



# Nomadic News

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The disappearing tribe
- ◆ **EDUCATION:**  
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## The Indigenous World



# Nomadic News

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# A Word from the Editor

Two years ago a few journalists from pastoral communities mooted the idea of starting *Nomadic News*. We were concerned that the only news from the dry lands in the country, home to the Indigenous Peoples that get any media attention is negative news. Drought, famine and clan or tribal conflicts are headlined in both print and electronic media.

Yet we know there are success stories in these communities where the people, like the other members of the larger Kenyan family need support to realize meaningful development in their areas. These people are by the very fact of where they live a special lot and they deserve special attention.

We felt it was necessary for the media to accord equal publicity to both positive and negative stories from these areas like it happens in other parts of the country. This conviction gave birth to *Nomadic News*.

We are grateful to the International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) who worked hard and got funding from the European Union without which we would not have been able to produce this magazine. The magazine's main focus will be development issues as far as pastoral communities are concerned. The pastoralists, who are categorised as Indigenous peoples have been marginalized for many years. The positive side of this is that they have never given up.

This first issue focuses mainly on education. It also looks at other social issues. The first three articles highlight news on Indigenous peoples in the new millennium—who they are and their current situation

in Africa. Professor Kinuthia Macharia, a consultant with the World Bank in Washington gives an overview of the Bank's policy on the Indigenous peoples. The magazine highlights major events of concern such as the African Indigenous Women Organisation (AIWO) conference held in Nairobi in August last year.

In *Nomadic News*, issues such as land problems facing minorities are presented. Of particular interest is the opinion of Minister William ole Ntimama who has for a long time been demanding for the return of land which he believes was stolen from the Maasai.

Other stories highlight cultural barriers that prevent the pastoral people and especially the girl child from getting education. We have the story of Priscilla Nangurai who has been at the forefront in promoting girl child education. We have success stories on Indigenous girls who have stood tall and jumped the cultural barriers in search of education.

The magazine highlights the role of mobile schools, which help keep nomadic children on the education line. There is an analysis on why schools in the northern part of the country perform poorly in national exams.

We have a story on gender war in Samburu, another on some indigenous communities facing extinction such as the Rendille. To show how different Indigenous Peoples adapt to their environment, the magazine features the Ilchamus—The fishermen—Maasai.

The Indigenous Peoples have been victims of their hospitality. In



*Nomadic News* we have a story of how settling of refugees has left a trail of degradation such as deforestation. There is a sad story on how drug abuse is destroying families in Isiolo.

Infrastructure in indigenous urban centres is totally neglected leading to lack of the most basic physical and sanitary facilities. There is the shocking story on Wajir, a town that does not have toilets.

There have been several heroes among the Indigenous Peoples, most of whom have gone unsung. Among them is Sora Ali Galgalo -- the man who played a key role in ending the Shifta war that threatened to split the country into two immediately after independence.

Read the story of the Sonjo, a people who live in trees and the Konso who have no place to call home.

*Nomadic News* will be published twice a year but we hope to publish *Nomadic Briefs* quarterly.

We thank all those who contributed in one way or another in the production of this first edition.

*Lucy Makenkei,*  
Executive Director,  
Indigenous Information Network.



# THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF AFRICA IN THE MILLENNIUM

By Lucy Mulenkei

**W**hen the United Nations declared 1994 to 2004 as the decade for Indigenous Peoples, the question that arose was who is indigenous in Africa? The issue is still being debated today but the rest of the world has recognised the identified Indigenous Peoples of Africa.

## Who are Indigenous Peoples?

Different international organisations define Indigenous Peoples as follows:

### UN Economic and Social Council, Sub-Commission on Prevention on Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that have developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.

This historical continuity may consist of the continuation, for an extended period reaching into the present of one or more of the following factors:

- Occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them.
- Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands.
- Culture in general, or in specific manifestations (such as religions, living under a tribal systems, membership of an indigenous community, dress, means of livelihood, lifestyles, etc)

- Language (whether used as the only language, as mother tongue, as the habitual means of communications at home or in the family, or as the main, preferred, habitual, general or normal language)
- Residing in certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world.
- Other relevant factors' (Martinez-Cobo, Jose'R. 1986. Study of the problem of Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations. Geneva: United Nations)

### International Labour Organisation (ILO)

ILO Convention 169 states that a people are considered indigenous if they are:

- Tribal peoples in countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or tradition or by special laws or regulations;
- Peoples in countries who are regarded by themselves or others as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain, or wish to retain, some or all of their own social, economic, spiritual, cultural and political characteristics and institutions.

Self-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determination of the groups to which the provisions of these conventions apply. (ILO 1989,

Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal People. Geneva: ILO)

### World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP)

Indigenous peoples are such population groups as we are. Who from ancient times have inhabited the lands we live, who have a character of their own, with social traditions and means of expression that are linked to the country inherited from our ancestors, with a language of our own, and having certain essential and unique characteristics which confer upon us the strong conviction of belonging to us peoples, who have an identity in ourselves and should be thus regarded by others

### International Work Group For Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)

Although Indigenous Peoples are quite diverse they, nevertheless, have three important aspects. First, there is the cultural aspect that binds them to the term peoples. We are dealing here with a group which because of a common history, culture, affiliation to an area of land, language, etc. considers and feels itself one entity - a people or a nation. Secondly, there is the notion of a common territory. Finally, there is the political aspect that recognizes that indigenous peoples or nations have at one time been deprived of the possibilities to control their own affairs, territory, wealth and prospects for development. Their members are often marginalised and excluded from political decision-making processes and their collective and national rights to land, water and culture are not recognized by the dominating and governing group(s) of the state. The goal for all indigenous peoples is to achieve the right to the land and territories. This is what one might call the structural aspect, that is, a peoples' relations to the state of which they are members. Particular indigenous peoples and their cultures may have

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changed considerably over time and still be changing but, on the whole, their fundamental and marginalised relation to the state continues: (IWGLA 1994, *Indigenous World 1993 -1994*, Copenhagen)

### World Bank

"The revised directive noted that for purposes of bank work, the term "indigenous peoples" (or other equivalent terms such as "indigenous ethnic minorities", "tribal groups", and "scheduled tribes") refers to "social groups with a social and cultural identity distinct from the dominant society that makes them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the development process." It also notes that there are national legal contexts and social-cultural criteria for identifying "indigenous peoples" and that "no single definition can capture their diversity". Some people are truly isolated from mainstream culture and society, while others are integrated into the wage labour force and national markets. In particular geographical areas, indigenous peoples can be identified by some characteristics, such as:

A close attachment to ancestral territories and to the natural resources in these areas;

- Self-identification and identification by others as members of distinct cultural groups;
- An indigenous language, often different from the national language;
- Presence of customary, social and political institutions; and
- Primarily subsistence-oriented production (Davis, Shelton H. 1993, *The World Bank and Indigenous Peoples*. Paper prepared for a panel discussion on Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Minorities at the Denver Initiative Conference on Human Rights, University of Denver Law School, Denver, Colorado, and April 16-17 1993.)

Having looked at the various definitions of Indigenous let's try to focus on who are the Indigenous Africans. For some people, both within and outside Africa, the concept of *Indigenous* African is

confusing or contradictory. After all, are not all black people Indigenous to the continent?

The short answer is yes; all Africans are indigenous in the common sense of the word. However, since the beginning of the of the United Nations Decade for Indigenous Peoples (1994 -2004), a number of specific African communities, some of them aboriginal, have come to identify with the experience and aims of the international indigenous movement. These groups recognize themselves as indigenous in the narrower sense of the emerging international definition of indigenous.

A few examples of groups claiming an indigenous identity include:

**Maasai, Barabaig, Samburu, Borana, and other East African cattle pastoralists.** Migratory cattle pastoralism is an ancient economic and cultural system in Eastern Africa. During colonization, Pastoralists were considered unproductive and uncontrollable. They were driven away from good lands and marginalised from the political and economic systems of East African States. After independence, the colonial pattern continued, with pastoralist people being treated as second-class citizens. The languages, culture and traditions of pastoralists are not permitted in schools or in official public life. There are also other groups known as the Hunter Gatherers in the sub-region who are also claiming an indigenous identity, these include the Olkiek and Elmolo of Kenya, and the Hudzabe of Tanzania among others.

