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**PASTORAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH EASTERN KENYA: PAST
EFFORTS, PRESENT EXPERIENCES, FUTURE OPTIONS**

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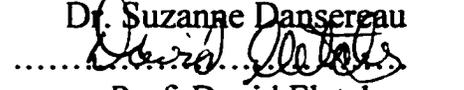
**PASTORAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH EASTERN KENYA: PAST
EFFORTS; FUTURE OPTIONS**

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the
Master of Arts Degree
in
International Development Studies
Saint Mary's University
Nova Scotia, Canada

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Professor Gerry Cameron who took time from his busy schedule to help me finish this thesis. I am most grateful for his advice regarding my paper. I am also grateful to Dr. Suzanne Dansereau who not only became my reader on very short notice but also contributed immensely to the content of this thesis. I am also very grateful to Mr. David Fletcher who gave invaluable advice and became my outside reader on such short notice.

I also wish to express my sincere and loving gratitude to my brother, Ali Daud Mohamed, whose faith and belief in my abilities has not only made this study possible but also most of my entire education. A special mention goes to my beloved mum, Hallma Hassan, whose prayer, support, encouragement and understanding outweighed every obstacle I ever encountered. My appreciation also goes to my wife, Farhiya Ali, for her love, care and understanding throughout the years.

PASTORAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH EASTERN KENYA: PAST EFFORTS, PRESENT EXPERIENCES, FUTURE OPTIONS

ABSTRACT

African pastoral societies are affected by the general social, economic, political and ecological crises of the continent, and are subject to forces, which have an increasing influence on their ecosystems and cause growing vulnerability. Many analyses, which influence development decision-makers often, confuse symptoms and causes, therefore establishing inappropriate courses of action. Among policy makers and within some of the literature there is a current thinking that attributes traditional practices as the main barrier to development. Simplistic assumptions about the traditional attitudes of African herders are held up as explanations for development failure.

Development interventions in northeastern Kenya, as is in much of pastoral Africa, have not fared well. Development policy was geared towards pacification, control, and sedenterization of the Somali of northern Kenya, giving priority to livestock health and marketing and ignoring the plight of the herders. Much of what has been proposed fails in visualizing affordable ways of reaching nomadic pastoral peoples with any meaningful social services. While segments of development literature pay lip service to ascertaining pastoralists' desires, rarely has this expressed concern been fully translated into process.

This study will examine the significance of indigenous pastoral strategies within the sustainable development of the Somali of Northeastern Kenya. The paper argues that without including indigenous pastoral strategies into the development process, not only will development efforts be unsustainable but in fact the costs of development are exacerbated. The need for planning and implementing development projects with, rather than, for local people have become increasingly apparent. Meaningful involvement of the local communities is an essential component of sustainable development.

**January, 1999
Adan Daud Mohamed**

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Chapter 1. Introduction and Literature Review.

1.1 Background

Reflection of pastoralism and its development is surrounded and submerged by a host of myths, assumptions and generalizations which contribute neither to the understanding of ongoing processes of change nor to an elaboration of appropriate approaches for development. National and international development agencies have tended to adopt these images and to conduct policies based upon perceived notions. As stereotypes of all sorts have filtered into current development thinking, they have deeply influenced development initiatives, and have far reaching consequences for development programs. When taken as a basis for action, they have led to harmful interventions or at best provided partial solutions. Pastoral societies have undergone immense transformation through incorporation into national and international market economy through the coercive powers of the state, and through the pressures of bureaucratic development. From colonial times to the present, states and international organizations have attempted to intervene in the pastoral sector with approaches influenced by 'modernization' ideologies and land tenure reforms. States have tried to control pastoralists, condemning their lifestyle, forcing them into rigid administrative boundaries and imposing upon them national identities. Whatever their will and their circumstances, pastoral peoples have not been able to ignore or elude these pressures. Pastoral peoples are thus entangled more than ever in a web of social, economic and political ties, with the pressure and constraints determined by factors largely outside their control.

1.2 Rationale of Study

The productivity of nomadic pastoralism in North Eastern Kenya has undergone a drastic decline in the last four decades mainly because of extraneous interventions whose consequences were ill understood by pastoralists. Planners, conservationists, range practitioners and international development agencies have persisted with the view that pastoralism possesses inherent tendencies that lead to degradation of primary resources and limit their development. It was therefore thought natural to make pastoralists aware of their 'destructive' production techniques and offer them alternative 'progressive' packages that advocated for radical transformation of pastoral strategies. Such a blueprint approach at developing nomadic pastoralism is not only untenable, but it is bound to fail as experiences of livestock development projects in sub-Saharan Africa have shown. Favorable results can more likely be achieved if designs of pastoral development projects were based on actual needs of pastoralists themselves. It is unfortunate that development of African pastoral communities as opposed to development of pastoral areas seems to be a subject in virtual limbo, bereft of ideas. While segments of development literature pay lip service to ascertaining pastoralists' desires, rarely has this expressed concern been fully translated into process. The need for planning and implementing development projects with, rather than, for local people have become increasingly apparent. This is especially true in the pastoral sector where local level decision making and great flexibility are vital for the survival of the peoples who make productive use of adverse environments.

1.3 Research Question

The study investigates the significance of indigenous pastoral strategies within the process of development among Somali pastoralists of Kenya. The relationship between traditional strategies and sustainable development will also be investigated. Examining past efforts at development as well as on-going projects so as to assess their impact on the pastoralists will be the focus of this study. The following research question will be addressed: **What significance does the element of indigenous pastoral strategies have on the success of sustainable development efforts among the Somali of North Eastern Kenya?**

The study argues that indigenous pastoral strategies are a key factor for sustainable development among the Somali pastoralists. I will argue that without the incorporation of indigenous pastoral strategies, not only will development efforts be unsustainable but also the social, economic and ecological costs of development projects will be exacerbated. The study hypothesizes that without the incorporation of indigenous pastoral strategies into planning, development projects will not be sustainable in the long run. The conceptual framework of this thesis is rooted in the concepts and principles of sustainable development, community participation and the alternative development paradigm. Sustainable development explores the relationship and the interdependence among environmentally, socially and economically responsible activities. It is a goal for the entire society and therefore participatory approach and joint commitment are

integral part of sustainability. Sustainable development is a development strategy that manages all natural and human resources for increasing long-term wealth and well being. It rejects policies and practices that deplete productive base and that leave future generations with poorer prospects and greater risks.

1.4 Literature Review

Pastoralism is arguably one of the most studied areas in anthropology. African pastoralism in particular has received a striking amount of attention. Knowledge of pastoralism as a way of life has its foundation in the studies conducted by anthropologists during the past sixty years. Nomadic pastoralists were viewed originally as a detached segment of humanity, an autonomous society with prehistoric origins. While the early work of anthropologists on pastoral societies focused on spatial movement and the way this movement affected social organization and subsistence patterns¹, the later works introduced the rationale of pastoralism as an economic and socio-cultural adaptation². In this way, pastoral peoples became, arguably, less romanticized as cultural oddities, and better understood for their capacity to successfully adopt to extraordinarily challenging environments³.

¹ Evans-Pritchard, E. (1940) *The Nuer*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

² Dahl, G. and A. Hjort (1976) *Having Herds: Pastoral Herd Growth and Household Economy*. Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, No.2. Stockholm. University of Stockholm.

³ Dyson-Hudson, Neville, and Rada Dyson-Hudson (1982) The Structure of East African Herds and the Future of East African Herders. *Development and Change* 13: 213-238

Research in the 1950s⁴ and 1960s⁵ shifted to a more specialized ecological inquiry into the unique fit between livestock keeping peoples and the arid lands they inhabit and between their particular social organizations and the demands of mobile livestock production. Following independence the new government of Kenya, in continuing with colonial experiments, endeavored to convert pastoralists to sedentary livestock producers. Following the Sahelian drought of 1968-73, interest in pastoralism grew with specialized collections focusing on ecological hazards and economic change produced⁶

During the 1970s⁷ and throughout most of the 1980s⁸, much of the literature related to African pastoral peoples emphasised the failure of pastoral economies; the impact of drought; the rapid social, political, and economic change deriving from development initiatives and incorporation of pastoralists into state economy. Issues related to land use in Africa's arid and semi-arid lands were also well represented in the literature but usually couched within the context that emphasised the destructive consequences of communal land tenure and individual livestock ownership. Any definition of pastoral nomadism must include two basic concepts: the raising of livestock and the movement of livestock and people. Although there is extensive literature on pastoral peoples, there is little detailed information on patterns of mobility for specific pastoral people. Much of

⁴ Baxter, P. (1954) *The Social Organization of the Boran of Northern Kenya*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Oxford University.

⁵ Stenning, D. (1959) *Savannah Nomads*. London. Oxford University Press.

⁶ Monod, T. (1972) *Pastoralism in Tropical Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.

⁷ Dyson-Hudson, N. (1972) The Study of Pastoralism. *Journal of African Studies* 7: 2-29.

the literature discusses land use in general terms but little attention is paid to pastoral movement patterns. This lack of information has been cited by some as directly contributing to the faulty designs and ultimate failures of livestock development projects⁹. Much of the literature on desertification attributed environmental degradation directly to mismanagement on the part of pastoral peoples¹⁰. Many development programs targeted at peoples living in Africa's arid regions emphasised the need to shift from traditional pastoralism to some other form of livestock based economy, such as private and group ranches¹¹, or away from livestock all together, for example, into irrigated agriculture or fishing¹².

During the 1980s, researchers increasingly turned to multidisciplinary approaches linking the study of pastoral peoples to the physical conditions and problems of arid lands, especially in the wake of continuing drought, environmental degradation, and political instability throughout Africa's arid regions. Several important interdisciplinary projects emerged during this period, including South Turkana Ecosystem Project (STEP), which focussed on human dimensions of pastoral land use among the Turkana pastoralists in Kenya, and the UNESCO-MAB Integrated Project in Arid Lands (IPAL), which studied impact

⁸ Watts, Micheal. (1983) *The Demise of the Moral Economy: Food and Famine in Sudano-Sahelian Region in Historical Perspective*. In J. Scott (ed.), *Life Before the Drought*, p: 124-146.

⁹ Horowitz, Michael. (1981) *Research Priorities in Pastoral Studies: An Agenda for the 1980s*. In Galaty et al (eds.) *The Future of Pastoral Peoples*, 61-88. Ottawa: IDRC: 69

¹⁰ Lamprey, H. (1983) *Pastoralism Yesterday and Today: The Overgrazing Problem*. In F. Bourliers (ed), *Ecosystems of the World 13: Tropical Savannas*, 656.

¹¹ Galaty, John (1980) *The Maasai Group Ranch: Politics and Development in an African Pastoral Society*. In P. Salzman (ed.) *When Nomads Settle*, 157-172: 164

¹² Hogg, R (1984) *Destitution and Development: The Turkana of Northwest Kenya. Disasters*, 164-168: 165

on domestic livestock on arid environments of northern Kenya.¹³ During the later half of the 1980s, the picture of poverty-stricken pastoralists destroying their land began to change. This change resulted from a number of studies conducted in East Africa in the early and mid 1980s, whose results were made available. Work conducted among the Kenyan Turkana by members of South Turkana Ecosystem Project demonstrated that the pastoralists did not cause environmental degradation, that they were adept decision-makers and environmental managers and that they had a viable economy and healthy human populations¹⁴. These results were similar to those reported for the Aarial of Kenya¹⁵ and the Ngorongoro Maasai of Tanzania¹⁶. Although researchers continue to produce focussed monographs of pastoral peoples, the studies are increasingly situated within a larger historical and economic context. Furthermore, there is a trend in African pastoral studies to engage in a more collaborative and interdisciplinary research¹⁷. In the 1990s many researchers used participatory methods in their studies of pastoral issues. The most important aspect was participatory planning with pastoralists and coming up with pastoral development which encompassed most, if not all, of the pastoral sector¹⁸.

¹³ Fratkin, E.; K. Galvin and E. Roth (eds.) (1994) *African Pastoralists Systems: An Integrated Approach*, p: 3.

¹⁴ Ellis, J and D. Swift (1988) Stability of African Pastoral Ecosystems: Alternative Paradigms and Implications for Development. *Journal of Range Management* 41: 450-459: 455

¹⁵ Fratkin, Elliot (1989) Two Lives for the Aarial. *Natural History* 95 (5): 39-49: 42

¹⁶ Arhem, Kaj (1985) *Pastoral Man in the Garden of Eden: The Maasai of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania*. Uppsala: 23

¹⁷ Fratkin, E. and E. Roth. (1990) Drought and Economic Differentiation among Aarial Pastoralists of Kenya. *Human Ecology* 18: 385-402

¹⁸ Swift, J. and A. N. Umar (1994) The Problem and Solution Game. *PRA Notes No. 20*: 131-141.

Approaches to understanding pastoral development strategies have developed from a series of different theoretical perspectives. This paper will explore the most significant and relevant in the literature available. The most important school of thought that concerns itself with pastoral development is the mainstream view which is dominated by the 'tragedy of commons' theory¹⁹. Concern about falling living standards and a diminishing food-population ratio in the theories of economic development is nothing new, it goes way back to Malthus. This concern along with related fears about limits to growth, the carrying capacity of the world's environment, conservationism and ecology began to gain renewed credibility in the late 1960s. This movement was especially boosted as a result of the work of an influential group, the Club of Rome scientists, who argued in favour of zero growth rate for the sake of the ecology²⁰. Hardin has drawn attention to the aspect of common ownership of grazing land and its negative effects on the environment in his essay entitled 'The Tragedy of the Commons'. Hardin pointed out in a situation where a number of pastoralists keep their livestock on a limited area of common land, it would pay each herd owner to increase the herd as much as possible and that the advantages to the herd owner of an increase of one animal would far outweigh the effect on him of the relatively slight degradation to the common pasture by the animal. The logic is then each owner will maximize the herd to the greatest extent and no individual would suffer in proportion to the increased advantage. Eventually, however, the population will face ruin and the whole social structure of the people will collapse.

¹⁹ Hardin, G. (1969) The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science* 162: 1243-1248.

As a direct result of an immense debate on the sustainability of the common resource management systems in the world took place, with special focus on the pastoral systems of the world²¹.

This school of thought and its distrust of traditional pastoral strategies base its ideas on two main sources. The first is the assumed 'economic irrationality' of the pastoralists as conveyed by Herskovists' theories of 'East African cattle complex'²², according to which numbers of animals are kept in excess since cattle are valued for their own sake. This theory was around since 1926 and has over time shaped the thinking of both scholars and development practitioners. Time and again it is repeated that pastoralists live in a subsistence economy characterised by the total absence of economic rationality, that they accumulate animals only for prestige, or that they practice a 'contemplative livestock raising' which is useless, archaic and environmentally destructive²³. This theory fitted neatly with the colonial and perhaps racist thinking prevalent in those days that Africans (Blacks) are inferior and therefore irrational. Today it is well understood that domestic livestock serve a variety of economic functions. Pastoralists are reluctant to consume their capital because livestock is not merely a food resource; it is also the only form of investment available and the capital essential

²⁰ Schumacher, F. (1973) *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. London. Blond and Briggs, p: 49-54.

²¹ Harrison, P. (1979) *Inside the Third World: The Anatomy of Poverty*. London. Penguin Books, p:71-73.

²² Herskovits, M.J. (1926) The Cattle Complex in East Africa. *American Anthropologist* 28: 230-272.

²³ Bonfiglioli and Watson (1992): *Pastoralists at Crossroads: Survival and Development Issues in African Pastoralism*. Nairobi. UNICEF/UNSO NOPA Project. 22

to their social life²⁴. If pastoralists are sometimes reluctant to sell their stock, it is because they have to maintain a certain level of production for current needs and subsistence, and must also hedge against all the vagaries of both highly uncertain climatic and epidemiological conditions, and an equally uncertain political conditions such as the civil strife that has rocked the horn of African states of Somalia and Ethiopia.

This mainstream view on pastoral development has lost theoretical support in recent years as the distinction between common property regimes, which in essence is jointly held property, and open access systems, which have no restrictions on the resource use, and which are in fact subject to degradation, has become clear, and as more empirical studies have come out demonstrating the economic value of the commons²⁵ Range in many African pastoral areas is commonly owned, but this does not imply open access. Access is generally regulated by defined grazing management groups, which have the responsibility of maintaining range conditions and providing an institutionalised framework for indigenous grazing management practices. The land is all that the nomad has, to degrade it or treat it foolishly is tantamount to suicide. In spite of the fact that the 'tragedy of the commons' scenario is no longer accepted by many theorists, the metaphor remains a powerful influence on, or at least a strong basis for the rationalization of the policies of both the Kenya government and international

²⁴ Bonfiglioli and Watson (1992): 23

²⁵ Feeny, D., F. Berkes, B. McCay, and J. Acheson (1990) The Tragedy of the Commons. *Human Ecology* 18: 1-19.

agencies which advocate the sedentarization of pastoralists.

The proponents of the Mainstream view believe that pastoralism represents a more 'primitive' economic stage than agriculture and in the interest of 'progress', farming should replace it. Such evolutionary theories of social and economic change, although widely discredited in academic circles, still have strong influence on the public perception of pastoralism. Scholars have too often contributed to popular misconceptions by describing African pastoralists in univocal terms such as 'the wandering savage' and 'the last of the noble savage'. The weight of historical and contemporary evidence points to much more complex social and economic change, that pastoralism and farming do not represent polar opposites but rather ideal terms of activity along a continuum of economic activities from pure pastoralism to agro-pastoralism to farming²⁶

The modernisation theory prevailing in the 1950's and 1960's held that the 'backward' or undeveloped countries had to radically change their traditional institutions and values in conformance with the modern Western models, in order to achieve economic well-being. These inevitably led to industrialisation, extension of market relationships, urbanisation and of course sedenterization for the 'wandering' nomad. There is also a consistent tendency by agents of development to characterise traditional pastoral strategies as problems impeding development²⁷. Traditional modes of production and lifestyles were declared 'un-

²⁶ Galaty and Bonte: 12.

