national and international human rights law and increased networking and collaboration at local, national and international levels. □

## Note

- 1 According to the World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism: [www.iucn.org/wisp/](http://www.iucn.org/wisp/)



# TIBET'S NOMADIC PASTORALISTS

## Tradition, Transformation and Prospects

John Isom







*Milking goats. Goats provide the drokpa with meat, milk and cashmere. Photo: Michael Buckley*

## Introduction

The Tibetan Plateau, known today as the Earth's third pole,<sup>1</sup> averages over 4,500 meters in elevation and covers some 2.5 million square kilometers in south-central Asia. The size of Western Europe, the region is bounded to the south and west by the Hindu-Kush Himalaya complex of mountains, to the north by the vast Taklamakan Desert, and to the east by lowland Han China. The region, which receives most of its scant rainfall in summer from the Indian monsoon to the south, is largely semi-arid to arid, with strong, persistent winds, long arctic winters and hot summers punctuated by local thunderstorms. Extreme fluctuations in daily temperature are common year round.

Evidence suggests that humans arrived on the plateau during the Middle Paleolithic, some 30,000-50,000 years ago. In historical times, an independent Tibetan polity developed in relative isolation, an isolation abetted by the sheer size, natural mountain barriers and extreme environment of the plateau.

This isolation would lead to the development of a unique language and culture, social structures and, for the past 1,400 years, religious traditions rooted in Tibetan Buddhism.

More than two-thirds of the plateau is grasslands, a resource that, along with the domestication of the wild yak, has meant the development of a pastoralist livelihood. Since the hypothesized origin of pastoralism on the plateau some 4,000 years ago, and perhaps as far back as 8,800 years ago, these livelihoods and lifeways have demonstrated a persistence that suggests a strong co-evolutionary relationship between the grasslands ecosystem and human lifeways, in service to families and clans, monastic communities and the larger polity.

The conditions of Tibet's unique form of nomadic pastoralism and its environmental relations, the transformation of both under communist Chinese rule since the 1950s and their future under renewed and rapidly changing political, environmental and climatic conditions are the focus of this paper.<sup>2</sup>



Yak wool is the basis of the nomads' tents and other essential household products. Photo: Michael Buckley



Yak dung, an important fuel, is piled for drying. Photo: Michael Buckley



## Enduring traditions

The Tibetan Plateau's extreme environmental conditions make for a unique ecological context for pastoralism. The semi-arid and arid rangelands of the region are subject to high seasonal and inter-annual variability and intensity of summer rainfall and winter snowfall, the latter a critical variable that strongly affects the survival of livestock. Precipitation also varies significantly on relatively local scales, necessitating the regular movement, again both within and across seasons, of livestock in order to ensure sufficient forage and safety.

Within this ecological context, Tibetan nomads, called *drokpa*, graze several forms of domesticated livestock, including yaks, yak-cattle hybrids, sheep, goats and horses. Sheep are typically the most abundant domesticated animal in *drokpas'* herds. They supply wool and milk, and often the dominant form of meat for subsistence consumption. Goats, in turn, provide meat, milk and cashmere, a high-quality wool that is an increasingly valuable market commodity. Nomads also keep horses, mainly for riding, never for meat, and in some regions they serve also as pack animals. *Drokpas'* herds also include the iconic Tibetan yak.

The value of the yak in the nomads' culture cannot be overestimated. Yaks are the main beast of burden; they provide milk and milk products, hides, dung fuel and occasional meat. According to Miller (1999), thirty to forty milking yaks, in a herd of about 100 overall, is about the maximum number a typical-sized nomad family can maintain before needing to hire additional labor. The yaks also provide the raw materials for the nomads' tents, which are made from the yak's long, coarse hairs, woven into strips and readily transportable. It is no surprise that the Tibetan term for yak, *nor*, also translates as "wealth".

The *drokpas'* herds typically consist of a mix of these species, a strategy that serves to mitigate risk while taking advantage of the livestock's complementary feeding strategies: each species grazes different plants or parts of plants, thus more efficiently using the assemblage of pasture species. Maintaining not only abundance but diversity of the overall composition of one's livestock also minimizes the risk of loss from disease or extreme weather events.

A common stereotype with regard to all nomads, Tibet's included, is that they move randomly across the landscape. There is, however, nothing random about the *drokpas'* daily and seasonal movements across the plateau's rangelands. Rather, their movements are, in the words of one researcher, "well-prescribed by complex social organizations... [that] are

Yaks are the primary pack animal for moving between summer and winter pasture. The Tibetan term for yak, *nor*, also translates as "wealth". Photo: Michael Buckley





*In this propaganda image, heroic Chinese workers urge Tibet's people to work in order to harness the power of the rivers and mountains of the region. Photo: Michael Buckley*

highly regulated" and environmentally contingent (Miller 1999).

Management and reduction of risk to both pasturelands and livestock are distributed not only ecologically but also socially. Before communist Chinese control of Tibet ended traditional nomadic practices in the late 1950s, access to and control over pasture resources were undertaken through common-property regimes. The *drokpas*' range-use practices were defined by a dynamic mobility of livestock, proprietary but overlapping pastureland territories, and adaptive decision-making for access based on local and seasonal conditions. These practices linked strongly with social structures that created a somewhat fluid landscape of access, again dependent on local-scale resource abundance.

### **Transformation: Maoism invades the grasslands**

In 1950, communist China invaded the once-independent Tibet, and quickly began implementing what would become a half-century of disastrous land-use policies across the plateau. These policies were rooted in Maoist ideology, in a lack of capacity in grassland science and studied indifference to pastoralism's most basic practices, along with a disdain for Tibet's nomads as backwards, superstitious and in need of China's civilizing hand. The effect has been to transform

the *drokpas*' social relations and pastoralist practices, and Tibet's grassland ecosystem has become degraded. More than a half-century later, China's policies continue to create human rights and environmental crises on the Roof of the World.

The first of these policies occurred in the late 1950s, when Tibet's grasslands were suddenly in the hands of Chinese cadres, grassland "foreigners" who had come either from China's urban centers or small-plot farms. Productivism was the new ideology, the goal of which was to intensify meat production, in service to the influx of Chinese migrants building new towns, oil wells and mines and other resource extraction industries across Tibet and western China.

From the outset, the cadres saw the nomads not as enduring stewards of the land but as backward and irrational: unscientific, unproductive and in need of revolutionary regimentation. The cadres set about increasing herd size, slaughter rates and overall meat production. By the early 1960s, however, Mao's Great Leap Forward had become an agricultural nightmare, producing a famine across Tibet and China that killed between twenty and forty million people nationwide.

Deng Xiaoping's rise to power in the late 1970s ushered in an era of economic and political pragmatism. Under the so-called Household Responsibility System, nomads were given their animals back, but not their land. As soon as they regained some control over their livestock, they cut the number of sheep



*China's fencing policies abet grassland resource overgrazing and therefore ecosystem degradation. Photo: CTA, DIIR, Environment and Development Desk*

back from the unprecedented highs of 30 million sheep and goats and six million yaks to more sustainable levels.

Still, the ecological damage had been done and, by the early 1990s, it was becoming clear that the grasslands were in trouble. The grass was dying, and animal weights were dropping. Burrowing rodent populations were exploding, reaching plague proportions because predators had been extirpated. Toxic invasive weeds had multiplied, and desertification was on the rise. The rangelands and their capacity to support life, abundantly, were degrading. Yet the policy-driven, compulsory overstocking undertaken during the first thirty years of communist policy could not be discussed; it was and still is a taboo subject, a shameful loss of face that China's officials have yet to look at afresh.

In the 1990s, new state-mandated policies once again extended the reach of central authority across the grasslands. In an effort "to integrate all regions of China...within a centrally planned system", state authority implemented the so-called "Four-Way Scheme", mandated region-wide fencing regimes and shelters for nomads and livestock, soon obligating decade-long limits on herd sizes (Foggin, 2007). Livestock mobility, which had for millennia resulted in both sustainable livelihoods and abundant, resilient ecosystems, was gone. The state, still eschewing any dialogue with the backward nomads as to how these policies might affect ecosystem abundance and resil-

ience, had still not realized that there was anything to be learned from Tibet's nomads.

### **A new crisis, and a new policy: China's water security**

By the end of the twentieth century, as China's long-held dream of Tibet as a source of meat began to fade, a new concern was emerging for China: water security. The Yellow River, chronically and acutely overdrawn for irrigation, industry and urban populations along its length in lowland China, ran dry in its eastern reaches for 267 days in 1997 (Yeh, 2005). In turn, disastrous flooding in 1998 in the Yangtze River basin of central China made the public acutely aware of the recognition that China's unregulated logging and watershed practices in eastern Tibet had created a tragedy downstream.

Now, the Yellow and the Yangtze, along with the Mekong – the three rivers with headwaters in the semi-arid *Sanjiangyuan*, which means "three rivers plateau," or headwaters – would engender a new slogan and national policy: "Tibet is China's Number One Water Tower".

The drive to protect the sources of water quantity and quality coalesced into a new policy, embodied in a Marxist explanation of the new situation: that there was a "contradiction" between grass and animals.

Grasslands policy was now a simple zero-sum proposition: China must protect the grass in order to protect the watersheds, to protect the water – in quality and quantity – from degradation. And since the grasslands were not producing enough meat through traditional pastoral practices, the grazing animals would have to be removed – and, with them, the herders.

The new policy, *tuimu huancao* in Chinese, means, “closing pastures to restore grasslands”, and assumes that the only way to conserve Tibet’s grasslands ecosystems, as the headwaters of China’s great rivers, is to remove the *drokpa* and their livestock. Yet ecosystem scientists, including China’s own, are beginning to realize that the grasslands of Tibet, when grazed moderately, intermittently and using dynamic mobility of livestock, produce an abundance of forage and maintain a higher biodiversity than ungrazed pastures, where exotic weeds invade and biodiversity declines (Klein, Harte and Zhao, 2007, 2004).

Chinese policy lags far behind the latest scientific knowledge, and the *tuimu huancao* policy is the latest disaster in a half-century of disastrous land-use policies. The certificates guaranteeing nomads’ long-term land tenure have been torn up, nullified by the new edict. The installation of fencing across large areas, meant to instill a sense of ownership over plots, continues to disrupt customary access and social relations, and has led to overgrazing, exacerbating stressed and degraded ecosystems. State power is uprooting and displacing the *drokpa* – nearly 50,000 in the Sanjiangyuan alone, and several hundred thousand across the plateau so far – from their homelands and socio-cultural and socio-ecological life-ways and traditions, and doing so without prior, free and informed consent or participation in the decision-making process.

Instantly, the *drokpas*’ husbandry skills and traditional ecosystem knowledge, their risk-management strategies, environmental services, carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation are gone, made irrelevant, as if they had never existed.

### Climate change and state imperative exacerbating

China’s water crisis is the recognition that climate change is warming the Tibetan Plateau and inducing glacial meltdown: according to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), some 18% of the Yangtze River is glacial meltwater, 7% for the Mekong River, and 2% for the already parched Yellow River (Eriksson et al 2009). The



China’s fencing policies abet grassland resource overgrazing and therefore ecosystem degradation, seen at left in the image - Photo: Michael Buckley

explanatory power of climate change is now too convenient for China’s policy makers to ignore. Under the increasingly dire predictions of how climate change will affect the plateau, China no longer worries that its past policy failures caused the degradation of Tibetan rangelands. Climate change explains what is now seen as desertification in Tibet. Climate change is the overriding cause of the accelerated desiccation of Tibet’s lakes and wetlands and the disruption of Tibet’s modest croplands. Climate change has become China’s *force majeure*.

But it does not follow that the only response to climate change is the exclusion of nomads from their lands. Yet they are being uprooted and displaced from their socio-cultural and socio-ecological life-ways in the name of a plateau-wide greenwash conservation scheme to protect the water quantity and quality of the Tibetan Plateau’s China-bound river waters. The nomads’ practices are now a threat to what China’s state-run media characterizes as the “fragile ecology” of the region, and the nomads are now officially “ecological migrants”, victims of a conveniently impersonal force called climate change (Xinhua 2009).

### Common traditions, common solutions

Like the dispossession of the American Indians and Australian Aborigines, the compulsory “ecological



migration" of the Tibetan nomads is grounded in ignorance, prejudice and a failure to listen and learn. China is far from alone in assuming its nomads are backward, far from alone in blaming them for degrading the land. But alternative models do exist, and can be found relatively close by in Mongolia.

Mongolia is perhaps Tibet's closest geographic analogue, both ecologically and socially.<sup>3</sup> Long, cold winters, a semi-arid and arid climate, vast pasturelands and high spatial and temporal variability in precipitation define both Mongolia's high-latitude grasslands and Tibet's high-elevation grasslands. The comparison ends, however, when we consider how Mongolia is adapting to climate change and thereby to the fate and future of its own nomadic herders, their lifeways and the grasslands ecosystem that defines them.

In July 2009, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Mongolia's nomads and government officials. During this meeting, he referred to the "moral imperative" of climate change adaptation and the need to act on behalf of "the one third of the world's population – two billion people – who are potential victims of desertification". He also declared that the climate negotiations, both in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process and within nations, should be "guided by the principles of equity and transparency, and involve all in the decisions that affect us all (Ban 2009)".

Secretary-General Ban visited Mongolia not only because it faces severe challenges in adapting to climate change but also because its response is becoming a model for action. In 2000, Mongolia launched its National Action Programme on Climate Change (NAPCC), a multi-decade framework for addressing climate change. The goals of the program include "economic sustainability of livestock production and the ecological sustainability of natural resources used in livestock production", and the "reduction of vulnerability of livestock to impacts of climate change." The means to these ends include the "education [of] herdsmen and farmers on sensitive issues of climate change... technology and information transfer to farmers and herdsmen... research and technology to ensure agricultural development capable of dealing with various environmental problems in the 21<sup>st</sup> century... [and the] coordination of information from research, inventories and monitoring".

Underlying this ambitious program is the full participation of Mongolia's nomads in all aspects of the long-term assessment, analysis, planning, restoration, management and use, and conservation of Mongolia's ecosystems, ecosystem services and conservation zones.

These efforts point to the fundamental nature of how adaptation to climate change is a human rights issue: that a people have a fundamental right to determine their own fate and future in terms of how best to adapt to climate change. Numerous UN officials have already made direct statements linking climate change adaptation and human rights, providing more "moral imperative" to the mandate of nations to engage their peoples directly in planning for climate change.<sup>4</sup> Tibet's *drokpa* deserve no less.

Annealed in the ecological crucible of Earth's highest plateau, and until recently the stewards of a unique form of sustainable pastoralism, Tibet's *drokpa* learned millennia ago that only through effective stewardship can life on the Tibetan Plateau be humanly possible and ecologically sustainable. They possess a traditional ecosystem knowledge that, despite sixty years of relentless attack under occupation, provides the template for an enduring pastoralist livelihood and ecosystem stewardship, especially as Tibet and the larger region work to adapt to climate change.

Indeed, the *drokpas'* ecological knowledge and pastoralist practices are essential for undertaking long-term restoration and conservation of the ecosystems and ecosystem services that China so desperately craves, and must still come to understand. □

## Notes

- 1 The Tibetan Plateau stores more freshwater, in the form of glacial ice, than any other region on Earth except for the North and South poles. The Third Pole is warming at least twice as fast as the rest of the world, causing a glacial meltdown and a growing water crisis for some 1.3 billion people who live downstream in ten nations.
- 2 Additional online resources for the issues addressed in this paper include [www.tibetjustice.org](http://www.tibetjustice.org), [www.tibetthirdpole.org](http://www.tibetthirdpole.org), [www.tibetnetwork.org](http://www.tibetnetwork.org), and [www.meltdownintibet.com](http://www.meltdownintibet.com).
- 3 Their cultures have been connected since the early thirteenth century and the so-called "patron-priest" relations between Tibet's high lamas and the reign of Genghis Khan; Mongolia's forms of Buddhism are derived from Tibet's.
- 4 Ms Navanethem Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has spoken on the vulnerability of the poorest and least-contributing peoples under climate change scenarios. In turn, Ms Kyung-wha Kang, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, has spoken about the "striking climate injustice" that the most vulnerable in the world face in adapting to climate change, and that the "human rights perspective also underlines the importance of empowerment". Finally, Mr Feng Gao, Director of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat was a panelist on a mid-June 2009 Human Rights Council panel, during which time he asserted that, "The UNFCCC negotiation process and the expected Copenhagen agreed outcome will undoubtedly have positive impacts on the full enjoyment of human rights."

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Note: The following works have informed the composition of this article. I extend my thanks to two anonymous readers for comments on the text and suggestions for references. All website references were active as of 16 November 2009.

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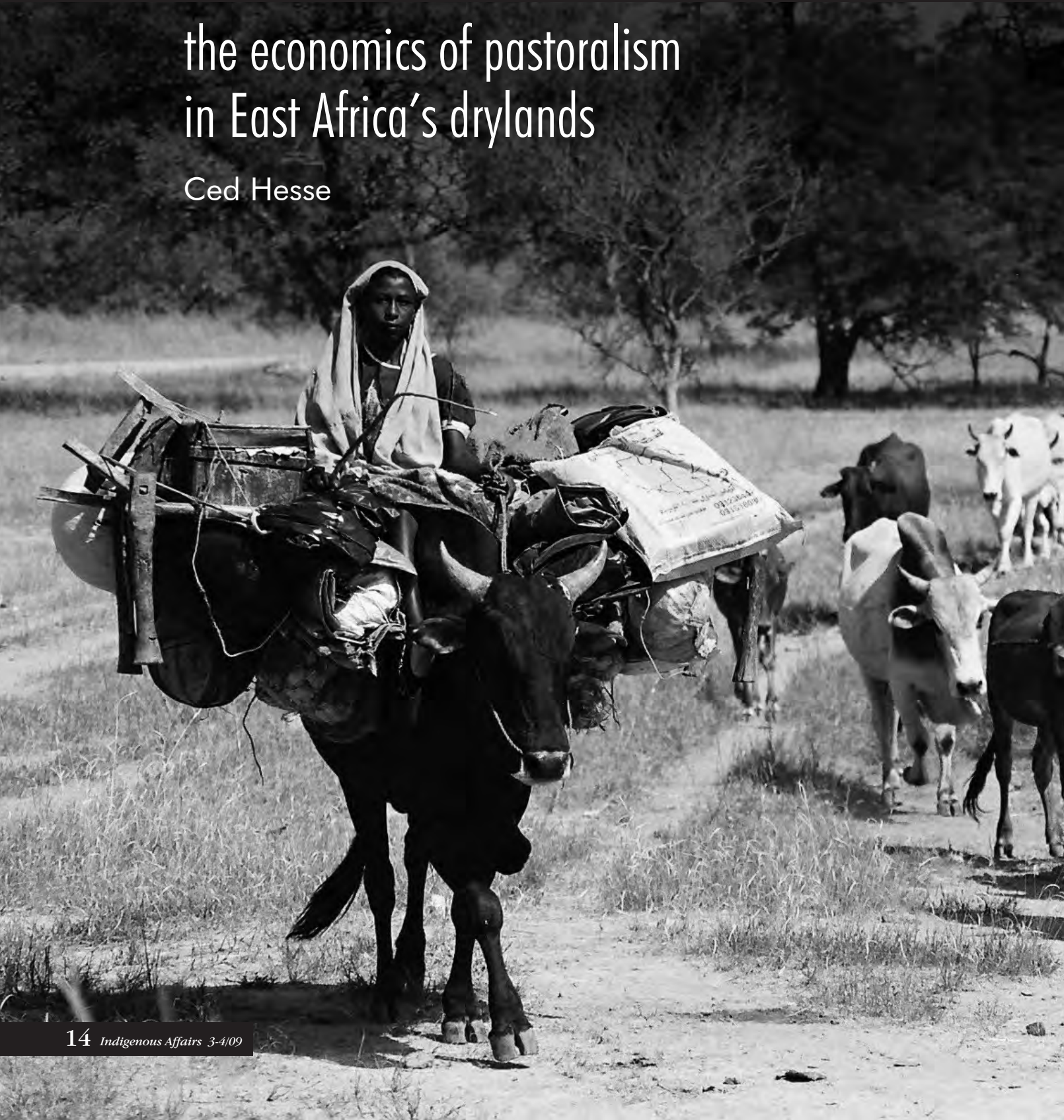
*He wishes to thank his colleagues in Tibet Third Pole, Mr Michael Buckley and several anonymous Tibet scholars for guidance on earlier drafts of this manuscript. Mr Isom alone is responsible for the opinions and any and all errors that there might be in this article.*



# GENERATING WEALTH FROM ENVIRONMENTAL VARIABILITY

the economics of pastoralism  
in East Africa's drylands

Ced Hesse





Productivity in the face of environmental variability and resilience to periodic but unpredictable cycles of drought and flood are built into pastoral livelihoods, institutions and knowledge systems.<sup>1</sup> Yet poverty, environmental degradation and conflict persist in many pastoral areas of Africa. This is, in large measure, a direct result of inappropriate policy and development interventions. Enduring perceptions of pastoralism as an economically inefficient, and environmentally destructive land-use systems continue to drive rangeland and livestock policy. But these perceptions are not evidence-based. They are sustained by ignorance of the dynamics of dryland environments and pastoral livelihood systems, and the absence of an economic valuation framework in which to assess the true contribution of pastoralism to local and national economies. Furthermore, policy design and practice are not sufficiently informed by past failure or designed with the participation of pastoral communities.