**Batwa, Bambuti, Baaka, Bagyeli, Bakole-Pygmyes of Central Africa.** Throughout Central Africa and the Great Lakes (Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic du Congo), there are populations of "Pygmy" people. Forests dwelling "Pygmy" people have maintained hunting and foraging culture, distinct from the agricultural and pastoralist economics of Bantu-speaking people who came to dominate and post-colonial states. "Pygmy" peoples, as visible minorities, have often been treated as less than human or as children. Their cultures and economic systems in Africa's equatorial forests are seen as

"primitive" and unimportant to the national economies. During the recent violence in Central Africa, Pygmy people have suffered extreme rights violations including genocide.

**San, Khoe, Griqua and the Himba Peoples of Southern Africa.** The San and Khoe peoples have developed in southern Africa for over a million years. For the last 20,000 years San hunter-gatherers culture has been distinct and unique to Southern Africa. Black, Bantu-language speaking only entered the region about 2000 years ago. San people remain marginalised from the political, economic and cultural life of the countries where they live, sometimes in situations of extreme poverty.

**Tuareg and other Amazigh (Berbers) of West and North Africa.** For several centuries, Amazigh people have been under a harsh cultural religious and linguistic domination by Islamic Arab culture in North and West Africa. This inequality was heightened during French colonization. Saharan nomadic people were considered a threat to European control and were marginalised from the political and economic systems of North and West African states. This systematic discrimination has erupted in violence and racial conflict in the Central Sahara. Basic human rights are denied because of the suppression of indigenous identity and prejudice against their customs.

### But what about other Africans?

All Africans should enjoy full and equal rights. There are principles about collective rights in the UN Draft Declaration that could be usefully applied in Africa, beyond the claims of indigenous peoples. This does not negate the importance of using the UN process to challenge the systematic discrimination against peoples' aboriginal identities and their continued use of ancient territories, economic and cultural practices. Thirteen countries have ratified the ILO Convention No.169, and not one case has led to separatism. It has also inspired other institutions and countries to develop guidelines and national policies on indigenous and tribal peoples.

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## **Are we not just talking about minority rights?**

The current discrimination sometimes violent and even genocidal usually contains the concept that indigenous peoples are "primitive" and not part of the particular national citizenry. Throughout Africa, there is a strong oral tradition that recognizes aboriginal peoples. They are often seen as spiritually powerful though economically and culturally subordinate.

In the Americas, the legal recognition of First Nations derives from a legal relationship with Britain, France and Spain. There is a sharp and fairly clear distinction between indigenous peoples and settlers. In Africa, generally, indigenous peoples are defined by their total exclusion from the state system. This is not the case with minorities, some of whom benefited from the colonial administration. It is the maintenance of systematic inequality and marginalisation that defines who is indigenous today in Africa.

Some of the characteristics that set indigenous Africans apart from other people include:

- A claim to specific ancestral territory linked to their cultural and economic survival
- A distinct and identifiable genealogical blood line, sometimes accompanied by distinct physical characteristics which draw attention
- Modes of production such as hunting-gathering-foraging and pastoralism (using sheep, camels or cattle)
- A reliance on natural resources.
- A long history of sustainable management and use of natural resources
- A close link between the natural world (wildlife, wild plants, distinctive climates) and their cultural, intellectual resources and identities
- An absence of concepts of individual land title
- A situation of non-dominance in their national economies and political systems.

Support for Indigenous Peoples is supported for an inclusive Africa. The indigenous African movement is a voice into African forums, and supports the struggle of indigenous peoples to determine their own development as distinct and equal within African democracies. Indigenous Africans have a great deal of wisdom and knowledge to offer the African continent. Without urgent action and support these cultures may perish and valuable resources will be lost.

## **Organizations for and by the Indigenous Peoples of Africa. African Indigenous Women Organization (AIWO)**

African Indigenous Women Organization was formed on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1998, in Agadir, Morocco, after the first African Indigenous Women conference initiated by the Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples NCIV. It was hosted by Tamaynut of Morocco. The Conference took place from 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> April of the same year. Over 30 participants from Africa and the Canary Islands attended the meeting. (See more on AIWO pages 10-11)

## **Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC)**

IPACC is a membership organization, with a democratically elected leadership. The executive committee is elected every two years during the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples (UNWGIP) and has the task of expanding the indigenous network and initiating lobbying of African governments.

The primary aim of IPACC is to unite African groups who identify with the UN International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples and support the Draft Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. IPACC helps indigenous groups to be more effective in promoting these international rights instruments by working co-operatively with other indigenous groups in Africa and overseas.

## **Horn of Africa Pastoralist Advocacy Network (HAPAN)**

HAPAN is a regional advocacy network formed out of two successive meetings that took place in December 1998 in Nairobi and September 1999 in Addis Ababa. Representatives of pastoralist

communities and other organizations working to promote the rights of pastoralists agreed about the importance and the potential role that an advocacy network can play.

It aims to promote and protect the rights of pastoralists through advocacy, research and lobbying activities through non-partisan approaches to issues. It also aims to promote the image of pastoralism as a dynamic way of life and a viable production systems and acknowledge pastoralists' contribution to the national culture and economy. It aims to gain recognition for and appreciation of the pastoralist way of life in national, regional and local policy formulation and implementing government development policies. It also strives to promote peaceful resolution of conflict, gender equity within and between pastoralist peoples.

## **Commonwealth Association of Indigenous Peoples (CAIP)**

The Commonwealth Association of Indigenous Peoples (CAIP) is a newly established international organisation. Membership provides Indigenous organisations from throughout the Commonwealth with legitimate accreditation to Commonwealth fora. On 23 July, 1999, 'A Dialogue on Indigenous Rights in the Commonwealth' meeting was held by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative in London. Those present strongly supported the creation of an organization to support indigenous people in the Commonwealth. CAIP was officially formed a week later, on 30 July 1999, in Geneva during the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples.

## **Organisation of Indigenous Peoples in Africa (OIPA)**

OIPA was formed during a training session organised by Saami Council and PINGOS Forum. The training was held between 5<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September 1999 in Arusha, Tanzania. The European Commission funded the forum. OIPA was formed with the purpose of promoting and protecting the rights, freedoms and interests of the African Indigenous Peoples.



# Indigenous peoples get World Bank policy attention

**A**s part of the process of revising the World Bank's Policy on Indigenous peoples (known officially as OD 4.20) I was able to organise two workshops that were attended by Indigenous Peoples and others working either in academia, research or NGOs concerned with Indigenous Peoples.

The workshops were held in Dakar, Senegal, to capture the Franco-phone and the West African countries and in Kampala, Uganda, to cater for the East, Central and South Africa.

The following excerpts are unofficial impressions and accounts of the two workshops, which I gathered at the workshops.

Being a minority in any situation is usually a disadvantage. It is not surprising that in a number of African countries, the indigenous groups are the minority and usually not recognised amongst the mainstream groups or within governments. An interesting case which was coming into the Kenyan mainstream media just a few months before my workshops in June 1999 is the case of the so-called Ndorobo who identify themselves as the Ogiek and would prefer to be called by that name. The land saga they have been going through in Nakuru demonstrates a case of a disadvantaged group. What is clear is that the lifestyle of these people is different, they rely more on the forest products and at one time they had some land they used for many years

The issue of the Indigenous Peoples will continue to be complex. It is important to note however that this is changing and there are voices from amongst the Indigenous Peoples themselves, the mainstream groups, local and international NGOs and the support of the United Nations all aimed at inclusion of all voices.

The Senegal workshop in June 15-17, 1999, was officially opened by the Resident Representative of the World Bank in Dakar who emphasised on the significance of the workshop as an attempt to ensure that all Indigenous Peoples from Africa will be included in the continent's development and be accorded special attention as people "who have previously been excluded". He emphasized on the need for their inclusion in the economic and political development with regards to challenges the new century poses. He told the participants that their participation and scrutiny/advice of the OD 4.20 would be of tremendous assistance to the overall strategy of the Bank's work in the region.