²⁷ Oxbly, C. (1975) *Pastoral Nomads and Development*. London. International African Institute, p: 4.

modern' and hence rejected by the African elite as governments shaped their policies in the name of progress, development and nationalism. The desire to control pastoralists politically and to incorporate them in the national (non-nomadic) culture has always been strong. Governments generally harbour a deep mistrust of nomads and their lifestyles. They regard them as difficult to control and politically unreliable. Nomadic populations 'threaten' national security and their seasonal or cyclical movements are believed to be a sure sign of lack of national loyalty, especially as they fail to recognise national boundaries which cut through their grazing lands²⁸. By their very nature pastoralists rub nation states the wrong way. They do not fit neatly into national boundaries and they look and behave differently from majority populations. In post-colonial states run by bureaucrats wedded to the modernist vision of national progress, pastoralists are seen as distinctly un-modern, and therefore an embarrassment rather than productive members of society. If not for their own good then nomads must be settled for the good of the nation. The settlements of pastoralists therefore may be seen as a victory of the centre over the periphery, a way of controlling a potentially hostile people.

In contrast to the above, some proponents of the mainstream view point out that pastoral management is adoptive and rational from the perspective of human survival, but does not incorporate environmental conservation as a management objective²⁹. Overstocking causes environmental degradation, which will

²⁹ Lampery, H. (1983): 664

eventually lead to the extinction of pastoralists, they opined. This did not happen for over the thousand years of pastoral occupation of Africa because, “ either they moved on from the degraded lands into new territories, or they could adopt their pastoral practices to increasingly marginal conditions (for instance by herding camels instead of cattle) and remain where they were”³⁰.

The key assumption of the mainstream view maintains that ecosystems occupied by pastoralists generally function as equilibrial systems. These ecosystems are regulated by density-dependant feed back controls but pastoralists override these feedback controls to the detriment of themselves and their environment³¹. If this assumption is accepted, it is logical to reason that internal alterations in system structure can correct the imbalances caused by the pastoralists and restore equilibrial conditions. The most obvious adjustments to make are those involving numbers of livestock per unit area, with two types of development procedures adopted³². It was thought that reduction in stock rates and radical alteration of land tenure will solve the problem of 'overstocking'. The mainstream view proposes that in many cases development has exacerbated degradation of pastoral ecosystems. Because of modernisation, veterinary care and reduction in tribal raids, livestock population has increased. Curtailment of nomadism as well as losses of land to agriculture and game parks has combined to reduce the area of rangeland available while herds are on the increase. Most proponents of this

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ellis and Swift (1988): 452

³² Ellis and Swift (1988): 452

view also hold that technology is available to control desertification, but the principal reason why this technology is not applied is, once again, traditional economic and social systems, which are hostile to it. In particular, blame is put on communal grazing systems in which there is felt to be coherent contradiction between private and public interests, because ownership and rights to the grazing are not limited and restricted. this view

The prevalence of the mainstream view has had a number of serious consequences, one of which has been the haste with which range management projects have been introduced. It was thought that since the rangelands are deteriorating rapidly, action must be taken immediately and even if the programmes are not optimal, they are better than the continuation of the present situation. Another consequence of this view is to radically transform land tenure systems as well as re-organise existing traditional institutions because they were deemed to be undesirable. These changes were undertaken without consideration of what may be useful or valuable in the pastoral systems and institutions. The two types of development procedures advocated by this 'safari-consultants' were reduction of stocking rates and alteration of land tenure systems. It was believed in many circles that a more productive and efficient economic strategy than pastoralism is available in pastoral areas. Huge sums of money have consequently been spent on commercial beef ranching and large and small-scale irrigation projects. This is the view commonly taken by proponents of modernisation whose bottom line is economic growth. Pastoralism

is seen as 'un-modern' and therefore it needs social and economic change to bring these 'primitive' souls to mainstream society. Indeed, several comparative studies of ranch and pastoral herd output demonstrate that pastoralism equals or exceeds the productivity per unit land area of commercial ranching in similar environments³³. Nor is there much evidence that irrigation agriculture is a more secure source of food than pastoralism³⁴. For the majority of people pastoralism will continue to offer the only effective means of exploiting marginal semi-arid and arid environments.

Yet another consequence of the dominant paradigm is the tendency for pastoral development interventions to assign a key role to outside forces, especially the government. This follows from a distrust of existing pastoral institutions and from the belief that modern science has already discovered the technical solutions to the problems of pastoral areas. But this dominant role for the government and its officials involve a number of disadvantages. Few if any in the Kenyan government find that the pastoral areas are of any major political and economic importance. Their commitment to the development of these areas is therefore likely to be small and spasmodic, and this is certainly not a suitable background against which to propose appropriate intervention and management³⁵. The objectives of pastoral development and research has for too long been defined by outsiders, usually Western or Western-educated economists and

³³ Breman, H. and C. de Wit (1983) Rangeland Productivity and Exploitation in the Sahel. *Science* 221: 1341-1347: 1346

³⁴ Hogg, Richard (1990): 134

anthropologists, who write policies based on more often than not, flawed research results. The major reason for the poor record of pastoral development projects is that most have been dominated by ideas developed in Australia and America with little or no effort being made to adjust project designs to the local African conditions or use the rich indigenous knowledge of the pastoralists.

The other school of thought to discuss pastoral development strategies is the alternative development paradigm. It is the only school of thought to seriously challenge and question the mainstream approach to development and therefore of immense importance to the future of pastoral development. This new approach emphasises self-management and local participation instead of extending further the range of government services. It promotes the establishment and strengthening of grass-roots institutions, so as to enhance the capacity of pastoralists for collective action as well as effective participation in different phases of development³⁶. The alternative approach to pastoral development involves major rethinking of some of the key elements of the mainstream view. The utility of terms and concepts such as 'vegetation succession', 'carrying capacity', and 'degradation' are being reassessed³⁷.

This new thinking highlights in particular the differences between equilibrium and non-equilibrium environments. Range management has for so many years been

³⁵ Oxby, C. (1975) *Pastoral Nomads and Development*. London: International African Institute, p 45

³⁶ Bonfiglioli and Watson (1992): 22

dominated by ideas such as 'carrying capacity' and 'range degradation'. It has now been realised that, although these ideas may have some value when applied to stable (equilibrium) environments, they are not at all useful when thinking about dry range lands, in which the only thing one can be sure of, is environmental diversity and climatic uncertainty³⁸. In an equilibrium environment, fairly predictable patterns of rainfall, vegetation change, and availability of forage occur. If livestock numbers increase above certain level and are not checked, then the ability of the vegetation to recover is likely to be damaged and range degradation may occur.

On the other hand, in a non-equilibrium environment, range degradation is not such a problem. Sparse rainfalls keep vegetation production, and livestock numbers so low that livestock do not have a long-term destructive effect³⁹. This new ecological thinking suggests a number of key principles for management and policy in arid lands of Africa, flexibility being the key to planning in these environments. Mobility for both people and animals is also essential so as to ensure best usage of available forage. Contingent responses are critical to successful survival in a hostile and uncertain environment. Because of the unpredictability, blueprint planning and imposed solutions will not work.

³⁷ Sandford, S. (1983) , p 174-184

³⁸ Benhke, R., I. Scoones and C. Kervin (eds), (1993) *Range Ecology at Disequilibrium: New Models of Natural variability and Pastoral Adaptation in African Savannas*. London. ODI: 8

³⁹ Ellis, J., M. Coughener, and D. Swift (1993) Climate Variability, Ecosystem Stability and the Implications for Range and Livestock Development, In Benhke, R., I. Scoones and C. Kervin (eds), (1993) *Range Ecology at Disequilibrium: New Models of Natural variability and Pastoral Adaptation in African Savannas*. London. ODI: 56

Pastoralists have always depended on these strategies. The state and external participants have dominated the decision making processes and distributive policies affecting the development and service sectors, often giving little room for local initiative and empowerment.

There is need to rethink planned intervention in the pastoral sector since global solutions (such as the grazing blocks based on ranching models) imposed on local environments do not work. The assumption that Western science and technology can provide planned solutions to particular problems under conditions of unpredictability and uncertainty is clearly unfounded. Yet the domination of Western science has engulfed so much of the development process, putting forward technical solutions to political problems such as poverty. Blueprint solutions so often ignore the important contextual issues of politics, history, and culture that necessarily impinge on technical development⁴⁰. The study of development or indeed the study of human life generally, necessitates the study of shared values, and the examination of multi-faceted transformations. Without incorporating those aspects of a society into development process, little if anything will be gained in the development efforts. Millions of dollars have been spent on elaborate projects in the past four decades, showing little or no obvious benefit, and in most cases inflicting quite a lot of damage in pastoral areas. The problem lies with the planners of pastoral development. The more they see that local situations are hard to predict, the more that they try to introduce plans which

⁴⁰ Sanford, S. (1983): 255-256

rely on the generalised 'big-picture'. This is known as 'blueprint planning', which is not only inappropriate but leads to solutions being applied which have little to do with the problem⁴¹. Rather than addressing the issues of variability and uncertainty directly, unworkable and generalised solutions derived from simplistic assumptions of complex problems dominated the mainstream view. Conventional planning and mainstream development intervention are premised on assumptions that the future can be predicted, inferred from patterns that have occurred in the past⁴².

Alternative development calls for a more useful type of planning based on adoptive management. Since uncertainty is an important part of life, it is not possible to have complete information before a project starts. Instead, a process of collecting information, feeding it back, learning from it has to be started and continued during the life of the project⁴³. Within the framework of alternative development, there are two basic alternatives for planning in an uncertain world. The first aims at reducing uncertainties by collecting more and more data on more and more variables. The assumption is that more information will allow the prediction of outcomes at least in a probabilistic way. The result will be, it is hoped, a better-defined problem allowing for more effective plans. The second alternative is to accept that no single solution to any particular problem exists and

⁴¹ Prior, J. (1994) *Pastoral Development Planning*, Oxfam Development Guidelines No.9. Oxford: OXFAM: 15

⁴² Holler, Eva (1998) *Pastoral Development: Lessons from the Past Implications for the Future*. MA Thesis. Saint Mary's University: 26

⁴³ Korten, D.C (1980) *Community Organization and Rural Development: A Learning Approach*. *Public Administration Review* 20; 480-511: 499

that uncertainty is fundamental. The ability to react, reassess and reformulate is a vital component of planning. Rather than aim for more complete intervention prior to information it is better to act incrementally and initiate a learning process that monitors and feedback lessons. The skill of planning is to find some form of consensus between these different interests⁴⁴.

Alternative pastoral development draws a lot from traditional resource management which is entirely based on indigenous knowledge, also known as traditional wisdom or ethnoscience, that has evolved over generations as a product of human-environment interactions. Indigenous knowledge is composed of whole system of knowledge including concepts, beliefs, perceptions, the stock of knowledge and the process whereby it is acquired, augmented, stored and transmitted⁴⁵. Indigenous knowledge is dynamic and ever changing through indigenous creativity and innovation and often, it borrows from other knowledge systems through contact. It holds practical values for the mounting cost-effective, sustainable, environmentally friendly and socio-culturally workable options for finding innovative and effective solutions to pastoral development problems⁴⁶.

Pastoral resource use pattern is predicated upon risk spreading and highly flexible mechanisms such as mobility, communal land ownership, large herd

⁴⁴ Scoones, Ian and Olivia Graham (1994) *New Directions for Pastoral Development in Africa. Development in Practice Vol.4 No.3*: 188-198: 192

⁴⁵ Chambers, R. (1993) *Challenging the Professions: Frontiers for Rural Development*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications: 55

sizes that are diversified and herd separation and splitting. Herd diversity, mobility, large herd sizes and splitting serve both ecological and socio-economic roles in the adoptive and survival strategies of nomadic pastoralists. Herd diversity ensures that any one ecological factor has no disproportionate effect on their fortunes. In addition it offers nutritional benefits because different livestock types use the range differently. Herd diversity also enhances more efficient use of the range and helps allocate range resources in the best and most flexible way. Cattle, camels, goats and sheep have different, but not necessarily competing food, water and management requirements. While commercial ranchers adjust livestock numbers to their land base when faced with large and unpredictable fluctuations in resource productivity, pastoralists seek access to natural resources needed to sustain their livestock elsewhere rather than reduce their herd size. Opportunistic stocking and herd mobility are logical and tactical complement to non-exclusive tenure⁴⁷. Local knowledge differs from modern scientific knowledge in that it allows a greater understanding of the heterogeneity of local conditions as opposed to scientific knowledge, which may be developed into universal generalisation for wide range of situations⁴⁸.

It is a sad reflection on the way African pastoralists are regarded by national and international development agencies that it still seems appropriate to ask whether

⁴⁶ Farah, K. O. (1996) *Management and Development of Arid Communal Rangelands of Northeast Kenya*. African Pastoral Forum 7: 3

⁴⁷ Toulmin, C. (1994) Tracking through Drought: Options for Stocking and Restocking for the Small-scale Pastoral Sector in Dryland Africa. In Scoones (ed.), *Living with Uncertainty: New Directions for Pastoral Development in Africa*: 47

pastoralism can survive as a way of life. The reason might be that it is during crisis such as the Somali and Ethiopian famines, that the attention of the World is briefly drawn to the plight of these proud inhabitants of African deserts, savannahs and rangelands, when emaciated animals desperately driven to the market die near the roads and when herders settle near famine relief camps or flock to urban peripheries to seek menial employment. Images of gaunt herders experiencing the triple catastrophes of drought, famine and internal conflict reinforce the non-viability of a pastoral economy or the failure of pastoral Africa to share the continent's expectations and aspirations for development. The recent decades of conflicts and famines have had particular impact on pastoral livelihoods and livestock production⁴⁹.

Historically pastoralists have proved resilient in the face of both natural and man-made disasters, and therefore it is feasible that despite the problems, pastoralism will survive. Pastoral peoples in Africa have been hammered in recent times by drought, famine, warfare and poverty, but pastoralism's inherently adoptive nature will, enable it survive future stresses. Many researchers emphasize the success of traditional pastoral strategies in response to recent drought episodes despite rapid social changes in residence, education, and income employment⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ Niamir, M. (1990) *Community Forestry. Herders' Decision-Making in Natural Resources Management in Arid and semi-Arid Africa*. Community Forestry Note No.4. Rome: FAO. Pp 12.

⁴⁹ McCabe, J. Terrance (1990): 83

⁵⁰ McCabe, J. Terrance (1990): 88

Development agencies have designed and implemented livestock production rather than pastoral development in pastoral Africa. The mis-interpretation of pastoral development has its genesis in the background of development agents responsible for the design and implementation of pastoral projects, especially following the Sahelian droughts of the 1970s. The development technicians were either from the West where livestock production and conventional range management originated and evolved, or their African counterparts educated in those countries, who wanted to replicate their learning experiences at home. The successes recorded in animal production in the West have enticed African policy makers to readily accept the implementation of livestock development in pastoral Africa. The failure of livestock production in pastoral Africa is primarily because they had narrow conceptual and technical approaches to pastoralism. They focussed on animal and rangelands rather than herders, people and institutions⁵¹. They simply neglected the social, cultural, and ecological peculiarities of pastoral production systems. Planners have failed to take into account the complexities and development potentials of traditional pastoral organizations and production systems. More historical and ecological perspective will help development planners appreciate that appropriate development, which is practically achievable, minimally disruptive might better be sought among pastoralists through 'fine-tuning' present systems than attempting to transform them radically.

⁵¹ Swift, J. (1989) *Getting Services to the Nomadic Pastoralists in Kenya*. Nairobi. UNICEF

Sustainable development is a very important issue with the wider field of development. The emergence of the term sustainable development is associated with the Bruntland Report, which highlighted the conflicting nature of conventional economic development and the environment. The alternative development calls for a transition towards greater sustainability, which will require a more holistic approach to development, entailing inter-generational equity as well as harmonization of economic growth with other human needs and aspirations⁵². Pastoralists primarily rely on natural resources and have been successful at establishing a sustainable mode of production by developing traditional methods to ensure the conservation of their environment.

Looking at the key elements of the alternative development paradigm, pastoral development can not follow a universal or general path to development. It conceives the process of poverty alleviation not just as a mechanism to get destitute pastoralists to cross a given threshold of income or consumption, but also to enable them to achieve a sustained increase in productivity and their integration into the process of growth⁵³. The alternative development and its emergence as the most important approach to alternative pastoral development have resulted in a shift away from an interventionist approach to pastoral development. Development plans are usually guided by some kind of intervention philosophy, an ideological justification for outsiders to guide indigenous peoples

⁵² Redclift, M. (1987) *Sustainable Development: Exploring the Contradictions*. London. Methuen & Co., p: 121-126.

⁵³ Korten, C. and R. Clauss (1984) *People- Centered Development: Contributions Towards Theory and Plannig Frameworks*. West Hartford. Kumarian Press, p: 229.

in specific directions. Beauclerk and others argue that forces of national society tend to undermine indigenous people living them demoralized, impoverished, and poorly placed to exert any control over their resources and their future⁵⁴. The alternative development paradigm calls for development plans that will allow the people to determine their own future and their relationship with national society from a position of autonomy⁵⁵.

Appropriate pastoral development involves, in addition to livestock production, the recognition and genuine support of a pastoral entity within a wider national development. It involves management of peoples and as such integrates anthropological aspect, cultural and sociological beliefs and practises of a people into a comprehensive development plan. This is in accordance with the nature of pastoral production systems where there is a strong interdependence between humans, livestock and land resources, leading to a true collaboration with nature, rather than, control over nature, which is less painful and destructive.