Governments' poor understanding of pastoralism, combined with the inability of pastoral groups to influence the decisions that affect their lives and to hold government to account, is perpetuating a vicious circle of pastoral poverty and conflict, thereby reinforcing the very preconceptions underpinning policy directives for pastoral development in much of East Africa. These are failures of governance.

Building the capacities of both pastoral communities and their advocates to challenge these ingrained perceptions is an essential pre-requisite for the greater participation of pastoralists in national and local decision-making processes. Until governments better understand the rationale of pastoralism and the significant economic and environmental benefits of mobile livestock keeping, they will see no value in engaging with pastoralists or protecting their rights.

### Box 1: Persistent perceptions

*One of the weaknesses of communal land tenure is that it does not confer adequate incentives and sanctions for efficient utilisation and management of common property resources, which leads to what is commonly referred to as the "tragedy of the commons".* Draft national policy for the sustainable development of arid and semi-arid areas of Kenya, 2005, p.7.

*We are producing little milk, export very little beef, and our livestock keepers roam throughout the country with their animals in search for grazing grounds. We have to do away with these archaic ways of livestock farming.* Hon Jakaya M. Kikwete, President of Tanzania, Press Conference on 4th January 2006.

*"The extensive system which is mostly agro-pastoralism and pastoralism is a livestock production system which is based on seasonal availability of forage and water thus requiring mobility. This system is constrained by poor animal husbandry, lack of modernization, accumulation of stock beyond the carrying capacity and lack of market orientation..."* National Livestock Policy, Tanzania, 2007, p.1

*"The need to facilitate the restructuring of the pastoral economy over time towards a market driven economy, where key inputs are accessed through the markets rather than social networks as is the case currently..."* Draft national policy for the sustainable development of arid and semi-arid areas of Kenya, 2005, p.28

*"Improved productivity in terms of yield per unit area or per unit of livestock is envisaged to be one of the main areas of focus for agricultural transformation under PMA"...* Uganda's Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture: Eradicating poverty in Uganda, 2005, p.74

## Persistent perceptions

Two narratives continue to dominate environmental and livestock policy in East Africa even though there is little or no evidence to support their premises, particularly with respect to pastoralism – see Box 1. These need to be challenged.

First, the “tragedy of the commons” thesis articulated by Garrett Hardin (1968), which maintains that environmental degradation is inevitable where lands are held in common while livestock is privately owned.<sup>2</sup> Despite being discredited, it still strongly influences governments’ attitudes to customary pastoral land tenure systems, prompting policies to control stocking levels and privatize pastoral land. Hardin’s arguments are not in themselves wrong in that, in the absence of any enforceable rules of use or management of common goods, resource depletion and degradation may occur. The collapse of certain fishing stocks as a result of the failure of the international community to manage quotas in the world’s oceans, or the impunity with which the industrialised world continues to contribute to global warming through uncontrolled greenhouse gas emissions, are two contemporary examples.

But Hardin’s thesis does not apply to pastoralists, who customarily have complex rules of resource management to ensure that they use pastures and water in a sustainable manner – see Box 2. Furthermore, a careful reading of Hardin’s article, and in particular the section within it in which he uses pastoralism to il-

### Box 2:

#### Traditional water management in Ethiopia

Pastoralists traditionally control stocking rates by controlling the number of animals that can drink from a permanent dry season water point. This water management ensures sustainable use of the rangeland in dryland areas.

Among the Boran in southern Ethiopia, the Abba Herrega, an elected water manager, controls the clan’s traditional deep wells that provide permanent water in the dry season. The Abba Herrega ensures that strict watering regimes are followed.

The livestock of the well’s owner are watered first, followed by the most senior member of the clan responsible for traditional administrative issues, and then others according to the membership of the given Borana clan.

Setting the watering rotation is the responsibility of the well council. All those who graze in the same grazing circumference of the well have access rights to the water point. People who come from other grazing areas are not denied water, but they will need to negotiate the conditions of access.

**Source:** Modern and Mobile: the future of livestock production in Africa’s drylands. IIED and SOS Sahel, 2010 (forthcoming), p.43.

*Shenabla Nomads moving south with the rains, North Sudan*  
Photo: Sue Cavanna





lustrate his hypothesis, demonstrates his lack of understanding of the dynamics of pastoralism in dryland environments. No account is taken of livestock mobility or of the dynamics of the pastoral herd where numbers are in constant flux as a result of animal mortality, livestock sales, births, etc. Contrary to Hardin's thesis, pastoral herd numbers do not grow exponentially over time but are constantly increasing and decreasing within and between years. Natural pastures, too, are in constant flux but, subject to rainfall, they do reproduce themselves, providing highly nutritious, if dispersed, fodder on a seasonal and inter-annual basis.

Second is the widely-held belief that pastoralism is backward and that livestock mobility is wilful, conflictual and, crucially, less productive than alternative land uses such as commercial ranching or agriculture. Many governments in East Africa believe that ranches with rotational grazing, controlled stocking densities, high-yielding cattle breeds and improved veterinary control produce more and better quality beef than pastoralism.

## Economic productivity of pastoralism

Such views fly in the face of a growing body of evidence showing the very significant economic contribution pastoralism makes to national and regional economies and how it is considerably more productive per hectare than settled commercial ranching in similar environmental conditions. Research in Ethiopia, Kenya, Botswana and Zimbabwe comparing the productivity of ranching against pastoralism all came to the same conclusion: pastoralism consistently outperforms ranching, and to a quite significant degree (see Table 1). Whether measured in terms of meat production, energy generation (calories) or cash provision, pastoralism gives a higher return per hectare of land than ranching. Whereas commercial cattle ranching tends to specialise in only one product – meat – pastoralism provides a diverse range of outputs including meat, milk, blood, manure and traction which, when added up, is of greater value than meat alone.

**Table 1:** Comparing outputs per hectare from mobile pastoralism versus settled commercial cattle ranching in eastern Africa

Productivity of pastoralism and ranching		Unit of measure
Ethiopia (Borana)	157% relative to Kenyan ranches	MJGE/Ha/yr (Calories)
Kenya (Maasai)	185% relative to east African ranches	Kg of protein production/ha/yr
Botswana	188% relative to Botswana ranches	Kg of protein production/ha/yr
Zimbabwe	150% relative to Zimbabwean ranches	US\$ generated/ha/yr





Furthermore, contrary to popular belief, mobile livestock keeping in the drylands of Africa is more productive than sedentary livestock keeping in the same environment, as research from Sudan and Niger, respectively presented in Tables 2 and 3 below, testifies.

In the dry rangelands, the timing and distribution of plant nutrients are highly variable and unpredictable. This variability is due not only to the erratic rainfall but also the different soil types, different plant species and even the different stages of a plant's growth cycle. Pastoralists, unlike sedentary livestock keepers, use this variability to their advantage to maximize the productivity of their herds. Research by Krätli (2006) among Wodaabe pastoralists in Niger

demonstrates how these communities positively exploit their unpredictable environment in order to maximize the productivity of their livestock.<sup>7</sup> Through controlled breeding, the Wodaabe select animals that are not only highly mobile and capable of withstanding very high temperatures with little water but which are also able to feed selectively, carefully choosing the most nutritious plants, and even parts of the plant, in the rangelands. Combined with mobility, these skills enable pastoral herds to track and exploit the unpredictable concentrations of nutrients in dryland pastures thereby outperforming sedentary animals in similar conditions.

**Table 2:** Comparing productivity of mobile and sedentary cattle in western Sudan<sup>8</sup>

Indicators of productivity	Mobile Herds	Sedentary Herds
Calving rate	65%	45%
Females 1st calving under 4 years	65%	29%
Total herd mortality	15%	35%
Calf mortality	11%	40%
Meat production per breeding female	0.057 kg	0.023 kg

**Table 3:** Comparing productivity of sedentary, transhumant and nomadic cattle in Niger<sup>9</sup>

Indicators of productivity	Sedentary	Transhumant	Nomadic
Annual rate of reproduction	61	65	69
Mortality calves under 1 year	11.1	0	5.9
Calf weight at 300 days in kg	98.1	80.6	88.3
Average days in lactation	285	295	321
Quantity of milk per cow for human consumption in 1 lactation cycle	575	615	668

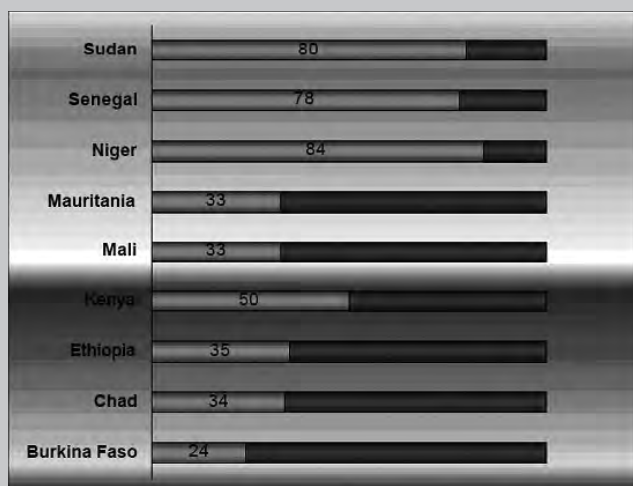
*A cattle route in action - South Kordofan, Sudan. Photo: Sue Cavanna*



## Economic contribution of pastoralism

The high productivity of livestock in pastoral systems not only supports millions of pastoralists but also contributes significantly to other sectors in national and regional economies in Africa. Official statistics confirm the significant contribution pastoralism makes to agricultural GDP in many African economies – see Figure 1 below.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 1:** Contribution of pastoralism to agricultural GDP



These figures, however, do not reflect the Total Economic Value of pastoralism to national economies.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the direct subsistence value of goods produced through pastoral production, there is the substantial economic value of these goods on the formal and informal markets through the sale and export of meat, livestock, and hides and skins, including leather. Pastoralism provides inputs to a wide range of formal industries such as the meat and restaurant trade, and is very significant in the informal meat industry, including the *nyama choma* or roast meat trade in East Africa. A 2005 study in Arusha, Tanzania, identified over 600 *nyama choma* businesses employing 5,600 people with an estimated 25,000 dependents.<sup>12</sup> When ancillary businesses such as butchers' outlets are included, the annual turnover of the industry in Arusha is now estimated at US\$ 22 million.

Pastoralism contributes significant but unknown value indirectly to other sectors and industries. Agriculture is a key beneficiary of pastoralism. It helps raise agricultural productivity by providing manure, animals for agriculture and transport, seasonal labour, and technical knowledge for the rising number of farmers now investing in livestock. Farmers also help pas-



Sudan - goats drinkning on -the- move. Photo: Sue Cavanna



Camels resting at the oasis, Northern Kenya. Photo: Sue Cavanna



Messeri ya pastoralists moving from summer pastures in North Kordofan down to South Kordofan, Sudan. Photo: Sue Cavanna

toralists by providing crop residues as fodder – potentially crucial in drought years. These reciprocal exchanges help reduce conflict and promote peaceful relations. In tourism, a vital input from pastoralism is the maintenance of grazing reserves, which provides critical dry season habitats for wildlife. Nelson (2009) estimates the protection of dry season grazing contributes US\$ 8m million to Tanzania's northern circuit tourism industry.<sup>13</sup> The carbon storage potential of the rangelands is increasingly recognized. The rangelands are the largest land-use system in the world, covering about 40% of the earth's land mass and 60% of Africa. It is estimated that these habitats store approximately 30% of the world's carbon stocks.<sup>14</sup> Pastoralism, while generating economic benefits from these areas through the temporary grazing of livestock, also plays a significant role in ensuring the stored carbon is not released, as would be the case with alternative land-use systems (e.g. farming, bio-fuel production).

## Making the economic argument

Pastoralists and their advocates need to make the economic argument for pastoralism with some urgency. Throughout East Africa, governments have embarked on an agenda of institutional reform centred on the modernisation of the agricultural sector as the pathway out of poverty. Within this, the replacement of pastoralism either by a livestock sector based on commercial ranching or alternative land-use systems such as commercial farming is promoted as a key objective. Political and economic factors are combining to replace pastoral grazing land with other allegedly more beneficial land uses. These decisions, however, are not informed by a sound analysis of either the expected returns or the benefits foregone from replacing pastoral access to prime grazing land with alternative commercial land use. This is because the value of pastoralism as a land use, both in comparison with alternative land uses and to the national economy, is unclear. Sound field-based research on the Total Economic Value of pastoralism is urgently required to gather hard evidence of the multiple contributions pastoralism does make to local and national economies.

Such research, however, needs to be accompanied by a parallel process of building the capacity of pastoral communities and their advocates to use data in order to make the economic argument in favour of their livelihood system. Whereas twenty years ago pastoral advocacy was largely driven by well-meaning northern organisations, today an increasingly vocal and well-organised pastoral civil society is emerg-

ing. Increasingly visible events such as "pastoralists day" in Ethiopia and "pastoralist week" in Kenya and Uganda, and the establishment of pastoral parliamentary groups in all East African countries are contributing to keeping pastoralism on the political agenda. The challenge now is to ensure it features on the economic agenda of these countries. To do this, pastoral civil society must further strengthen partnerships with different stakeholders and at different levels, including those sectors in which pastoralism provides a range of inputs, often in interlocked markets of reciprocity (e.g. farming, tourism, conservation). Developing such alliances is essential if they are to develop the political and economic "leverage" necessary to ensure that improved knowledge of the value of pastoralism is actually used by government to improve policy and legislation in its support, thereby addressing poverty, environmental degradation and conflict in East Africa's drylands. □

## Notes

- 1 Krätli S. 2007. Cows Who Choose Domestication. Generation and management of domestic animal diversity by WoDaaBe pastoralists (Niger), PhD thesis, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK.
- 2 Hardin, G. (1968) The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science*, 162(1968):1243-1248.
- 3 Cossins, W.J. (1985) The productivity of pastoral systems. *ILCA Bulletin* 21: 10-15.
- 4 Western, D. (1982) The environment and ecology of pastoralists in arid savannas. *Development and Change* 13: 183-211.
- 5 De Ridder, N. & K.T. Wagenar. (1984) A comparison between the productivity of traditional livestock systems and ranching in eastern Botswana. *ILCA Newsletter* 3 (3): 5-6.
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- 7 Krätli S. 2007. Cows Who Choose Domestication. Generation and management of domestic animal diversity by WoDaaBe pastoralists (Niger), PhD thesis, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK. Krätli S. (2008) Cattle breeding, Complexity and Mobility in a Structurally Unpredictable Environment: the WoDaaBe herders of Niger. *Nomadic Peoples* 12(1): 11-41.
- 8 Wilson, R.T. and S.E. Clarke (1976) Studies of the livestock of southern Darfur, Sudan II. Production traits in cattle. *Tropical Animal Health and Production* 8: 47-51.
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- 10 Rodriguez, L. (2008) A global perspective on the Total Economic Value of pastoralism: Global synthesis report based on six country valuations. World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism, Nairobi.
- 11 Hesse, C. and MacGregor, J. (2006) Pastoralism: drylands' invisible asset? Developing a framework for assessing the value of pastoralism in East Africa. *Drylands Issue Paper* 142, IIED, UK.
- 12 Letara, J. (2006) *The economics of the Nyama choma business in the city of Arusha, Tanzania*. RECONCILE/IIED.



- 13 Nelson, F. (2009) Natural Conservationists? Evaluating the Impact of Pastoralist Land Use Practices on Tanzania's Wildlife Economy. IIED and TNRE, in press.
- 14 Tennigkeit, T and Wilkes, A 2008 Carbon Finance in Rangelands. ICRAF/UNFCC Challenges and opportunities for mitigation in the agricultural sector. Technical paper.

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*Sheep at the water hole - Sudan – Photo: Sue Cavanaugh*



# PUSHING, HOUNDING AND BULLYING

Half a decade of resentment and acrimony  
towards indigenous peoples in Tanzania

Edward Porokwa



*Photo: PINGOS FORUM*



*The lady that had a miscarriage of a seven-month pregnancy - Photo: PINGOS FORUM*





Orkosiskos Yaile whose home was burned 9 times - Photo: PINGOS FORUM



Tanzania is internationally admired for its high regard for human rights and political stability. It has a good record of lasting peace and tranquility for its citizens. Pastoralists<sup>1</sup> in Tanzania account for about 10% of the total population, and comprise the Maasai, Barabaig, Sukuma, Taturu and other small tribes. Their grazing land across the country is subdivided in order to take account of grazing patterns that accommodate both the dry and the wet periods of the year.

Since colonial times, pastoralists have continuously been pushed and hounded from their ancestral land to give way to different categories of protected areas, including 13 National Parks, Game Reserves and Conservation Areas. Protected areas currently account for 38% of the country's total land mass, most of which has been alienated from pastoralists. Pastoral land has also been alienated for military bases, foreign and local investments, parastatals and farms, pushing the pastoralists onto marginal areas unsuitable for their livelihood patterns.

Despite the pre-and post-colonial alienation of pastoral land, pastoralists have for some decades now settled in vestigial areas where they have managed to establish villages in accordance with the land laws governing the state. Although their mobility is already constrained by these processes, the government has persistently continued to push them further to the

margins, citing investment policies, environmental degradation and overstocking, and labelling them as the cause of conflicts with other land users.