*It is important to note however that this is changing and there are voices from amongst the Indigenous Peoples themselves, the mainstream groups, local and international NGOs and the support of the United Nations all aimed at inclusion of all voices.*

In my presentation, I gave an overview of the three main social safeguard policies, namely Resettlement, Cultural property and the Indigenous Peoples one, on which we would deliberate on for the next two days. I also discussed the background of the OD 4.20 and the on-going revision and the need to hear from the participants what they thought of the policy and the concepts used in it and the recommendations/contributions they would suggest to improve it in paper as well as in expectations once it gets to the implementation stage.

On the first day, the discussion focused mainly on the use of the concept 'Indigenous Peoples'. Most of the participants from Francophone Africa were opposed to the use of this concept and wondered why the proposed OD



*Professor Kinuthia Macharia,  
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University Washington DC.  
(&Consultant, AFR, World Bank)*

cannot use such other concepts like 'the Most Marginalized Groups', the 'Vulnerable Groups', or 'The Traditionally Underrepresented Groups'. They were particularly concerned with the negative connotation of the French word 'indigene' which they claimed was derogatory. There was no consensus on doing away with the use of the concept 'indigenous' though the majority (75%) of the participants were in favour of one of the several alternatives suggested. The rest had no objection with the usage of the concept especially as they argued that it has already been accepted in major international forums-ILO, UN, European Union. They also felt that dwelling on the technicalities of the concept would be undermining the injustices and the vulnerable expose' that these groups have faced.

Participants at the Dakar Consultations were from Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Niger, Gambia and Senegal, the host country. Among the key issues raised in Dakar included:

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- What leverage the Bank prepared to protect targeted Indigenous Populations, for example; possible withdrawal of government support and funding if that government ignores the rights of development for the Indigenous Peoples. Also, what kind of support will the Bank avail the NGOs, especially those genuinely representing the Indigenous Peoples?
- Participants were concerned that the Policy could be divisive and may bring unanticipated results if applied while the loose definition of Indigenous Peoples persists. They were particularly concerned with the question of neighbouring communities who may be envious if only the Indigenous Peoples were targeted for certain projects. It was feared that this could bring some animosity instead of unity amongst communities.

They were concerned with the possible impact of the policy on the delicate issue of national unity in African states, and the dynamic nature of settlement on the African continent. In other words, could this bring more divisions than there already are in the African continent? There was also the foreseen problem of the concept's usage between Anglophone and Francophone Africa and some noted that the same problem had occurred when the concept of gender started to have wider usage in the two regions.

Beyond being preoccupied with the concept 'Indigenous Peoples', most participants reported that in Africa, the major issue that needed addressing is the conflict between pastoralists and sedentary agriculturalists.

There was a concern from all participants that most African governments are not open to the discourse of Indigenous Peoples and they feared that some Bank staff may be influenced at the peril of the Indigenous Peoples themselves and

need to revisit and understand how the present boundaries in the continent were created. States were created with arbitrary definition of boundaries and ethnic hostilities were ignored and opposing or warring groups were placed in the same nation states and some have continued to be discriminated as a result of such arbitrariness.

The general statement occasionally heard especially from African government bureaucrats as well as from some donor organisations that 'all Africans are Indigenous' was seen as a lazy way of getting out of a complex situation.

*Beyond being preoccupied with the concept 'Indigenous Peoples', most participants reported that in Africa, the major issue that needed addressing is the conflict between pastoralists and sedentary agriculturalists.*

On June 22-24, 1999, was the Kampala workshop. Like in Dakar, the Resident Representative opened the meeting.

Participants at the Kampala workshop were from Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, the host country. The participant from the San, an Indigenous People from South Africa fell sick on his way to Kampala and did not make it to the workshop.

Issues similar to the Dakar ones were raised but in Kampala, the concept 'Indigenous Peoples' was not contested. The emphasis on the role of the World Bank to intervene in the governments that do not recognize their Indigenous Peoples was re-emphasised.

The participants felt that there was no information available on first inhabitants where the Indigenous Peoples lived, hence the need for more research and documentation in most African countries so as to dispel and distinguish myths from facts.

They claimed there was no information on geographical areas/territories that indicate where these people used to live; hence the need for demographic mapping to be used as a tool for all regions in Africa regardless of whether a Bank project is planned for the area now or in the distant future.

Need to know what the neighbouring communities or the dominant communities say about the Indigenous peoples in the specific African countries.

There was an overall emphasis for more collaboration between the Bank and the Indigenous Peoples to raise the awareness, which could eventually be used to persuade the governments to invest in their communities. The Indigenous Peoples were becoming a conspicuous constituency in a number of African countries and they cannot be ignored any more hence the need to include them in the strategic economic development plans for these countries.

Just like 'gender' work may have been ignored in the earlier years, so might be the Indigenous Peoples but they are progressing strongly as they raise local and international awareness. Possibilities of starting operational work for these groups is not 'it cannot happen', but 'when it will happen!' they stressed.

After sitting in the two workshops it was easy to observe the feelings of the participants. Participants both in Dakar and in Kampala were appreciative of the fact that this was the first time that they had been consulted by the Bank particularly on the Indigenous Peoples' Policy. They emphasized strongly that they hoped this was not just a token exercise but an ongoing one.

Evidently, most of the other international organisations are investing, organising training courses and funding different aspects of Indigenous Peoples' work in Africa. It is therefore imperative that the World Bank should get more involved

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*The Ogiek of Kenya are currently involved in a land saga and seeking identification*

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with such initiatives so as not to become a late entrant in the debate that is shaping up locally and internationally amongst African self-identified Indigenous groups.

It was encouraging to note that the UN has been supporting many of the African Indigenous groups. The European Union funded such groups and in September last year they funded a three-week skills training and capacity building forum in Arusha, Tanzania. The Arusha meeting was to be run by the Saami Group from the Scandinavian countries. They have been categorised as 'Indigenous' in their regions and they have been active in promoting other such groups in other parts of the world and specifically in Africa. There are also a number of exchange programmes that are bringing African Indigenous Peoples to Europe and other parts of the world.

With the Bank's mission of alleviation of poverty amongst all peoples and particularly the more vulnerable ones, then a clear strategy from the Bank's side on how to get more involved with Africa's Indigenous Peoples is certainly a priority.

A more active strategy from the concerned unit of the Bank (Africa Region) should be effected so as to initiate various forms of intervention and partnership with such emerging organized groups of the Indigenous Peoples like IPACC, (Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee) with its secretariat in Cape Town, South Africa; AIWO (African Indigenous Women's Organization, currently with branches in West Africa and Central and Eastern Africa, PINGOS (Pastoralist Indigenous NGOs) based in

*Evidently, most of the other international organizations are investing and organizing training courses and funding different aspects of Indigenous Peoples' work in Africa.*

Arusha, Tanzania, PDIP (Programme d'Integration et de Developement du Peuple Pygme'eau Kivu) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, EMIROAF (Ethnic Minority Organizations of Africa) and many others. More full time work rather than ad hoc concern is recommended because the issue of the Indigenous Peoples is evolving like the 'gender' issue did about a decade ago in Africa. That

evolution will answer the question as to whether this will lead to operational work.

The contacts established during the workshops and the Geneva meetings should not fade away. Most participants understood this to be a beginning of a closer partnership with the Bank and losing contact may appear embarrassing in the future in case a Bank project were to be initiated in their regions.

Besides the seriousness of the discussions as to "who really are the Indigenous Peoples in Africa and the interpretation of the Indigenous Peoples' Policy of the World Bank, both groups had lots of fun meeting different participants and sharing individual stories about their countries. In Dakar, the workshop ended up with a dinner at one of Dakar's best restaurants specializing in Senegalese dishes. In Kampala, a grand cocktail party at the gardens of the hotel where the workshop was held brought the participants together and we all enjoyed the moment.

The participants in both Dakar and Kampala felt and called for the need to conduct research on the Indigenous peoples. This would help in clarifying the basis of categorization so as to bring some consensus and make the issue less controversial. The kind of research anticipated on identification and rights will help to bring the activists, governments, scholars and donors on the same table to hopefully agree on who the Indigenous peoples are and how they should be assisted and included in the development strategy of their regions and countries.