1.5 Thesis statement

Drawing on theory, which has been provided through literature review, this thesis proposes that more attention should be paid to traditional pastoral strategies as a starting point for development. The literature reviewed is multi-disciplinary in nature and borrows from different fields. Development is about people and therefore it has to be people-centered. Indigenous pastoral strategies are a key

⁵⁴ Beauclerc, J., J. Narby, and J. Townsend (1988) *Indigenous Peoples: A Fieldguide for Development*. Oxford: Oxfam, p 17.

element of alternative development paradigm and as such their incorporation into development planning will likely lead to the avoidance of significant obstacles to development and therefore vital in the success of development efforts. This is so because alternative development is people-centered, need-oriented, self-reliant, ecologically sound, and aims at structural transformation toward democratic participation in decision-making and self-government. There has been a tendency to promote livestock development which is seen as modern at the expense of pastoral development which has been viewed as traditional and hence of no use. The study argues that formulation for improved policy for development of pastoral lands must take into consideration such fundamental factors that were ignored in the past and present national policies. Clearly development will include some kind of change and it is not the purpose of this study to argue that social change is necessarily bad, rather it is naturally occurring process. On the contrary the study argues change should occur but in a gradual and manageable way with the consent of the people.

1.6 Methodology

The study relied on both primary data and secondary material. This study using a heuristic research method⁵⁶, is also about the experiences of the author over the years as a pastoralists, teacher, politician and researcher leading to extensive interaction with the Somali people of North Eastern Kenya and the issues affecting them. Eight years of teaching (1987-94) has brought the author to the

⁵⁵ Korten, D. and R. Clauss, p 284-299.

forefront of issues pertaining to education of the Somali nomadic pastoralists. Vast experience (1988-98) with different development agencies on the ground has also helped shape the author's view on development and what it means to the people. The study is not only about the experiences of the author but also of the people of the region with several interviews conducted with a cross-section of the people on the effects of development on their lives. Secondary research was conducted in Halifax with sources from a number of libraries throughout Canada and overseas. The Internet also proved to be an excellent source of important information from international organizations such as Oxfam, FAO, UNSO, ILCA and UNEP. This approach has allowed for procurement of resources not available locally.

1.7 Outline of Thesis

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one describes the methodology used, provides a detailed analysis of the theoretical schools of thought, reviews literature as well as provide the thesis statement. Chapter two discusses the community structures and social organization and looks at some historical factors. Chapter three discusses development interventions, past and present, with the aim of supporting the study. Chapter four is a case study of Wajir Pastoral Development Program; a local initiative based on holistic approach. Chapter five concludes the thesis and makes policy recommendations for pastoral development.

⁵⁶ Moustakas, C.E (1990) *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, p 26.

Chapter 2. Community Structures and Social Organization

2.1 Introduction

Pastoralists have been accused of degrading their environment but for thousands of years pastoralists have done a reasonable job of taking care of themselves and given their low energy adaptations, of managing their resources and environment better than we manage our own¹. In general, there is little valid evidence found on the so-called common-property problem, which in its worst scenario will lead to collective overstocking hence leading to environmental degradation. On the contrary many of the most severe problems faced by pastoralists today are due to their positions within nation-states and their increasing dependence on the world economy. In general, people who rely primarily on natural resources for their livelihoods do typically develop sustainable modes of production to ensure the conservation of their environment. Such indigenously developed resource management strategies are commonly referred to as traditional, but they are by no means static. Generally those strategies are more formalized in areas and situations where resources are very scarce, such as the North Eastern Province of Kenya. Such traditional management strategies are important and will be examined in greater detail in the context of the search for sustainable development. In spite of the external and internal pressures to which they are subject, traditional systems have remained not only viable but also active in many parts of the world. Where still in

¹ Bodley, J. (1988) *Tribal Peoples and Development: A Global Overview*. Mountain View, California. Mayfield Publishing Co., p: 23-26

existence, such as in North Eastern Kenya, these systems involve elaborate social, technological, and economic mechanisms to safeguard resources.

2.2 Social Organization

North Eastern Kenya is the home of the predominantly pastoral Somali community. It is administratively divided into the three districts of Wajir, Mandera and Garissa. The main principle underlying the two most important functional units of Somali pastoralism, the nomadic hamlets and the mobile camps, is kinship. In Somali society descent is recognized through the male line and this rule of descent is used to define membership in the social category 'Somali'. Every Somali can trace his or her relationship to the founding father of the Somali nation, known as Samaale, through a genealogy, which is recited in most cases. The recitation of one's genealogy provides many benefits. For one, it identifies one's pedigree, that is if one is of noble origin or not, and secondly it is one's 'address' as it identifies the person relations to the wider Somali society and hence provides a sense of belonging.

The Somali people of North Eastern Province are segments or parts of larger clan-families, which are to be found in either Ethiopia or Somalia. The 'primary unit' is the family, which consists of the husband, his wife or wives (not more than four), children and other close kin. This small primary unit is self-sufficient in its basic needs and only joins other primary unit(s) in times of need such as war or natural calamities. A combination of many of these related primary units make up

a *Rer*. Many related *Rers* combine to form a *Raai* or sub-clan and many sub-clans unite to form a *Qolo* or clan. Finally many clans joined to make the largest of the units a person can belong to, the clan-family or the *Qabi*².

Traditional institutions, though weakened considerably by the modern state, remain vital for sustainable pastoral development. The clan is probably the most dominant and important traditional institution in the district. Based on blood lineage, its different forms stretch from as near as cousins to cover the whole Somali tribe. Traditionally the clan has acted as a source of protection and security as well a source of material support in times of difficulties such as drought. It has also regulated the use of natural resources and imposed a general societal code of conduct. Clan members also come together to establish social amenities such as wells and water pans. People who share genealogical proximity band together sharing same pastures and resources and fight together against any threats, Somali clans therefore have a broad territorial significance.

Another important institution is the *Heer*, the Somali customary law, which is the established ways of solving disagreements and conflict, dividing resources and agreeing on contributions for something. It can also be translated to mean custom or contract. *Heer* refers to existing or agreed way of doing things. If a dispute arises whether it is murder, assault or minor disagreement a meeting is called with elders from the relevant level of the clan of both individuals attending.

² Abdullahi, A. (1997) *Colonial Policies and the Failure of Somali Secessionists in Northern Frontier Districts of Kenya Colony*. M.A Thesis, Rhodes University: 14-18

According to the *Heer*, if murder is committed, a compensation of 100 camels will be paid if the victim is male and 50 camels if female. Failure to adhere to custom will lead to war³. Elders are responsible for decision making in almost all spheres of life and economy with the additional responsibility of mediating on behalf of clans in matters concerning resource use, marriages and conflicts. When it comes to either collecting or sharing of resources, clans, sub clans and sections share the responsibility. Members of each clan observe a broad range of recognised obligations towards one another thus, if one clan is to pay compensation to another, the amount is divided among various sub clans of that clan and then collected and handed over. The same method is also used for digging of wells, water pans and lately building of schools and health centres. This support system still remains strong today, albeit it exists quietly to avoid tensions with overarching state systems. It is important to note that, the administration of customary law, especially in the areas of natural resource management and conflicts resolution, have been considerably weakened by modern government institutions. Matters of general policy are discussed in a meeting of elders called *Shir*. Thus if a clan wants to discuss the state of its relations with another clan or even within its sub-clans and sections, a *Shir* is called and decisions reached⁴. These institutions therefore can be used as a basis for any development interventions with members of each community can use the *Shir* to discuss any changes they want in their lives.

³ An interview with Ali Maow a Somali Elder in Wajir on 20 December 1997.

⁴ Interview with Ali Maadey, a Somali Elder in Wajir on 20 December 1997.

Somali culture is mutually supportive, with a strong awareness that anyone can become poor and need help. Wealth difference between groups is usually disguised because of the welfare system that exists. The *irmaansi* system gave the poor user rights over livestock whose offspring remain the property of the original owner. This system was in decline in recent years because of general poverty and a less generous *Hirsi* system is now common. The poor get a gourd(s) of milk from the well off, rather their own livestock to milk.

2.3 Grazing Patterns and Management Strategies

Nomadic pastoralism in Northern Kenya is a highly flexible system which has evolved over time as the most efficient means of exploiting transient water and grazing resources under ecologically marginal conditions and prevailing technological and economic situations. In this regard, pastoralism has been described as a livelihood form that is ecologically adjusted at a particular technological level to the utilization of marginal resources⁵. The most important determinant of pastoralism in the arid lands of northern Kenya, is the inadequate rainfall that is highly variable in space and time. Nomadic pastoral systems are largely maintenance oriented and are subsistence in nature, an ecological requirement for off-setting impacts of periodic and sometimes severe abiotic perturbations caused by frequent droughts and highly erratic and unpredictable rainfall making Northern Kenya's pastoral ecosystem non-equilibrial in nature⁶.

⁵ Farah, K. O. (1996): 4

⁶ Ellis and Swift (1988)

An important implication of non-equilibrial arid land ecosystems is that conventional beef ranch approach to development is least likely to succeed.

The Somali of northern Kenya are pastoral nomads who move from one place to another in search of pasture and water for their livestock. This movement is due to harsh and unyielding environment with high evaporation rates throughout the year. There is a year round high temperature with a monthly mean of about 30 degrees centigrade and low amounts of highly variable rainfall averaging less than 350mm annually. The rainfall pattern is bimodal with long rains coming between March and May, known as the *Gu*, and the short rains between October and December, known as *Deyr*. A long hot and dry spell called *Jiilaal* is experienced between January and early March, while a relatively cooler but equally drier spell, the *Hagai* is experienced between June and September. The province is characterized by featureless, flat and low lying, basement landscapes which are less than 300 meters above sea level, except in few areas with volcanic outcrops and hills.

Lewis has estimated that the average Somali family (a man, wife and three children) required 10-20 camels, 50-60 goats and sheep, or 15-20 head of cattle to subsist in the normally harsh environment of the Horn. Many family herds, however, are three or four times this size and few holdings very much larger still⁷.

⁷Lewis, I. M. (1955) *People of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar and Saho, Ethnographic Survey of Africa. Northeastern Africa, Part 1*. London. Pg. 67-68

Most recent analysis has stressed the importance of large herds as a form of disaster insurance⁸. The reasoning here is that by 'hoarding' large numbers of animals in good years, the pastoralists ensured that at least some livestock would survive the bad. Moreover, in good times, herdsmen do lend some of their animals to kin, friends or neighbors or use them to contract a favorable marriage for a family member, all of which are forms of alliance building. These social alliances built through these transactions are then called upon in time of need. Individual families whose herds are lost to drought can approach allies for assistance in replenishing some of their breeding stock, or sell some of the remaining animals to obtain rice or other grains to help see them through times of milk shortages⁹. The grazing patterns of the Somali pastoralists may be understood with reference to two conflicting requirements. On one hand, it is essential to disperse livestock in as large an area as possible to reap maximum advantage from shifting pasture and water conditions and to cater for the different grazing requirements of different classes of animals. On the other hand, it is equally essential to be able to mobilize support from their clansmen in case of dispute over water or pasture¹⁰. Pastoralism in most of Northern Kenya corresponds to what might be termed horizontal nomadism, which entails seasonal and to a lesser extent, intra-seasonal and inter-seasonal migrations of human and livestock between wet and dry season grazing area. Wet season grazing areas are utilized during the rainy seasons and are usually of lower productive potential with respect to surface water availability and forage

⁸ Cassanelli, L.V. (1982) *The Shaping of Somali Society*. University of Pennsylvania. Pg. 30

⁹ Ibid.

production. Water availability is the main determinant of the length of utilization of wet season grazing areas because surface water, which is the main source of water, is depleted earlier than forage.

A prominent feature of Somali pastoralism is split-herd management, involving the division of total livestock holding into sub-herds. Sheep, goats and milking stock are generally kept in a nomadic hamlet inhabited by women, children and old people. Such hamlets are normally located near a permanent or semi-permanent water source only moving when pasture and water in the area are exhausted¹⁰. The livestock kept in hamlets are largely in the care of women and children. The male head of the family rarely concerns himself with the sheep and goats, as these are animals over which women have property rights, but rather looks after camels and cattle, transferring animals in milk to the hamlet and dry animals back to the mobile herd called *Jiiley*. The dry stock in the mobile herds moves freely over large areas, often covering hundreds of kilometers in a year in search of pasture and water. In exceptionally good years, when pasture and water are plentiful, a number of mobile herds may come together with the nomadic hamlets to form temporary grazing settlements of related kin. There is evidence that Somali nomadic groups not only maintain large herds to hedge against the possibility of natural disaster but also practice a form of range management¹². In the plains of northern Kenya, herdsman avoid pastures containing certain varieties of hardy grasses during the rainy seasons in order to

¹⁰ Helland, John (1980): 133

¹¹ Ibid.

insure their availability for livestock during *jillaal*. Particular pastures are usually set aside for exclusive dry season grazing by mutual consent.

2.4 Land Tenure

Unlike the case of sedentary populations where land is held under restrictive tenure, most pastoralists' territories are loosely divided, and communally used, at various kin level units. An important aspect of pastoral resource utilization is the land tenure system, which encompasses issues of property rights including access, control and management of water and grazing resources by the pastoral community. As is the case with other pastoral societies in sub-Saharan Africa, land and land-based resources in northern Kenya are, in principle, communally owned¹³. Development specialists and central planners in nation states have, in past attempts at pastoral development, misconstrued communal land ownership to be synonymous with open access pasture, a situation where Hardin's tragedy of the commons paradigm is expected to operate¹⁴.

The inappropriateness and inapplicability of Hardin's paradigm to Africa's communal rangelands has overwhelmingly been documented¹⁵, thus partially explaining the dismal performances and failures of past pastoral development projects. In fact communality of land ownership is a prerequisite of the very functional integrity of nomadic pastoralism, precisely because it allows mobility,

¹² Cassenelli, L.V. (1982): 30

¹³ Sanford, S. (1983) : 656

¹⁴ Hardin, G. (1968) : 1245

and therefore, flexible exploitation of highly transient forage and water services. This flexible form of land tenure is an adoptive response to the knowledge that the variability of rainfall and pasture can be restrictive against the concentration of herds in one area over lengthy period¹⁶. The flexibility of land use also embodies the ideology of equitable resource utilization, where specific land use monopoly would be disadvantageous to the pastoralists' survival. This is what makes pastoral land use not only appropriate but sustainable.

Somali pastoral communities operated democratic systems of governance based on their culture and traditions¹⁷. Through these consultative civic approaches they were able to go through the harsh life of dry climatic conditions of the region. The council of elders controlled the grazing system. Unfortunately today, land matters are controlled by the state. The central system of managing land tenure in pastoral areas with total disregard to traditional and customary norms has resulted in total confusion in land holding and usage. Oral evidence indicated that while nomadism in Northern Kenya is epicyclical, it is neither random nor chaotic. On the contrary, it is based on an intricate information base generated through the *Sahan* system (*Sahan* is a Somali word roughly corresponding to 'search' in English)¹⁸. In such a system heads of households¹⁹ dispatch young men to search for areas that combine good grazing and water availability. Such a

¹⁵ Artz, N. E. (1985) Must Communal Grazing Lead to Tragedy? In L. White et al (eds.), *Proceedings of International Range Symposium*. Salt Lake City: 35

¹⁶ Njeru, H. N. (1996) *The Application of Indigenous Knowledge in Pastoral Production Systems*. African Pastoral Forum No.6: 3

¹⁷ Lewis, I. M (1961) *A Pastoral Democracy*. London . OUP: 15

¹⁸ Interview with Ali Weynow in April 1998.

traditional practice which is deeply embedded among the Somali is a clear demonstration that these pastoralists possess adequate knowledge of their range resources as well as the capability to assess range condition for livestock production.

In the case of Wajir District, and indeed the whole of North Eastern Province, my personal observations, experience and discussions with a wide cross-section of communities in Wajir indicated that social and customary mechanisms for control, access, and management of grazing and water resources, that is traditional authority and customary mechanisms for access control and management of grazing and water resources have rapidly disintegrated in northern Kenya. This is due to the fact that both colonial and independent governments of Kenya have taken control of all land matters. Currently, forage and water resources are utilized in a free-for-all manner, a situation that may lead to tragedy of commons. Restoration of traditional authority structures and socio-cultural mechanisms for control and use of range resources, to pastoral communities constitute a fundamental requirement for any intervention whose objective is to realize sustainable pastoral production in northern Kenya.

2.5 Economic Organisation

The Somali of Kenya are subsistence pastoralists, wholly dependent on their livestock for survival. Although they are outstanding breeders of camels, cattle,

¹⁹ In interviews I carried out in April 1998, showed that a typical Somali household consisted of a father (head of household), his wife or wives, children and the family of his sons.

goats and sheep, Somalis never raise animals specifically to feed a large non-pastoral population. The Somali nomad takes great care of his animals by investing a great deal of time and effort to protect them from both diseases and predators. People living in the southern part of the province raise cattle primarily while those living in the northern part raise camels. In between there are different combinations of both in addition to herding goats and sheep. Ownership of particular stock depends on the individual nomad's preference and the environment. In fact the environment is the decisive factor as to which type of stock a nomad rears and dictates where s/he lives²⁰. It has to be stressed that the nomad has to meet all his or her basic needs in an environment that has little to offer in terms of natural resources besides his animals.

Livestock are the pastoralist's means of survival; they play a central role in the economic, social and cultural lives of pastoral societies and form the basis of their subsistence by providing milk and meat. Milk is the most appreciated and most commercialized of the pastoral products as both urban and rural dwellers are eager milk consumers. Milk has become a source of income for most pastoral households over the years. The income from the sale of milk is usually used for household financial requirements, as there is an increasing tendency towards grain consumption. Women milk animals and decide what portion of the milk should be used for family consumption and what should be left behind for the young animals. They also decide what portion of the milk should be

²⁰ Lewis, I. M. (1955): 125

commercialized and sold as fresh milk to provide the family with cash²¹. Milk is sold in the local market and the money so generated is normally used for the family's needs. The saving from the sale of milk is used to provide a buffer against hard times, but its perishable characteristics have made it a poor source of income. Sale of livestock and livestock products also help pastoralists satisfy their other financial needs. There is an active daily livestock market in all urban centers.