Historically, Tanzania has had a negative view of indigenous pastoralism. The present government, however, which has been in place since 2005, has been the one to demonstrate the most visible intent to completely wipe out this form of livelihood. The previous three governments - under the leadership of Julius K Nyerere, Ally Hassan Mwinyi and Benjamin Mkapa - though not friendly to pastoralists did not come into direct confrontation with them. From day one, however, the current government clearly abhorred the existence of pastoralists. In his inaugural speech as head of state on 30 December 2005, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Jakaya Kikwete, stated in his parliamentary address:

*Mr Speaker, we must abandon altogether nomadic pastoralism which makes the whole country pastureland...The cattle are bonny and the pastoralists are sacks of skeletons. We cannot move forward with this type of pastoralism in the twenty first century. (Hansard, December 30, 2005).*

In yet another speech on 22 February 2006, the President stated, "It is better for a few pastoralists to be angry, but protect the lives of the next generation."

The Barabaig, Sukuma, Maasai, Hadzabe, Tatoga and Dorobo ethnic groups (indigenous people of Tanzania) are increasingly the victims of forced evictions and livelihood losses, without compensation. For the last half decade, disguised global investments and modern conservation and climate change policies have become the justification for coordinated violations of human rights and dispossession of pastoral lands in Tanzania, threatening the future survival of indigenous pastoralists and their livelihood. In the process of putting an end to pastoralism, the government has consistently used the state machinery and a wide range of national development strategies.

The current government's vision of pastoralism and indigenous peoples was manifested in April 2006 when the Vice-President announced a government strategy for environmental conservation and protection. This strategy includes evicting pastoralists from their grazing areas, accusing them of destroying the environment and completely ignoring the fact that they have lived in harmony with and successfully conserved the environment for generations. Recent cases of forcible evictions of pastoralists in Tanzania are, unfortunately, numerous and will be described below.

### **The Usangu /Ihefu evictions of 2006 and 2007**

In 2006 and 2007, forcible evictions of Sukuma agro-pastoralists and IIParakuiyo, Taturu and Barabaig pastoralists and their livestock took place in Usangu and Ihefu.

The Usangu catchment is located in the south-west of Tanzania, falling within the eastern arm of the Rift Valley in Mbeya and Iringa regions. The area forms the upper catchment of the Great Ruaha River, flowing through the Ruaha National Park downstream to the Rufiji River, the largest drainage basin in Tanzania covering some 174,800 km<sup>2</sup>, or approx. 18% of mainland Tanzania. Between the mid-1980s and 1995, the flow in the Great Ruaha River started to diminish drastically. While DANIDA and the World Bank, for example, attributed the shortage of water to irrigation abstraction, deforestation and general environmental degradation, the Government of Tanzania blamed the pastoralists and declared that the pastoralists and the agro-pastoralists residing in the Usangu basins and the Ihefu wetlands should be immediately evicted.

The reasons for eviction put forward by the government primarily included overstocking beyond the carrying capacity, land-use conflicts between different user groups and poor agricultural and irrigation

techniques. Scientific studies have concluded, however, that the environmental problems in Usangu and Ihefu are not caused by the activities of pastoralists but rather by the expansion of irrigated cultivation, in particular the extension of rice and other crop growing into the dry season.<sup>2</sup> The evictions were also related to the expansion of the Ruaha National Park into areas occupied by pastoralists and smallholders.

It is estimated that more than 400 pastoralist families and 300,000 livestock were moved during the evictions, and a high number of livestock died or were lost in the process.

The evictions resulted in an uproar and outcry from pastoralists, the media and members of parliament because they breached fundamental human rights. The evictions led to a loss of land and livestock and the relocation of pastoralists from the Mbarali District to different parts of the country without proper preparation and without alternative grazing land being provided. The whole exercise was characterized by human rights violations, corruption and lawlessness.

In a bid to pacify the public, a presidential commission of inquiry was created to look into the allegations of human rights abuses. However, to date, the report and its findings have still not been made public and the perpetrators remain free while their victims suffer in silent turmoil.

One of the many victims was Mr Sangala Matayani Kashu, who is the Chairman of the Mbarali Pastoralists' Council and whose father came to Mbarali District in 1953. He lives in Ormugona sub-village of Ivalanje village, a village which is registered and where the majority of the villagers are pastoralists. During the dry season, his family used to take their livestock to Ihefu, moving back to the village during the rainy season. In 2005, the government barred livestock entirely from entering Ihefu and, in December 2006, impounded his family's livestock. The family paid a heavy fine for allegedly failing to comply with the government order to relocate to the southern part of the country:

*My brother and I paid collectively a fine of TSh. 23,000,000 (US\$ 16,000). Now I am very poor. They forcefully took away our 1,700 cattle and 800 goat and sheep. I have 40 people to feed. I have no food. No school fees. No clothes. (personal interview 2009).*

Instead of addressing the human rights violations, dispossessions and suffering of the evicted pastoralists, the government subsequently defended and bragged about the inhuman evictions, as exemplified



by the statement of the Vice-President during his visit to Mbarali on 23 November 2006, when he said:

*I have come here today to see how the eviction was implemented and its success, I am happy and impressed with the success and we will not turn back.*  
(own translation)

The government did not stop harassing the pastoralists who had been evicted from Usangu/Ihefu, and they continued to be mistreated in the areas they had been forcibly relocated to.

Pastoralism has been a part of what is now Mbarali District of Mbeya region for many years.<sup>3</sup> It should be remembered that the British colonial Government of Tanganyika established the Utengule Swamps Game Controlled Area in 1953 but did not evict the pastoralists.

The 2006/2007 evictions had, for several years, been preceded by harassment and negative stereotyping of pastoralists. On 24 July 1994, through GN.436A, the government upgraded the Usangu Game Controlled Area to a Game Reserve covering 4,148 km<sup>2</sup>. Immediately after upgrading the area to a Game Reserve, numerous hate letters accusing pastoralists of destroying the environment began to be written by government officials. On 10 December 1999, the Mbeya Regional Commissioner, Basil P. Mramba wrote the most arrogantly worded letter of all, with reference G.10/7/112, to the Mbeya Police Commander. He ordered the commander to round up 176 pastoralists and take them to court. He advised the commander to “make special arrangements with the court so that the cases move fast”.

The basis for the 2006/2007 eviction process was laid when, on 10 March 2006, the Mbeya Regional Commissioner, John Mwakipesile, issued a seven-day ultimatum to pastoralists to move voluntarily from Ihefu or face forcible eviction (*Guardian* [Dar es Salaam] 14 March 2006). Later, a letter from the Mbarali District Commissioner dated 16 November 2006, with reference W/MBL/G.10/7149, revealed that the police officers, park wardens, state security officers, Commanding Officer of Mbarali District, Senior Game Warden of Usangu Game Reserve and Warden of the Ruaha National Park, Village Executive Officers and Ward Executive Officers would evict the pastoralists.

The government allocated around US\$4.5 million to be paid to victims of the evictions in Mbeya Region. This money has not, however, been accounted for. According to a recent report by the Controller and Auditor General, the Tanzania National Park set aside another US\$1.2 million for compensation purposes, and

these funds have also not been accounted for (*The East African* [Nairobi] 18 May 2009).

The phenomenon of forceful evictions and harassment of pastoralists has now spread all over the country. Pastoralists are currently being harassed in Mbeya, Lindi, Mtwara, Kilosa, Mvomero, Kilombero, Mpanda, Nkasi, Mbulu Same, Mwanga and Loliondo districts.

### **Kilosa: yet another Ihefu**

The effects of the Ihefu evictions reverberated across the country, and Kilosa District was the next to be hit. Kilosa is one of six districts in Morogoro Region, East Tanzania and covers 14,567 km<sup>2</sup>. Kilosa borders Kiteto and Kilindi Districts to the north, Mvomero and Morogoro Rural Districts to the east, Mpwapwa and Kogwa Districts to the west and Kilombero and Kilolo Districts to the south. According to the National Census of 2002, there are 489,513 residents of Kilosa District.

Maasai pastoralists have been present in Morogoro Region since as far back as the 1880s.<sup>4</sup> On 18 December 2008, the Kilosa District Council listed Kilangali, Kiduhi, Mbamba, Kivungu, Ulaya Kibaoni, Chanzuru, Ilonga, Ihombwe, Lumango, Rudewa, Msowero, Mvumi and Mambegwa villages for eviction. The ravaging of these villages began in January 2009, led by government officials from Kilosa District, including the District Commissioner, District Executive Director, policemen, militiamen and Village Executive Officers. Livestock was forcibly impounded and taken to so-called “holding areas” to be traded. In addition, pastoralists whose livestock was forcibly taken to these holding areas were also forced to pay a so-called “accommodation charge” of TSh. 5,000 (US\$ 3.5) for each animal in the holding area. Many cattle, goat and sheep died and several did not even reach these “holding areas”. Cattle were transported by police officers to Pugu livestock market several hundred kilometers away to be slaughtered, leaving calves at home to die. Unlawful fines were imposed for failure to relocate. These fines were to the tune of TSh. 30,000 (US\$ 21) and TSh. 10,000 (US\$ 7) per impounded cattle and goat/sheep respectively. Pastoralists who failed to pay within three days of impounding had their animals sold at knock-down prices.

The following example reflects the human rights violations and impoverishment that took place during the evictions: Doto Dofu is a 51-year-old Sukuma pastoralist from Mlangali village in Kilosa District. He was first forced by the police to pay TSh. 390,000 (US\$ 273) in fines and was issued with receipt number 0426653 on 31 January 2009. Three days later he was

forced to pay a further TSh. 6,660,000 (US\$ 4,662) and TSh. 4,250,000 (US\$ 2,975) and issued with receipt numbers 0426676 and 0426677 respectively. The same reckless government officials then went on to impound his 1,500 cattle worth TSh.1,200,000,000 in Mfilisi village. Eighty calves worth TSh. 8,000,000 (US\$ 5,600) died in the process. On 4 February 2009, Dofu was once again forced to pay a fine of TSh.75,000,000 (US\$ 52,500) and issued with receipt number 0426824 showing TSh. 42,780,000 (US\$ 29,946) only. The next day he was again forced to pay another fine of TSh.1,000,000 (US\$ 700) and issued with receipt number 0445602. Six days later he was forced to pay another fine of TSh. 40,000,000 (US\$ 28,000) and issued with receipt number 0428024 showing TSh. 15,180,000 (10,626) only.

In Mabwegere village, which has been inhabited by pastoralists since before 1956 and which has been surveyed and issued with a 99-year title deed (No. 36042), the pastoralists were evicted on claims that they had invaded a farmer's land.

Ngaiti is another pastoralist sub-village in Kilosa inhabited by pastoralists since before independence. The pastoralists in Ngaiti were also forced to leave their land without alternative settlement or compensation. Their cattle were confiscated and they were forced to transport their livestock to Pugu cattle market to be sold at very low prices determined by the police.

The humiliation, dispossession and impoverishment of pastoralists caused by these forcible evictions has been disastrous. The exact losses suffered by pastoralists in Kilosa will probably never be known because in the mayhem some victims, now destitute, vanished to unknown destinations.

### **The ongoing evictions of indigenous pastoralists from their land in Loliondo**

The latest round of forcible evictions of pastoralists in Tanzania is now taking place in Loliondo, in Ngorongoro District of northern Tanzania. Ngorongoro is one of the six districts of Arusha region and an integral part of the Greater Serengeti ecosystem. It covers an area of 14,036 km<sup>2</sup> and has a human population of around 167,000 people. The district is administratively divided into 3 divisions, 14 wards and 37 villages.

Land tenure arrangements in Ngorongoro District are hugely affected by conservation laws since all the land is either a conservation area (Ngorongoro Conservation Area - 59.1%) or a game-controlled area (Loliondo and Sale Game Controlled Areas - 40.9%). This has drastically increased the vulnerability of pastoralism and the pastoral livelihood system, which depends entirely on land and natural resources.

Conflicts between pastoralist communities, conservation authorities and investors have been common since 1959 when the Maasai were relocated from the western Serengeti, which is now the Serengeti National Park, to the southern part currently known as the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. A compromise between the community and the colonial government was struck under the Serengeti compensation scheme but it was stopped after independence.

The recent evictions in Loliondo have been taking place in eight villages bordering the Serengeti National Park. The villages were established and are legally governed by the Land Laws, which allow them to own, utilize and manage village land under the Village Land Act No 5 of 1999.

The evictions started on 4 July 2009 and were conducted by the paramilitary police Field Force Unit together with security forces from the United Arab Emirates enterprise, the Ortello Business Corporation (OBC). At the district level, the directive ordering villagers to vacate their land was issued by the District Commissioner on 1 July and the villagers were ordered to vacate their villages on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the same month.

The evictions are part of a wider land rights conflict between Maasai pastoralists and conservation tourism development initiatives that has been ongoing in the Ngorongoro District for several decades. The Field Force Unit camped at the OBC camp and had full access to their facilities, including monetary gains and vehicles that were used to carry out the evictions.

In 1992, the OBC, which is owned by the royal family of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), was granted hunting rights within Loliondo Game Controlled Area, an area that is settled and legally owned by Maasai pastoralist villages. Over the last 17 years, Maasai villagers have been subjected to ever-increasing restrictions on their rights to access the lands and resources traditionally used and occupied, particularly their right to graze and water their livestock within Loliondo Game Controlled Area.

The OBC has now been operating in Loliondo for almost 17 years and its operations are shrouded in a dark diplomatic cloud, with minuscule local engagement. This is because of the involvement of the UAE royal family in the ownership of the OBC. This situation has brought about conflict over resources, has generated gross violations of human rights and



## Photos relating to the evictions in Loliondo



*Trees destroyed by wildlife especially elephants was the destruction encountered  
Photo: PINGOS FORUM*



*The team of activists watching a burned home on 21st August  
in Olchorooibor in Loliondo - Photo: PINGOS FORUM*



*Some of the trucks at the camp - note: the lack of registration  
Photo: PINGOS FORUM*



*Nkodidio Rotiken, who was shot at by the police and lost his eye  
Photo: PINGOS FORUM*



*Flanked by his operation aides, the District Commissioner was at pains  
to explain himself - Photo: PINGOS FORUM*



*The commander of the anti-riot police unit that carried out the operation  
Photo: PINGOS FORUM*



*The fact finding team paid the Ngorongoro District Commissioner Mr. Elias Wawa Lali a visit in his office on the 20th of September 2009 and outlined their intended fact-finding mission in his district - Photo: PINGOS FORUM*



*Meeting with the villagers in Maaloni - Photo: PINGOS FORUM*



has led to a denial of the livelihood rights of the local community. The government has sided with the OBC, citing the economic gains that Tanzania allegedly obtains from OBC operations, while turning a blind eye to the plight of pastoralists.

The official stance is that the OBC is there to benefit the state. Initially, the OBC operations implied restrictions on access to grazing land and water for livestock, particularly during the hunting period, which was discussed between the community and the OBC. However, as time went on, the government started claiming that the pastoralists had invaded OBC land, thus bringing serious questions of landownership into play. This is a major cause of concern since the land issue was previously undisputed and it is clear that the land belongs to the villagers.

The situation has now deteriorated to one of near warfare due to the deployment of security and military personnel. The pastoralists and their representative organizations have tried to dialogue with the authorities about this desperate situation, but to no avail. The government refuses to dialogue but continues to apply force through "legal orders".

The most appalling facet is the process and way in which pastoral land is alienated. The Government of Tanzania has deployed the military to forcibly evict people, burn their property, physically beat and harass development actors and individuals in order to suppress any efforts to inform the wider public about the situation and the human rights violations taking place.

So far, one pastoralist has had a tear-gas canister shot at his face at point-blank range, leaving him permanently blind in one eye. More than 350 Maasai *bomas* (settlements) and their belongings have been burnt to ashes, 25 people have been beaten up by the police and five more seriously injured. One child was lost in the mayhem, a woman was gruesomely raped by the police, livestock was lost, crops were razed to the ground and over 60,000 livestock have been pushed to the most extreme dry areas. Above all, land ownership is now in serious doubt. Fifty-seven innocent pastoralists have been arrested and 27 of them taken to court on grounds of environmental destruction. Fourteen of them were jailed for six months each. Three civil rights activists have



been arrested and taken to the police station in an attempt at intimidation.

The government is looking to capitalize on the provisions of the new Wildlife Conservation Act No 5 of 2009, which separates Game Controlled Areas from village lands. In fact, the new law clearly states that *"there shall not be any game controlled areas within village land"*. The Government and OBC are now stating that the villages should conduct Land-Use Plans. There is a worry that once the land-use plan has been produced, the area currently used by the OBC - which is village land - will be demarcated outside the village and automatically become a Game Controlled Area in the hands of the OBC since Game Controlled Areas are not supposed to form a part of village lands according to the new Wildlife Act of 2009.

The process of dispossession of pastoralists from their land and their consequent impoverishment has been accompanied by corruption and acquisition of their land, and the enrichment of those enforcing the laws. The last half a decade has been characterized by lawlessness and anarchy pelted on indigenous pastoralists by their government in a quest to extinguish their livelihood.

What we now see is large-scale land grabbing in which the pastoralists - who are accused of not using the land productively - are the losers, and in which pastoralist lands are taken by so-called investors and corrupt government officials, as evidenced in Kilosa and other parts of the country. Because the state does not protect the pastoralists, it has become easy for any person to raise allegations against pastoralists and, due to the stereotypes and negative attitude of the government, they are likely to be the losers in any battle with any person, be they investor, crop farmer or government official.

The displacements, the deliberate impoverishment, the complete lack of free, prior and informed consultations and the numerous gross human rights violations are in blatant violation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the various UN conventions to which Tanzania is a party. The international community has reacted strongly against these violations, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, foreign representations in Tanzania including the Danish and other EU ambassadors, and international human rights organizations. The international media has strongly criticized the acts of the Tanzanian government and the Tanzanian press has also voiced se-

rious concerns. The issue is being debated in the Tanzanian Parliament and it is to be hoped that the Government of Tanzania will realize that its actions are in breach of fundamental international human rights law and jeopardize its otherwise good international reputation. It is also to be hoped that the Government of Tanzania can be made to respect fundamental human rights and constructively support and nourish the country's rich cultural diversity, including the livelihoods and future survival of its pastoralist population. □

## Notes

- 1 As per the 2003 report of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights "Report of the African Commission's Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities", the indigenous peoples in Tanzania comprise, among others, the pastoralists and hunter/gatherers.
- 2 Research conducted by the DFID-funded SMUWC Project - Sustainable Management of the Usangu Wetland and its Catchment.
- 3 The indigenous Sangu were noted for their herds of cattle and cattle-raiding in the 1850s (Walsh, 2007:2). Seperwa ole Kashu, former Chairman of Mwanavala village, argues that the Maasai moved into Usangu through Mtera. They helped the Sangu to cushion the advancing Hehe forces. The Sukuma and other pastoralists followed in the sixties (Walsh, 2007).
- 4 Verbal testimonies indicate that during colonial times there was a Chief, Masingisa Orkinana, in the Morogoro Region who represented the Maasai and the Kaguru of Kilosa District. Orkinana perhaps lived at Kibedia and used to settle disputes between the two communities at Gairo near Dodoma. In her letter dated 23 October 2003, the Kilosa District Executive Director, Theresia Mmbando, was also clear when she stated that the pastoralists had been in Morogoro Region since before the 1950s.