I was able to visit some of the Indigenous peoples we had been referring to in our two-day workshop in Kampala, the Batwa pygmies of South Western Uganda. Most live at the fringes of the forest and are having a hard time, as they cannot legally go into the forests, which are now protected by the government. It was notable that most of them are impoverished and need support!



# African Indigenous women brace for war against discrimination

By Nomadic News Writer



*Hon. Nicayenzi Liberatta, a Batwa from Burundi.*

**T**he diversity only existed in the fact that they came from different parts of Kenya and Africa, spoke different languages and wore different attires.

Other than that they existed as one suffering the same problems. And when they came under the umbrella of the African Indigenous Women Organisation the driving force was that they all had the same problems, goals and objectives. This was at the Eastern Africa Regional Conference for African Indigenous Women Organisation (AIWO) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) held at the Pan Afric Hotel in Nairobi from 23-25 August, 1999.

The aim of the conference was to clarify the role played by indigenous women as supporters of the community. The indigenous tribes are the people that have been marginalised, discriminated and segregated against as a group. "The problems faced by the indigenous people are problems related to dominant rules whereby people are allocated different values and unequal positions in society and undermines the cultural skills of the locals, and this is where the struggle for change begins to project selfhood concern," said Regina Akii Loki of Southern Sudan.



*Muhawenimana Martha, a Batwa from Rwanda.*

But the question of who the indigenous peoples are had to be made clear before the conference could start deliberating on issues affecting them. "We have always known who we are and it is upto the world to find out and know who we are," said Henriette Rasmussen, an Inuit Eskimo from Greenland.

The indigenous communities, peoples and nations are described as those that have a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that have developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, according to their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.

At the conference there were the Batwa and Pygmy of Rwanda and Burundi, the Bushmen of South Africa, the Acholi and Luo of Sudan, Inuit of North Arctic Greenland and the Barabaig of Arusha, Tanzania. Not to be left out were the Maasai, Samburu, Turkana, Pokot and Sengwer from Kenya.



*Linda Ndarema, a Barabaig from Tanzania.*

Addressing the opening of the conference, the then Minister for Transport and Communications, Mr William Ole Ntimama, who is a Maasai by tribe said: "We have been relegated to borders of society, indeed periphery for the last hundred years. We have not been able to emerge from the shadows of oppression and domination."

The demand for fertile land has been the bone of contention between the indigenous people and the dominant tribes. In Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, the pygmies and Batwas who previously occupied the forests have been pushed out as the demand for land increases. As hunters and gatherers who have no idea about other income generating activities the pygmy women have to live a life of begging. "We have not been able to emerge from the shadows of oppression and domination. All indicators show that we are still at the bottom of the economic, social and political ladder," the Minister said.

Land is a global problem that is crucial and important to the indigenous peoples and a very controversial issue for most governments because land and its resources represent a great value for the government. One indigenous society that has succeeded so far is the Inuit of Greenland. With only a population of

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*Anisia Achieng from Sudan.*



*Susan Kidemi, a Maasai from Kenya.*



*An unidentified Sengwer from Kenya.*

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120,000, the Inuit have negotiated for self-autonomy without achieving a state. Previously under Denmark, the Inuit can now collect their own taxes and create policy and laws. They, however, still share the same currency and foreign policy with Denmark. The situation of the indigenous people and tribes became a concern of the International Labour Organisation since the early 1920s. "What made ILO particularly interested in the indigenous people was the realisation that within any national society, we are often the ones who are marginalised, and are economically and socially most disadvantaged, with the lowest rates of literacy and employment, but we also have our own culture and languages," said Henriette, who is the Chief Technical Advisor, ILO, Geneva.

The conference looked into issues affecting the indigenous woman ranging from her rights, leadership, traditional life, culture and language, violence, poverty and health, resources for community infrastructure to relationship between cash and tradition economy. A major argument brought forward is that development hardly reaches areas occupied by indigenous people. They have not been equipped with education and health facilities. These areas were initially

ignored by missionaries who were the pioneers in providing schools and dispensaries. The Governments that took over have not been able to look into these two important issues.

With the pace at which the world is moving focus must be placed on uplifting the indigenous woman both socially and economically. She must be educated along with other members of the indigenous tribe.

AIWO was formed on April 24, 1998 in Agadir, Morocco. The first African Indigenous Conference was held on April 20-24, the same year. According to Lucy Mullenkei of Indigenous

***A major argument brought forward is that development hardly reaches areas occupied by indigenous people. The areas have not been equipped by education and health facilities.***

Information Network and contact person for AIWO Africa, the conference was initiated by the Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples and hosted by Tamayut of Morocco.

*The objectives of AIWO are:*

- The defence and promotion of the rights and interest of African Indigenous Women.

- Defence and promotion of Indigenous languages and identities.
- Assistance and support to the indigenous women of Africa, victims of violence and genital mutilation.
- Supporting the Indigenous Women of Africa in the preservation of their indigenous knowledge and natural resources.
- Taking action on the level of the international community in order to prevent all acts of genocide and ethnocide.
- Making every effort to guarantee the property rights of the indigenous women in order to enable them live a decent life in their territories
- Monitoring the initiation of sustainable economic development in the areas inhabited by the indigenous people of Africa

- Organising training sessions for indigenous women in the field of human rights. Making every effort to ensure the realisation of the objectives determined by AIWO.

For eliminating prejudices against them, the society should be sensitised and educated about indigenous and tribal peoples situation and values.



# Return 'stolen' lands, demands Ntimama



*WELCOME: Minister William ole Ntimama being welcomed to the conference by Sengwer participants.*

**A** Minister of State in the Office of the President, William ole Ntimama defended women rights to the hilt and made a strong itch for "stolen" lands to be returned as he opened the African Indigenous Women Organisation conference in Nairobi held on 23 August, 1999. The Minister was then heading the Ministry of Transport and Communications. Here are some excerpts from his powerful and emotional speech as carried out in the *Sunday Standard*.

"You need to reach the rural woman if you are to accomplish our (Ntimama is a Maasai, an indigenous group) primary objective of raising the awareness, sensitising and empowering the indigenous women to understand their

fundamental basic human rights and to encourage them to stand up to fight for those rights. Human rights are women's rights and they are God given and nobody can take them away. In these meetings, the indigenous people meet to exchange views and to plan strategies

*"You need to reach the rural woman if you are to accomplish our primary objective of raising the awareness, sensitising and empowering the indigenous women to understand their fundamental basic human rights and to encourage them to stand up to fight for those rights".*

with which to circumvent the plight of their own people all over the world. The indigenous men and women are exposed

to what the other indigenous groups are doing. They come back more enlightened and more resolved to articulate their human rights.

Madam chairperson, looking at the delegates in front of me, it will be seen that our attire and languages are different. We come from different cultures and different nationalities. These differences suggest diversity but the truth of the matter is that we have more similarities than there are differences. Our problems are the same. Our fundamental goals and objectives are the same. We are birds of a feather who must fly together. We have been marginalised, discriminated and segregated against as a group. We have been relegated to borders of society,

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indeed to the periphery for the last 100 years. We have not been able to emerge from the shadows of oppression and domination. All indicators show that we are still at the bottom of economic, social, and political ladder. We have been denied educational facilities and indeed we have no access to adequate health care facilities. The infrastructure is almost non-existence. Our areas are ecologically fragile and degraded.

They are prone to drought and famine. We have recognised the basis of our historical plight. We have been squeezed to cold corners of no opportunities. The fact that we are denied education means that we are 'trapped'. We are consigned to social and economical *limbos*. The white man made sure that we were glued to perpetual ignorance and poverty. The social and economic landscape as far as indigenous people are concerned has never been level, it has been tilted away from our favour.

Since the advent of the British and German imperial regimes in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, we have gone through a series of chronological events which have facilitated our disempowerment as a people. Our struggle for survival has been long and winding considering the obstacles and impediments that have been put on our way. We have lost land through illegal acquisition and forceful relocations. This country, for example, has about eight separate land laws, which have been enacted with a colonial flavour. They favour the buyer and the grabber. These laws legitimise fraud and oppression.

We have since been battling to get them amended. The lands of the indigenous people, and I have the Maasai people as an example, have been stolen through coercion, intimidation and threats. The most discouraging truth is that the dominant communities have adopted these colonial laws to legitimise their occupation of the lands of the indigenous people. There has been massive encroachment on the lands of Indigenous people by the dominant communities. These are some of the predicaments that affect the indigenous peoples.