2.6 Historical Perspective

In pre-colonial times, Somali society was self-administered through informal systems based on clan and sub-clan. The acquisition of Northern Kenya as a possession adjunct to the rest of the British East Africa Colony was necessitated by certain political exigencies of the time. There was need to create a buffer between Kenya highlands and check the Abyssinian advance southwards and Italian advance westwards from what later become Italian Somalia. Once the British acquired the north Kenya region, a need was felt to protect what were conceived as weaker and less numerous communities from the more numerous Somali. A line of division was created based on ethnic consideration, which was called the 'Somali-Galla line', and it constituted a colonial imposed boundary between the Oromo and the Somali. Under colonial administration, elements of the clan system were formalised and structured, with rigid and sometimes arbitrary clan boundaries imposed, in which a clan was forced to live in a given area as determined by the colonial administrators.

²¹ Hussein, Ibrahim (1998) *Study on Milk Marketing in Garissa Town*. ALRMP: 12

The colonial government perceived the major problem of the pastoralists to have been one of unruliness driven by zealous prediction to conquer and amass livestock and land through persistent raids. In this respect, the government felt the greatest challenge in northern Kenya was to make the nomads amenable to government. One of the key policies of the colonial government was to check and stop the movement of the pastoralists so as to protect the white settlers²². To achieve this objective the Somalis were placed in a distinct administrative area known as Northern Frontier District (NFD). The separate administration of the NFD under a legal regime that did not exist elsewhere in the British East African Protectorate (later colony) laid a foundation for the course of events and the path of development that the region took down through its long, turbulent history. It also explains some of the realities as they exist on the ground today.

NFD was designated 'closed' and emergency law declared, with residents requiring permits to travel in and out of them. The emergency law introduced in the 1920s was lifted only recently, in 1992 after the introduction of multi-party politics in Kenya. Livestock movement policy based on protecting white settlers' livestock market and health was also introduced. These strenuous and restrictive laws have remained to date, severely affecting the economic base of the district which is reliant on pastoralism. In the run up to independence, the colonial administration carried a referendum on whether the people of NFD will join the newly independent Somalia or be part of Kenya. Though the majority of the

people then voted to join Somalia, the colonial government at the urging of Ethiopian and Kenyan leaders announced just before independence that the district would be part of Kenya without further consultation²³. This led to the *Shifita* insurgency of 1963-67 whose main objective was secession. The brutal suppression of the *Shifita* insurgency and the heavy handed manner in which all subsequent issues of conflict and insecurity were managed, helped shape the population's negative attitude to other Kenyans and Kenyan government, religious and cultural differences notwithstanding. It has been suggested that the political, economic and social marginalization of the Kenyan Somalis today has its roots in this immediate post-independence period. Development was impossible during those years of unrest and uncertainty and subsequently, with continuation until recently of the state of emergency, underdevelopment became structuralized, and chronically self-perpetuating²⁴.

Using the secessionist war as a pretext, the Kenya government undertook between 1966-9, a "sedenterization program" throughout the region, where large villages were set up within the vicinity of administrative centres²⁵. The pastoralists together with their livestock were moved into these villages with any arrival and departures reported to the local administrator. The large herds of village livestock confined within limited areas led to an unbearable grazing pressure. The widespread livestock decimation and subsequent pauperisation

²² Farah, K.O. (1996): 9

²³ Onyiuke, G. C. M. (1962) *Kenya: Report of the Northern Frontier District Commission*. London. HMSO: 18

²⁴ Umar, A.(ed), (1994) *Sustainable Development in North East Kenya*. Nairobi. KPF: 10.

led to the start of the widespread famine relief provision in northern Kenya. The nomadic pastoral population was reluctant to move into the restricted villages but resistance was largely met with widespread machine gunning of people and livestock.

2.7 The Wagalla Massacre

The people of Wajir and indeed those of North Eastern Province have continuously suffered at the hands of the government. The chronology of abuse is so long that it can not be covered by this study, perhaps the most cruel of all the suppressions is the infamous Wagalla massacre of 1984. In February 1984 five people were shot dead in an inter- clan fighting incident. The government decided that the Degodia as a clan were the aggressors and a punitive military operation mounted collectively against them. All male Degodias, young and old in Wajir town and surrounding villages within 50 kilometers radius of the town were rounded up and taken to a disused airstrip at Wagalla, which lies about nine kilometers west of Wajir town.

For three days the men were tortured and herded without water and food, in the sweltering desert heat of the airstrip, surrounded by heavily armed security personnel. On the fourth day, overcome by thirst and hunger, a section of the crowd made a run for the perimeter fence. The security forces opened fire simultaneously and killed 600 people instantly, with a further 400 dying later from

²⁵ Sora, H. (1994) Northern Kenya: A Historical Perspective. In A. Umar(ed.), *Sustainable Development for North East Kenya*: 5

the wounds and effects of the torture. Amongst the dead were school children and civil servants. In addition to the killing of people, the security forces in what they called a mop-up operation killed tens of thousands of livestock. The incident, which came to be known as the 'Wagalla massacre' received world-wide publicity and the plight of the Kenyan Somali was for the first time recognized as an issue in its own right²⁶. This single incident has made over 5,000 pastoral families destitute. The death of over 1000 males and the loss of thousands of animals, coupled with the state of panic and fear that gripped the general populace, led to general poverty. All of a sudden most households became female led. The government used its legal powers to declare a state of emergency, therefore, hindering help to the needy. Francesca Torrelli, a catholic nun working in the area was deported from the country for attempting to help the grieving families²⁷. Several prominent residents from the area were detained and civil servants transferred to other districts.

Northern Kenya remains distinct from the rest of the country in many ways. It has an arid climate with an unreliable and low rainfall. Its inhabitants are pastoral nomads belonging to the Somali Cushitic group and largely Islamic. It was out of this peculiarity of circumstances that the British administered the NFD in manner different and separate from the rest of Kenya. Negley Farson described the region as "a part of Kenya which the rest knows nothing about and cares even

²⁶ The Daily Nation, February 11th, 1984

²⁷ Ibid.

less about"²⁸. This statement was then an apt testimony of the reality of NFD vis-à-vis the rest of Kenya, is as true today as it was thirty years ago.

Kenyans from other parts of the country are generally ignorant of the northern area forming about one third of their country. People of this area are generally mistrusted and viewed hostilely as foreigners with minimal rights if any and secessionists bent on taking away part of Kenya and giving it to another republic. The plight of the Somali people rarely touches the right chords amongst other Kenyans. Government workers posted to the area normally end up frustrated as they view the posting as some form of punishment. The attitude of civil servants in the province epitomizes that of the colonial administrators on assignment to less developed colonial possessions. It is in deed a form of internal colonialism in which the dominant group that identifies itself with the nation subjects the other social groups such as the Somali to subordination and exploitation. They form 'civil-service clubs' with their own sort. This then perpetuates the locals as a kind of 'colonial subjects' to be subdued and made to submit to authority of the distant central government in highland Kenya. The attitude of 'they' as opposed to 'us' has become one mutually held by people of the region and civil servants from without the region. This attitude encouraged the feelings of separateness and further alienation especially as the relation between the Somalis and the government has been far from rosy, ever since the acquisition of Kenya by the British imperial power. These as well as the deliberate weakening of the

²⁸ As quoted in Umar, A. (1994) : 10

traditional structures have impacted negatively on the development of the region as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3. Development Issues in Northern Kenya

3.1 Introduction

This part of the paper will give a description of the colonial and post-colonial development projects implemented among the Somali pastoralists in Northern Eastern Kenya. Development policy and planning is only good to the extent of understanding the problem under consideration, in this case nomadic pastoralism in northern Kenya in particular and sub-Saharan Africa in general. It is apparent from past performance of livestock projects that national policy and planning regarding development attempts at pastoralists has been less sound, especially given that such policy was based on mainstream range management view, which advocate management prescriptions that are totally at variance with sound and sustainable development of pastoral production systems in African arid lands, an observation demonstrated by Ellis and Swift.¹

Colonial development policy emphasized pacification and movement control of the pastoralists, giving priority to livestock health and marketing. Post-independence national development policy was based on mainstream range management view that totally disregarded the role and significance of indigenous technical knowledge in natural resource management. The approach employed was primarily a top-down type which aimed at wholesale transformation rather than building on strength of existing strategies of traditional pastoral systems. The technical basis of development policy, therefore, requires a thorough appraisal so as to properly reflect problems, perceptions and aspirations of

respective pastoral communities. Development planning and successful execution of programs is therefore dependent on appropriate policy framework. This portion of the paper will explore this theme by addressing policy and development issues in North Eastern Province of Kenya and the impacts and implications of such activities on sustainable pastoral development.

3.2 Development Initiatives: Colonial Period

In the early period of colonialism, the main attitude and policy of the government regarding the nomadic pastoralists of northeastern Kenya was directed towards pacification and institution of law and order. By 1919, British punitive expeditions had succeeded pacifying the Somali and pushed them into the far northeast region where they would presumably constitute less danger to the other indigenous tribes of Kenya². However, The Somali never accepted pacification and continued to follow their historical pasturage routes down to and into the period of independence. The colonial attempt at corralling the Somali into blocking grazing schemes were also resisted, and the persistent hostility of the Somali to the British culminated in the 1960 in a serious secession movement of these people, echoes of which continued to be heard in northern Kenya to date. The evolution of colonial policies towards pastoralists and pastoralism can be sketched using Kenya as an example. The pattern of pacification, alienation of pastoral grazing lands and treatment of migratory pastoralists as savage or barbarous continued down to World War Two. During these period, the British

¹ Ellis and Swift , p: 488

engaged in a number of attempts to develop 'superior' grazing facilities and water resources, but most emphasized conservation and less intensive use of pasturelands which they perceived as undergoing progressive deterioration.

Throughout the colonial period, North Eastern Province of Kenya was part of the larger region called Northern Frontier District (NFD) which combined the present province with the districts of Isiolo, Marsabit and Moyale, thereby lumping together the northern Kenya Cushitic pastoral nomads i.e. the Somali, Boran, Gabra and the Rendille. The colonial government perceived the major problem of the pastoralists to have been one of unruliness driven by zealous predation to conquer and amass livestock and land through persistent raids. In this respect, the government felt the greatest challenge in northern Kenya was to make the nomads amenable to government. To achieve this end, the colonial government fixed spatial boundaries along what was then seen as clan territorial grazing areas. To achieve these objectives, the government invoked the Special District Law Ordinance of 1934, which empowered the Provincial Commissioner of NFD to define grazing and water boundaries for different ethnic, and sub-ethnic groups to avoid armed conflict³. This Act was effectively used for successful implementation of the territoriality concept. Trespassers were punished through arbitrary livestock fines. Security personnel patrolled the area to ensure abidance and minimize violations.

² Turton, E. R. (1972) Somali Resistance to Colonial Rule and the Development of Political Activity in Kenya 1893-1960. *Journal of African History* 8(1):57

This new concept of territoriality had three negative consequences for the Somali pastoralists. First, it was erroneously assumed that clan territoriality, for grazing and watering livestock had evolved inherently and could distinctly be discerned on the ground, as was the case with the neighboring pastoral groups. The Somali were in the process of expansion when colonialism arrived and what colonialism did in essence was to freeze this expansion⁴. Second, rigidly fixed sub-ethnic boundaries overlooked the extreme seasonal variations in grazing and water resources, thereby, seriously restricting the ability of nomadic pastoralists, whose production system is firmly based on maximum flexibility in resource utilization to meet their needs. Third, fixed boundaries and strict control of NFD pastoralists' movement greatly undermined mutually beneficial interactions between them and cultivators. Nomads in northern Kenya have historically interacted with neighboring crop farmers, through barter trade by exchanging livestock, especially small stock, for grain whose role in the pastoral economy can hardly be over-emphasized⁵.

Efforts by the colonial government at development were mainly directed at livestock production. Livestock development in the arid communal rangelands of northern Kenya appeared to be largely based on development plans prepared for semi-arid lands of southern Kenya, which have a higher rainfall and are in a different ecological zone. The African Land Development Board (ALDEV) ten-

³ Abdullahi, A. (1997): 24

⁴ Farah, K.O. (1996): 8

year development plan (1946-55) and Swynerton Plan of 1954 with some modifications are two examples⁶. Whereas in the ALDEV plan, the problem and source of land degradation in the semi-arid lands of southern Kenya were seen as overpopulation, the Swynerton plan identified mismanagement of land as the main casual factor. It is important to note that these plans were based on the prevailing misconceptions of 'the tragedy of the commons' which is an offshoot of the modernization theory. The fact that indigenous knowledge exists and can be used to solve land problems was not considered at all.

The plan was aimed at the introduction of private land ownership among pastoralists coupled with an encouragement for a shift to cultivation of crops. Excess pastoralist populations were urged to migrate to cities and enter the labour force. Livestock marketing was emphasized and an attempt was made to reduce herd size and control grazing movements by introducing block territories for particular sets of herd owners and tribal sections such as the Masaai group ranches in Kajiado District. Such attempts to limit migratory pasturage was not new, since the British had earlier tried them in northern Kenya, but more in line with pacification or corralling policies, rather than as attempts to improve grazing resources or adjust herd size to carrying capacity.

⁵ Hjort, A. (1990) Production Versus Environment: Planning Resource Management and Ecological Adaptation in Kenya's Drylands, in M. Bovin and L. Manger (eds). *Adaptive Strategies in Africa's Arid Lands*: 93

⁶ As Quoted in Farah, K. O. (1996): 11

The colonial government's main thrust on management of rangelands covered such areas as adherence to wet season/dry season utilization of range resources within clan territories with seasonal migrations of pastoralists enforced through the Chief's Act. For example, in Wajir District no livestock was allowed to graze within 7km of Wajir town, which has a concentration of wells and served and continue to serve to date as a dry season grazing area. The establishment of Livestock Marketing Division (LMD) just prior to independence in 1963, was probably a culmination of a long struggle by the colonial government to control what it perceived as destruction of land based resources, namely vegetation, soils and water, and therefore, land degradation. Because overstocking and overgrazing were identified as the causes of range degradation, it was thought that increasing the offtake of stocks from the arid communal rangelands of north-eastern Kenya through provision of livestock marketing will reduce stocking rates to the carrying capacity of the land. The LMD developed necessary infrastructure for livestock marketing including stock routes, weigh bridges and holding grounds as well as large trucks to transport the animals to markets in other parts of Kenya.

Livestock marketing has been one of the successful services that had direct beneficial impact on the pastoral economy during the colonial rule. However two major shortcomings of livestock marketing under LMD constrained its efficiency. There was a lack of flexibility in timing of livestock purchases and over-emphasis on cattle. Overall the colonial government's policy for livestock development

lacked goodwill and hence various activities were maintained at marginal levels. Furthermore, livestock development efforts were highly piecemeal in nature and were framed in the reigning range management school of thought, which did not encourage and use indigenous knowledge. While these represented a gain in the sense that attention was finally being directed to the key components of the pastoral system, there was no coherent theory or model of migratory pastoralism as a system, nor of pastoralists in conjunction with other modes of production or occupation.

3.3 Development Initiatives: Post Colonial Period

3.3.1 Livestock Development

At the dawn of independence the already perilous state of Kenya's semi- arid lands was exacerbated by the floods of 1961/62 to such an extent that the colonial government decided to create the Range Management Division under the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry. The Division was specifically mandated to deal with rehabilitation and management of rangelands in Kenya, so that they could contribute significantly to the national economy⁷. In the NFD, a Commonwealth Commission comprising of Canadian and Nigerian personnel, assessed the feelings of the locals towards imminent independence of Kenya. The commission concluded that 75 per cent of the people in the area supported a secession bid to join the newly independent state of Somalia⁸. The commission, however, did not honour the people's wishes but left NFD within Kenya, thereby leading to a secessionist war. Between 1963 and 1969, the post-independence

⁷ Pratt, G. (1968); *Proposals for Rangelands Development*. Nairobi. GoK: 16

Kenya government became so preoccupied with the *Shifita* secessionist war in Northern Kenya that all sectoral development in the area was reduced to a bare minimum. The Kenya government undertook a "villagization program" throughout the region, where large villages were set up within the vicinity of the administrative centers. The local people, together with their livestock, were moved into these villages. These large herds of village livestock, confined within limited grazing zones, lead to unbearable grazing pressure. The resultant livestock decimation and subsequent pauperization led to a start of famine relief provision whose legacy, sadly remains to date⁹.

A national rangeland development plan was prepared which included proposals for the arid communal rangelands of northern Kenya¹⁰. Three reasons were outlined to justify these proposals. First, it was not feasible to deprive one area completely of development finance when others were to benefit. Second, the national economy and the understocked ranches elsewhere in Kenya required a commercial off take of cattle from northern Kenya; and thirdly, it was necessary to the survival of northern arid zone that an annual increment of livestock is removed.

The basic economic justification for the development of grazing blocks in Northeast Kenya is that the area is the main source of immature cattle bought for fattening elsewhere in the country. Development efforts are thus aimed at

⁸ Onyoike, G. C. M. (1962): 18

⁹ Several small urban centres such Merille have got most of the inhabitants dependant on famine relief.

increasing the number of cattle in the area, for instance by expanding the dry-season grazing areas through the provision of permanent water and improving the distribution of water in the wet-season grazing areas. Provided that offtake rates are sufficient to prevent overgrazing, this strategy should distribute grazing pressure over wider area and harvest a wider part of the herbage production in the area for animal feed¹¹ Two significant observations can be made about the reasons advanced for developing these rangelands. First, it is assumed, wrongly in my opinion, that the production goal of pastoral nomads in northern Kenya is cattle production for beef, hence the suggestion that they become the source for commercial ranches in other areas. These development proposals are therefore biased towards cattle, while northern pastoralists keep camels, goats and sheep in addition to cattle.