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# PASTORALISM AND THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Joseph Ole Simel



*Pastoralists contributing to the national economy through livestock trade. Photo: Vetworks*

*The purpose of this article is to discuss pastoralism as a viable livelihood system - even during times of environmental, economic, political and social-cultural crisis as a result of climate change. The article will demonstrate that pastoralism through livestock production has been a major economic activity - especially in Africa - even without any policy, financial or technical support from governments.*

## **Drylands and livestock**

**D**rylands cover 41 percent of the earth's land surface and are home to more than two billion people, making up 35% of the world's population (Safriel and Adeel 2005, p. 625.) The largest and most populated dryland regions are in developing countries, especially in Africa, such as the Sahara and the greater Horn of Africa. Drylands in Africa are characterized by limited water resources and seasonal, scarce and unreliable rainfall, leading to high variability in the water available for humans and livestock, this latter being the backbone of the pastoralist culture and economy.

Very high temperatures in the drylands of Africa cause much of the rainfall to be lost through evaporation, and the intensity of tropical storms means that much of the rain runs off, eroding the soil. Dryland areas experience substantial differences in rainfall both within and between years. Rainfall is also highly variable over short geographical distances: one village may receive abundant showers while its neighbor 5 kilometers away remains dry (Simon Anderson, John Morton and Camilla Toulmin).

Climatic changes in the world's drylands have already been observed. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has reported an increase in the extent of dryland areas affected by more intense and longer droughts, and a decline in rainfall in those areas (IPCC 2007).

African pastoralists have, over many years, developed a range of diverse coping strategies to survive in the harsh drylands environment – strategies which in today's discussions on climate change have been baptized "Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies".

Pastoralist livestock herds are made up of sheep, goats, cattle and camels, differing from one country to another and from one pastoralist community to another. Every pastoralist, family, household or commu-

nity considers livestock to be the key asset and investment, providing social, cultural and economic security, and such animals are strategically vital for social networks and relations among pastoralist communities. Livestock provides support in time of stress and crisis and it is important for spiritual relationships. Livestock plays a fundamental role relating to conflicts and peace-building, and relating to building strong family ties in the form of marital arrangements and exchanges that make up daily life.

## **Food insecurity and vulnerability**

Food insecurity, due to frequent and prolonged droughts, has led to many social and economic challenges among the pastoralists, and drought and preventable livestock diseases have caused extreme and sometimes chronic poverty among the indigenous pastoralists of Africa.

Due to food insecurity, pastoralists are at major risk when several bad years of drought follow each other and when there are no government efforts or strategic plans in place for reconstruction and recovery to restore the pastoralist livelihoods. Due to displacements and conflicts over limited resources, there is a lack of solidarity and unity among pastoralists which undermines their ability to speak against state marginalization with one voice and limits their capacity to build a strong agenda for pastoralist-friendly policy changes and actions.

Pastoralist people face health challenges resulting from malnutrition and poor access to water for domestic and livestock use. They are exposed to many diseases and hunger, and hunger and famine have been reported, for example, in relation to the current drought in Kenya where several deaths have been observed among different pastoralist communities. The pastoralist population demonstrates the lowest levels of human well-being and the highest infant mortality rates, according to the UNDP human development index 2008-2009.

Periodic and prolonged droughts provoke livelihood shocks and major pastoralist migrations as they look out for employment or any other livelihood survival or resources to support their families.

Climate change is expected to bring major environmental changes globally, but particularly in the



drylands of Africa. Predicted changes in rainfall volumes and distribution will cause major threats and challenges to the natural environment, pasture, water and general vegetation on which pastoralist people and their livestock depend. The common and prolonged droughts, which are an outcome of climate change, are expected to increase the already high levels of poverty among the pastoralist communities. Pastoralist communities who are already feeling the most serious impact of climate change must be at the center of the climate change discussions and dialogue if adaptation to and mitigation of climate change is to be effective in dryland areas of Africa. The livelihood systems of pastoralists must be widely understood in order to:

1. Avoid the past mistakes that led to failures in pastoralist areas,
2. Create a better understanding that will enable adequate, equitable and timely responses.

A continuous assessment and monitoring of climate change impacts in pastoralist areas is needed in order to develop a range of appropriate measures and responses and to guide in building the capacity of pastoralists and their institutions at different levels.

### **Anti-pastoralist policies**

The history of pastoralist peoples has always been depressing due to continuous misguided policies, programmes and projects and often hostile views on the part of post-colonial African governments and administrations, influential institutions both in the West and in Africa, and researchers and academia.

Land and other natural resources belonging to the pastoralist communities have been taken away from them without any consultation, consent or any form of compensation and put to other uses for the ownership and benefits of other people. This violation of their rights has undermined their strategic drought-coping mechanisms.

The pastoralists' own traditional and customary practices and rationale for sustainable natural resource management have always been ignored, and government policies still reflect the old colonial perceptions and attitudes towards pastoralists. They regard them as primitive and call for a transformation of traditional pastoralism, including putting an end to mobility. Mobility is a crucial aspect of pastoralism and coping strategies in drylands, and enforced set-

tlement, enforcement of modern ranching (as, for example, the Botswana model) and promotion of agricultural production will undermine the pastoral production livelihood system, which has been carefully adapted to the harsh conditions of dryland areas in Africa for hundreds of years.

Many people from mainstream society today, who make up the political elite and policy makers, see the pastoralists in Africa as the embodiment of a primitive society that is anti-change and anti-development. These allegations have been accepted as the truth. The same attitude is also common among the international development partners, and a negative bias and misconception has prevailed over fact and a well-researched and documented understanding of the pastoralist way of life.

### **The strategic importance of pastoralism to national economies**

Pastoralism is a viable and sustainable livelihood and economic production system in the drylands of Africa, especially in the Horn, East and West Africa. Recent research has clearly demonstrated that these drylands, characterized by low rainfall of 200-500 mm, high temperatures of 28-40 degrees and a soil that does not hold enough moisture, cannot support sustained and reliable agricultural production or crop farming. Pastoralists have successfully made use of the drylands not only to sustain and support their own livelihood but also to contribute to the national economies of the countries in which they live. The foundation of this is the extensive livestock keeping system that has been sustained by the movement of livestock from one place to another for the purposes of using the diverse flora found in the drylands without degrading the environment. To do this successfully, pastoralists have used different herd management strategies such as splitting, herd diversification and herd maximization to ensure they spread the risk of a loss of livestock. For instance, during droughts pastoralists divide their livestock into different categories e.g. goats, sheep, cattle and camels and drive them in different directions in order to minimize the risks and maximize the benefits and use of vegetation.

Pastoralism makes an important but undervalued and largely ignored contribution to African national and local economies. Livestock provides pastoralist households with the means to meet their basic needs, and pastoralists produce all the meat and milk that they consume themselves at household or family lev-

el, thereby ensuring their own food security. Pastoralist production also makes an important contribution to national economies. It provides a major part of the hides and skins for national consumption as well as for export and it is a key supplier of meat and milk, which are strong pillars of most African national economies, especially in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and West African countries. Statistics show that the livestock sector in Kenya contributes 50% of agricultural GDP, which in turn contributes 25% of total GDP. It is estimated that pastoralists hold 70% of the national herd (Republic of Kenya 2004), with a monetary value of between 50- 60 billion Kenya Shillings (Nyariki 2004). The country is just about self-sufficient in livestock products, especially milk, meat, hides and skins. Statistics show that pastoralists produce 70% of the meat consumed in Kenya annually.

The pastoralist sector also provides substantial employment through the direct employment of pastoralists in the pastoral production system and the employment of other Kenyans in pastoralism-related activities such as wildlife conservation, the tourism industry, trade in livestock, transport services, veterinary services, leather industries, slaughter houses, butcheries and eating houses. The most common and famous local food industry is known as "Nyama Choma" (meaning roasted meat) which serves almost entirely meat, most of which comes from pastoralist livestock. The Nyama Choma industry also assists the beer industry to market and sell more of its products, since beers are also widely sold in the Nyama Choma restaurants.

Unfortunately, the economic contribution of pastoralism to national economies is rarely captured in economic data. However, some useful data does exist.

#### Livestock products in Kenya

Production					
Item		2001	2002	2004	2006
Milk (ltrs)	Production	2,448	2,497	2,598	2,729
	Demand	2,047	2,113	2,250	2,404
Beef (tonnes)	Production	295,610	304,478	323,021	342,693
	Demand	329,600	339,500	360,200	382,000
Mutton (tonnes)	Production	37,540	38,606	40,830	43,182
	Demand	49,050	50,440	53,350	56,420
Goat meat (tonnes)	Production	43,750	45,050	47,810	50,920
	Demand	38,640	39,790	42,220	44,960
Camel meat (tonnes)	Production	8,250	8,300	8,470	8,790
	Demand	8,200	8,200	8,300	8,400
Pork (tonnes)	Production	11,474	13,901	15,326	16,896
	Demand	7,000	7,204	7,631	8,083

Source Republic of Kenya: National Development plan 2002-2008

In Uganda, the cattle population is estimated at 5.6 million, of which pastoralists own up to 90%, providing meat, hides, skin and milk for domestic and international markets (Uganda Investment Authority: Republic of Uganda 2001). The livestock sector in Uganda contributes 7.5% of total GDP and 17% of agricultural GDP. The livestock sector in Uganda produces hides and skins which are exported to Europe and Asia, earning the country up to \$10 million in 2002 (Uganda Meat Policy. Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries – MAAIF - 1998). Milk production has enabled the country to progressively reduce its reliance on imported milk and milk products, the milk sub-sector is growing daily, providing many opportunities for the local and national economy.

Despite the pastoralists' adaptation to the dryland conditions and their ability to make economic contributions despite the very harsh conditions they operate under, the pastoralists' resilience to climatic shocks is decreasing and their vulnerability increasing. This is due to poor mitigation and adaptation strategies put in place during extreme drought, which are aimed at saving human lives but which have no focus on livestock as the main asset for the survival of pastoralists. The vulnerability of pastoralists is being exacerbated by their marginalization from policy processes, brought about by their lack of knowledge and capacity to engage in such processes and by power imbalances.

#### Climate change mitigation, adaptation and capacity building among pastoralists

The pastoralists' mobility acts as a means to adapt to changing patterns of rainfall, whereas a combination of different livestock species each herded in different directions provides greater protection from drought. Coping mechanisms and strategies among pastoralists include out-migration and recourse to wage labor, the use of wild fruits, exceptional pastoralist migrations to drought refuges or rarely-used rangelands, and inter-community sharing of food

and livestock. In the future it will be important to further develop the following mitigation and adaptation strategies:

### **Restocking**

The responses to addressing the increasing vulnerability of pastoralist communities in situations of drought have been fundamentally inappropriate, with most actors focusing attention on the provision of emergency relief food aid. Unfortunately the provision of food aid without reconstruction of pastoralist livelihoods has kept pastoralists on the edge of a cliff, with most of them falling off into chronic poverty and destitution, becoming food aid-dependent. This has been perfected by African governments, international development agencies, the Red Cross and the World Food Programme. The food aid industry has also contributed to the collapse of customary social security networks which had otherwise over the years assisted pastoralist communities to recover after long droughts. It is imperative to acknowledge the fact that new challenges are emerging from both intensive and extensive food aid provision in pastoralist areas. These include increasing sedentarisation around food distribution centers and on the outskirts of towns, creating a group of peri-urban pastoralists. If not addressed, these new challenges will increase the vulnerability of pastoralist communities yet further.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms are by definition moral claims. Hunger and malnutrition are morally unacceptable because they form a violation of the most important right of all: the right to life. Both the right to life and the right to dignity are key concepts in all human right instruments adopted by the international community under the United Nations framework, starting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. In the case of the right to life and the right to food, it is fundamental to focus on the right to feed oneself – a right which is closely linked to the right to development (Williams, Kjonstad, Robson, 2003).

Droughts have always drastically reduced the number of livestock. Effective and sustainable mitigation and adaptation strategies need to address the need to design and implement restocking programmes that will re-build pastoralist livelihoods after droughts. Successful restocking programmes will restore pastoralism, enhance food security, improve nutritional levels, especially for children under five, strengthen family structures, reduce conflicts and secure better access to formal education (MPIDO external evaluation report, 2003).

Restocking is a new adaptation and mitigation strategy that helps pastoralist communities reconstitute their herds after experiencing livestock losses as a result of severe drought or livestock disease. Restocking will not only rebuild pastoralist livelihoods but will also contribute to national economic growth. Restocking programmes have been identified as an effective way of linking relief, rehabilitation and development. As a strategy, it reverses the trend towards marginalization and restores restocked households back into pastoralism which, to them, is more than just an economic system, it is a heritage, a spirituality and a determinant of identity.

### **Water investment**

Water scarcity in most pastoralist areas has necessitated the concentration of people and livestock around water sources. This is one of the environmental concerns that needs to be monitored and mitigated against by investing in water provision through affordable and sustainable technology. The provision of water in important strategic areas will contribute to the greater productivity of pastoralism and reduce the distances in kilometers that people and livestock have to track in search of water. The time and energy saved can thus be invested in other productive activities - especially activities carried out by women.

### **Access to livestock markets**

The issue of lack of access to livestock markets has been raised and continues to be raised by pastoralist communities as one of the major contributing factors in livestock deaths during droughts. Improved access to markets will improve pastoralists' terms of trade. It will protect livestock prices from falling sharply during drought, stabilize cereal prices and reduce the vulnerability of pastoralists. Periods of drought are always characterized by unfavorable terms of trade for pastoralists. Whereas cereal prices sky rocket, those of livestock plummet. Mitigation and adaptation strategies will have to include investment in more livestock markets and link this with early warning systems. Such strategies will ensure that pastoralists will, in the long run, be able to restock themselves after droughts without external support.

### **Early warning systems**

Mitigation strategies should address the capacity of pastoralist organizations and communities to initiate





*Restocking pastoralist households after a severe drought in Kenya. Photo: MPIDO*

*Photo: MPIDO*





*Pastoralists highlighting the impact of drought through the media. Photo: MPIDO*

and develop simple but functional early warning systems within different pastoralist regions and communities. The purpose of such a system is to monitor the food situation and weather predictions in order to inform local communities and other stakeholders sufficiently in advance with regard to what needs to be done at a particular time in order to reduce the vulnerability of pastoralists. This will enable communities to be prepared once indicators start reaching dangerous levels. Effective early warning systems must be developed as a combination of the development of local indicators and highly-developed technologies on weather patterns. Animal health and veterinary services should form a strong component in the development of early warning systems and community contingency plans such that new livestock diseases can be prevented through vaccination and provision of livestock drugs.

### **Mobility**

Modern adaptation and mitigation strategies must acknowledge and appreciate pastoralists' mobility

as a key customary and traditional knowledge that has been practised by pastoralist communities across the globe since time immemorial. Mobility has, over the years, enabled pastoralists to sustain livestock production in semi-arid areas during severe droughts. This system of mitigation and adaptation based on mobility is only possible in a political and economic policy environment where the land rights of pastoralists are promoted and protected. Land reforms that support pastoral livelihoods will ensure and guarantee pastoralist mobility within the national borders and even mobility across international borders, for example, between southern Kenya and northern Tanzania and between northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia, among many others. Unfortunately, we are currently seeing the exact opposite with negative development tendencies in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, which have developed policies that seek to control grazing and livestock mobility by encouraging and supporting the subdivision of pastoralist lands into individual holdings that cannot support mobility and which are not economically viable. □



*The impact of climate change in pastoral areas. Photo: MPIDO*

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# HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES FACED BY INDIGENOUS PASTORALIST WOMEN

## Experiences from Laikipia and Samburu, North Central Kenya

Rebecca Lolosoli and Johnson Ole Kaunga



IMPACT (Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation) is a human rights advocacy and development organization working to promote the rights of indigenous women and youth in northern Kenya.<sup>1</sup> Since its inception, IMPACT has been working with community-based organizations to broaden and promote the space in which women and youth can articulate, defend and claim their human rights. The aim is to contribute to reducing the gender disparities, discrimination, social and policy inequalities and exclusions that pastoralist women and youth experience and which have denied them a voice and space for effective participation in determining their destiny. Women and youth have been rendered victims of a culture whose values and systems are largely patriarchal, and of a modern form of development that is also dominated by male-based thinking and paradigms. This article delineates some of the major human rights challenges facing indigenous women in Kenya and also discusses strategies being used by IMPACT to address these challenges.

Indigenous pastoralist women are key players in the household and interfamilial relations and their position is important for holding the family, clan and community together. It is unfortunate but true that the disempowerment of women begins at the household level and feeds into the entire community.

Pastoralism is a *traditional* occupation and productive form of livelihood in which a finely-honed symbiotic relationship between people (pastoralists), domestic livestock and local ecology in resource-scarce and highly variable arid regions (rangeland) is evident. However, the livelihood of pastoralists is increasingly on the decline and facing a myriad of challenges. The fundamental resources that are critical and necessary for the survival of these communities are dwindling, leading to intense conflicts between different communities. It is evident from the literature that resource scarcity and the emergence of conflicts are interdependent (Maxwell and Reuveny, 2000).

Pastoralism in its diverse and dynamic forms is the main source of livelihood for a considerable proportion of communities living in northern Kenya. Livestock rearing constitutes a key livelihood activity and livestock production supports food security and the provision of employment, income, food, fuel and a variety of commodities.

Pastoralists have continued to be the victims of inappropriate state policies and project interventions and they are probably the most marginalized group of producers in the region in terms of properly-focused policy attention. They are constantly experiencing varying degrees of social, economic, ecological and political trans-



formation, in relation to which they adopt different coping strategies, including transhumance. Resource-use conflicts between different pastoralist groups are becoming increasingly violent as the different social groups struggle to compete and control the remaining open rangelands, and indiscriminate killings/massacres are now a common occurrence in northern Kenya, the most recent case being the murder of 32 Samburu herders, of whom 18 were women and children.

Through the financial and technical support of IW-GIA and other agencies such as Fastenopfer and the Gender and Equity Support Project of CIDA, IMPACT has been implementing a human and land rights capacity building project for indigenous pastoralist women focused on human rights education, awareness raising, advocacy skills and legal aid to enable abused women to access justice and remedial measures.

The indigenous women suffer three-fold. They suffer from the different forms of discrimination faced by all indigenous communities in Kenya. They experience and suffer from the gender-based discrimination that all women face in Kenya. And, in day-to-day life, they continue to be the victims of an indigenous system of decision-making and governance that relegates and discriminates against women despite the crucial role they play in sustaining the pastoralist livelihood, cultural values and heritage that forms the communal identity.



Indigenous women continue to experience a number of interrelated challenges that make the realization of their rights and equitable access to resources, leadership positions and effective participation in life and community development processes extremely difficult, and unless these challenges are addressed at several levels and by different actors, it will be difficult for a fair and just community, nation or world to be achieved. Some of the key challenges facing indigenous women in northern Kenya are discussed below.

### **Challenges and discrimination faced by indigenous women in northern Kenya**

Participation in informal or formal decision-making structures broadens the possibilities for vulnerable groups to interact, share ideas and mobilize their individual and collective efforts around problem-solving and resistance to oppression and domination. Given that indigenous women have limited space and influence, both within modern and traditional governance structures, their inputs, aspirations and experiences are rarely captured and utilized to advance the situation of entire indigenous communities.

In general, the participation of pastoralists in decision-making processes at both macro and micro levels is limited. There is a fundamental contradiction between the modern institutions of the nation-state and the traditional pastoralist decision-making institutions, which evolved for different purposes - and in most instances there are conflicts between the two types of institution. They are incompatible because the nation-state in Africa opts to impose the notion and practice of the modern state on pastoralist communities with no respect for traditional systems of governance and authority. Hence the pastoralists' perception of the state as an alien institution and hence their reciprocal hostility. As a result, whatever the state stands for is viewed by pastoralists with suspicion and considered a strategy for domination. This is, however, gradually changing as a result of several advocacy initiatives aimed at encouraging states to transform their policies and make them more sensitive to the realities and needs of pastoralists.