For all our problems the sufferers and the victims are the Indigenous woman and her children. The indigenous woman has been the preserver, the guardian and the protector of culture and traditions. She is the professor of language and makes sure that it is transmitted to future generations. She prepares food for the family; she is an architect and contractor of the family's dwelling place. She provides energy in the way of firewood for cooking and warming the dwelling place. But she is vehemently environmentally friendly. She does not degrade the environment. She only uses dead wood. She milks the cows, the camels and the girl-child milks the goats and the sheep. Occasionally, donkeys

have borne the brunt of all these hostilities.

We must therefore focus our attention on uplifting the indigenous woman in our society both socially and economically. Most of our observers here are asking themselves who are the indigenous communities. Who is an indigenous person? Are we all not indigenous? The loss of land to the invading colonisers is the most important and typical example of dispossession and marginalisation.

Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and East Africa are typical examples where the white men invaded and took away the land of the people forcefully.



*Samburu women pay attention to the conference proceedings.*

are milked. Their milk is used as medicine for the children. Normally it is the girl child who is sacrificed when it comes to paying fees. In matters of lack of health care facilities, it is stated in cold figures that one in every six children among the indigenous communities does not live to see their fifth birthdays.

In these fragile ecological environments it sometimes becomes necessary for the men to move their livestock in search of water and pasture. On many occasions the woman has been left alone in the manyatta. We have heard true stories of stoic heroism of women who have died of hunger while holding their children close to their chests. Some have died while protecting their children from wild animals, while others have been killed in the crossfire between bandits and authorities. The woman and her child

When people lose their land, which is the basis of their survival, they become paupers and slaves in their own lands. Their culture is destroyed and so is their economy. At times the dominant communities also imitate the colonialists by illegal invasion of the indigenous territories and adopt a vague process of colonisation called assimilation.

The white man polarised the indigenous people as scavengers, cannibals and untouchables. The white man called them *washenzi*, which means uncivilised. Even our livestock was *shenzi* and everything else related to us was *shenzi*. This was to justify our exclusion from the mainstream of society for purposes of domination and marginalisation. Most

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*Lucy Mulenkei of Indigenous Information Network Kenya, greets Minister Ntimama as Silole Mpoke prepares to pin a name-tag on his lapel.*

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of the lands of the indigenous people according to the white man were closed.

These days they are called hardship areas even by our own people. Teachers and administrators who are posted to these areas are paid a special allowance to induce them to work in these areas just as they did to the white expatriates. The indigenous peoples have been blamed for shunning development. These are stereotypes of that very well known theory of "blame the victim". Very little or no development support is planned for these areas. We require a process with specific of affirmative action from the Government.

Affirmative action is being practised in the United States and other countries of the world to address and to redress inequalities in development. Some of these inequalities are legislated especially those governing the distribution and allocation of land. The improvement of the infrastructure like the roads and general communication is essential in these areas to make them habitable by qualified teachers and doctors.

Affirmative action would be our development 'liberation'. Remedial measures through affirmative action should be taken to close development gaps.

The indigenous peoples must be part of the planning and implementation of policy and programmes; after all they know their problems better than anybody else.

*The indigenous peoples must be part of the planning and implementation of policy and programmes; after all they know their problems better than anybody else.*

Affirmative action must be conscious of and alive to the needs and aspiration of the people. Research has shown that there has never been any down to earth development programmes in the lands and territories of indigenous populations. What we have witnessed is token development, nominal development. This tokenism and nominalism in development is a hypocritical way of duping the indigenous peoples. It says, "after all you are also part of the system". We


want affirmative action not differential action.

There must be an equitable distribution of resources. It has been established that unequal development among communities encourages insecurity and instability of a nation. The effects of underdevelopment among the indigenous peoples will threaten to build a permanent situation where the children of the indigenous peoples will be caught up in a diminishing prospect and mechanism of marginalisation, which will be transmitted from generation to generation.

Let me tell you how Maasai land was stolen. Illoodariak and Mosiro are two group ranches with a total of about 40,000 hectares and a population of about 3,000 adult males. A plan was hatched, developed and executed in the headquarters of the Ministry of Lands. The conspirators decided to set aside the normal laid down procedures of adjudicating the land according to an Act of Parliament, Chapter 284 of the Laws. Instead they brought in a large map to the Ministry of Lands and with rulers and set squares they marked and allocated the land on the map to officials, their friends, wives and even girlfriends.

There were no survey marks or beacons on the land. They even went ahead and acquired title deeds to take advantage of the first registration. The owners of the land did not know what was happening. Their land had gone.

It had been stolen by government officials. The law was ignored. The people and their children were robbed of their ancestral land. They were left in the void and hopelessness. The only consolation is that there is a Bill in Parliament to amend Chapter 284 of Laws of this Country in order to return the land to the rightful owners. It was fraud most foul. Even after 36 years of independence the Maasai are still discriminated and segregated by the laws of their country.

*Courtesy of The Sunday Standard* 



**A**frican Indigenous Peoples are among the poorest and most marginalised in Africa. All Africa Indigenous Peoples share the same problems, from marginalisation, land loss to states and dominant groups, forced displacement, mining dam constructions, creation of national parks and game reserves to lack of education and development opportunities. Whereas Indigenous Peoples from North and South America are organised, self-organisation is still in its infancy in Africa and therefore contact and exchange of experiences between indigenous people groups across the continent is minimal.

In this regard the SAAMI (parliament of Indigenous Peoples form the Scandinavian countries) Council saw the need to train the Indigenous Peoples on the International Human Rights Standard and Policy Process to enhance their participation in the United Nations Working Groups meetings. The training was funded by the European Union, facilitated by the SAAMI Council and hosted by Pingos Forum, Tanzania. There were 30 participants working for indigenous organisations from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Botswana, Namibia, Sudan and South Africa. The facilitators covered a wide range of topics on:

- United Nation System and Mechanism including specialised agencies
- United Nations Commission on Human Rights and its Sub-Commission and related procedures
- International policy process and indigenous peoples and why it is important that Indigenous Peoples participate at International level.
- The United Nations System and role of Non- Governmental Organisations and Indigenous Organisations in International Policy Process
- The working Group for Indigenous Populations
- United Nations process on the Draft Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples
- The UN treaty body system
- The Core United Nations Human Rights instruments and application in advocacy at the national level and advocacy strategies
- Advocacy at the United Nations and strategies

## Indigenous peoples trained on human rights

- United Nations Treaty body Complaint procedures
- United Nations Special Studies
- United Nations Resolutions
- United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples
- United Nations Complaint Procedure
- International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions No. 107, 169, 111 and ILO complaint procedure
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples rights and The African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights

The participants paid a visit to the Rwanda Tribunal at Arusha International Conference Centre. Apart from the formal training this also provided a forum and opportunity for African Indigenous peoples to share and discuss their problems and experiences, alternative options and implementation strategies. These discussions gave birth to the Organisation of Indigenous People of Africa (OIPA) whose mission Statement is:

*'Seeks to bring together all Indigenous peoples of Africa under one umbrella so that they can articulate issues affecting them in a unified way with a purpose to enhance their self determination.'*

### Objectives

- Support and promote human rights awareness and practices, self-determination and identity among various indigenous peoples
- Seek participation of indigenous people in UN affairs particularly those related to Indigenous peoples and their practices
- Seek to build spirit of brotherhood and unity among the many indigenous peoples of Africa for mutual understanding
- To facilitate the coming together of indigenous peoples through conferences and other forums with a view to addressing the many socio-cultural and political problems affecting them.



*Rahab Kenana,  
Programme Officer,  
Kenya Pastoralist Forum*

A steering committee was elected with members from all the present countries. The committee was given mandate to carry on registration process and fund raise for the organisation. The organisation is currently based in Arusha, Tanzania and housed by Pingos Forum.

This training was very important because most of the trainees are now Human Rights activists in their respective countries, who have to come to learn of local and international remedies and were brought into the world of UN operations. Participants two from Kenya, two from Tanzania and one from Namibia were able to attend the 5<sup>th</sup> session of commission of Human Rights Inter-session working for Draft Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva Switzerland. We were all able to participate and present statements on problems faced by Africa declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Special thanks go to IWGIA, World Council of Churches and INCOMIDOS who funded the participants to Geneva and John Henriksen of SAAMI Council for facilitating the Training all the Resource Persons.