Second, pastoralists are explicitly portrayed as possessing inherently destructive land management practices that lead them to keep livestock herds in excess of their requirements. It is assumed that unless outside intervention occurs, such tendencies will inevitably lead to habitat destruction, degradation of range resources and ultimately, desertification¹². There has been persistent belief that these arid communal rangelands are overstocked and require a steady increase in off take to keep them within their carrying capacity. The economic irrationality, inflexibility to change and irresponsible grazing methods of pastoralists in northern Kenya was re-emphasized time and again by the development experts

¹⁰ Pratt, G. (1968): 17

¹¹ Helland, John. (1980): 139

working in the area. All these assumptions had and still have serious implications for development attempts at pastoral communities. Oral evidence suggests that while nomadic pastoralism in northern Kenya is epicyclical, it is neither random nor chaotic as suggested by Pratt .

The development proposals for northern Kenya envisaged various sectoral inputs for livestock development which included substantial development of water supplies, livestock marketing, extension and development of pastoral educational facilities, and the establishment of grazing blocks through sub-division of clan grazing territories. It is important to critically review the development proposals because David Pratt became the head of Range Management Division and was mandated to implement them. Pratt's proposal formed the blueprint for the Grazing Block Development Project initiated in that area and also, in one way or the other affected all livestock development initiatives in the region. These development proposals recommended commercialization of livestock production among the nomads, which was to be fashioned along American and Australian beef ranch model.

The fundamental propositions which form the premise and assumptions of the proposed livestock development in northern Kenya has serious flaws that make them inappropriate for attaining sustainable pastoral production in the region¹³. First, development proposals were biased towards cattle, for beef production,

¹² Lampery, H. (1983): 650

¹³ Farah, K. O. (1996): 11

therefore, wrongly assuming that the production goal for pastoral nomads in northern Kenya is cattle production for beef. The consequences of such an assumption is constrained pastoral production to the extent that flexibility and risk spreading mechanisms, i.e. herd diversity and multiple energy extraction pathways are ignored. Second, it is important to know what yardsticks were used to judge whether rangelands in northern Kenya were either overstocked or degraded. Pratt used the beef ranch model as a yardstick for acceptable stocking rates and carrying capacity, an approach, which is totally inappropriate for subsistence pastoralism¹⁴. Subsistence African pastoralists tend to maximize animal production per area because they have multiple herd species for multiple uses; therefore, high stocking rates in northern Kenya are rational to the extent that their production goals transcend that of beef production per se.

It was assumed that like other pastoral tribes in Kenya, the Somali had inherently evolved a well-developed tribal and clan grazing territories, which in terms of social organization, were the most viable sociological units in grazing management. While these may be true for other pastoral tribes, it has never operated intrinsically among the Kenyan Somali¹⁵. In the case of the Kenyan Somali, the territoriality concept was imposed and artificially maintained by the colonial government. Fixed clan grazing territories were drawn on unknown, but most probably, arbitrary basis with conformity ensured and enforced by the Native Ordinance Act. Adherence to clan grazing territories persisted during the

¹⁴ Sanford, S. (1983): 125

¹⁵ Umar, Abdi (1994): 22

colonial period and broke down completely three years after independence. The proposals' assumption that clan grazing territories not only existed but were, sociologically, the most appropriate level of social organization is therefore, highly questionable. Furthermore, the concept of sub-division of clan grazing territories to create appropriate grazing blocks sounded more like trying to form super-ranches which could afford greater managerial control yet, the non-equilibrium pastoral ecosystems of northern Kenya are best managed for greater flexibility rather than rigidity. The idea also smacks a lot about control. Coming shortly after the *shifita* war it may be viewed as a way of controlling these wandering nomads in the name of development.

As a result of these development proposals, an internationally funded livestock development project was initiated in northern Kenya. The Grazing Block Development Project, totalling 18 blocks in number lasted for ten years between 1969 and 1978. The project was designed to provide services and assistance to pastoral communities in northern Kenya along multi-sectoral lines, including water development, livestock marketing, veterinary services and purposefully structuring grazing management with a great degree of control. However, before the effects of the flaws in the technical input of the project could manifest themselves, approach and mode of implementation hampered success. The occurrence of 1969/70 drought at the beginning of the project accentuated its likelihood of failure.

The first two Grazing blocks to be developed were Modogashe East in Garissa District and Kalalut in Wajir District. Both grazing blocks were located along the southern and eastern frontage of Ewaso Nyiro River whose basin is a critical dry season grazing area for pastoralists. Permanent water, in the forms of boreholes, was developed parallel to the Ewaso Nyiro River at intervals of approximately 20 kilometers for a total of 180 kilometers from Habaswein trading center to the Kenya-Somali border¹⁶. The devastating drought of 1969/70 made these two grazing blocks the foci for all pastoralists in northern Kenya as well as neighboring southern Ethiopia and western Somalia because of the increased dry season water supply. These caused much damage to the range resource, but mostly of reversible nature.

However, of great significance is the fact that most of the permanent water sources developed in the grazing blocks became permanent settlements, largely because of famine relief services from both Government and Non-Governmental Organizations were delivered only at settlements¹⁷. The government of Kenya also encouraged sedenterization of nomads by establishing administrative centers around water points. For example in Wajir District alone, the number of locations and sub-locations (administrative divisions) increased from 62 in 1992 to 170 in 1996. A Strong trend towards sedenterization of nomads has greatly constrained sustainable pastoral production in northern Kenya. It is important to note that the grazing block projects fizzled out as soon as donor support was

¹⁶ Farah, K.O. (1996): 12

withdrawn in 1978. This is a classic case of prescribing 'development' to people without consulting them, a top-down development initiative, which failed miserably.

In the first 15 years after independence (1963-78), the main thrust of government development efforts was directed at high potential areas comprising of 20 per cent of Kenya's land. These areas are presently overpopulated and have apparently reached the peak of their human carrying capacity. This, coupled with a run away population growth rate (approximately 3.8 per cent in 1989), makes these areas unlikely to satisfy food needs of the country. The government re-oriented its development policy to afford greater focus for the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL), when in 1979 a national ASAL program was formed. The policy was reiterated in the National Development Plans of 1988-93 and 1994-99. The government commitment to development of ASAL areas was further strengthened by the formation of Ministry of Reclamation and Development of Semi-Arid and Wastelands, whose sole responsibility was to specify, quantify and remedy environmental and production problems of ASAL areas.

While these change in government policy towards ASAL areas was applaudable and timely, there are serious shortcomings particularly as regards management and development of arid lands. In general, the policy seemed to be based on the mainstream conventional view of range management, which is totally

¹⁷ Farah K.O. and A.J Haji (1990) *African Pastoralism in Transition: The Case of North Eastern Kenya*. Nairobi. UNICEF: 22

inappropriate to African arid pastoral ecosystems. There was still a strong bias towards cattle production to the extent that no mention is made of ASAL areas supporting 100 per cent of all the camels in Kenya. Development activities were mainly biased towards the semi-arid southern parts of Kenya, totally ignoring the northern pastoral areas. This was so because of the relative superiority of the semi-arid lands over the arid lands and the perception of political and cultural differentiation of the northern pastoralists. In 1992 the Ministry in charge of ASAL affairs was eliminated, bringing to an end the short flirtation by the Kenyan government with improvement of pastoral areas.

Pastoral activities have come under enormous strain as farming practices encroach on and block key pastoral areas. The rapid increase in population, coupled with limited arable land for cultivation, lowered export earnings and plummeting productivity, has induced encroachment into land of relatively lower productivity. Pastoral activities today are threatened by land-use patterns introduced consciously by the government and farmers spilling over from medium and high potential areas. The government has initiated small-scale irrigation development, ground water exploration and mini-dam construction with limited groundwork being done to understand implications of such policies on pastoral activities¹⁸. Pastoral lands are now punctuated by 'integrated' agricultural programs, which have restricted pastoral patterns of movement, forcing them to over-exploit, overgraze and overburden the limited routes of nomadic passage.

¹⁸ Khalil, M. H. (1994) Maldevelopment in ASALS: The Impact of Unholistic Policies. In Abdi Umar (ed.) *Sustainable Development in North East Kenya*: 71-77

3.3.2 Education

Education, that is the initiation of the young members of the society into pastoral culture and adulthood, is definitely as old as history of pastoralism. The pastoral's child education starts immediately after the development of verbal communication and continues throughout the adolescence period. The pastoral encampment is the school and members of family and later clans are the teachers. As the child grows older, he or she interacts with other members of the clan and learn much more. The content of socialization and training reflect the need of the society and it represents the collective values of and attitudes about what is considered a worthwhile life. At the age of eight and above, the child is given the responsibility of herding young calves around the encampment, learning games, geography and the science of the immediate environment¹⁹. There is also the *Dugsi* system, which is a mobile school where Koranic teachings are imparted among the pastoral communities in northern Kenya. All in all indigenous pastoral education and training is linked closely with social life, both in the material and spiritual sense. Its 'many-sidedness' and progressive development is in conformity with the successive physical, cognitive and emotional developments of the child. There is no separation of educational training and productivity activities. The purpose is to produce well-rounded personalities and adaptable manpower that fit well into the society.

¹⁹ Adawa, E. (1994) Human Resource Development and Education in Northern Kenya. In Abdi Umar(ed.) *Sustainable Development in Northeast Kenya*: 25-34.

Formal educational structures have been weak to non-existent among pastoralists contributing to the ongoing conditions of mass impoverishment, social marginalization, and discrimination leading to serious risks of national disintegration. The provision of effective education services has been made difficult not only because of the dispersion and mobility of pastoralists, but because methods and curricula have been unadapted to the special needs of the pastoralists and inappropriate to the specific cultural values held by pastoral groups. The rare schools situated in small towns and villages of the pastoral zones have generally been attended by children of traders and civil servants, with small proportions of pastoral children, mainly drawn from richer families and usually boys.

Formal (read Western) education in the province started in 1948 when Wajir Government African School, the present day Wajir Primary School opened. The school remained the only intermediate school in the former NFD. Pupils came from all the six districts for intermediate education. Apparently, Wajir was chosen for its central position. The first response of the Muslim nomadic community was that the colonial government intended to use the school system as centers for converting Muslim children to Christianity. The limited educational and training facilities provided for the pastoralists of northern Kenya came as a result of recent political pressure. At independence, 12th December 1963, there were only ten primary schools, six health centers and three motorized water supplies and a

few earth dams in the region²⁰. Infrastructure for human and livestock development was conspicuously absent.

The first secondary school in the area was started in 1966 and remained the only school in the province till the early 1970s. The region has the lowest literacy and enrollment rates in the country. Illiteracy rate is 90%, while total enrollment in primary schools in the province in 1994 was 34,759(24,133 boys; 10,626 girls). Secondary school enrollment for the province was a total of 3,707, with girls making only 784 and boys 2,973 of the total. Percentage of school age children attending school is 13% while the national average is close to 90%²¹. Children in the pastoral areas of Kenya lag far behind their counter parts in the rest of country in the access to and acquisition of 'modern' education. Schools in the arid areas are characterized by low enrollment/participation rates, high dropout rates and general poor performance. Nomadic pastoralism poses the fundamental dilemma of ***access to stationary schools by a people whose economy necessitates constant and unpredictable movements***. All pastoralists seasonally require their young to participate in herding activities. The curriculum taught in Kenyan schools has next to nothing to offer to the pastoralists. Dr. Wario, a senior lecturer at Moi University, Kenya concludes "... any meaningful development change among the pastoralists will of necessity require the agents of development to understand and appreciate aspects of

²⁰ Adawa, A. (1994): 30

²¹ Abdulkadir, F. (1994) Gender and Development in North Eastern Kenya. In Abdi Umar (ed.) *Sustainable Development for Northeast Kenya*: 36-41.

culture and language of the pastoralists..."²². Dr. Wario goes on to argue that the education system must also change to appreciate the pastoralists and their ways of dealing with nature, environment and livestock production. School systems should not be used as something to change and 'modernize' the 'primitive' pastoralists, but designed as system capable of enriching their culture, language and indigenous education systems.

One of the main reasons for failure of educational programs for nomads is that such education has been conceived by decision makers and planners as a tool to sedenterize pastoralists, to change their lifestyles and to integrate them on unequal terms into the mainstream social and economic life of the country. Political prestige has often led to the establishment of educational structures, which have little or no relevance to the local realities. The development agenda for the last two decades in Kenya has been that of change and modernization. Underpinning these are the misconceptions, values and attitudes held by outsiders, planners and professionals about pastoral nomads. These outsiders hold a strong cultural prejudice against the culture of nomadic pastoralism. Often there is a conflict of interest between what is important and convenient to the outsiders and experts and that of the pastoralists. Outsiders who make decisions about development issues exhibit several biases, against contacting and learning from the poorer rural people²³. They prefer urban, tarmacked and roadside places where access is easy. They do not venture into the rangelands and

²² Wario, H. (1995) Language, Culture and Education in Pastoral Societies in Kenya. In A. Umar (ed.), *Education in Pastoral Areas of Kenya*: 32

therefore relate only to well-endowed and easily accessible groups. Non-adopters of their programs are often branded primitive, traditionalists and anti-development.

Development interventions and policies advocated and stressed sedentarization. Top-down strategy was used to assess community needs, design and implement programs. The agenda whose ends and means were the same, was to change, modernize and sedenterize the pastoralists. The link and relationship between pastoralists' culture and resources was de-emphasized. Consequently indigenous knowledge skills and values that have been the basis of pastoral sustenance are gradually becoming redundant. Modern education and training institutions however have not had any meaningful impact.

The government has provided schools in the major towns, completely disregarding the fact that close to 70% of the population in northern Kenya is nomadic and therefore live in the rural areas. This insensitivity to the people coupled with the irrelevancy of the curriculum has made schooling in the area a complete failure. Government functionaries always trumpet the increase in the numbers of students since the attainment of independence, but what they fail to appreciate is the creation of 'pseudo-nomads' who cannot fit in either the nomadic lifestyles or the workforce because of their limited education. In fact

²³ Chambers, R. (1983) *Rural Development: Putting the Last, First*. London. ITP: 31

some authors attribute this group (unemployed semi-educated youth) to the recent spate of banditry in the region²⁴.

Education should not be conceived as a goal in itself, but as a means of enhancing life and survival. Appropriate curricula would transmit not only reading and writing techniques but civic awareness, technical information about animal husbandry techniques, human health and environment. Drawing lessons from the failure of most sedenterization programs, the government must now rethink its educational approaches and more clearly draw the link between education and the participatory development strategies that is emphasized in the national development plan.

3.3.3 Health

The main causes of morbidity and mortality among pastoralists in North Eastern Kenya are the common tropical diseases of the poor- malaria, diarrhea, respiratory infections and tuberculosis. Poor health conditions, heavily marked by seasonal variations, directly affect pastoralists' livelihoods and threaten the productivity of the livestock keeping. Particular health problems are aggravated by the nomadic lifestyles, their dispersal in large and remote areas and hence the restricted access to major health centers all situated in urban areas. In Kenya, pastoral areas in general, and North East Kenya in particular have received low priority in terms of medical expenditure and deployment of personnel.

²⁴ Maalim, D. (1994) *Insecurity and Underdevelopment in North Eastern Kenya*. In Abdi Umar (ed.) *Sustainable development in North East Kenya*: 63-68

Northern Kenya has 43 health centers, including 3 district hospitals, 8 health centers and 32 dispensaries²⁵. These health facilities are relatively poorly staffed and have little capacity for outreach activities. These facilities are all situated in urban areas where less than 30 percent of the population of the province live. It is important to note that in the whole of the province which covers an area of 126902 square kilometers and a population of 650,000 people (1989 census), has only 3 doctors. A baseline survey carried out by UNICEF in conjunction with the government of Kenya found that, immunization coverage for the region was 18 per cent compared to a national average of 71 per cent. Less than 13 percent of pastoralists lived within 10 kilometers of a health facility and over 65 per cent have more than one day's walk to reach a health facility. Nationally 76 per cent of Kenyans live within 5 kilometers of a health facility²⁶. It is clear from the figures above that health provision in the area is very low. The current national economic situation makes significant improvement in health services unlikely in the near future. Economic problems, compounded by structural adjustment programs, have been partially responsible for the recent policy changes affecting service costs. Introduction of user fees in hospitals and health centers have proved prohibitive to the poor. While the Alma Ata conference of 1977, which Kenya is a signatory, endorsed a worldwide social objective of "attainment by all people of the world by the year 2000 of a level of health that will permit them to lead a socially and productive life", pastoralists in northern Kenya are far from attaining these. Most of the time basic drugs are unavailable in government health

²⁵ Umar, Abdi (1994): 83

²⁶ UNICEF/GoK (1992) *Baseline Survey for Wajir District*. Wajir: 12

centers, and when available, delivery to pastoralists is not there. Even if all government services worked perfectly, most still will not meet the needs of pastoral communities because they were designed for settled communities. The health sector based on mainstream approach has for a long time trashed the contributions of the traditional health practitioners with providing a viable alternative to them.

3.3.4 Water

Water has been limiting factor in the region especially during the early 1970s. The 1970s donor-funded Kenya Livestock Development Project (KLDP) developed boreholes and water pans in the region but unfortunately without involving pastoral communities to determine the patterns of local grazing systems. Boreholes were drilled within a short range of 13 kilometers radius. New grazing systems developed by scientists that conflicted with traditional grazing systems were proposed by KLDP. Social conflict followed implementation of the project and KLDP ideas waned during the late 1970s. The general water problem, which seemed solved by drilling of boreholes and dam construction, created a long-term grazing problem and subsequent range degradation following the expansion in the livestock population around water points. Pasture points deteriorated to the point that the pastoral community started systematically destroying some of the water infrastructure²⁷. Most boreholes in the rangelands were drilled for use by livestock only. However,

²⁷ Oxfam/DoLP (1996) *Pastoralists Under Pressure: The effects of water sources and settlements in Wajir District*. Wajir: 4

around most of the boreholes in the area, permanent administrative centers have been subsequently developed and as a result some areas around water points have become denuded lands. The distance between the water points and the grazing radius around them has increased to three times the normal distances of early 1970s²⁸. Therefore, water development should only be carried out with basic understanding of concepts governing the rhythm of pastoral life and the involvement of the pastoral community.