In the traditional set-up, pastoralist women played recognized roles in managing household assets and resources, communal resources, performing traditional rituals and in transmitting the culture from generation to generation. It is also a documented fact that women used traditional means within their reach and authority to express their discontent. For instance, among the Maasai, the women have used the *Olamal* to express

their discontent and punish the perpetrators of misdeeds such as defilement, which was considered in violation of traditional norms. In such cases the women were allowed, by culture, to collectively punish all the male adults of the age group from which the man who committed the offense came from. This is an indication that the traditional institutions did, to a certain extent, allow remedial measures for abused women. This still happens among the Maasai, despite ongoing social transformation that is tending to weaken traditional structures and value systems.

The right to development and access to information are fundamental in ensuring that the women make informed decisions pertaining to their own development needs and aspirations. The indigenous women are illiterate and their freedom of association is largely controlled by the men. The women do not control their own time and their husbands play a significant role in determining how women can associate and participate in public life. The pastoralist women's freedom of association is thus curtailed, including their right to participate in community development activities and training related to human rights awareness.

The rights of pastoralist girls and women are affected by community traditions in the sense that girls are not given equal consideration in access to education. The few who do go to school rarely complete their education due to challenges such as a lack of access to school fees, sanitary towels and a non-conducive learning environment. The poor indigenous households tend to marry off their daughters at a tender age as this remains an opportunity enabling them to access assets (dowry in all its forms) and achieve social status, especially if their daughter marries into a rich family.

It is also important to reiterate that there are very few organizations articulating women's rights and, as such, a human rights approach to gender-based development is still some way from being achieved.

The use of traditional and ancestral lands for military training has also had a number of negative effects on indigenous women's lives. A considerable chunk of land in Laikipia and Samburu has been annexed as military training areas for the Kenyan and British armies. These areas are considered out of bounds for all communal activities, leading to increased workloads for women who have to walk long distances for firewood and water. Far worse, over 1,000 cases of rape of pastoral women committed by British soldiers were recorded between 1969 and 2000. The rapes were kept secret until incidences of death, injury and maiming caused by unexploded ammunition from the training grounds were reported and the issue was addressed through a law suit brought against the British govern-



*Yaiku women's group in Laikipia - Photo: Marianne Wiben Jensen*

ment by indigenous peoples' human rights organizations between 1998 and 2004. The rape allegations have put a serious spotlight on the military and there have been concerted efforts to de-gazette these areas as military zones and hand them back to the relevant communities. The Kenyan military has also been accused of misusing its access to important resources such as water and food in remote camps to lure indigenous women to have sex. The women have a hard workload to ensure that their households have enough food, and the British and Kenyan armies have been committing serious human rights violations against them by exploiting and taking advantage of their poverty and hopelessness as a tool of oppression and domination. The case against the British Ministry of Defence is still pending trial in London. Meanwhile, very many affected pastoralist women have been left stigmatized and traumatized.

### **Degrading and harmful traditional values and practices**

Indigenous communities have clearly defined but also dynamic sets of cultural values and belief systems. These form and inform the traditional institutions of governance and decision-making, which influence and regulate the day-to-day relations within households as well as the entire community. The indigenous communities operate on a two-pronged system of governance and decision-making. On the one hand, there is the traditional system of governance based on social values, norms and institutions, which are mainly defined, in varying degrees, from community to community, by men. Then, on the other, we have modern administrative structures of governance and leadership that are based on the modern laws, human rights and democratic values used by the government to regulate day-to-day decision-making. In most cases, the two tend to clash or have divergent approaches.



### Box 1: Consequences of FGM

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has received global attention due to its devastating health problems and fatalities. FGM is widely practised among the Samburu people. It is a difficult issue to address because it is so deeply-rooted in Maasai and Samburu culture. Justifications for continuing female circumcision include the following:

- As a rite of passage for both men and women, circumcision marks one's entry into adulthood, a path that leads to marriage and childbirth.
- Those who are circumcised are believed to be enlightened.
- Serious consequences are expected for children of uncircumcised parents, including early death, rejection from the community and prohibition of their own circumcision.
- It is feared that ending this long-standing tradition will result in cultural erosion.

Various forms of circumcision exist. The four different classifications of female circumcision are:

1. "Sunna"/Clitoridectomy: a small cut of the clitoris
2. Excision: a deep incision that completely removes the labia and clitoris.
3. Infibulation: stitching together the labia, leaving a small hole near the urethra.
4. Unclassified: includes puncturing and/or burning genitalia.

The Samburu people practice excision, which has numerous health implications including (but not limited to):

1. Haemorrhaging, which often leads to shock, unconsciousness and even death
2. Complications during childbirth
3. Urinary tract problems
4. Pain during sex/sexual dissatisfaction
5. Risk of the spread of HIV/AIDS (due to the use of shared razors or knives)

Circumcision also has serious social ramifications for young Maasai and Samburu girls and women, which may include:

1. Being removed from school prematurely since, once circumcised, girls as young as ten years are expected to take on adult roles and responsibilities
2. Suffering psychosocial distress and isolation if their classmates and friends are not circumcised



For instance, the Samburu, Maasai, Borana and Somali pastoralist communities consider Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as part of an important rite of passage and a traditional practice that forms part of their culture and identity. However, this practice is considered by modern law and governance systems as a serious human rights violation that has serious health and social implications for those individual women who have undergone the operation, and as such it is punishable by law. The fact that FGM is illegal in Kenya does not mean that the practice has stopped; it is still practised secretly by many pastoralist communities. However, a number of advocacy initiatives led by women's organizations and other civil society organizations are beginning to take root and bring about positive results. Alternative rites of passage are being introduced which still fulfil the role of ritual passage between childhood and adulthood but without any circumcision or operation being involved. There is now an increased acceptance and adoption on the part of pastoralist communities of such alternative rites of passage, which respect traditional culture as well as modern law and human rights.

Violence against women of the Laikipia Maasai and Samburu communities is common and a generally accepted norm. The violence meted out to women takes various forms, including wife beating, battery and insults. For instance, when a goat or cow is lost, or the husband comes home to find there is no food or that food is not ready, he may decide to beat the wife. On marriage, the bridegroom is advised by the in-laws "not to keep the cane down"- meaning that wife punishment and wife beating is part of the household management. Some women are known to have been seriously injured and some have even died. Due to lack of information, fear and being subjected to a dominant culture that accepts wife beating, most cases go unreported.

## A wide range of sufferings

Despite limited progress in some areas, indigenous pastoralist women continue to be victims of their cultures and traditions, as illustrated by the following:

- Cultural and social discrimination is common, and harmful cultural practices and rituals such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are still widely practised. The girls are not consulted as to whether they wish to undergo FGM or not. The fact that indigenous communities are geographically isolated means that there is little access to information regarding FGM and its negative consequences.

Young girls who undergo FGM tend to be married off at a tender age and the tradition does not require consent from the girl or her mother. These marriages are considered by government agencies and human rights organisations to be forced marriages. However, they are still common and contribute to the low status of women in the communities since it is through early marriage that women are denied opportunities to access education and achieve their goals.

- Women suffer from domestic violence in terms of wife beating, restricted opportunities for interacting with other women and participating in gainful activities.
- Indigenous pastoralist women still experience marginalization from decision-making and leadership positions, limiting their access to and control of critical resources for livelihood security.
- Pastoralist women are overburdened by domestic work and their productive roles are undervalued and uncompensated.
- With more communal land being transformed into "community wildlife sanctuaries", women become burdened by an increased workload as their access to firewood becomes restricted and they have to walk longer distances to fetch firewood and water.
- With the increased commercialization of livestock products, pastoralist men are taking over resources that were traditionally controlled by women, such as hides, skins and milk, further undermining household livelihood security.
- Due to increased frequency and impact of droughts, there is increasing rural-urban migration, with young able-bodied men moving away to seek gainful employment, leaving women in charge of the household.

Very few women are aware or informed of the public resources available for the communities at constituency level. It is therefore necessary to develop the capacity of the women to enable them to monitor and hold their leaders accountable regarding the use, allocation and prioritization of these resources i.e. Constituency Development Funds, Constituency Bursary Funds etc.



*Samburu woman - Photo: Johnson Ole Kaunga*



*Rebecca Lolosoli, leader of Umoja Women's Group  
Photo: Kate Cummings, Vital Voices*

## Widespread resource-based conflicts and displacements

Northern Kenya is ridden with violent conflict, and pastoralist women are increasingly becoming the victims of these conflicts. Generally, the conflicts in northern Kenya are caused by competition over natural resources, particularly cattle, pasture, water and land. However, some conflicts are simply revenge missions, whereby past atrocities against a group are “corrected” by waging war. There are also some clashes associated with electioneering and the competition for political power and dominance. This is particularly common in those constituencies that are home to diverse groups. The instability of the Ethiopian and Somali governments is also another factor. This instability is compounded by the porosity of the shared borders, which contributes to a proliferation of small arms.

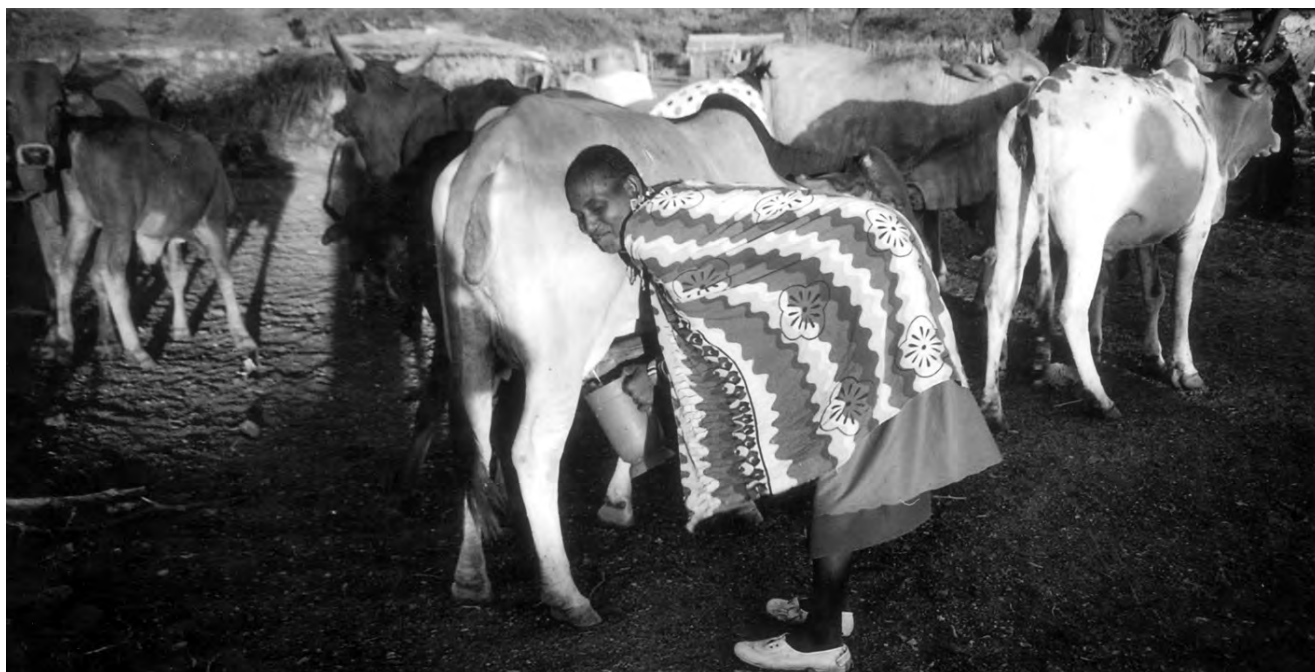
The conflicts, including the traditional phenomenon of “cattle rustling”, are increasingly violent, involving modern weapons. The attacks also increasingly seem to target women and children. There are many reports of women and girls being attacked, raped and even killed indiscriminately by gangs of men. These are said to be “new” crude tactics adopted by “cowards who cannot face other men”. Whatever the case, these new forms of revenge are affecting women deeply. Conflicts have devastating effects on the local communities and households, including loss of human life, living in a state of fear, destruc-

tion of property and homesteads and loss of basic means of livelihood (e.g. food crops destroyed by attackers and loss of livestock).

The conflicts are a serious threat to the well-being of pastoralist women and, unless issues of peace-building are addressed, the chances of pastoralist women realizing their human rights will be limited.

Most peace-building and conflict management initiatives in the northern rangelands of Kenya have been the domain of men. It is the men who are involved in the actual conflicts, it is the men who are brought in to “stop” the conflict in the form of opinion elders, administrative chiefs, clan elders, the District officers and Commissioners and the para-military and military personnel - the chain is made up only of men. When a public meeting is convened, the women’s participation is minimal if not entirely lacking.

Looking at various initiatives that have been taken by different actors over time to address these conflicts, it is evident that the important role of pastoralist women as traditional peace mediators and peace-keepers has not been positively exploited. This is partly due to the fact that pastoralist societies are patriarchal and, as such, tend to subjugate the role of women in decision-making and participation in devising strategies that reduce conflicts. However, it should not prevent development practitioners and human rights activists from making positive use of the clear opportunities offered by the same cultures. In most if not all pastoralist communities, the traditional role of women as peace-build-



*Pastoralist woman milking cows - Photo: Marianne Wiben Jensen*

ers, mediators and motivators is well-known, and such traditional roles need to be utilized to expand the human rights and democratic space for women.

### **Lack of space to articulate women's needs and priorities**

The pastoralist communities are, to a great extent, patriarchal in nature and, when it comes to decision-making processes, the women are largely locked out, even at the household level. Women are the victims of a culture that ignores them when it comes to making crucial communal decisions. In the traditional set-up, there is no leadership structure for women. The traditional age set and clan leadership system has no space for women as the women belong to the age set of their husbands, and all chiefs are male.

Nowadays the pastoralist women are struggling to organize themselves by establishing grassroots or community-based women's groups or organizations as a mechanism for ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are addressed.

It is essential to note that, in northern Kenya, women's groups have become important structures through which the pastoralist women themselves can articulate their voices and their desires for leadership and representation. No responsible leadership structures or projects willing to strengthen the role and position of

women among the pastoralists can afford to ignore these groups.

### **The Case of the Umoja Uaso Women's Group: where women rule!**

The Umoja Uaso Women's Group is one very successful example of self-organization and empowerment among pastoralist women in northern Kenya. The Umoja Uaso Women's Group is based in Archer's Post, in Samburu district, and was founded with the aim of improving the livelihood of its members and the Samburu community through education and poverty alleviation. In this way, the group helps fight the many inequalities faced by Samburu women. A number of Samburu women have been empowered, through the assistance of the Umoja Women's Group, and these women are now securing their livelihoods, while providing greater opportunities for their children's futures.

Samburu women are among the most marginalized groups in Kenya. Development has been slow to reach the area and education is often not easily accessible. Furthermore, women have low status in the community and are the last to receive the few resources available. Within this context, many women are subjected to severe mistreatment from their husbands. Faced with continual abuse, many of them choose to leave their husbands. Another example of the discrimination and





*Women from the Umoja Women's Group - Photos: Kate Cummings, Vital Voices*

ill-treatment that Samburu women have faced is the alleged rape of approximately 1,400 Samburu women during the 1980s and 1990s by British soldiers from training bases in the area. Many of these women were subsequently shunned and chased from their homes by their husbands because of the shame that the rape represented for the family, and the husbands accused the women of “exposing themselves to the soldiers”.

Whether the women leave their husbands or are abandoned by them, they end up as the sole providers for themselves and their children.

In 1990, 15 women formed and registered the Umoja Uaso Women's Group with the then Ministry of Culture, Heritage and Social Services in order to address these issues and to provide a refuge for women who had been raped by the British soldiers and thrown out of their homes by their husbands. The group was started by 19 Samburu women, the majority of whom were single, abused Samburu women, under the leadership of Mrs Rebecca Lolosoli. They started by selling beadwork and other goods. Faced with threats from men who were jealous of the success of the women, the members decided to found a women-only village and to live there together, thus providing collective security and cooperation. The group is dealing with some of the key issues that continue to affect Samburu women. These issues include the following:

## **Key issues for Samburu women**

### **Violence**

Most women in Samburu district have experienced some form of domestic abuse. Many of these experiences occur within relationships due to women's vastly

subordinate role in society. In particular, since a man pays a dowry for his wife, he often views and treats the woman as his property, to do with as he pleases. For many women then, beatings and abuse are typical of everyday life. As the majority of women lack knowledge of their rights, such abuses are accepted as the norm and go unreported. In addition, the local police do not always take reported cases seriously because they also view such behaviour as routine.

Many members of the Umoja Women's Group have suffered abuse at the hands of their husbands and, for this reason, fled them. By living together in a self-declared gender-based violence-free village, women are collectively safer. While some men come to Umoja to attempt to abuse the wives who have left them, the women in the village have the power to stop this and, in fact, chase the men out themselves. Further, it is perceived as less shameful for a group than an individual to report a beating. The trend in reporting violence against women is beginning to change, with Umoja's members now volunteering to go to the police on behalf of women who have been assaulted, and with attempts by the group to educate the men who initiate such violence. More broadly, Umoja Women's Group works to educate women about their rights, and to empower women by assisting them in becoming less dependent on their husbands and thus more capable of demanding equal status.

### **Property, economic and inheritance rights**

According to custom, Samburu women do not have the right to own property, and husbands have full control over their wives' possessions, leaving these women especially vulnerable. Furthermore, women do not receive inheritances. When a husband dies, his possessions are left to his

sons. If the deceased husband does not have any sons, his brothers inherit his possessions. In either case, the widow is left at the mercy of her sons or brother-in-laws to ensure her well-being and that of her children. The Umoja Women's Group owns land and livestock, to which each woman is entitled, and in this way the group empowers women by giving them the right to own property. The group ownership grants the women financial independence and the freedom to manage their own resources.

### Female genital mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has received global attention due to its devastating health problems and fatalities. FGM is widely practised among the Samburu people. It is a difficult issue to address because it is so deeply rooted in Samburu culture. With the associated risks and adverse consequences in mind, Umoja has become an agent for change and the group is now part of an effort to eradicate female circumcision from Samburu culture. FGM is not only increasingly scrutinized in the global arena but is also widely discussed among the Samburu people. Women's health must be safeguarded, and all members of Samburu communities need to be informed about a woman's right to refuse circumcision. The Umoja Women's Group has organized several village-level workshops to create awareness around the effects and ramifications of FGM on the individual as well as the wider community.

### Way forward

There is a need to put more concerted efforts into ensuring that existing structures - whether formal or informal - are strengthened through human rights advocacy training to enhance their capacity to advocate for the necessary changes. The indigenous and mainstream development organizations need to strategically focus and prioritize inclusive approaches in their plans and project activities that include women-specific activities in order to ensure that benefits are spread across all segments of the communities affected. In order to achieve the empowerment of indigenous pastoralist women, patriarchal leadership structures, whether formal or informal (read modern or traditional), need to be sensitized to this. For instance, there have been very limited efforts to reach the traditional leaders, who are the custodians of the traditional institutions among the Maasai and Samburu. The formal administrative structures established by government, such as the provincial administration, are there to enforce government policies but such structures are male-dominated and indigenous women therefore

have limited space to obtain the attention they need if their issues are to be addressed. There is therefore a need to target both the traditional and formal leadership structures as a means to accelerate awareness-creation around pastoralist women's rights issues.