# Education among the pastoralists of Kenya

By Peter Njenga, Management Advisor SNV - Kenya

**T**his paper looks at the question of education among communities that practice pastoralism as a production system. The paper is inspired by the following considerations:

## A general perspective on pastoralism:

■ About 75-80% of Kenya's total land mass is characterized as Arid and Semi-Arid (ASAL). The backbone of the economy of ASAL is pastoralism, an adaptive production system suited for the highly variable environment found in these areas.

■ About 25% of Kenya's population lives in the Arid and Semi-Arid environments and are largely dependent on pastoralism. Pastoral regions of Kenya have the lowest social and economic indicators of development.

■ Pastoralism has never been officially acknowledged as a productive sector in its own right. As such, there has been little government investments in the form of human, social and economic capital to strengthen and develop the pastoral production system.

■ Despite the pastoral sector being consigned to the periphery of the mainstream economy, it continues to make a significant contribution to the nation, estimated at 12% of the GPD. The growth of pastoralism to its full potential however remain stifled.

■ In the early years of forming Kenya into a nation-state, the first consideration of the colonial government was to create a strong administrative structure. Whereas this was relatively easy to do in areas with sedentary populations, pastoralists were considered inherently ungovernable, areas where the government had established an administrative machinery got a head start in social and economic infrastructure development. This was further intensified by the post-

independence government with the logic that the path to modernization was through a strong agrarian economy.

## The question of curriculum:

■ The education system was a central tool in shaping the public perception of what development is, as well as producing the human resources for it. With a heavy bias towards agricultural, and later, industrial development, there was a hidden assumption that the pastoralist sector would eventually transform into farming as part of an inescapable evolutionary process. The subsequent weakening of the pastoralist system followed a twin process of (a) introduction of top-down development programmes, based on the sedentary model of development, and ones that did not take the intrinsic value of pastoralism as a point of departure (b) an education system that completely failed to acknowledge the legitimacy of pastoralism and therefore alienated pastoralist children from their environment, while socializing non-pastoral children into a prejudiced view of pastoralists.

■ There is now a sufficient body of knowledge in support of pastoralism as the most appropriate land-use for dry, non-equilibrium ecologies. Additionally it is now clear that the practices upon which pastoralists are judged to be irrational, e.g. mobility, large herd sizes etc, are actually the pillars of the system. A balanced curriculum should give pupils an opportunity to broaden their understanding of the country, its diverse environment and production possibilities. Because its full potential has not been developed, the education system can strengthen pastoralism by continuously injecting new knowledge and skills into it, as well as deriving learning from it.

## Education infrastructure, Access and Participation:

The development and provision of education infrastructure has a historical basis in missionary activities during the colonial period. Parts inhabited by pastoralists and agro-pastoralists attracted less missionary activity and tended to lag behind in the development and provision of educational facilities. In addition to the above, pastoralist regions are characterized by low enrolment and retention rates as well as poor performance in national exam. Some of the factors that contribute to these include:

- (a) the fundamental question of relevance, and by extension a feeling that education does not add value that is commensurate to its cost.
- (b) The problem of access to stationery schools by people whose economy necessitates unpredictable movement.
- (c) A view, albeit a minority one, that education is hostile to pastoral cultural values, especially in relation to education of girls.
- (d) Lack of a programme to correct historical imbalances
- (e) Lack of strong local level policies and plans to respond to location specific problems.

The above issues are a shared responsibility between pastoralists themselves and the education planners. Whereas tentative suggestions are made in the text in regard to some relevant knowledge areas that can be incorporated into the curriculum, this would still require wider consultation between pastoral and education experts. The question of access to stationery

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schools among mobile communities is tied together with the lack of appropriate local level policies to respond to location specific problems; some of the issues that could be addressed at the local level would include consensus on which delivery systems to use (e.g. mobile system, boarding facilities etc) in addition cultural obstacles and perceptions can only be legitimately resolved at the local level.

Finally, the government carries a bigger responsibility in correcting the historical imbalances evident in both the content of education as well as in the distribution of facilities.

### **Education infrastructure, access and participation:**

In discussing access and participation of pastoralists in the education system, a number of parameters are considered. These include: the distribution of education facilities, teacher supply, completion rates and patterns of enrolment. Data for 12 pastoral districts is presented in the appendices section of this report. For purposes of rough comparison, and where appropriate, data from some non-pastoral districts is presented alongside that from pastoralist districts. However, the depth of analysis does not allow direct comparison between one district and another in respect to each specific parameter; but when all the factors are taken into account, and taking pastoralist districts as a generic category distinct from non-pastoralists districts, an overall picture of the differences emerges.

The analysis is presented in the subsections below, while data is appended at the back.

### **Historical Lag in the Distribution of Education and Vocational Training Facilities**

Available data indicates that the position of different regions of the country with regard to the development and provision of education facilities varies considerably. At the time of independence in 1963, Kenya inherited an educational system characterized by gross regional inequalities in the

provision of education infrastructure (teachers, facilities etc). The inequality was among other things, a reflection of differential geographical response to evangelisation and/or colonial authority. The development of education facilities often followed districts in which missionary activities were focused. Missionary activity was intense among sedentary communities in the highlands and the lake region. Areas that developed a head start in education include the Central, Western, Nyanza and parts of Eastern and the highland areas of the Rift Valley. Parts of the country inhabited by pastoralists and agro-pastoralists attracted less missionary evangelism and therefore tended to lag behind in the development and provision of educational facilities.

In 1963 for instance, there were, absolutely no pre-primary schools in the pastoralists regions of Kenya. In total, there were sixty-seven (67) primary schools and three (3) secondary schools in all pastoral districts (see table 1). Narok and Kajiado with twenty-six (26) and sixteen (16) respectively, had the highest number of primary schools followed by Turkana and West Pokot with five (5) and six (6) respectively. The northern region had only six primary schools with an enrolment of less than 450 pupils. The three secondary schools in the region were Kajiado High School, Narok High School and Kapenguria Secondary School. The entire northern region, including Turkana and West Pokot, had no single secondary at independence.

The first secondary schools in the northern regions were established shortly after independence in 1965 and these are Lodwar Secondary School, Marsabit Secondary and Wajir Secondary School. Currently, the pastoralists' regions have only one (1) national secondary school – that is Garbatula Secondary School in Isiolo district which was developed in mid seventies. By the end of 1997 the pastoralists regions have 1814 pre-primary schools, 1378 primary schools, 103 secondary schools, 30 youth polytechnics, 2 teacher training colleges and 10 assorted vocational/technical institutes and centres. Kajiado has more pre-primary and primary schools in all pastoral districts, followed by Narok, West Pokot, Samburu, Turkana and

Transmara districts, while the newly created Moyale district has the least number of pre-primary and primary schools.

While the expansion in educational facilities in pastoralist districts has been remarkable, it has not kept pace with the rest of non-pastoral districts in a number of respects:

- (a) In most pastoral areas, the capacity of communities and parents to contribute to provision and maintenance of educational facilities is extremely low a situation often aggravated by the view that education makes no visible contribution to the local development of pastoralists themselves
- (b) Most expansion has occurred in the districts where sedentary communities have settled, and the education facilities are either located in the central divisions (also where the district Headquarters are situated) or in the highly populated urban centres like Ngong (Kajiado), Moyale and Sololo towns (Moyale district) or Garissa municipalities of Garissa District. The two teacher training colleges are in Garissa and Narok towns draw most of their admissions from non-pastoralist districts. While the only technical training institute in Garissa attracts less than 10% of its total enrolment from the pastoralists areas.
- (c) Schools in pastoral areas are poorly equipped, and are characterized by low attendance and completion rates than other parts of the country.