3.3.5 Drought Management

No development intervention will be complete without taking drought management and control into consideration. Drought management is a strategy that not only leads to more effective drought relief programs but also has development aims: to strengthen local people's capacity to weather droughts with minimum disruptions and with minimum external resources. The most important goal is to prevent total economic and social collapse. If people can survive droughts with the nucleus of their productive system intact, then they can regain self-sufficiency more easily after the drought.

Drought is an inherent climatic feature of the low-lying communal rangelands of northern Kenya. Droughts range in scale and intensity, and pastoralists distinguish between two types of droughts: droughts that hurt (that cause hunger and shortages) and droughts that kill (that cause famine). Presently, a drought will disrupt pastoral systems in a significant manner irrespective of the form

²⁸ Oxfam/DoLP: 4

which it occurs, primarily because these systems functional integrity is already weakened by impacts of numerous external influences, for example, demographic pressure and sedentization trends²⁹. Traditionally, droughts are considered to be cyclical in nature, that is, they recur in cycles of seven to ten years. Droughts in Kenya have lately been linked to more global environmental changes, specifically the *El Nino* that can cause diverse environmental disasters ranging from droughts in Africa to flooding in the United States during 1993. In the last two decades, characterized by runs of long-term below average mean annual rainfall, droughts have tended to assume catastrophic dimensions in terms of livestock production and degradation trends of land based resources. Today, drought, more than any other factor, has the most serious implications for the productive capacity of nomadic pastoralism in northern Kenya. During a series of district consultations in 1992 undertaken by World Food Program, European Community and the Dutch government, participants provided a list of specific problems which affect pastoralists at the onset of a drought. These included vulnerability of pastoralists to drought, increased livestock raiding and slow response by government agencies to drought.

The government has traditionally viewed droughts as rare and random events that are inherently unpredictable; therefore it adopted a 'wait and see' attitude. As a result, the onset of a severe drought catches most implementers of relief programs ill prepared to respond. The latest drought to hit Kenya occurred between May 1996 and March 1997. Northern Kenya was the most affected

²⁹ Farah, K.O. (1996): 22

region in the country, but it took till January 1997 for the government to acknowledge the existence of the drought. Since drought affect pastoral production severely, any attempts at development intervention in northern Kenya must, therefore, have a provision for coping with drought. Such management scheme should include; drought monitoring capacity using both local knowledge and technical expertise, insurance grazing areas which are basically fall back areas and lastly an improvement in the security situation in the area.

3.3.6 Insecurity

Insecurity has become the greatest hindrance to development in northern Kenya. Loss of life, loss of property, fear and general stress caused by insecurity has become the unfortunate characteristics of the region. Insecurity in the region is but an underlying symptom of a deeper malaise; historical, economic and sociological realities are perpetuating the continued bloodshed in pastoral areas of northern Kenya. Politically motivated insecurity problems in northern Kenya date back to the late 19th century, when the British started colonizing the area inhabited by the Somali. The British treated the Somali differently from the rest of Kenyans. Such treatments were aimed at limiting Somali economic enterprise and expansion. They were denied access to grazing and water sites as well as the right to settle and trade in certain districts. In 1902, the colonialists decreed the NFD, a 'closed district' through their Outlying Ordinance Act of 1902. This decree was followed by the Special Districts Administrative Ordinance in 1934. This acts isolated northern Kenya, as they prevented movement from one town

to another without a pass. This sowed the seeds of discontent and led to periodic acts of sabotage and violence towards the colonialists.

Lewis described the NFD during the British rule in 1960 as "the most isolated and the most backward portion of Kenya"³⁰. This trend of underdevelopment continued even after Kenya's independence. The situation became more grave during the *Shifita* war and with the application of emergency laws in 1962. After the war, trends of poverty and unemployment led to the birth of banditry as a source of income. The government still nervous from the secessionist war started to elevate banditry activities to political sphere. The fight against banditry developed racial overtures. A bandit was no longer referred to as a bandit, but a Somali, indicating that the suspect was representing the Somali Community in Kenya per se. Many still remember the words of G.G. Kariuki, Kenya's Internal Security Minister, who said in a public gathering that I attended, "...for every one non-Somali killed by bandits in northern Kenya, we will ensure that ten Somalis are killed (in revenge)".

Insecurity in the area is further exacerbated by the civil strife in the neighbouring countries of Somalia and Ethiopia. As recently as 29th October 1998, hundreds of members of Oromo Liberation Front from Ethiopia crossed into Kenya and slaughtered over 300 men, women and children in western parts of Wajir

³⁰ Lewis, I.M. (1980) *The Modern History of the Somali Nation and State in the Horn Africa*. London. OUP: 89

District³¹. The government is over-represented in the area by thousands of military and para-military personnel but has so far not taken any action to apprehend these murderers. The government has abdicated its responsibility of providing security to its citizens in northern Kenya. It is the belief of many in the area that, the constant insecurity is perpetuated by the government itself because among other things, it imposes chiefs whom most of the populace passionately opposes. Widespread poverty and lack of alternative employment has also led to rise in insecurity motivated by short-term economic gains.

3.4 Conclusion

Major constraints to development in northern Kenya may be explained by the differences between government's perception and understanding of development in an arid area and its short term objectives on the one hand, and the perceptions and needs of pastoralists on the other. 'Development' to a pastoralist means access to social services such as basic health facilities, perennial water sources and veterinary services. In other words, all they really need is support and strengthening of traditional livestock based livelihoods. To the government planners schooled in the modernization school of thought, however, "development" seems to mean changing of pastoral 'unmodern' ways and settling them in 'modern' occupations such as farming. On 7th July 1987, the Provincial Commissioner of North Eastern Province declared "Nomadism will no longer be tolerated", when he was opening an agricultural show in Garissa town whose motto was "development of North Eastern Province by eradicating the nomadic

³¹ The Daily Nation, October 29th, 1998.

way of life³². Invariably, pastoralists resist these changes, leading to the common complaint that pastoralists are not amenable to development.

Pastoral development involves, in addition to livestock production, the recognition and genuine support of a pastoral entity within a wider national development program. Pastoral development involves management of people and as such, it integrates anthropological aspects, cultural and sociological beliefs and practices of the people into a comprehensive development plan. This is in accordance with the nature of pastoral production systems where there is a strong interdependence between humans, livestock and land resources, leading to a true collaboration with nature rather than control over nature, which is less painful and destructive. Pastoral communities have a wide knowledge of their environment and consequently have evolved adoptive strategies to survive in it. The implementation of commercial livestock production projects rather than pastoral development within the context of African pastoralism resulted in the waste of much needed resources in failed interventions. Conflicts arising from lack of clarity in land tenure policy, especially land use and land security, internal regional political and economic insecurity, increasing rate of sedenterization, either State-induced or voluntary, are some of the limiting factors to sound pastoral development. There also exists a catastrophic discrepancy between technical and indigenous knowledge in carrying on pastoral development projects.

³² The Daily Nation, July 8th, 1987.

Government policy regarding pastoralists does attempt to be at best, benign neglect. The government is more concerned with the economic potential in terms of supply of animals and animal products by the pastoralists. But its most important objective has always been political, i.e. to 'integrate' the pastoralists into the social, cultural and to a small extent, the political life of the nation. In fact, pastoralists in northern Kenya, like pastoralists in other regions, are excluded from decision making. The District Focus Strategy for Rural Development, currently in force in Kenya, does not include pastoralists in decision making. It is a vehicle used by civil servants who, more often than not, are not from the area, to propagate whatever policy that is currently in vogue. The broad political dimension of development processes points to the necessity for popular influence on planning decisions through appropriate institutions and structures, but unfortunately that is not happening in the pastoral areas of northern Kenya.

Apart from the ingrained nation-wide bias against the mainly nomadic pastoral population of northern Kenya, infrastructural development in the region is far from being satisfactory. All roads are seasonal and in the worst condition ever. During the in October 1997 to March 1998 *El Nino* induced rains all roads in the province were impassable leading to widespread deaths of people and animals for lack of basic food and drugs. Schools are no better than under the tree institutions and have irrelevant curriculum. Health facilities are few, far between, understaffed and mostly without essential drugs. Men, women and children have to regularly walk prohibitive distances for water.

Clearly, this dismal picture has to be changed if pastoralism and pastoralists are to survive in this world. The work of Wajir Pastoral Development Program (WPDP), a community initiative in partnership with Oxfam is a ray of hope in otherwise bleak picture. The next chapter will deal with a case study of WPDP and its endeavors to empower the people so that they can help themselves. It tries to correct all the mistakes that happened in earlier development interventions by strengthening traditional structures and institutions and using local knowledge to attempt solve local problems.

Chapter 4 Wajir Pastoral Development Program

4.1 Introduction

As seen in the preceding chapter, considerable investments have been made in pastoral projects in Northeast Kenya with relatively little success measured against the stated goals. To a large extent, these shortfalls have been due to development practitioners' poor understanding of pastoralists' objectives, the ecosystems in which they live, the functioning of pastoral production systems, their productivity relative to the environment and the economics of extensive animal husbandry. As a rule development planners have come from other modes of life and have been educated in types of livestock production which differ greatly from that practised in tropical dry-lands. They have generally underestimated the productivity of African pastoral systems and overestimated the technical possibilities to improve pastoral production. These poor judgements on the part of the planners have been combined with a tendency to plan for, rather than with, pastoral producers.

Development projects with pastoralists have been diverse in nature with three types of approaches identified. First there have been attempts to promote commercial production coupled with restrictions on traditional practices. Since independence, most resources for pastoral development in Africa have been directed at this type of approach, as we have already seen in the preceding chapter. A second approach has been to provide food aid to pastoralists who have become destitute, often as part of the food for work schemes. These two

approaches have been largely unsuccessful. Project planners frequently lacked understanding of the pastoral environment and many projects failed to involve beneficiaries in the planning process. There also has been insufficient recognition of the need for flexibility and of the uncertainty of the environment in which the projects were operating.

The third and least tried approach emphasises supporting the pastoral sector rather than modernising it. There is recognition of the need for flexible planning and local participation. Pastoralists have traditionally exercised the necessary strategies and exhibited the flexibility required to maintain, if not expand, the viability of livestock, the people managing the livestock and the resource base upon which people and livestock depend. This new approach supports the traditional pastoral economy by providing veterinary care for livestock and health care for herders, training pastoralists in veterinary skills, pastoral institutional building and strengthening the ability of herders to withstand droughts. It is crucial to consider the pastoral community, their knowledge, strategies, diagnosis and listing of priorities as the starting point for intervention. Planning and implementing development together with, rather than, for pastoralists will certainly improve the chances of success of any project. Pastoral development policies must recognise that pastoralism is in most cases the most productive and ecologically appropriate form of arid lands use. Wajir Pastoral Development Program uses this approach in trying to at least make a difference in the lives of the pastoralists.

Oxfam has had a limited presence in the district since 1984 Wagalla massacre. It had restocked thirty female-headed households as well as distributing some food to the victims of this massacre. During the 1991/92 drought, which was the severest in the living memory of Wajir residents, Oxfam responded with limited general ration distributions, a therapeutic feeding centre as well as water and shelter supplies. At the end of 1992, with a diminishing emergency situation, a team of three local staff was constituted with the object to develop Oxfam's long-term strategic plans for its future work in the district through a participatory planning process. They were also charged to participate and co-ordinate with the government of Kenya and other agencies and in the translation of the emergency activities to recovery and development. Lastly they were mandated to identify, support and strengthen indigenous local groups and associations. The author was involved in the formulation of the long-term plans with the team and the community. It was during this stage that permission was sought from the government through the District Development Committee and was speedily granted. This happened because of pressure from the elected representatives of the area and also because of the disastrous effects of the famine on the district and the capacity of the government to provide services. The experiences gained in trying to achieve the above objectives and the results of the participatory dialogue with communities formed the basis of Wajir Pastoral Development Programme.

Oxfam's Wajir Pastoral Development Programme (WPDP) aims to support pastoral communities in Wajir District to diversify their strategies in coping with changing circumstances and recurrent drought. The underlying assumption is that pastoralism is the most viable economic activity in the area and hence the project goal is to strengthen the way of life in the area. The project aims to restock destitute ex-herders and to identify and develop viable alternative livelihoods for poorer urban families, particularly women, who may not be able or wish to return to pastoralism. WPDP is envisioned to be a nine-year programme and began work in July 1994. It had a secure funding base for the initial three years with a budget of Sterling Pound 1,136,384. During this initial phase, the WPDP's work will be concentrated in Wajir town and Wajir Bor Division of Wajir District¹.

Wajir is the third largest district in Kenya which has been most affected recently by the twin scourges of drought and insecurity. The district borders Ethiopia and Somalia as well as the Kenyan districts of Garissa, Isiolo, Marsabit and Moyale. Lying just north of the Equator, the district is arid and covers an area of 56,000 square kilometres. Wajir is divided into thirteen administrative divisions and WPDP has concentrated most of its activities in Central and Wajir Bor divisions during the initial phase of the programme. The district is characterised by mainly featureless and gently undulating plain, with elevations ranging from less than 200 metres above sea level in the south to over 400 metres in the north. Rainfall

¹ OXFAM (1994) *Wajir Pastoral Development Project 1994-7: A Proposal to ODA from OXFAM*. Nairobi. Pgs 5-8.

is unreliable and averages about 200 mm per year, against an average evapotranspiration of about 250 mm per year, making Wajir a high drought risk area. An arid district with little arable land and unreliable rainfall, Wajir is prone to frequent droughts². Drought is an unpredictable climatic phenomenon, whose causes are impossible to address directly. The effects of the drought of 1991/92, which killed hundreds of people and thousands of livestock, were the severest in living memory, eclipsing both in scale and severity that of 1984/85. There are a number of mechanisms traditionally used to mitigate its effects; principally among these is migration to alternative sources of water and vegetation. During much of 1991/3, this movement was severely constrained by insecurity due to the civil war in Somalia and Ethiopia and its slipover effects in Northern Kenya³.

Nomadic pastoralism remains the mainstay of the district's economy, with over 70 percent of the population deriving their livelihoods from livestock and livestock products. The pastoralists have long established patterns of seasonal movements between different pasturelands and water supplies, the more permanent of which has become the focal point of small trading and service settlements. Over the years, pastoralists have adopted coping strategies, such as mobility, herd differentiation, and herd-splitting which maximise the use of the fragile environment with minimal damage. However these coping mechanisms are increasingly undermined by the pressures of the modern state⁴. These pressures includes creation of boundaries that limit movements, regional and

² OXFAM (1994): 8.

³ OXFAM/ DoLP (1996) *Pastoralists Under Pressure: Wajir District*. Wajir: 5.

local conflicts, weakening of traditional institutions and replacing them with state bureaucracies, and lastly ill-conceived projects such as the grazing block schemes discussed in the preceding chapter. Today pastoralists face a myriad of problems which include lack of access to animal and human health services, water supplies and absence of effective institutions to represent their interests.

Wajir's population is estimated to be 300,000, although the last official census of 1989 put the figure at 142,549. During the drought of 1992/93, estimates for purposes of relief distribution varied between 150,000 to 275,000. It is important to note that the 1989 census was acknowledged to be completely inaccurate by none other than the President of Kenya⁵. Differences between estimates may be due to problems of inaccurate measurements and migration. Official estimates show that 88% of the district's population to be nomadic pastoralists, although the more reliable estimates are of the order of 70%. The other 30% are urban dwellers consisting of traders and recently impoverished ex-pastoralists, who have been forced out of the pastoral economy by drought and insecurity⁶.

Wajir town and the settlements at its periphery have a combined population of about 45,000⁷. Since the drought of 1991/92, thousands more people settled in the town's outer periphery in villages known as 'bullas'. These are victims of drought and/or insecurity, and in some instances refugees from the neighbouring

⁴ Government of Kenya (1995) *Wajir District Annual Report*. Wajir: 12.

⁵ The Daily Nation, 20th May 1990.

⁶ Government of Kenya (1995): 13-15.

⁷ OXFAM (1994): 9

Somalia. Elsewhere in the district there are small trading centres which developed around water sources- wells, pans or boreholes. The rest of the district is scarcely populated by pastoralists who move from one point to another in search of pasture and water. The target population for this programme in the initial phase, is the recently settled population on the 'bullas' around Wajir town and on the pastoral and settled populations in and around five small trading centres. These are Wajir-Bor, Riba, Khorof-Harar, Kutolo and Wargudud. Low population densities of 1 person per square kilometre with 45% of the population below 15 years (similar to the national average) characterise the district. In comparison to the national average, mean household size and under-5 mortality rate as well as illiteracy is much higher. Other key measures on mortality and fertility is expected to be higher, although no accurate data exist⁸.

4.2 Infrastructure and Service Provision

Communications infrastructure linking Wajir to the rest of the country is weak. There are no tarmac roads in the whole province and therefore most roads are impassable during the rainy season. There is a telephone service within the town with links outside the district, but no significant network within the district. Government service provision is weak. Schools are insufficient with high-class sizes and low equipment and staffing levels. Literacy levels, enrolment and completion rates are lowest in the country. Static health facilities are understaffed, under-equipped and under supplied. Veterinary services (on the rare occasions when available) cater only for cattle, and do not extend beyond an

⁸ OXFAM (1994): 9

annual campaign of immunization⁹. Underdevelopment in Wajir district is reflected by low investment in infrastructure and basic services such as education, health for human and livestock, water development, livestock marketing and preventive security and civic education. The statistics from a baseline survey¹⁰, illustrate best what this low investment has done to the socio-economic status of the population:

- That 60-70% of the pastoralists have little or no access to essential services
- Immunisation coverage was 23%, which was soon after a campaign, while national coverage was 71%
- Less than 13% of pastoralists are within a kilometre of a health facility and over 65% have more than one day's walk to reach a health facility. Nationally, 76% of Kenyans live within kilometre of a health facility.
- 2% of birth are assisted at a health facility, nationally 20% are assisted.
- Livestock immunisation coverage rate is 7.4%
- During dry season 62% of the population have more than one day's walk to water. During wet season 44% walk more than one day.
- Under five mortality rate is 339 per thousand, nearly seven times the national average. Annual rate of diarrhoea in children is 8 fresh attacks, twice the national average.
- Illiteracy rate stands at 87.5% while the national rate is 40%.
- Primary school enrolment at 14%, while national rate is close to 90%.