Women's groups still remain the most practical way for the village women to organize and mobilize their efforts and resources to improve their lives and position in society. However, they lack the necessary capacity to influence decision-making and policy on the issues affecting them. It would be worth civil society, donors and governments investing time and resources in building and enhancing the capacity of pastoralist women's groups so as to enable them take a lead in shaping their own destiny. □

### Note

- 1 Indigenous women are, in this article, understood as women coming from pastoralist or hunter/gatherer communities.

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# THE NOMADIC PASTORALISTS OF BURKINA FASO

Issa Diallo





Burkina Faso is a country of some 60 ethnic groups, including the Tuareg and the Peul. Both these peoples are defined as indigenous and listed as such by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in its (non-exhaustive) table.<sup>1</sup> While the Tuareg inhabit only the north of the country, the Peul, also known as Fulbe,<sup>2</sup> can be found throughout the whole national territory, with their strongest presence being in the northern provinces.

The Peul of Burkina Faso are not a homogeneous people. While some have become traders, civil servants or settled farmers, others have remained nomadic pastoralists moving to find watering holes, pasture and secure lands for their animals, which are of great cultural and economic significance to them. These latter, the true pastoralists, are called *duroobe*. It is they that form the focus of this article.

This article is the result of documentary research conducted by the author of this article, including interviews with victims of the massacres of nomadic pastoralists in Burkina Faso, and discussions during large meetings held in many locations throughout Burkina Faso and Ghana. It focuses on the following four points: pastoralism in Burkina Faso, the vulnerability of nomadic pastoralists, negative stereotypes of pastoralists and, finally, recommendations as to how to improve pastoralism.

## Pastoralism in Burkina Faso

The *duroobe* are found primarily in the Burkinabe provinces bordering Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin. During the lean season, some of them cross the border and travel hundreds of kilometres into neighbouring countries where they meet with nomadic pastoralists from other countries. Nomadic pastoralists coming from Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and, increasingly, from Nigeria and Benin, can all be found in Ghana, for example. They are generally transhumant, follow a common code of conduct, educate their children in a similar manner and are, without exception, highly vulnerable.

Migrations take place either individually or in groups. The large migrations are, in all cases, seasonal. The children and elderly also take part. They walk for months on end with their animals, making do with the minimum necessary for their survival. The over-riding aim is to find watering holes and lush pasture.

The pastoralists are breeders of zebu cattle and live in small family groups formed of a head of household, his wife or wives, and their children. They move



from camp to camp and their homes, made entirely of straw, are built in just a few hours in the same area as that set aside for the cattle. They may live in one place for several months, sometimes just a week. Some nomadic pastoralists will, however, spend the whole year without building themselves a house, in spite of heavy rain or other bad weather.

In both West (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria) and Central (Cameroon, Chad) Africa, Peul pastoralists all hand down a wisdom known as *pulaaku*, which manifests itself in a virtually identical code of conduct steeped in hundreds of years of experience gained over time and geographical space.

Nomadic pastoralists have a highly-developed oral tradition. It is by word of mouth and imitation that their children are educated. By the age of 10, children are already spending more than 2/3 of their time with the animals. At night, while everyone else is asleep, they drive the animals into the bush, bringing them back at cock crow. Their only contact with their parents by this age is first thing in the morning and last thing at night.

The pastoral way of life prevents children from being educated within Burkina Faso's formal education system. At a time when other children are being formed and moulded by primary school, a gulf is created between the two groups, which has led to the increasing marginalisation of pastoralist children. It is not rare to find a camp containing dozens of families where no-one can read or write. Quranic teachers are, however, managing to infiltrate this pastoralist environment, and recruit some children to their Quranic schools. But these are, above all, children recognised as being lazy and bad cattle herders by their parents!



*Peul woman from semi nomadic community - Photo: Issa Diallo*

## The vulnerability of nomadic pastoralists

The nomadic pastoralists have absolutely no land security at all, in a rural environment in which land conflicts are becoming increasingly common and ever more violent. And whereas, in the past, land chiefs<sup>3</sup> would act as their intermediaries and protectors during their stay in a particular area, these chiefs have found their powers curtailed since the establishment of the rural district councils. The pastoralists are thus left defenceless and vulnerable. The nomadic pastoralists do not vote in elections and they do not participate in the political administration of the rural districts. Since they are not represented on the district councils, they have no one to defend their interests.

There has been rapid demographic growth in the country and the majority of the population in rural areas now live from agriculture. The cattle trails are disappearing under cultivated fields and the seasonal watering holes are no longer accessible because vegetable plots have grown up around them. Moreover, the traditional pastoralist encampments, sometimes used for years on end, are increasingly being turned over to agriculture by sedentary farmers. Some pastoralists therefore prefer to remain in Ghana or Togo rather than return to Burkina Faso.

The Burkina Faso authorities have created what are known as pastoral zones. These pastoral zones are areas identified by the state as being of a pastoral vocation and, because of this, have been set aside with a

view to undertaking improvements aimed at promoting livestock raising. Out of some sixty potential pastoral zones, 11 have undergone improvements and are being made viable.<sup>4</sup> The land laws that apply to these areas are becoming increasingly understood by the pastoralists, who are gradually beginning to gain an awareness of their rights, despite not being literate. Given the difficulty in accessing pasture and water sources, the nomadic pastoralists have agreed to move into these pastoral zones, while continuing their nomadic lifestyle during the lean season.

However, the state is not demonstrating a genuine concern for the survival of pastoralists. For instance, one group of pastoralists that agreed to move into a pastoral zone – the Pastoral Zone of Yallé – said that their animals had been decimated by illness and that the veterinary workers were unable to do anything to stop it. Despite this, the group decided to stay on in the area in order to ensure the state's continued attention. Unfortunately, the area subsequently lost its status as a pastoral zone<sup>5</sup> and has now largely been allocated as a hunting concession, despite opposition from the pastoralists. Sedentary groups are in the process of attempting to occupy the area, which highlights the problem of the lack of reliability of legal texts. It also reflects the importance granted to new rich individuals, to the detriment of poor rural communities.

As highly vulnerable livestock owners in a country where half the population lives below the poverty line, nomadic pastoralists are easy prey for govern-



Peul man - Photo: Issa Diallo

ment officials. Corruption is on the increase in both society and the economy, a curse that is threatening the whole system of governance, and impunity is widespread.<sup>6</sup> Peul are the victims of organized and brutal attacks because of their ethnicity. This is for instance the case when groups of sedentary farmers conduct systematic searches aimed at attacking any nomadic pastoralists they find if one of their own has been killed by a Peul. The Peul pay for the errors of an unknown person: their only crime is to be of the same ethnic group. In short, there is very little security of either belongings or people among the nomadic pastoralists.

### Negative stereotypes of nomadic pastoralists

People in Burkina Faso are increasingly beginning to believe that all Peul are the same and that there is no reason why one Peul should not pay for the crime of another. This concept can be summarised in the expression “a Peul is a Peul”. But the logic goes further: because some Peul are bandits, “all bandits are Peul”.

In rural areas, it is increasingly proving to be the case that any Peul can be killed in revenge for the actions of another. In proof of this, over the last few years there have been the most dreadful massacres of Peul. In 2008, for example, children as young as 7 and adults of 60 quite literally had their heads smashed in by a group of sedentary farmers who led this massacre. One

of the adults who was killed was torn limb from limb and buried in a termite mound. Eleven other people were killed in other villages some 20 kms distant. Many people believe it is no crime to kill a Peul, and Peul people can be killed when their only “crime” is to share the same ethnic background as another Peul who has committed a crime. *A Peul is a Peul* and so no Peul are spared – as in the case of the 11 people killed.

One of the murderers, in the very presence of government administrators, and without batting an eyelid, showed the authorities the body of a man he had killed. One of the victims of the massacres described the situation as follows: *“On his arrival, the police chief pointed at one of the bodies. He asked me if I knew him. It was my brother’s herder, I told him. A few metres on, he showed me a second body. That was my father, killed simply for being a Peul. There were another 5 people missing. What had become of them? Also murdered? I was still asking myself these questions when a man, well-known to all, spoke to the police chief in the Dioula language, stating that it was he and no other that had killed the two men. He could scarcely contain his pride.”*

### The Peul are bandits

As strange as it may seem, it is now virtually accepted in Burkina Faso that the bandits carrying out armed attacks on the roads are Peul. This is what the journalists have endeavoured to drive home, with great suc-



cess. In fact, when a Mossi or a Gourmantché is arrested by the police, their name is given in the media without reference to their ethnic background. If there is a single Peul in the group of highwaymen, the name of this person is given, along with his Peul ethnicity. *Le Quotidien Sidwaya*,<sup>7</sup> Burkina Faso's leading newspaper, for instance reported on an attack as follows: "*The arrested bandits are Bonkougou Korgo, alias Denis, born in 1981 at Kindi, and the brains behind the group, Simporé Yéwaya Abdré, alias Tougou born in 1979 at Bantogodo in Sourgoubila Department, Kourwéogo Province and Diandé Korka (Peul) born in 1976 at Zoundri in Sourgoubila Department*". Why state Diandé Korka's ethnic background (Peul), especially as he was not even the leader of the group? Why not also write Bonkougou Korgo (Mossi)... Simporé Yéwaya Abdré (Mossi) ...

Sometimes it is clearly stated that the bandits are Peul even before any of them have been arrested or identified, as in this extract from *Le Quotidien Sidwaya*:<sup>8</sup> "*A vehicle travelling from Gao to Léo was targeted by an armed gang of three thugs on Friday 20 February 2009 at around 11 o'clock (...). The three bandits, all Peul, took up position in the middle of the road and, without warning, fired at the driver... After shots had been exchanged, they disappeared into the forest, taking their loot with them. Police searches have thus far not been successful and the three crooks are still at large.*" Can it really be stated that the bandits were *Peul* when they disappeared into the forest and are still on the run?

In short, the media has managed to make the Peul out to be gangsters, and Peul pastoralists are suffering the consequences. Entire families are being attacked and killed in revenge for incidents in which some Peul individuals are believed to be the culprits. This extract from the newspaper *L'Événement* for instance reports: "*In the eastern region, where there is a high level of insecurity, entire Peul families were wiped out in lightning raids because the suspects of the massacre were 'people speaking Mooré with a strong Peul accent'. In the departments of Pama, Kompienga, Tamalbougou, Kantchari and elsewhere, raids have targeted primarily the Peul community, and serious human rights violations have occurred*".

In many areas, there are so-called police informers who are village information agents in the service of the police. The police informers are often members of rival ethnic groups and so there is an air of a settling of accounts. As an outcome of, among others, the activities of police informers, peaceful community members are often arrested and summarily executed without any kind of trial. The following is but one example out of many. One year ago, at Tamalbougou on the main highway to Niger, a peaceful Peul teenager whom no-one had ever heard anything bad said of

was arrested by the police while working in his field. He was the only son of a family in which the head of the household was blind. The poor father waited days without news of his son and, finally, decided to go to the police station. When he got there, his son had already been executed.<sup>9</sup> The death affected him so much that he never returned to his village. He decided to leave for Benin."<sup>10</sup>

## Improving the situation of pastoralists in Burkina Faso

According to the National Policy for Land Security in Rural Areas,<sup>11</sup> Burkina Faso's population may well reach 161 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> by 2051, in contrast to 38.1 per km<sup>2</sup> in 1996, i.e. four times its current density. The country is also rapidly becoming urbanised. The long-term consequence of these trends is that land will become an ever rarer commodity for the rural population, particularly the poorest, women and pastoralists.

Against such a backdrop, there is a serious danger that pastoralism could disappear altogether, despite its current prevalence. The following recommendations are therefore made with the aim of avoiding this:

### To the nomadic pastoralists

- *Revive traditional migration management structures:* in order to channel their migrations, encourage harmonious relations with the sedentary populations and ensure a better handling of possible emerging conflicts, nomadic pastoralists used to migrate in well-organised groups, choosing two migration guides in advance: the first was responsible for managing the migration from one camp to another. The second would take over from the first while the pastoralists were living in a particular camp. There was hardly any talk of pastoralist massacres then as the choice of guides was a very well-considered one and they had great moral strength in terms of handling compensation for any possible damage caused to sedentary populations.
- *Strengthen indigenous peoples' organisations in order to preserve pastoralism.*

The nomadic pastoralists have no organisations through which to defend their cultural diversity. They need an organisation that will provide them with highly skilled leaders, particularly in terms of the security of people and goods but also in relation to how to preserve pastoralism.

## To the state

- ***An end to impunity***

The state should encourage balanced and non-biased media reporting in relation to the various kinds of violent attacks taking place in Burkina Faso and should take action based on anti-discrimination laws to ensure that media reporting does not incite hatred towards this particular ethnic group. The state should furthermore take action to bring to justice all perpetrators of violent crimes, including crimes of an ethnic nature, whatever the reason for the crime.

- ***Trust between the state and the nomadic pastoralists***

Some pastoralists have lost those people most dear to them in the massacres. And yet they do not perceive that the state is taking their concerns on board. Such is the case, for example, of a 64-year-old man, who gave the following account: *"That same night, other Peul came to Bakala with their herds. When I asked them if they knew the people who had been killed at Tiankoura, one of them, Amadou, told me that two of them were my children. I thus learned that my two children had been killed: a daughter of 16 and a son of 7. I am 64 years old and now I have no children"*. This man has been left to fend for himself, just as has another mother, whose son was taken at night some years ago and who has never been found. No wonder the nomadic pastoralists have no faith in their country's administration. Before a national policy can be envisaged in their regard, this lost trust first needs to be regained.

- ***Securing the pastoral zones***

Burkina Faso has more than sixty pastoral zones. These offer the nomadic pastoralists sufficient space in which to continue their pastoral livelihood within the country. They simply have to be made viable and given a very clear legal status. The pastoralists also need to be informed so that they can move there and continue to practise a form of migration, better organised by the nomadic pastoralist organisations that will need to be established. These zones should be sustainable and land tenure should be secure such that they will not later be turned into hunting concessions or other forms of land uses.

In conclusion, pastoralism is under serious threat in Burkina Faso, where pastoralists are becoming increasingly vulnerable. There is therefore a need to improve pastoralism by reviving some of the traditional transhumant practices, which could reduce the vul-

nerability of pastoralists, and by ensuring that they have clear leaders. One unknown remains, however: the population of Burkina Faso is increasing rapidly and it is not out of the question that pastoralism could soon be perceived as an avoidable luxury. The creation and viability of pastoral zones therefore remains an important and more long-term solution to the current problems of pastoralism and to the survival of cultural diversity in Burkina Faso. □

## Notes

- 1 African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2006: *Indigenous Peoples in Africa: the forgotten peoples?* Page 15-16. IW-GIA and ACHPR.
- 2 Pullo in the singular, Fulbe in the plural, they are commonly called Fulani in English and Peul in French.
- 3 Land chiefs are traditionally responsible for customs and land issues in the village. However, they are now losing their traditional power to locally-elected district councils.
- 4 This is provided for by the National Policy for Land Security in Rural Areas and Decree N°2007-610/PRES/PM/MAHRH on the adoption of the National Policy for Land Security in Rural Areas of 04 October 2007, p.20.
- 5 All provisions taken by Raabo N°AN-VI-0093/FP/MAT/PSSSL/HC on the official declaration of the pastoral vocation of the area of the Projet d'Aménagement Pastoral de Léo, Pastoral Zone of Yallé in Biéha Department, measuring 40,000 ha, have been annulled on the basis of Decision N°96-030/PRES/MEE on authorising concessions in wildlife exploitation areas in Burkina Faso.
- 6 African mechanism of peer evaluation, Burkina Faso Evaluation Report, Country Evaluation Report No. 9, p. 403.
- 7 Sidwaya No. 5064.
- 8 Sidwaya, Friday 27 February 2009
- 9 Many Peul who have been arrested are generally accused of being street bandits and executed without trial.
- 10 [http://www.evenement-bf.net/pages/facon\\_voir\\_73.htm](http://www.evenement-bf.net/pages/facon_voir_73.htm)
- 11 National Policy for Land Security in Rural Areas, Decree N°2007-610/PRES/PM/MAHRH on the adoption of the National Policy for Land Security in Rural Areas of 04 October 2007, p.21.

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# Regional Networking among the Pastoralist Communities of West Africa: the Billital Maroobe Network

Dodo Boureima





Almost 30% of the population of the Sahel is involved in livestock rearing, and this forms an important pillar of the region's national economies. In countries such as Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mauritania, pastoralism is the dominant form of domestic livestock rearing (cattle, sheep, goats, camels) and it is estimated that between 70 and 90% of the national cattle herd is managed in this way.

The nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralists that practise livestock rearing are primarily Peulh, Tuareg, Arab and Toubou communities spread across the arid and semi-arid regions of West Africa. There are numerous difficulties and constraints undermining the exercise of pastoral activity, including:

- The existence of an arsenal of legal texts favourable to the specific nature of pastoral practices within the Network's member countries, in particular the Pastoral Code in Mauritania, the Pastoral Charter in Mali, the Guiding Law on Pastoralism in Burkina Faso and the draft bill on the Pastoral Code in Niger. However, all these texts are facing slow and laborious implementation and this is the fault of all those involved. These implementation difficulties are due, on the one hand, to a lack of any real will on the part of decision makers and, on the other, to the ongoing weakness of pastoralist civil society in terms of its ability to demand its rights;
- Economic constraints linked to access to markets (frustrating red tape between countries, insufficient marketing infrastructure...), to the West African Economic and Monetary Union common external tariff and to monetary policies significantly influencing the competitiveness of products abroad and trade between countries in the CFA zone<sup>1</sup> and other countries of the sub-region;
- Access to natural resources. Livestock farmers and pastoralists find themselves increasingly confronted by sometimes drastic reductions in the size of their traditional pasturelands, caused by an ever-increasing demand for land for arable farming along with the acute monetarisation of the land market, which is leading to a new phenomenon of speculative land hoarding to the benefit of rich landowners and multinationals;
- The difficulties pastoralists have in accessing basic social services (education, water, health) due to a way of life that is incompatible, or virtually so, with development approaches that have made sedentarisation an essential condition of accessing such basic requirements.



### Establishment of a network of pastoralists

In West Africa, pastoral and livestock farmers' organisations have established a network, the "Billital Maroobe" Network of Pastoralist and Livestock Farmer Organisations (RBM). "Billital Maroobe" is Fulfulde for "the promotion of livestock farmers". It forms a regional reference point for livestock farmers and pastoralists, and works to defend their economic, political, social and cultural interests.