The distribution of pupil/teacher ratio for pre-primary schools in pastoral districts in comparison to selected non-pastoral districts. At the end of 1991, pre-primary schools in pastoralists areas, with a total population of 58,688 pupils had a teaching force of 1384, giving a pupil/teacher ration of 43:1, compared to a national mean of 39:1. Nyandarua has a pupil/teacher ratio of 39:1 the same as the national mean. Kwale and Kitui districts are also very close to the national mean. In Turkana the pupil/teacher ratio of 101:1 is related to inadequate pre-primary facilities for the cohort, hence very few teachers, while

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West Pokot (36:1), Isiolo (32:1), Kajiado (28:1), Samburu (29:1) and Narok (36:1) suggest existence of facilities and teachers that are underutilized. The pupil/teacher ratio for primary schools for all pastoralists' districts is 29:1 compared to a national ratio of 40:1 (see table 4). This is far too low and implies that primary school facilities are underutilized especially in the remote rural parts. Schools in urban centres have a high pupil/teacher ratio closer to the national average. West Pokot (26:1), Marsabit (26:1), Isiolo (20:1) and Samburu (21:1) have pupil teacher ratios which are far below that of other pastoralists districts.

The pupil/student ratio for secondary schools in pastoral districts is 14:1, which is below the national average of (16:1), on district-by-district basis, Mandera, Samburu and Isiolo are at par with the national mean. While the ratios in Kajiado (13:1) and Moyale (11:1) indicate low enrolment per class, hence an underutilization of secondary school facilities.

### Patterns of participation in education:

This section of the report looks at the patterns of change in enrolment for both primary and secondary schools in a comparative perspective. We begin with an analysis of participation rates because this is arguably the biggest problem in pastoral districts. Participation rates are measured using several parameters, which for the purposes of this paper are compared across the main pastoral districts as well as some selected non-pastoral districts. The data is then compared with the national mean or the norm.

A common parameter is used to measure participation rates in schools is the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER). GER is the total enrolment of primary school pupils as a proportion of the total population of school age children. In Kenya, school-going age is taken to be between 6 and 14 years. GER shows that a certain

percentage of school age children are in school, while a certain percentage is not. In general, enrolment in primary schools in Kenya rose from 891,533 pupils in 1963 to over 4.5 million in 1997. This increase of almost 500% raised the GER from about 40% in 1963 to approximately 90% in 1997. However, the proportion of the children in the cohort 6-13 attending school in 1997 varied greatly in Kenya's 65 districts. This variation is heavily influenced by several factors, among them, the history of educational development, income of the population, and the perception or attitude to the education system.

### Participation rates for primary schools:

Primary schools in the pastoral districts are characterized by low GER. The twelve pastoral districts have a mean GER of 51.6% meaning that 48.4% of primary school age children are not enrolled in schools. This compares for instance with a national mean of 90%, 86.8% for Bungoma in Western Kenya, 69.2 for Kwale in coast province. Isiolo district displays an exceptionally high GER of 105%, which suggests incidence of over aged pupils in primary schools.

There are substantial disparities between pastoral districts themselves. For

instance the districts of North Eastern Kenya have GERs of 27.5%, 23.5% and 21.9% for Mandera, Wajir and Garissa respectively compared to Turkana (63.9%), West Pokot (67%), Samburu (61.3%), Moyale (69.6%) and Kajiado (63.8%). For the three districts of Garissa, Mandera and Wajir over 72% of primary school going age children are outside the school system.

### Gender disparities in primary school:

Another point of disparity is the gender component; whereas districts like Nyandarua and Bungoma are approaching gender parity in GER, the participation rates for girls in pastoralist district is low. Twelve pastoralists districts have a mean GER of 61.7% for boys and a mean GER of 41.9% for girls. The GER for boys in Garissa is 29% while for girls is 14.8%. Similar gender disparities are shown across most pastoral districts with the exception that districts with significant populations of non-pastoralists (Kajiado and Transmara) display relatively fewer disparities.

Although district-by-district comparisons give a general indication of

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LUCKY GIRLS: Maasai pastoralist girls studying in a classroom in Narok.



**TABLE 1  
GROWTH OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS FROM 1963 TO  
1997 IN SELECTED PASTORAL DISTRICTS**

|              | PRIMARY SCHOOLS |             | SECONDARY SCHOOLS |            |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|------------|
|              | 1963            | 1997        | 1997              | 1963       |
| 1997         |                 |             |                   |            |
| Turkana      | 5               | 159         | 0                 | 8          |
| West Pokot   | 6               | 241         | 1                 | 8          |
| Moyale       | 1               | 22          | 0                 | 3          |
| Isiolo       | 2               | 66          | 0                 | 6          |
| Samburu      | 3               | 92          | 0                 | 8          |
| Garissa      | 2               | 56          | 0                 | 9          |
| Mandera      | 2               | 52          | 0                 | 6          |
| Wajir        | 2               | 55          | 0                 | 5          |
| Kajiado      | 16              | 207         | 1                 | 23         |
| Narok        | 26              | 244         | 1                 | 13         |
| Transmara    | 26              | 129         | 1                 | 9          |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>67</b>       | <b>1378</b> | <b>3</b>          | <b>103</b> |

Source: Ministry of Education statistics section  
Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)  
DDP 1997 - 2001

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the gender disparities, the figures, often heavily weighted towards schools in the urban centres, conceal the situation in a typical school found in the rangelands. Gender distribution of pupils in the rural rangelands has the ratio of boys to girls is in almost all cases around 2:1. In addition, there is a consistently high rate of dropout among the girls as compared to boys. In most schools, there are hardly any girls in class 8.

#### **Participation rates for secondary schools:**

Enrolment rates for secondary schools. The average GER for secondary schools in pastoralist areas stands at 11.9%

compared to a national GER average of 40%. On a district-by-district basis, Northeastern province has some of the lowest GER figures in the country, with Mandera, Wajir and Garissa having 4.6%, 4.955 and 8.6% respectively. In general, none of the pastoralist districts is close to the national average apart from Turkana district with 33.6%. From a gender perspective, the mean GER for boys is 14.9% while that of the girls is 8.9%.

#### **Concluding points:**

The long-term solution to the development and integration of pastoral sector into the rest of the national economy lies in human resource development. Better skills acquired can

create an internal capacity within arid areas to absorb and engage productively the rising population as well as contribute to national development. While access to basic education seems adequate in the rural parts of the agricultural regions, access in sparsely pastoral regions is far from adequate. The disparities in education provision, participation and performance between pastoral and sedentary districts is big. For instance, currently, the districts with the lowest primary school enrolment rates are all pastoralist, led by Garissa, Wajir, Tana River, Mandera, Samburu, Isiolo and Narok in that order. While most agricultural districts are approaching gender parity in Primary education, within pastoral districts themselves, great disparities exist: for instance, in Northeastern province, the ratio of girls to boys is about 1:6.

The above issues are a shared responsibility between pastoralists themselves and the education planners. Whereas tentative suggestions are made in the text in regard to some relevant knowledge areas that can be incorporated into the curriculum, this would still require wider consultation between pastoral and education experts. The question of access to stationery schools among mobile communities is tied together with the lack of appropriate local level policies to respond to location specific problems: some of the issues that could be addressed at the local level would include consensus on which delivery systems to use (e.g. mobile system, boarding facilities etc); in addition cultural obstacles and perceptions in regard to especially the education of girls can only be legitimately resolved at the local level.

Finally, the government carries a bigger responsibility in correcting the historical imbalances evident in both the content of education as well as in the distribution of facilities.



# Curriculum ignores special needs of the pastoralists

**"T**he curriculum of education in Kenya is central-developed and the planning process does not take into account diversity of the cultures, and climatic variations," according to Mr. Justus Okoko, research assistant at Action-Aid regional office in Isiolo. Pastoralists are the most affected as the existing system does not accommodate the issues around their lifestyle, he said. It does not take into account for instance, that the people inhabiting these lands are nomads who have to move up and down in search of water and pasture during the constant dry spells. This movement in most cases affects children's performance because they have to drop out of school and follow their parents.

need for a policy shift that will reinforce the right to education for these people. "Consequently," he continued, "the skills, values and attitude acquired in schools have no bearing on realities faced by many Kenyans," he said. The conference co-hosted by Action-Aid (Kenya) and Association for World Education (AWE) in Isiolo noted that, lack of access to education, a key factor in poverty alleviation is more pronounced in the arid areas of this country. "Although the Government recognises the potential in education in relation to improving the living standards of its citizens, it remains ironic that its policies do not guarantee the right to education and there is no legal binding obligation for it to offer basic needs and rights to all its citizens," he said.

attending school in these areas is still too low. Mr. Joseph Thomas, Action-Aid country director said the current education system is alien to many communities and in most cases serves to marginalise a section of Kenyans who gain little or nothing from it.