The current national economic situation makes significant improvement in services unlikely in the near future, and economic problems compounded by structural adjustment have been partially responsible for recent policy changes

⁹ Government of Kenya (1995): 22-26.

affecting service costs. Kenya's economy is highly dependant on agricultural exports and tourism and both have been doing badly in the last decade necessitating the government's borrowing from World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Unfortunately the conditions for getting a loan from these institutions is that the country must de-invest from social service provision, hence forcing the public to pay for services. Cost sharing in education has pushed schooling beyond the reach of many families, while the introduction of user fees in district hospitals and health centres have proved prohibitive to the poor. The withdrawal of government from the responsibility for maintenance of water sources has burdened the communities' dependant on large pans and boreholes. Government service provision is largely inappropriate, given that most of its policies do not address pastoral communities. Even if all government services worked perfectly, most will still not meet the needs of the predominantly pastoral communities. This led to the formation of Wajir Nomadic Primary Health Care programme (NPHC) in 1990, which seeks to develop and support community-based multi-sectoral services appropriate for the needs of the pastoralists¹¹. The animal and human health service components of the WPDP built on the experience of the NPHC in these sectors.

Nomadic pastoralism as the main source of livelihood is increasingly under threat. The problems faced by pastoralists include lack of access to animal and human health services, water supplies, lack of effective institutions to represent

¹⁰ UNICEF/GoK, (1992): 12

pastoralists' interest, inadequate systems for marketing livestock and livestock products and reliance on undiversified pastoral economy. Inter-clan conflict and periodic drought have exacerbated the vulnerability of pastoralists. As a result many families have been forced to settle in urban areas where they eke out precarious existence. Women and children are particularly at risk because they lack skills to earn a decent living when divorced from their traditional ways of life. Many families would like to return to the pastoral sector, but due to the scale of the problem, eroded traditional restocking mechanisms can not cope. The capacity of the government structures and the local NGOs to respond to these issues and problems remain weak.

It is because of these reasons that WPDP was mooted with the aim of improving pastoralist access to water and basic health services (both human and animal), strengthen pastoral associations, local NGOs and community groups, support income generating opportunities, enable some destitute families to return to pastoralism and to contribute to the district information data base. All these interventions are based on needs defined and prioritised by the target communities. In the longer term, the project aims to tackle issues of marketing, civic education, women's rights and effective drought management. The nine-year commitment of the project is a realistic time frame in which noticeable improvements, both in terms of sustained livelihoods and self-reliance, can be expected to show within target communities.

¹¹ Nomadic Primary Health Committee (1990) *A Proposal for Implementation of Primary Health Care in Wajir District*. Wajir: 12.

4.3 Oxfam and the Project

Oxfam's Wajir program had its beginning in 1993 with a series of Participatory Research Appraisal (PRA) exercises carried out in four centres of the district namely, Wajir Bor, Khorof Harar, Kutolo and Wargadud. The aim of the exercises was to identify the problems faced by the communities and ways of overcoming them. It was attempted to involve as many people as possible in the exercises and to achieve a wide cross section of the community. Particular stress was paid to involving women, ensuring adequate representatives from *baadia* (pastoralists) and taking great care that the proceedings were not dominated by chiefs or a few of the more powerful elders from the settled communities. It is important to note that women do not normally take part in community decision making and therefore their inclusion represented a challenge that needed to be handled delicately. Their inclusion, though a novel idea, has so far not had a negative impact on community power relations.

Institutional analysis was done to investigate the current relationship of government departments and other organizations to the community with the aim of examining other ongoing interventions and their relevance. It highlighted the fact that, for example, that although there were two Agricultural Assistants in the area they were perceived to be of little direct benefit to the community whose priority was livestock. The veterinary and livestock departments on the other hand were perceived of as important but their role was considered as limited and to have declined recently. Livestock analysis was then done and was followed by

a problem ranking (a listing of the problems faced by the community and their severity). Some of these problems were then investigated in further detail, for example, the problem of access to livestock drugs. The community was asked to list all current sources of livestock drugs and services and rank their importance. This highlighted the continuing role played by traditional practitioners (*san'alow*) whom they preferred for certain treatments and conditions and 'modern' medicine for others.

Access to water for livestock, livestock and human health were given as the most serious problems. Communities were then asked to come up with ways that they themselves could tackle the problems. There were some initial doubts and lack of confidence about the ability to do so. People felt that these were things that are government's responsibility. However it was explained that the government was no longer able to play its role and communities would have to take the lead if they wanted to improve things in relation to these problems. Prompting questions such as "what could you do about this" were asked, resulting in a list of actions to deal with the problems they have identified. In each case they were asked to decide what needed to be done and how and what they could contribute themselves to this. They concentrated on provision of drugs, training of pastoralists in human and livestock health, improvement to wells and pans and poverty alleviation through restocking. Each community for the task of completing the plan then chose six people. They were drawn together in Khorof Harar for an action-planning workshop with the aim of finalizing activities, time frame and

community contributions. The final plans were similar across the four places. They involved building of a drug store with materials to be supplied by Oxfam and labor by the community, the provision of drugs on a revolving funds basis, training of pastoralists in livestock and human health, well capping with similar cost sharing and restocking for poverty alleviation¹². Oxfam raised the question of how the various activities could be managed sustainably by the community. An association of livestock keepers had already been formed in Khorof Harar for livestock trading. Khorof Harar therefore suggested that an association of pastoralists such as this be formed and given the responsibility of management. This was seen as a good idea and the forming of pastoral associations was planned for by all four groups of representatives. Following this, Oxfam submitted a proposal on the basis of the above to Overseas Development Administration (ODA). Funding was received and Oxfam's Wajir Pastoral Development Program began in June 1994. Prior to this, a community initiated well capping and water pan digging has been ongoing. This proved important in building community confidence and that all talk will result in some action.

The aim of WPDP is to reduce poverty and vulnerability among pastoral groups and settled communities in Wajir Bor Division and Wajir town. The program activities will contribute to this goal over time by improving animal and human health, easing access to water, supporting income generating activities, building up local management capacity and trying to get issues of pastoral development more widely understood by government, who up to this time seem to believe in

¹² OXFAM (1994): 8

'benign neglect' of pastoral issues. The program hoped to strengthen sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance of the target population. The success of the project will be measured through changing socio-economic and health indicators of the population. Specific programme objectives include¹³:

1. Improving access to animal and human health services, through training of Community health workers and construction of drug stores. Communities identified lack of drugs at affordable prices and lack of basic knowledge to identify and treat common diseases as serious problem. The project is to develop curriculum and train 80 *daryelles* (health workers) each for animal and human health. In addition to that 40 *Umalisas* (Traditional Birth Attendants) to be trained. The project will also establish regular drug supply and create a revolving fund.
2. Improve access to water. The objective is to improve both the quantity and the quality of water sites and not to create new ones. This is due to the fact that the pastoralists are seriously opposed to the creation of new water sites.
3. Creating and/or improving income-generating activities in rural and urban areas, through restocking of destitute herders and credit schemes to women. Identify and restock 500 families with beast of burden and small stock and support 30 self help groups with training and credit, and investigate viable alternative sources of income in town.
4. Establishing pastoral associations, which are able to plan and manage community development, projects. Create at least four pastoral associations and give management and leadership training.
5. Strengthen the capacity of local non-governmental organisations and community groups to implement poverty reducing activities on a sustainable basis. Support and build the capacity of six local NGOs and eight women groups as well as run training workshops such as gender awareness, participation (PRA) and emergency management for interested district based organisations.
6. Assess the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the project through a series of studies, reviews and ongoing monitoring activities.

¹³ OXFAM (1994): 9

The activities span two main target groups, pastoral communities in Wajir Bor Division and poor urban families (particularly women) who dropped out of pastoralism and are concentrated in Wajir town. Different groups who were involved in the development of the programme from the start, representing a joint effort by Oxfam, the beneficiaries, local organisations and government departments, implement these activities.

4.4 Project Management

Oxfam's role in WPDP has been and still is to play a facilitating role. Oxfam team liaises with the communities and partner agencies, including government departments, to provide timely material and technical inputs, such as training. Communities are responsible for implementing their action plans. These include improving community water supplies through digging of wells and pans, and construction and management of the drug stores. The communities also select and supervise '*daryelles*' and traditional birth attendants. They are also involved in all aspects of planning, implementation and monitoring. In short the community has the last say on all programme activities, therefore truly controlling and managing the programme.

Following the beginning of the program, Oxfam went back to each target community and held meetings with them. The forming of Pastoral Associations (PA) and the start of activities were discussed. It was agreed that PA would be formed and registered with the Ministry of Social Services. The advantage here

was the formalizing of the community structures with the government system and given the pastoralists a voice in all issues of development. In each place a workshop was held to discuss the role of PA and its constitution. Efforts were made to secure the involvement of a wide cross section of community for these workshops. Agreement on the constitution meant agreement on issues such as the role of the association, who was eligible for membership, the role and the mode of election for officials. It is important to note that pastoral associations were modeled after the existing traditional institution of *Heer* and *Shir*, albeit with some new additions such as women instead of elders only. These associations were also formalized by registering them with the Ministry of Social Services. All of a sudden the voiceless pastoralists were given a voice within the formal structures of modern state¹⁴. The pastoral associations became members of the Divisional and District Development Committees and now were able to voice their needs and be heard.

Work began on restocking as well as the animal and human health components of the program. The newly formed PAs played an important role in implementing the restocking activity. They were asked to produce a list of possible beneficiaries according to agreed criteria based on need. These individuals were then interviewed by Oxfam staff and beneficiaries selected. Money was then given to the PA officials purchase animals from that center, brand them and hand them over to the beneficiaries. It was only at that point that Oxfam checked on the conditions of the animals. The money spent was accounted for by the PA

¹⁴ An Interview with Ali Maow, A Wajir Elder in March 1998

officials to Oxfam on forms provided. Once restocked, beneficiaries signed a three-way contract between them, Oxfam and the PA. This placed restrictions on the restockee in terms of disposal of livestock. It was therefore the joint responsibility of PA and Oxfam to monitor the progress of the restockee.

The PAs were asked to identify the candidates to be trained as *daryelles* depending on agreed criteria which was one must *be san'alow-* traditional medicine practitioner. It was agreed that the best approach was to train the same person in both human and livestock health rather than have separate Community Health Workers for human and livestock. This was a somewhat new approach. Trainees were then collected together at Khorof Harar for the first training in September 1994 and were trained¹⁵. These *daryelles* were responsible for the health matters of their *rers-* pastoral groups. They were to treat their own livestock and that of their neighbors by buying drugs from PA drugstore. Drugs were initially supplied free to the PA, who in turn sold them to *daryelles* and other pastoralists at a slight profit. The proceeds from these sales were banked so as to purchase more drugs from Oxfam initially and later from private suppliers. Basic bookkeeping training was also provided to the PA officials. It is important to note that work on the construction of drugstores, a partnership between PAs and Oxfam was ongoing. Oxfam provided some materials such cement and timber with the PAs providing sand and stones. Oxfam paid for the skilled workers and PA members volunteered the unskilled labour. The stores were built at different rates, which to some extent reflected each community's organization and

capacity. Oxfam did not interfere but left it up to the communities to go at their own pace¹⁶.

WPDP works closely with relevant government departments who are reminded that the program is complementary to their work, but not a replacement of their duties. These departments have shown commitment to support the program, and a number of key staff were involved in program design and implementation. Government support and collaboration is essential for the program's longer term success and sustainability¹⁷. This support includes the registration of PAs and their acceptance in the divisional development committees as the voice of the pastoralists. It also includes the restoration of control over natural resources to the community with minimal supervision by relevant government departments. The program also networks and co-operates with NGOs working in the area and in pastoral sector in Africa. It collaborates with GTZ, Nomadic Primary Health Care, World Vision, Wajir Volunteer Group, Wajir Red Cross and a host of other local NGOs and groups. This helps the program overcome common disadvantages of NGOs including, non co-operation with government, lack of technical expertise and not networking with other NGOs¹⁸.

¹⁵ OXFAM (1996) *Mid-Term Review of Wajir Pastoral Development Project*. Wajir: 9

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ OXFAM (1996): 8.

¹⁸ Ibid.

4.5 Social and Other Impacts

Traditionally pastoralists had sophisticated mechanisms for managing the arid lands on which they depend for their livelihood. Recent developments have put increasing pressure on the fragile environment, through restricting of grazing movements, population growth and sedenterization policies. Creation of unevenly distributed permanent water points, particularly boreholes are a major factor in environmental degradation, and as such are always opposed by herders. The effect of increase in water points and therefore settlements has been elimination of traditional wet and dry season grazing patterns. Given the proliferation of water points, most areas can be grazed in both in wet and dry seasons. Today it has reached the point where there are a few distinct areas in the district which are grazed only in the wet season. The result is rangelands do not get a grazing-free period for it to recover. The rapid increase in settlements has also had a negative impact on rangeland. Those inhibiting settlements keep goats, sheep and sometimes cattle resulting in islands of permanent grazing which is certainly degraded¹⁹. Many environmental problems result from activities undertaken by organisations with little understanding of pastoral production systems. The unpopular grazing block system of 1970s, which tried to limit movements by creating blocks along administrative lines, failed to consider pastoralists' viewpoints, such as the need of different type of pasture for different seasons. The general consensus among pastoral communities in northern Kenya is that

¹⁹ OXFAM and DoLP (1995): 6

traditional grazing practises for maximally and rationally utilising the scarce, transient and highly variable grazing and water resources has collapsed²⁰.

The restoration of socio-cultural control of natural resources to pastoral communities will likely lead to the improvement of the environment. By strengthening pastoralists' institutions, the programme, with the help of government, has augmented traditional resource management systems, and also enabled pastoralists to articulate their concerns at formal levels such as District Development Committees.

So far the programme has met all its objectives in the first phase and in some cases exceeded targets. As of March 1996, access to animal health services improved significantly. Five drugstores were established, eighty *daryelles* trained and a system for managing revolving funds developed by pastoral associations across the district²¹. These *daryelles* who are in essence Community Health Workers responsible for both human and animal health in their respective *pers* have alleviated the community immediate health needs. Drug availability coupled with prevention measures advocated by the community health workers has led many to believe that the fight against common diseases such as malaria and diarrhoea is slowly but surely yielding some positive results. Instead of pastoralists trekking tens of kilometres to the nearest health centre, essential drugs are now delivered to their doorsteps literally by *daryelles*. Not only are

²⁰ Farah, K. O. (1996): 12

²¹ OXFAM (1996): 10

those drugs delivered to them but their availability is assured something that is not true for the government run health facilities. In the human health service targets for training, drugstores and management of revolving fund were achieved. Twenty traditional Birth Attendants have now been re-trained and equipped with simple but hygienic materials which has led to a significant drop in infant mortality rate²².

The availability of essential veterinary drugs and the know-how in form of *daryelles* have had a significant impact on the pastoral livelihoods. The lives of pastoralists revolve around their livestock. The sustained demand for and supply of *daryelle* services is an indicator on how enthusiastically pastoralists have taken to the idea. The benefits from healthy livestock is three fold, first it increases the availability of livestock products such as milk, butter and meat; secondly it improves the nutritional value of those products and thirdly it improves the whole livestock based economy of milk sales and livestock sales. This gives the pastoralists additional resources to supplement their requirements. Now pastoralists do not need to visit the local veterinary office and be told that the essential drugs that they are seeking are not available, the usual answer that they have become accustomed²³. Three of the five PAs have now become capable of buying the drugs without Oxfam's help.

²² Interview with Khadija Salat, a pastoralist mother of five in March 1998.

²³ Interview with Gadis Alasow, a pastoralist in March of 1998.

Five pastoral associations (PA) were established instead of the target four, with leaders and members demonstrating a great enthusiasm and a strong sense of ownership. These associations were based on the existing traditional structures of the people of Wajir. All the programme did was to revive and strengthen them, after earlier losing heavily to the 'modern' structures of government bureaucrats schooled in modernisation school of thought, and whose understanding of development was the transformation of the 'savages' into 'modern' citizens. PAs are able to give coherent explanations of why they exist, what they have achieved so far and what they expect to achieve in the future²⁴. This has led to an increased social cohesion and successful planning and implementation of activities. Target for well capping and pans enlargement achieved as a result of enthusiastic community response and Water-users Associations training. Most communities have argued correctly against indiscriminate drilling of boreholes and digging of large water pans, instead, they proposed the desilting of existing water pans and repairing of broken down boreholes. PAs in collaboration with the programme have already undertaken these activities. The approach used was a successful participatory, low cost, low technology and making good use of local skills and materials²⁵. Instead of importing pumps from USA and Australia as the earlier projects did the community simply dug wells and desilted existing water pans. In successfully supporting customary management systems, the ownership of wells and pans were returned to the clans, proving it to be the best model around which to organise work and management.