The RBM currently includes pastoralist organisations from Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Mauritania, Senegal and Benin. Its members are estimated at more than 400.000. Other requests for membership from Cote d'Ivoire and Togo are currently under consideration. These organisations are grouped into national-level platforms known as "national Network contacts". These are:

- Benin: *Association Nationale des Organisations Professionnelles d'Éleveurs de Ruminants* (National Association of Professional Livestock Farmer Organisations/ANOPER);
- Burkina Faso: *Fédération des Éleveurs du Burkina* (Federation of Livestock Farmers of Burkina/FEB), *Réseau de Communication des Pasteurs* (Pastoralist Communication Network/RECOPA), *Comité Régional Des Unités de production du Sahel* (Regional Committee for Sahelian Production Units/CRUS);
- Mali: *Association des Organisations Professionnelles Paysannes* (Association of Professional Peasant Organisations/AOPP), *Fédération des Éleveurs pour le Bétail et la Viande au Mali* (Federation of Cattle and Meat Livestock Farmers in Mali/FEBEVIM), *Fédération Amadane* (Amadane Federation), *Tassaght*;
- Mauritania: *Groupe National des Associations Pastorales de la Mauritanie* (National Group of Pas-

- toral Associations of Mauritania/GNAP), platform in the process of being established;
- Niger: *Association pour la Redynamisation de l'Elevage au Niger* (Association for the Regeneration of Livestock Farming in Niger/AREN), *Gaina, Gadjé*;
- Nigeria: *Miette Allah*, platform in the process of being established;
- Senegal: *Association pour le Développement de Namarel* (Association for Namarel Development/ADENA), *Association pour le Développement Intégré et Durable* (Association for Integrated and Sustainable Development/ADID), *Fédération pour le Développement du Jolloff* (Federation for Jolloff Development/FBAJ).

The Billital Maroobe Network is convinced that pastoralism, based on seasonal and spatial mobility, represents an essential form of production because of the economic, social, cultural and economic contribution it makes to arid and semi-arid zones, where other methods of production are highly risky, if not impossible. The RBM is also fighting to safeguard the diversity of production systems in the face of a world dominated by an unbridled search for profit and privatisation.

The RBM was established in 2003, during a Constituent General Assembly in Dori, by the following organisations: AREN in Niger, Tassaght in Mali and CRUS in Burkina Faso. Its head office is in Dori, Burkina Faso, and its Permanent Technical Secretariat is in Niamey, Niger. The Network's strategic objectives were reviewed and updated during the process of producing a strategic plan and adopted at the last General Assembly in March 2009. They are as follows:

- To include livestock rearers in the process of drafting national and sub-regional livestock rearing development policies;
- To ensure the security of livestock rearing in Africa by means of accountable and fair management of essential natural resources: land, water and pastures;
- To provide better access to markets and basic services;
- To increase the capacity of pastoralist organisations to defend pastoralist interests in Africa;
- To promote social and gender inclusion;
- To strengthen the Network's regional basis;
- To defend the enforcement of livestock farmers' and pastoralists' rights.

## Achievements and challenges

Despite its young age, the RBM has gained significant knowledge and experience at both national and cross-border levels: RBM members have given training courses on advocacy, conflict management and planning for its members; produced quarterly newsletters aimed at civil society decision-makers; translated legislative texts on pastoralism and seasonal migration into the national languages; and organised vaccination centres, cattle markets, pharmaceuticals depots, warehouses, processing units...etc. Its members have contributed to and been involved in producing legal texts favourable to pastoral practices throughout the sub-region, particularly Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Mauritania.

Annual meeting of Wodaabe associations in Niger: informal talks during a break - Photo: iez Thiry





These significant achievements have raised the hopes of our members and a keen interest among them. However, pastoralists are still facing a number of problems and challenges in terms of production, marketing, environmental, institutional and organisational issues, and the rights and duties of livestock farmers and pastoralists. To face up to these challenges requires the following:

**Technical autonomy:** if we are to achieve the necessary changes in livestock policies, the pastoralist organisations need to be more actively involved, both on a local, national and regional level, and require, in particular, a perfect understanding of the “technical” issues related to the political, economic, social and environmental problems facing livestock rearing in general and pastoralism in particular, and its interactions with other sectors;

**Institutional autonomy:** the best possible pastoralist use of resources involves herd mobility, and this also allows for the geographical complementarities between the Sahelian and Sudanese regions to be exploited to the full. However, national livestock policies have failed to take regional integration fully into account in their design, hence the need for national institutions sensitive to pastoralist issues;

**Economic autonomy:** this vision intuitively incorporates the need for animal production to be more highly valued, for intra-regional exchanges to be renewed

with greater vigour, for product quality to be improved, etc...

## Opportunities

In addition to these challenges, there are also some opportunities, such as the political tendency to form large sub-regional groups through sub-regional integration. The agricultural sector as a whole is, moreover, at the heart of development in general due to the food crisis that has been caused by rising global food prices over the period 2007-2008. This has led decision-makers to reconsider the relevance of the directions envisaged by the Regional Agricultural Policy for West Africa (ECOWAP) to face up to the challenges of West African agriculture and food security.

It should be recalled that ECOWAP is, in principle, an ideal model for cooperation, focused on regionally-defined directions and priorities. Its implementation through the PDDAA (Detailed Programme for African Agricultural Development) creates a synergy of actions between the national levels (National Agricultural Investment Programmes) of each of the 15 member countries and an additional regional programme implemented by the Economic Community of West African States. This programme – the PRIA programme (Programme of Institutional Strengthening) is an opportunity for cooperation between the sub-regional institutions, states, agricultural networks (ROPFA/West African Farmer Based Organi-

*Pastoralists in Niger - Photo: Brigitte Thébaud*







sations' and Producers' Network) and livestock rearing networks (RBM), provided everyone plays their role fairly and transparently.

Other opportunities for cooperation are also taking shape, through the West African and Sahelian Cross-Border Livestock Markets Programme initiated by the CILSS (Permanent Inter-State Committee to Combat Drought in the Sahel) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union's sub-regional land initiatives.

This renewed interest on the part of states in transforming the sub-regional integration process with concrete actions could also represent an opportunity, if livestock farmers and pastoralists participate actively in the consultation and decision-making structures. It will simply pose a threat and a risk if they are not fully involved.

In light of the above, and given its status of sub-regional (West African) organisation, the Billital Maroobe Network is legitimately placed to represent the pastoralist world within existing national and regional bodies and thus aspires to becoming the priority contact of institutions such as the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the *Comité permanent inter-états de lutte contre la sécheresse dans le Sahel* (Permanent Inter-State Committee to Combat Drought in the Sahel/CILSS) and the *Autorité du Développement Intégré du Liptako Gourma* (Authority for the Integrated Development of Liptako Gourma/ALG).

To do so, Billital Maroobe is focusing on two main areas of action, namely:

- **Capacity Building of the Network** and its members with a view to creating a strong, legitimate and representative social pastoralist movement, recognised by the states and sub-regional institutions. It is in this spirit that RBM has begun a pastoralist training module that will equip the leaders of pastoralist organisations with arguments aimed at convincing the most sceptical of the relevance, role and place of pastoralism in the current context of climate change. This initiative will enable the Network to produce a Network Capacity Building Plan on common issues relevant to the realities of pastoralist communities. This training programme is built around the pastoralist module designed and run by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). Our members, particularly the elected members of the Network, have been trained on the fundamentals of pastoralism and equipped with arguments and tools aimed at being able to conduct advocacy work. The next stage will be to train RBM trainers, and to adapt the module for coastal countries, where the pastoral realities are different from those of the Sahelian countries.

*Peul herder watering his animals at borehole in Niger - Photo: Brigitte Thébaud*



Training by Billital Maroobe - Photo: Billital Maroobe

- **Developing Pathways for Advocacy** aimed at influencing policies for the greater security of nomadic pastoralism. This will enable the removal of all bottlenecks preventing pastoralism from playing a driving role in economic development and sub-regional integration. For this, the Network is developing collaborative initiatives with sub-regional institutions such as the CILSS, UEMOA, ALG and ECOWAS, which are the operational arms of the states at sub-regional level. In terms of advocacy aimed at adopting favourable measures and laws with regard to pastoralists' access and use of natural resources, the Network is currently organising a sub-regional workshop in Parakou, Benin, on cross-border seasonal migration. The aim is to provide a framework for exchange between the destination countries of transhumant pastoralists (Togo, Benin) and their countries of departure (Burkina Faso, Niger) in order to discuss the constraints placed on mobility.

The Network also works on gender issues and, in this regard, is currently producing a global policy document, along with an action plan, that will enable a consideration of gender issues to be institutionalised within the Network.

The Network bases its work on a global vision that has been updated by the members through the Strategic Plan (2009-2014).

In conclusion, it must be recalled that the major challenge facing the Network is that of ensuring the mobility of livestock farmers and their livestock in West Africa. In fact, it is vital for the prosperity of households and the region's economies in this current context of constant mutation and climate change. Mobility ensures the highest productivity of the herds and the economic profitability of the livestock rearing sector. In light of the above, mobility must be guaranteed at local, national and sub-regional levels. □

## Note

- 1 CFA is the currency used in 14 French speaking countries in West and Central Africa.

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# Siberian Reindeer Pastoralism and Challenges Facing Reindeer Herders in Western Siberia

Stephan Dudeck







Reindeer herders harnessing new reindeer to the sleigh. Photo: Stephan Dudeck

*"If you are determined to have a reindeer, then you will go to the very ends of Grandmother Earth's lap to get it."*

Jurij Vella (Nenets poet)

Josif Ivanovich was furious. I had asked about the significance of the reindeer sleigh races on the "Day of the Reindeer Breeders" in the nearby oil metropolis of Kogalym. His answer was clear. *"You really believe that we put our reindeer in harness only for the reindeer herders' festival in Kogalym? We Khanty don't live for those festivals."* But young Khanty practice hard in preparation for the day. To ensure the success of the festival, Josif Ivanovich's family sacrificed a reindeer to the gods at home in the taiga.<sup>1</sup> In Western Siberia, the Khanty reindeer herders are best known as a colorful attraction at fairs in the oil workers' settlements. Winners of the biathlons<sup>2</sup> regularly held in the regional capital, Khanty-Mansiysk, take their victory laps in a reindeer sleigh driven by a young Khanty reindeer herder. Bookshops are stocked with coffee-table books full of pictures of happy, satisfied Khanty in traditional dress, posing next to their well-fed, fleece-nosed reindeer. The photos are usually taken at one of the numerous state-organized competitions and often include local politicians, or managers of an oil company, profiling themselves as sponsors and guardians of the Khanty's colorful and exotic culture.

Attitudes towards the Khanty in these oil settlements are generally divided into two camps. Some residents corroborate the harmonious picture painted in the books. They say the "children of nature" would not be able to sustain their unspoiled values and affinity for nature without the help and support of the government. Other people cite the seedy and



Nenets reindeer herder with his reindeer. Photo: Stephan Dudeck

drunken natives seen from time to time on the streets of cities and villages and say that the official story, according to which the Khanty community is blossoming thanks to generous state support, is transparent propaganda. In reality, according to this opinion camp, the indigenous people are forced to give up their culture for the inexorable march of civilization, making their social downfall inevitable.

So what made Josif Ivanovich angry was not my question but the attitudes he sensed behind it. He was at pains to explain the complexities of the weather conditions that made a reindeer sleigh superior to a motorized one, and how clothing made of reindeer skins was far superior to mass-produced outerwear in winter. In the Khanty community, reindeer are the most important status symbol. They are a basic foodstuff and the most consequential sacrifice to the gods.

## Reindeer herding in northern Russia

Reindeer herding is unthinkable without nomadism or transhumance (seasonal movement of livestock between different pastures). Reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*) were domesticated late in comparison with other animals, and the characteristics and behavior of the domesticated herds closely resemble those of reindeer in the wild. Extreme weather variations in the tundra<sup>3</sup> and the taiga force reindeer herders to move their animals seasonally, sometimes travelling several thousands of kilometers. Eighteen of Siberia's more than 40 indigenous peoples practice reindeer husbandry, foremost among them the Nenets, Sámi, Khanty, Dolgan, Even, Evenk, Chukchi and Koryak, as well as sub-groups of the Sakha and Komi.<sup>4</sup>

## Types of reindeer herding

Various forms of reindeer husbandry exist in northern Eurasia. In addition to dedicated reindeer husbandry, mixed economic systems also exist that combine reindeer husbandry with hunting, fishing, gathering and, increasingly, tourism. In the former Soviet Union, reindeer husbandry was largely aimed at meat production. In a few regions, meat production took a back seat to fur hunting, and reindeer were used primarily for transport.

The main forms of reindeer herding are characterized by the types of pastoralism of the following people. However, other forms of reindeer herding also exist, according to regional peculiarities.

In *Sámi* reindeer husbandry on the Kola Peninsula, the reindeer graze in free-ranging herds. They are rounded up seasonally for branding, counting and slaughter. These reindeer are used solely for meat. Almost all herders go out alone to herd the animals, leaving their families in the villages.

*Nenets* reindeer husbandry is nomadic. The Nenets tend large groups of reindeer throughout the entire year, using sleighs and dogs to herd them. The herders and their families travel by sleigh and live in tents. Their routes range from the coast of the Arctic Ocean in the summer to as far south as the timber line<sup>5</sup> in winter. The reindeer pull the sleighs and provide food, clothing and pelts for the tents. Herds can run as large as 1,000 to 3,000 head, sometimes more. The Nenets sell mostly the meat and the velvet antlers (summer antlers that have not yet calcified), called *panty* in Russian. The intensely symbiotic relationship of the Nenets and their reindeer means that Nenets clans continue to occupy the western Siberian tundra.

*Chukchi* reindeer husbandry also centers on tending large herds of reindeer on the tundra. The herders tend their reindeer by sleigh in the winter and on foot in the summer. In addition to the reindeer Chukchi, another subgroup, often referred to as the maritime Chukchi, live by hunting sea mammals along the coast. Chukchi reindeer husbandry suffered from the collapse of the Soviet Union, with its resulting economic crisis and loss of state-run infrastructure. Many reindeer Chukchi switched to maritime practice and the number of domesticated reindeer in north-east Siberia has dropped sharply since then.

The *Evenk* travel through the taiga with small herds and use the reindeer mainly for transport. They live primarily from fur hunting. Because the taiga is hilly, making sleighs impractical, the Evenk ride reindeer and use them as pack animals. Under this mixed livelihood system in the taiga zone, reindeer herds are kept

small (maximum of a few hundred head) to minimize the labor needed to maintain them. This system of reindeer husbandry is rarely effective enough to turn the animals themselves into a commodity. This form of reindeer herding is under particular threat, since it produces no profit and reindeer are increasingly being replaced by snowmobiles for transport. The number of reindeer in the taiga has dropped dramatically in the last few decades. In some parts of the taiga, reindeer herding has disappeared completely.

## Numerical developments

Reindeer husbandry experienced its first recession as early as the 1930s, when rising tax rates sounded the death knell for private reindeer breeding. The forced collectivization that followed provoked the mass slaughter of reindeer as a form of passive resistance. As a result, the number of domesticated reindeer fell from over 2 million at the end of the 1920s to fewer than 1.5 million in 1934. During the entire Soviet era, domesticated reindeer reached their highest population numbers in the 1960s and 1970s (almost 2.5 million) before declining by half to about 1.2 million in 2000.

## Soviet economic policies

In the early stages of the Soviet Union, there were plans to allow Siberia's indigenous peoples to determine their own development path, free from state interference and economic exploitation. However, those ideas soon fell victim to strategies for exploiting Siberia's wealth of natural resources for the benefit of, first and foremost, the European part of the Soviet Union. Those strategies included plans to integrate Siberian reindeer herders into a modern, industrial society. The measures instituted to try to turn what was a subsistence lifestyle into the viable production of commodities included education, health services, centralized administration, state-supplied goods and setting up state-run collectives.

## Settlement and the Soviet form of reindeer husbandry

Perhaps the most significant step in the state-controlled transformation of reindeer husbandry was the attempt to get the nomadic and semi-nomadic herders to settle. The idea was to better integrate a difficult-to-supervise population into the state's administrative machinery. As Christian missionaries had discovered in previous

## Indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation



- |                 |          |           |          |         |
|-----------------|----------|-----------|----------|---------|
| 1 Sámi          | 2 Nenets | 3 Khanty  | 4 Dolgan | 5 Evenk |
| 6 Sakha (Yakut) | 7 Even   | 8 Chukchi | 9 Koryak |         |

centuries, getting a given population to conform to the values and ideals of the dominant society requires first assimilating them into its lifestyle.

Progress in settling the reindeer herders varied from region to region. The state established settlements, administrative agencies, schools and hospitals everywhere in Siberia, and a substantial portion of the indigenous population were permanently settled in them. However, the grazing habits of the reindeer meant that the men continued to roam with their herds and live in tents. The herders were organized into work brigades and assigned paid housekeepers (called *chum rabotnit-sa*, meaning literally “tent worker”), usually the wives of some of the brigade’s men. The remaining wives stayed home in the villages, along with the children and elders. The herding work was organized into shifts so that the herders alternated between nomadic periods and periods in the villages. In essence, this model made the herders employees of industrial agriculture companies. This Soviet form of reindeer husbandry turned the tundra in some Siberian regions from clan habitats into male-dominated workplaces. Very few women are willing to take on the hardscrabble life and poorly paid work as housekeepers for the reindeer herders. The herders often spend months alone in the

taiga without their families. In fact, they often have difficulty establishing families to begin with.

In other regions, including most of western Siberia, the settlement process was only partially successful. Those members of the indigenous population not directly involved with reindeer husbandry moved into villages but the herders and their families remained in the taiga or the tundra.

### Survival of state-owned industry

In many regions of Russia, Soviet collectives (*kolkhozy*) and state-owned concerns (*sovkhozy*) survived the collapse of the regime. They were renamed and have a different legal status, as either state or municipal companies or (stock) corporations. The basic structure of the enterprises has remained the same, however. Commercial reindeer husbandry is run by a company director, who hires the herders for low wages. The herders themselves have little or no direct influence over management but they can graze their private herds under the aegis of the larger concern. There are also smaller, private enterprises run as either cooperatives or family businesses. Many private reindeer herders are unregis-



tered and work under the umbrella of the large concerns, as hunters for private fur traders, or as seasonal workers in the tourist industry.

The animals from state-owned agricultural estates are generally split into several herds of a few thousand reindeer each, to be tended by brigades comprising 5 – 10 herders and a few “tent keepers”. These businesses were the only guarantors of the upkeep of basic infrastructure, the supply of the minimum necessary provisions, and a sales and distribution system for reindeer products. In the 1990s, reindeer husbandry became an economically marginal and unprofitable sector of the economy. Since they were earning what, in some cases, were no more than token wages, the herders’ social status also dropped. They had great difficulty finding wives, and reindeer husbandry in some regions faced a grave crisis.

The only region that saw an increase in the number of reindeer was the tundra of western Siberia (the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District), where nomadic families of mostly Nenets reindeer herders tend large herds. More than half of Russia’s domesticated reindeer graze in this region. It is significant that this region also boasts the largest percentage of privately-owned reindeer, accounting for more than two-thirds of the total.

### The crisis in reindeer husbandry

One of the most pressing and serious problems, particularly in post-Soviet north-eastern Siberia, is the collapse of infrastructure. The Soviet Union maintained the community infrastructure - health and educational facilities - upon which the herders depend. Access to those facilities is largely dependent on a functioning transport infrastructure. Subject to market economics in the post-Soviet era, the state-run transport system became unprofitable in many regions. Helicopters, planes and all-terrain vehicles were no longer available to supply the settlements or transport the herders from the pastures to boarding schools or hospitals. Transport became the most significant cost factor in the production of commodities from reindeer husbandry. In many areas, producing reindeer meat was no longer economically viable due to low revenues and high transport costs. The majority of collectives and state-run companies went into the red.

The number of privately-owned reindeer actually rose slightly. However, these animals are rarely part of the commodity production chain. Instead, they are mainly held for subsistence purposes and also in order to compensate for the falling incomes. At the point of

Russia’s maximum reindeer population, around 1970, privately-owned reindeer accounted for about 11 – 13 percent of the total. Today, more than half of all reindeer in Russia are in private hands. The Ministry of Agriculture of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District estimates that, under the current conditions, a reindeer herder must hold 50 – 100 animals per family member to live solely from reindeer husbandry.