²⁴ OXFAM, (1996) Proceedings of Inter Pastoral Workshop Association , 25-27th Nov. 1995: 12

²⁵ OXFAM (1996): 12

Somali culture is mutually supportive, with a strong awareness that anyone can become poor and need help. Wealth difference between groups is usually disguised because of the welfare system that exists. The *irmaansi* system gave the poor user rights over livestock whose offspring remain the property of the original owner. This system was in decline in recent years because of general poverty and a less generous *Hirsi* system is now common. The poor get a gourd(s) of milk from the well off, rather the livestock to milk for themselves. The programme has tried to fill this void left by the general poverty affecting the pastoralists. Restocking of destitute families has had major impact for beneficiaries, particularly in the sense of well being. People were able to move back into the pastoral economy and reduce the pressure on Wajir town. The restocking program not only helped the beneficiaries but also had a multiplier effect on the economy of the district as a whole. Livestock markets becoming booming once again and those pastoralists with livestock to sell benefited from restocking. This in turn stimulated trade in urban centres where demand for non-livestock goods increased. Most of all it reduced the poverty level among the destitute ex-herders who once again were given a fresh lease of life²⁶.

Among the pastoralists and within the settled communities of Wajir, gender inequalities exist throughout society, manifested in resource ownership, resource distribution, and all forms of education, employment and civil rights. Under Islamic law, women have traditionally had basic right to property, inheritance, and

²⁶ Interview with Yussuf Abdi, a restockee. In March 1998.

were protected from violence. However these rights have been eroded over time, exacerbated by droughts and scarcity of resources, where women tend to loose out. Child marriages and traditional practices such as female genital mutilation contribute to women's reproductive health problems and are now addressed by the program. It was gratifying to note that in pastoral households, division of labour is more equitable than in settled communities.

Though the programme commits itself to addressing gender issues, it has taken a somewhat cautious approach, so as not to trample the delicate issues of power relations involved and to gain trust. During the programme design, women attended different PRA sessions, in which they identified their most pressing needs. The programme incorporated their concerns such as water improvement; health services and stoves, all aimed at reducing women's workload. Women are also represented in all project decision-making forums, though in the minority. A deliberate bias to assist poor female-headed households has been incorporated into the programme. A total of 14 women's groups were given loans so as to start income generation activities²⁷. Social and economic impact was very positive because of the number of people involved and the multiplier effect on the overall economy. The program has strong commitment to address gender issues in a culturally sensitive manner and is using a local Islamic NGO to create gender awareness and hold workshops on women's rights according to the Quran. Experiences with other programmes suggest that the promotion of activities with women, especially income generation, needs to be accompanied with active

gender awareness work with men, otherwise the activities will be seen as a threat to men's status or even as female bias. It is encouraging to note that men in both settled and pastoral communities accept and encourage these changing relationships between men and women.

Six local organisations have been supported so far and a number of workshops held with local government and NGO staff²⁷. These have in turn helped enhance WPDP approach and activities through establishment of good working relationship with government officials and NGOs. Management of the process is still a partnership venture between all actors involved, but heavily biased towards the community. Participatory ongoing monitoring is emphasised and well accepted by the communities. The program managed to change the focus from sector based intervention to a multi-sectoral approach. Practitioners use to deal with development from a narrow sectoral view, such as water development, livestock development, education or health provision without consciously trying to link them together. Now all actors in the development process in that target area network and help one another.

Security is a very contentious issue in Wajir, especially since the break up of the neighbouring Somalia. The ongoing clan wars in Somalia spilled over to northern Kenya and became more intensified when over 350,000 refugees were settled on the border of Wajir and Garissa districts. The program through the PAs carried

²⁷ OXFAM (1996): 12

²⁸ Ibid

out reconciliation and mediation effort, which became so successful that it was emulated by the other pastoralists in the neighbouring districts.

Drought, as an inherent climatic feature, usually disrupts pastoral systems in significant manner. This is because of the weakened environmental system in northern Kenya. Forecasting of drought is therefore important if timely intervention is to be carried out. All the PAs now use traditional methods of forecasting drought in order to complement the almost non-existent meteorological services. The programme has now developed a drought prediction capability and early warning system, which has led to timely intervention in the 1996 drought.

4.6 Education

In collaboration with Nomadic Primary Health Care (NPHC), one of the local NGOs, a free and mobile school system was introduced in 1997, which is set to change provision of education in the area. Teachers, who move with the nomadic families as they migrate from one place to another in search pasture and water, run the mobile schools. The revolutionary aspect of this arrangement is that it integrates the culture and lifestyles of the people with the education programme. The education system that was in place before was accused of alienating students from their culture. Over the years, Wajir district has had one of the highest illiteracy rates in the country. The nomadic lifestyle of local communities makes it difficult for them to take their children to schools, which are situated in

urban areas. Another reason why formal schooling was not popular with nomads is that they needed their children to assist in herding activities. The labour demand of children is high among the nomads and sending a child to a far away school means a big loss to the family.

This programme borrows heavily from the traditional Somali Quranic schools (*Dugsi*) does not interfere with the pastoralists' busy herding schedules. Lessons are given early in the morning before animals are taken for grazing and at night after herders have brought animals from the range and milked them. The teacher who is paid by the programme also teaches the old, women and the very young children who do not take livestock out for grazing. At night, hurricane lamps provided by NPHC and bonfires are used to carry out classes. Once every month, programme officials go round mobile schools to pay teachers salaries and supply them with teaching materials. In order to have many pastoralists benefiting from the education programme, pastoral associations and other local leaders urge nomadic families to form larger units by combining with others. Such a unit is given a teacher. The community donated a traditional hut (*Herio*) and a camel for carrying their belongings and teaching materials whenever the families are on the move.

The programme has achieved positive results during the short time that it has been running. Subjects taught at these schools include reading and writing, mathematics, languages, livestock production, civic and veterinary education.

Pastoralists are now been given tools to effectively represent themselves in formal institutions of state that has always excluded them. The government education department is seriously thinking of adopting some if not all the components of the programme²⁹.

4.7 Sustainability

The core activity of the project is the establishment of self-reliant pastoral associations. PAs have been effective in all areas of community activities and have even come up with an alternative to re-stocking the destitute using traditional practices, such as Zakat (compulsory Islamic tax). Some work is already underway to establish PAs outside the Oxfam project area. The establishment of Pastoral Steering Group under the District Development Committee (DDC) is highly significant in paving the way for replication at district-wide level, and hopefully province-wide and nation-wide³⁰. Effective replication, however, will depend on the identification of the minimal requirements for the establishments of PAs, as it is unlikely that either the local NGOs or the DDC will have the resources to match the intensity of input provided by Oxfam in developing the model. The restocking work as currently undertaken is probably not replicable without external support, but significant potential exists to build capacity among PAs to play a more active role in restoring livelihoods in the event of future crises.

²⁹ The Daily Nation, Monday October 5, 1998

³⁰ OXFAM, 1996; Inter Pastoral Workshop Association, 25-27th November, 1995. Wajir. Pg 15.

The Pastoral Associations has shown a great potential for self-sustainability, particularly if the management of drug stores and revolving funds can be effectively institutionalised at the community level, and a district PA can be established. If sufficient levels of income can be raised through PAs, many community-based activities, particularly the improvement of water services, are also likely to be sustainable. Water resources already improved through the project are being sustained by local management systems, which the programme has supported and kept in place.

Key areas where sustainability is less certain include technical training for *daryelles* and TBAs. While knowledge is likely to be spread through informal networks in the community, needs for sustained training inputs in the long term will have to be carefully assessed. The sustainability of the credit programme needs a careful review, both in terms of the potential for establishments of local organisation to manage credit programmes and financial viability of the current approach in the long term. Unfortunately none of the financial institutions present in the area are excited over lending to the pastoralists. Livestock is not classified as collateral and therefore nomads do not qualify for credit at all. It is desirable to have credit institutions modelled after the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, which should help the urban poor as well as the pastoralists.

The programme grew out of the experiences, both internal and external to Oxfam, as part of the learning cycle. It has a great potential to demonstrate a

number of lessons for the benefit of other development programmes. Such areas include the project approach of building sustainable structures capable of carrying on when Oxfam withdraws its operational capacity and the monitoring and evaluation systems that have been developed and tested. Many groups working in Wajir district such as Nomadic Primary Health Care and Drought Recovery Programme have already borrowed the participation aspect of the programme. The central government is also keenly looking at using the programme as a delivery vehicle for social programmes such as education, health and veterinary services.

4.8 Conclusions

It is important to note that a number of aspects of approach seem to have been important in the start-up phase. The start of some activities during the planning phase built community confidence in two respects. First they believed Oxfam was serious in becoming involved. There has been many situations in the district before where a lot is promised and nothing materialises. Secondly, the well-coping activities gave them the confidence that they could implement activities themselves and even do more. Related to this is the importance of community contribution in all aspects of the program. Communities realised that they have to play the lead role in this and future programs. Thirdly, communities were allowed to go at their own pace, however slow it may be. Fourthly, this 'hands-off' approach had to be balanced with suggestions and interventions by Oxfam staff

at some point. It is important to note that all the staff working for the project are sons and daughters of the pastoralists.

Wajir Pastoral Development Program has differed from the mainstream development school of thought in its approach and execution of its program in pastoral areas of the district. Pastoral development programme undertaken by Kenyan government has largely been top down, with little or no consultation with the communities about their own priorities. This is clearly shown in the case of Livestock Development Program, where boreholes were sited according to plans based on experience of range management in donor countries. This explains why boreholes, particularly in the south of the district were drilled so close together. The formation of PAs and WUAs is the most important contribution of WPDP to the area. It marks a change from previous top down government development and the dominant role played by administrators at the local level. It is important to note that these changes curiously coincided with the new era of multi-partyism and political openness. PAs have meant a wider cross section of the community are involved in planning and implementing activities from which they would otherwise have been excluded.

Nomadic pastoralists have now understood more about the potential of such organisations, despite initial doubts. Their awareness and understanding have improved the formation of these associations. Many, however, still have limited involvement and few are closely involved in decision making. Given the history of

pastoralists leaving decision making to their settled clans-people, these will take time to change. Their aloofness and carelessness is due to years of hostility between them and the government. They are suspicious of anything remotely associated with government and outsiders. PAs are more acceptable because they are a form of revival of traditional institutions, which have been weakened considerably by modern institution of government. Traditional institutions remain vital for sustainable pastoral programmes. Pastoral institutions are useful to all programmes especially in mobilising the communities for development of sustainable water supply and natural resource management.

Chapter 5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Development agencies have designed and implemented livestock production rather than pastoral development in pastoral Africa¹. This mis-representation of pastoral development has its genesis in the background of the development agents responsible for the design and implementation of pastoral projects. First, the development technicians were from the West where conventional range management theories evolved and originated. Second, their African counterparts educated in the same countries, tried very hard to replicate their learning experience in their home countries. Third, successes recorded in animal production in large-scale ranches in the US and Australia, have enticed African policy makers to readily accept the implementation of livestock development in pastoral Africa. Livestock production programs failed in pastoral Africa primarily because they had narrow conceptual and technical approaches to pastoralism, which wrongly equated livestock production with pastoral development. They focussed on animals and rangelands rather than herders, people and institutions. They have literally neglected the social, cultural and ecological particularities of pastoral production systems therefore failing to take into account the complexities and the development potentials and constraints of traditional pastoral organizations and production systems. Most projects ignore the needs of livestock production in the transitional subsistence-commercial indigenous regimes such as; ecological and economic reasons for herd movements and size. Underlying the designs of most livestock projects was a view derived from

¹ Salih, M. (1987) Livestock Development or Pastoral Development. In P. Baxter (ed.) *When the grass is gone. Development interventions in African arid lands*. Uppsala. SIAS: 66

Western economic theory: that is more economic-technological inputs, automatically yield expected economic outputs. Projects designed under the influence of this philosophy contain an element of built-in failure. The larger social environment of the pastoralist is ignored, and the task is focussed sharply on livestock (mostly cattle) alone. Development policies have advocated programs to integrate pastoral peoples into the state society and economy, but have generally minimized the human costs incurred by these policies. This 'global integration program' assumes that the pastoral way of life is inadequate, that 'progress' is inevitable and that integration will improve the quality of life. This approach has mainly exacerbated inequalities and undermined the ability of local communities to defend and manage their own resources, to protect their lifestyle and to cope with current ecological and nutritional crises².

Development should not be based on the premise that pastoral systems should be radically transformed but should adopt policies that strengthen pastoralism. Development interventions should be more holistic and multi-sectoral for them to succeed. Future development policies must be based on flexible utilization of highly variable range resources instead of measures, which merely enhance managerial control and rigidity of production systems. Pastoral ecosystems may be better supported by development policies that build on and facilitate traditional pastoral strategies rather than constrain them. In concentrating so exclusively on land (crop production, range management, water resources, and animal production), little attention is directed to, for example, meeting educational and

² Bonfiglioli and Watson (1992) Pg. 8.

human health desires of pastoralists. Much of what has been proposed earlier fails in visualizing affordable ways of reaching nomadic pastoral peoples with any social services. Projects based on adequate understanding of pastoral societies will have to take into account the particular problems of different segments of population, for example, women vis-a vis men, and will anchor intervention in the larger context of change. It is important to learn the lessons of the past failures in pastoral development and seek new paths based on more comprehensive and politically aware analysis of the problem, more realistic assessments of possibilities, and more participatory approaches to action.

Correct pastoral development policies should be multi-sectoral and livelihood-based and that treat pastoral systems as complex wholes. It should not be based on disjointed sectoral initiatives, which do not complement one another. In view of the fact that approximately 95% of north eastern Kenya comprises of arid ecosystems that are non-equilibrial, the starting point for any development intervention should aim at removing those factors that constrain the flexibility of the system as well as introduce new systems that will enhance the flexible utilization of resources.

As it is recognized that sectoral approaches are limited to addressing the problems in piecemeal fashion, it is clear that development practitioners should strive to adopt a more holistic and regional approach to pastoral issues. Social systems are complex wholes, which need to be treated in their entirety, rather

than as fragmented objects of interventions. This holistic approach is particularly crucial for land-use issues and community based programs. Experiences have shown that development must be seen as an integrated problem, with solutions adapted to specific needs of each community.

Clearly, much that has gone wrong with pastoral development stems from the lack of involvement of local people in the analysis of their situation, identification of priorities, discussion and design of activities and practical arrangements of implementation. Building of project designs on indigenous knowledge is crucial for their success and sustainability. Such knowledge has been derived from generations of experience in dealing effectively with harsh environments and is often superior to solutions brought from outside. It also provides the basis from which communities can direct their destiny. Dialogue and interaction with pastoralists is crucial. This participatory approach should stress the building of local communities' capabilities and mobilization of local resources and inputs.

Rural development interventions, centered on popular participation and human resource development, require a longer time frame than the standard four years. Projects have generally had a short life span, which tends to fragment the development process and create enclaves isolated from the wider economic and social context. Pastoral development is necessarily a slow process and programs should be based on long-term commitments and sequenced interventions. A longer time horizon will allow a stronger emphasis on institution building. A broad

view of pastoral development must be taken, within which, natural resource management and environmental concerns find their place as part of a wider set of issues and challenges to be addressed. Greater reliance on herders' own analysis and setting of priorities should help place environmental concerns within their proper contexts.

The social and economic benefits that improved water supplies may bring are considerable. However the creation of new water points must take ecological factors into account so as not contribute to environmental degradation. It should also take into consideration the mobility of pastoral groups, the seasonal uses of pasture patches and the stock routes. The creation of water points should not lead to concentration of human population and livestock in restricted areas, but improve their distribution in extended areas. Water policies should take issues of equity into consideration, since the control of water may allow pastoral groups to control grazing areas at the expense of others. It is prudent to concentrate less on water issues and more on pasture related matters.

Pastoral economies are more and more dependent on goods that they do not produce but purchase directly in the markets through stock and milk sales. Unfortunately administrative bottlenecks, exorbitant fees and commissions and a multitude of brokers, locally known as *Dalaaleys*, characterize livestock marketing in Northern Kenya, who have negative effects on prices. This leads to undermining of the efficiency of the system and the competitiveness of the pastoral products. The only meat-processing factory on which many a pastoralist

depended on was closed for over six years, consequently the demand for livestock has substantially dropped since the closure of Kenya Meat Commission factories in Nairobi and Mombasa. It is important to remove these bottlenecks in marketing and aggressively look for other markets within the East African region and beyond such as the Middle East where camels are prized animals and camel meat, a delicacy. The removal of unnecessary regulations and lowering of administrative costs will go a long way into making pastoral products more competitive. Pastoral associations can be strengthened and even allowed to perform commercial activities on behalf of their members. They can be turned into a sort of co-operative for selling livestock and livestock products as well as buying of grain and other needs of the pastoralists. This will ensure the eradication of brokers and middlemen from exploiting the pastoralists in addition to cushioning their vulnerability to disruptions in the markets.

The welfare of pastoralists is negatively affected by the increasing differentials in access to health, education and veterinary services for themselves and for their animals. Improving access of pastoralists to social services is a necessary step of any long-term step for reducing poverty, providing social mobility and providing equal opportunities for all to participate in human development. The provision of services to the pastoralists should take into account their nomadic nature. The state should attempt to make its service provision nomadic too. The use of community health workers drawn from pastoral groups should be encouraged and duplicated in all pastoral areas. Their use is both a cost-effective approach to

service delivery and a source of community empowerment. The existing fixed medical centers should adopt their activities to specific needs of the pastoralists and be complemented by introducing mobile health clinics. Use of nomadic teachers and para-veterinary technicians should be encouraged. Instead of forcing pastoral children to come to fixed structures hundreds of miles from their home, it will be better to take services to them.

Situated in weak and marginalized positions vis-a-vis control of power and wealth, and fighting for their very survival in fragile environment, the Somali pastoralists of Kenya, are unlikely to realize their political, economic and social aspiration without measures enabling them to pursue a development which empowers them as a people. The state and external participants have dominated the decision-making process often leaving little room for local initiatives and empowerment. The basic human rights of pastoralists should be respected and enforced if meaningful development is to occur. The Somali pastoralists should be guaranteed the right to survive as a specific social and cultural entity within the larger nation. It is said that the darkest moments are before dawn, it is my hope that a new dawn of pastoral development is breaking, and a new and more promising era is starting.

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