Another problem is the increase in predators, particularly wolves. During the Soviet era, culling was centrally organized and predators were hunted from helicopters. Reindeer are also lost to poaching by newly-arrived residents, especially in the areas where industrialization and urbanization are growing. The increasing number of wild reindeer is also a problem, particularly on the Taymyr Peninsula and in north-east Siberia, with domesticated animals led off by wild herds and lost. In eastern Siberia in particular, large swathes of grazing land are not currently in use and the wild reindeer population there is swelling. In western Siberia, however, both in the tundra and taiga zones, intensified petroleum and natural gas production means continuously shrinking pastures. The danger of overgrazing on the remaining land is thus growing.

### Land and resource rights

The issue of territorial rights is still an unsolved problem for the indigenous people of Siberia. In most regions, there have been few changes to tenure rights for reindeer herders since the end of the Soviet era. The land belongs to the state and is leased to the state, municipal or collective reindeer concerns.

Privately-owned reindeer are usually allowed to graze, either for free or for a fee, on the land leased by the successors to the state-owned *sovkhozy*. The various regions have enacted differing laws to regulate utilization rights, some of which contravene federal laws. The reindeer herders often prefer to rely on informal agreements and established customary rights than on the contradictory web of laws. Nowhere in Russia is there an unconditional property right to reindeer grazing land.

One attempt to codify indigenous land rights was the federal law governing the establishment of “territories of traditional natural resource use” or TTPs, adopted in 2001. Under this law, indigenous peoples should have been guaranteed exclusive utilization rights to natural resources in the TTPs. However, the law is largely declarative and depends on administrative by-laws, which have never been adopted, if it is to function. So far not a single one of those territories has been recognized at the federal level. Where they exist at the regional level,

the *obshchiny* (indigenous communes) that work these territories have no self-governing authority.

The mechanisms for distributing compensation from industrial companies that destroy reindeer grazing land (mainly while extracting mineral resources) vary from region to region. In most regions, the reindeer herders have no influence on reparation agreements and receive very little of the money personally. An attempt to establish inspection and negotiation mechanisms, similar to the environmental impact assessments conducted for investment projects, failed in the face of resistance from the legislature and administration in Moscow. An ethnological impact assessment (*etnologicheskaya expertiza*) was aimed at providing a way of negotiating conflicts between industry and indigenous peoples; however the law never made it past the draft stage.

The Russian "Animal Kingdom Law" guarantees indigenous peoples, in the regions they "traditionally" occupy, priority rights to the resources of the forests and waters (game and fish). The lands remain under state control, however, and the indigenous people must jump through enormous bureaucratic hoops to apply for utilization licenses. In many Russian regions, the hunting and catch quotas are insufficient to provide a livelihood and the indigenous people are forced into poaching to survive.

## Indigenous self-government and representation of interests

Even today, there is very little functioning indigenous self-government in Russia. Every indigenous group is a minority in the administrative sector in which it lives. The reindeer herders live and work in traditional clan groups but these groups are not granted self-government at the political level. Their status as "numerically small peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East" is anchored in federal and regional laws. However, these peoples have no democratically legitimized institutions or organs of representation.

The law governing communes (*obshchiny*) of indigenous peoples, which was passed in July 2000, was aimed at establishing legal entities that could achieve a form of self-government. However the text of the law puts the communes under the control of municipal government agencies and the state administration, which are dominated in most regions by non-indigenous officials. The mayors in most of the settlements where the indigenous people live are usually not elected by residents but rather appointed by the *rayon* (district) administration.

Self-government organs in the republics of Karelia, Buryatia and Sakha are the exception, but these have limited decision-making powers. The regional organi-

*Reindeer herd near Numto in the morning sun. Photo: Stephan Dudeck*



zations that form the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East (RAIPON) are perceived, on the political stage and in the media, as representing the interests of Russia's indigenous peoples.

In addition to RAIPON, the interests of reindeer herders are represented by the Russian Reindeer Herders Union, which was formed at the first Congress of Russian Reindeer Herders in 1995.

### Khanty reindeer husbandry in western Siberia

Along with the Mansi, the 29,000 Khanty in western Siberia are the "titular nation" of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, an area about the size of France and which is Russia's most important oil producing region. Khanty reindeer husbandry occupies a special position. The area, bounded by the Ob River and its tributaries, is marked by the transition from taiga to tundra. The flat landscape is predominantly swamp-land (60 percent of the total area) combined with numerous lakes and rivers (20 percent of the total area) to form a fragile hydrologic balance. Thaws moving from south to north create extensive flood plains in the spring. This mosaic landscape has traditionally been used by the indigenous people for hunting, fishing, reindeer husbandry and gathering. The reindeer husbandry practiced here is a form of taiga reindeer herding, with the animals used primarily as transport. The Khanty have adopted many elements, such as sleighs, conical tents and reindeer herding terminology from the nomadic Nenets farther north.

### Petroleum extraction

The most decisive moment in colonial history for the Khanty reindeer herders came in the 1970s and 1980s, when the vast oil deposits of western Siberia were first tapped. Both the demographics and the entire infrastructure in the region underwent radical changes. The indigenous residents, along with their lifestyle and economic structure, were completely disregarded. In the regions with the largest oil industries, the collective farms (*kolkhozy*) were disbanded as early as the 1980s, in contrast to other parts of Siberia. The transport routes servicing the oil fields ran through Khanty settlements. Khanty reindeer herders sometimes returned from the pastures to find their houses bulldozed in their absence.

The Khanty disappeared almost entirely from the radar of state agencies during this period. The authori-

ties were focused on regulating the petroleum industry and building new cities for the oilfield workers. The scheme for the involuntary re-settlement of the Khanty to central settlements was never fully realized and the reindeer herders retreated to their traditional seasonal habitats. A reindeer herder reaching retirement age would often turn his back on the village altogether and retreat to the taiga with a few reindeer.

Due to the destruction of the traditional foundations of their way of life, a large proportion of the Khanty today live in central settlements that have been systematically expanded since the 1930s. One reason they stay, despite the lack of economic prospects, high unemployment and widespread alcoholism, is the available infrastructure in the form of schools, health care, administrative institutions and shopping.

A minority of Khanty, about 2,500, still live from the traditional use of natural resources in family groups scattered across the taiga and tundra. A reindeer herder will have two to four seasonal living areas within a territory traditionally inhabited by that clan. He will move between them in concert with the grazing, hunting and fishing seasons. The majority of these families have been able to register these areas as *rodovye ugod'ia*, or "clan territory", although their exact legal status is unclear.

The following problem areas can be identified as arising from the **effects of oil production** on the life of the Khanty.

### Economy

The collectives and state-run enterprises that previously dominated the indigenous economic sectors have been robbed of resources. Reindeer grazing land and fishing grounds on the oil fields have been destroyed. The Khanty affected by this have been re-settled into the central settlements. By way of example, at the beginning of the 1990s, the fish processing combine in Surgut had to close down because the fishing grounds in the Ob and its direct tributaries had been destroyed. As a result of this loss of resources, unemployment in the settlements has risen dramatically and residents have very few economic prospects.

### Demographics

The number of Khanty has fallen to just over one percent of the total population and they have been suffering from a negative birth rate as young women have striven to marry new settlers in order to have some kind of economic outlook for their families.





*Flaring of carrier gas at an oil field near Nizhnevartovsk.  
Photo: Stephan Dudeck*

*(right) Oil field near Kogalym with destroyed Taiga forest. Photo: Stephan Dudeck*



## Social problems

Alcoholism, suicides and unnatural deaths—by drowning or freezing to death while drunk—rose. Within two generations in the settlements, many Khanty have lost their native language. Low standards in the educational institutions in the Khanty villages have reduced their prospects on the job market.

## Ecology

The burn-off of companion gasses during oil extraction releases organic compounds and dust into the air. Frequent oil spills cause extensive pollution to land and waters. Dams for roadway construction have drained areas and throttled waterways, causing vegetation to die and preventing fish migration in small streams. Wild game has been driven away from large areas around settlements, drilling installations and roads. A large number of for-

est fires are caused each year by the new settlers. Poaching and stray dogs pose a threat to game and reindeer.

As a result of these problems, traditional livelihood models remain possible only on the upper reaches of the Ob tributaries. There are few abundant fishing or hunting grounds in that area, however, so there has been a shift towards more reindeer husbandry. Reindeer husbandry has also gained ground due to its symbolic value within the culture. Not only are reindeer the most important status symbol within the indigenous communities, they also serve as an icon of Khanty culture, and reindeer herding is an important resource for the tourism industry.

## Political mobilization

During the era of glasnost and perestroika in the 1980s, western Siberia was one of the first Siberian regions from which the voices of indigenous people were heard. They spoke out to draw attention to the devastating environmental problems being created by the oil industry and the

loss of indigenous traditions and culture. The clearest indication of this was the massive decline of the indigenous languages, some of which had even died out altogether, and the concomitant loss of oral traditions and traditional wisdom. This loss of native culture was believed to be the cause behind the increased alcoholism and high murder and suicide rates in many Khanty villages.

Khanty living off traditional trades, particularly reindeer herding, were least affected by these losses. The reindeer herding community uses the indigenous language daily, observes the traditional religious rites and taboos, and hands down traditional craft and trade skills. For the Khanty intelligentsia working in the cultural institutions of the cities and towns, their traditional culture is an important resource. They have thus built a natural alliance with the reindeer herders in an effort to improve their living conditions. At the start of the 1990s, Khanty activists in the most densely worked oil regions succeeded in officially registering the territories (*rodovye ugod'ia*) where the reindeer herding clans live, which theoretically gave them certain rights over the given territories.

Interestingly, since the 1990s, the Khanty have received support for their efforts at cultural renewal from the regional political class, which is closely linked to the most powerful economic force in the region, the oil industry. Indigenous rights have been written into more than ten regional laws. A three-person chamber of indigenous affairs was set up in the regional assembly (*duma*), with limited powers but which is elected by the entire population. Funding was made available for cultural and academic institutions dedicated to the history, language and culture of the indigenous people. These measures have helped to obviate the open conflict between the regional government and the oil industry, on one hand, and the indigenous people, on the other.

At the same time, the region's identity, as its name "Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District" implies, is bound to the indigenous identity and its most visible symbol, reindeer herding. Regional identity has become an important bargaining chip in disputes with the central government in Moscow, which is always looking for ways to curtail or abrogate the autonomy of regions. Regional political powers have managed to head off any such attempts with the support of the oil industry. They do not want to jeopardize their ability to directly influence regional policy and the way in which capital is used, and the putative national autonomy of the titular nations provides them with a good argument. Although the regional government might have wanted to restrict its financial support to the cultural sector, indigenous politicians and activists have succeeded in drawing what are probably the largest subsidies in Rus-

sia to the area for traditional economic sectors, including reindeer husbandry. The reindeer herders were also directly involved in the negotiations over compensation payments for damage to their territories.

## Privatized reindeer husbandry

Since the collectives were dissolved during the 1980s, perestroika has led to a re-vitalization of private reindeer herding in traditional family groups. Relatively small herds, ranging from a dozen to slightly more than 100 animals, are grazed on clan land (*rodovye ugod'ia*). The camps and the grazing grounds move seasonally within that area. In the winter, herders tend to head for the protective forests, where the reindeer can find lichen under the loose snow. For the spring grazing grounds, where the reindeer calve, the herders seek out open marshes where the snow cover melts first, revealing fresh green shoots. In early summer, smoky fires are kindled in special reindeer huts to ward off insects, which also keeps the animals close to the human dwellings. Near the oil fields, reindeer grazing grounds are increasingly surrounded by kilometers of fencing to keep the reindeer from wandering into the oil fields and to keep out predators and poachers. Shrinking grazing areas have led some reindeer herders to turn to supplementary feed. In the past, the reindeer were fed frozen or dried fish. These days it is usually feed pellets, sometimes provided by the oil companies as part of the reparations.

## Land rights and compensation mechanisms

Some of the private reindeer herders have documents guaranteeing their rights to the clan or family land (*rodovye ugod'ia*). However, there is almost complete overlap between the areas used by the reindeer herders and the areas licensed as oil fields in this region, and the status almost never actually prevents oil industry operations from going ahead. The main function is to secure certain material or monetary compensation for the families affected, for the loss of territory and biological resources incurred.

The law establishing these areas, which was passed in the Khanty-Mansi region in 1992, is in conflict with federal laws, so it has been annulled. Despite the murky legal status of land rights, the oil companies enter into indemnity agreements with individual Khanty families based on the borders of the clan lands established at the beginning of the 1990s, and pay compensation for the destruction of traditionally used resources. Many non-indigenous people deem those payments

unjustified enrichment at the expense of Russia's interests. In their PR, the oil companies portray their own economic interests in exploiting the natural resources as the interests of Russian society as a whole.

There are plans to change the compensation process because the state institutions and the oil companies want to agree on a procedure that calculates the damage caused by oil extraction in advance. Fixed reparation payments will be made to state institutions, which are supposed to use them to subsidize the indigenous people. Not without good reason, the reindeer herders fear the money will get lost in the state structures and they will be shut out of the entire indemnity negotiation process. An additional concern is that there will be no way of creating an incentive to avoid environmental damage if compensation for it has already been paid.

No mechanism yet exists for designating the legitimate representatives of indigenous communities at the local level. At the family level, the indigenous clans are represented by "family leaders" named by the state, who negotiate directly with the oil companies and the administration. There is also no judicial form of indigenous self-government. Communities (*obshchiny*) based on clan structures have been established but they act only as economic entities and have no legitimate political function. Informally, there are traditional political leaders in the form of respected elders or "shamans" but history has taught the Khanty to conceal the identities of these traditional figures of authority (especially the religious ones). So the role of spokesperson for indigenous interests has devolved to some activists of the urban indigenous intelligentsia, whose interests are not necessarily the same as those of the reindeer herders.

## Climate change

In North America and Scandinavia, it has been about 20 years since indigenous activists and reindeer herders began talking about increasingly severe changes in their natural environment, which they attribute to a changing climate. By contrast, climate change has only recently become an issue among the Khanty. Adapting to changing natural conditions has until recently been considered unproblematic by the Khanty. However, with the global economic crisis, which has become part of a more general discourse on an upswing in manifestations of crisis, Khanty reindeer herders are



*Khanty reindeer herder at his winter house in the Taiga. Photo: Stephan Dudeck*



*Two representatives of the Khanty intelligentsia. Photo: Stephan Dudeck*

*Oil-drop monument in the town of Kogalym, including the reindeer herders. Photo: Stephan Dudeck*





also beginning to interpret unusual weather events as a sign of worsening climate conditions. It is above all the increasingly fickle weather that has caused the reindeer herders concern. In the autumn and spring, the rapidly alternating thaw with periods of frost produces an ice crust on the snow cover which prevents the reindeer from getting to their winter feed, the reindeer moss. In the last 100 years, the rise in average annual temperatures in the Arctic region has been double the global average. Analysts predict that the temperature will rise from four to eight degrees Celsius by 2100. Factors that contribute to this are a diminished albedo effect, shrinking snow and ice cover, and the smaller volume of air in the northern atmosphere, meaning it warms up more quickly. We can expect a large-scale thaw of the permafrost, which in turn releases methane, a detrimental greenhouse gas, into the air.

## Capacity for action

Over the course of history, reindeer herders have consistently proved that they are capable of coping with and adapting to social, economic and even ecological changes. The question is whether the indigenous communities are also capable of dealing with rapid change.

There were three phases to the colonization process, both when western Siberia was incorporated into the Russian empire and during Sovietization. Political integration (conquest and when Soviet power was established) was followed by ideological integration (Christianization and the battle against shamans and kulaks) and then economic integration (dependency on Russian traders and forced collectivization). The indigenous reaction to these integration attempts was a retreat to undeveloped regions, conflict avoidance and, at most, partial integration. They could do that because they were able to switch between exploiting different natural resources – fishing, hunting, reindeer herding – and between different locations. The indigenous peoples preserved spaces over which there was very limited external control, and where internal value systems and methods of interaction, such as language, religion and distinctive lifestyles, could be maintained. Reindeer husbandry, a landscape inhospitable to Westerners, as well as the sheer geographic distances, were thus prerequisites for limited indigenous autonomy.

One of the greatest problems for the indigenous peoples is that the strategy of evasion, which guarantees them social and cultural autonomy in the face of the challenges presented by integration into a market economy and by climate change, could reach the limits of its effectiveness. There are, in fact, signs that it may

already have done so. These include self-destructive trends such as alcoholism and violence, as well as a resignation to the passing of traditional knowledge, and their re-orientation to urban life and wage labor.

There is some hope, however, when we consider that these warnings are not new but are at least as old as the ethnographic writings that have been recording them since the eighteenth century, and yet the collective disappearance of Siberia's indigenous peoples, which has so often been imminently predicted, has still not become a reality. □

## Notes

- 1 Sub-Arctic zone of coniferous forest.
- 2 A winter sport combining cross-country skiing and rifle shooting.
- 3 Flat treeless Arctic region.
- 4 The Sakha and Komi are not recognized as indigenous peoples under Russian law because their populations are greater than 50,000.
- 5 The limit beyond which trees do not grow in Arctic regions.

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# IWGIA - INTERNATIONAL WORK GROUP FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

## IWGIA's aims and activities

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs - IWGIA - is a non-profit making, politically independent, international membership organization.

IWGIA co-operates with indigenous peoples all over the world and supports their struggle for human rights and self-determination, their right to control land and resources, their cultural integrity, and their right to development. The aim of IWGIA is to defend and endorse the rights of indigenous peoples in concurrence with their own efforts and desires. An important goal is to give indigenous peoples the possibility of organising themselves and to open up channels for indigenous peoples' own organizations to claim their rights.

IWGIA works at local, regional and international levels to further the understanding and knowledge of, and the involvement in, the cause of indigenous peoples.

The activities of IWGIA include: publications, international human rights work, networking, conferences, campaigns and projects.

For more information about IWGIA's activities, please check our website at: [www.iwgia.org](http://www.iwgia.org)

## Publications

IWGIA publishes a yearbook, *The Indigenous World/El Mundo Indígena*, and a journal *Indigenous Affairs/Asuntos Indígenas*. Furthermore, a number of books thematically focussing on indigenous issues are published each year.

**IWGIA's publications can be ordered through our web shop at [www.iwgia.org](http://www.iwgia.org)**

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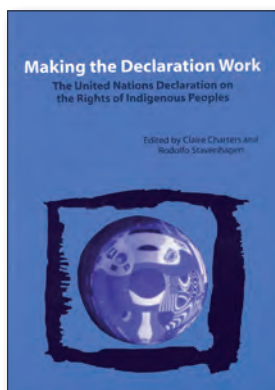
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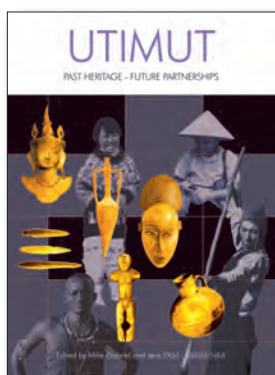
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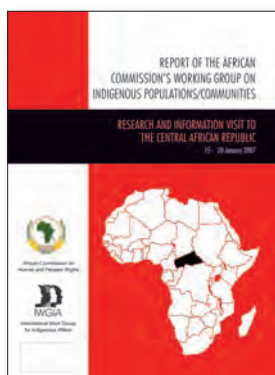
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