People living in these areas are already poor because of other factors such as drought and cattle rustling and therefore

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the burden of school fees worsens an already bad situation. "In order to restore local confidence in education, local knowledge should be included in the curriculum formulation and delivery," said a participant from Samburu District. Mr. Ismake Gedi from Moyale said the government's lukewarm regard for many arid areas and northern districts is to blame for the widespread poverty and the failure by many parents to meet education costs for their children.

Gedi, the Moyale District Livestock Traders Association secretary said other parts of the country have progressed as a result of the government support in agriculture. "The government should assist the pastoralists to market livestock as this will not only reduce poverty but enhance their participation in education. Mrs. Sophis Abdi Noor from Garissa and a member of WOMAN KIND, a local NGO, was of the opinion that girls have been put on the receiving end as communities' resources dwindle or are lost to drought and rustling. "Most household heads who are elderly men are reluctant to invest in the girl child's education and prefer to educate boys," said Mrs. Noor.

Mr. Otiende Elijah of the Samburu Action- Aid office says in a report that 30% of boys and 60% girls were either not enrolled or were withdrawn from school last year. In Samburu district, says his report, illiteracy level stands at 64% and a significant number of children desert school when there is drought to join their parents in search of pasture. Mr. James Karukunga, an education inspector in Isiolo says most of the teachers posted there from other districts and especially if they are not locals feel they are being punished and are therefore not committed to their duty. He says cultural and religious differences also play a role in hindering education in these areas. Some Muslim parents from Merti in Samburu were reported to have objected to their children being sponsored by a certain Christian organisation.

The Government was asked to enforce strict measures to curb early marriages, sustain retention and promote girl child education. Another recommendation was that the Government and non-governmental organisations be asked to provide water for all and establish an equal distribution of water system to attract more children to school. The Kenya Appropriation Accounts and Budget Estimates indicate that over the last ten years, the percentage share of the government expenditure on education has been on the decline. For instance in the 1996/97 fiscal year, the share of the gross domestic product (GDP) allocated to education was 7-10% compared to 7.56% in 1994/95 fiscal year. This decrease can be attributed to reforms being undertaken by the government in the country but the weakening economy has nevertheless had a devastating effect.

Increasing negative effects on access to quality education have been recorded.

*The cost-sharing policy introduced in 1988 has denied many children from Samburu and Isiolo districts access to education.*

The cost sharing policy introduced in 1988 has denied many children from Samburu and Isiolo districts access to education. This could be a reflection of what is happening in other nomadic zones.

The Isiolo district education board committee says in a report that cost-sharing policy has emerged as a major challenge to efforts aimed at improving performance and participation in education. The blanket decision taken by the government to suspend the recruitment of teachers has also been blamed for the poor academic performances. A number of primary and secondary schools in Isiolo and Samburu districts are currently faced with severe shortage of teachers. The shortage, especially in the remote parts of these two districts have worsened in the past two years because the

government has not replaced transferred teachers or those who have retired.

A senior officer at the Samburu District Education office said teachers' shortage has also affected performance and enrolment in Wamba, Waso and Baragol division. Students from Samba Secondary School (Samburu) went on rampage early last year protesting lack of teachers. "The fact that students went on strike is an indicator that, this is a serious issue which must be addressed," said the school deputy head teacher, Mr. William Lemarkat. He adds lack of science subjects and languages teachers has adversely affected students' performance. Other subjects are not better. For example, students' performance in English has been appalling because there has been no teacher for the subject in the past three years.

At Waso Secondary School there are only four teachers and the headmaster. The Samburu East MP, Mr. Sammy Leshore, says some schools might be closed down if these problems persist. "The government's decision to stop employing teachers has demoralised efforts by the local community to support and participate in education," said the legislator.

The Isiolo Kenya National Union of Teachers Executive Secretary, Mr. Issack Kara describes as blind the government's decision to accept the structural adjustment programmes set by the World Bank. "The government should have considered that some regions and in particular the pastoral community areas have lagged behind in education and hence revise or rescind this decision," he says. Kara says many primary schools in the remote parts of Isiolo have a serious shortage of teachers and as a result those present are overworked. Kara also says the decision by the government to stop building new schools is tragic.

"Poverty is widespread in most pastoral areas and it's ironic to expect these communities to build new schools," Kara says adding that the decision should have targeted farming areas where there are many schools.



# Priscilla Nangurai: A soldier at war for Girl Child education

—BY Penny Nyakio

**S**he has been at the forefront fighting a war that has left many great men helpless and at her mercy. Though soft-spoken, Mrs Priscilla Nangurai is one woman who has stood her ground and proved tough when a girl's future in education is at stake. She has endured criticism from many fathers for saving young girls, barely into puberty, from getting married.

Nangurai has demonstrated courage in her crusade for the Maasai girls' right to education. The doors to her school, AIC Girls Boarding Primary have always been left open for all Maasai girls who would like to go to school instead of being married off. She is probably motivated by the fact that she herself might have missed education because her father, the late Mzee Moses Nairi, like many fathers at that time did not have any reason for educating a girl child. The arrival of Christianity in her home area at Oloolua, in Ngong Division saved her because her parents gradually turned away from retrogressive tradition to Christianity.

Born the sixth child in a family of eight children, young Priscilla loved her studies at Oloolua Primary School. She was too bright for her classmates and had to skip class two as she was more comfortable with class three work after completing one year at school. Her brilliance could have come to naught had her father not been among the first people to interact with colonialists, consequently embracing the Christian life. Her father had also acquired some education and was serving the colonial government as a forest guard at Oloolua forest and also as an interpreter. This meant that he and his wife Carol Nairi interacted closely with the colonialists.

"This interaction meant that certain traditional beliefs which were regarded as backward in Christianity were no longer acceptable in our home,"



*MY MISSION: Nangurai is forced to incorporate counselling skills to the traumatised girls and organise to keep them at school during the holidays.*

Nangurai told *Nomadic News*. "Instead education for both boys and girls was encouraged by the church." By the time she joined class one, one of her brothers was in secondary school. He completed his education while another sister became a teacher. Young Priscilla was enrolled at Oloolua Primary School in 1955 and later transferred to Bissil Primary School where she completed her primary education.

"I now enjoyed the support of my sister, brother and parents in my pursuit for education," Nangurai says. This apparently gave her motivation and she excelled in her examinations. She was admitted to Alliance Girls High School where she studied between 1962 and 1965. Luck was on her side as the issue of school fees was solved when she was awarded a bursary by the local Native Council (now the Olkejuado County Council). After completing her secondary education, She joined the then Kenyatta College where in 1968 she qualified as an S1 Secondary School teacher.

Her teaching career started at the Aga Khan High School in Mombasa and later closer to her home at Olkejuado High School. It was while at Olkejuado in 1981 that the local community beseeched her

to take up leadership at AIC Girls Boarding Primary School in order to raise the level of girls' education in the district. Since then Nangurai has not looked back and has seen the school expand very fast. Initially, a missionary school intended to enroll girls from standard four upwards, the school currently has a pupil population of over 600 girls, the majority of whom are boarders. Besides this the school has become a haven for girls escaping from forced early marriages.

Nangurai says she has been forced to apply more than what she learnt at College for no one told her that she would be a "mother" to some of the pupils she teaches. "I am forced to incorporate counselling skills to the traumatised girls and to organise their stay at the school during holidays as some of the girls cannot go back home for fear of being married off," she said. Time has however proved to be the best healer as some hitherto angry fathers have been reconciled with their with their escapee daughters.

A born again Christian, Nangurai confesses that she was not always sensitive to the plight of the Maasai girl

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child and neither was she conscious of her ability to tackle the problem head on. "It all happened in 1986 when one girl by the name of Charity Olonyoike defied her father's wish to marry her off and sought my assistance, Nangurai says. "I had witnessed many cases where girls did not return to school after holidays but did not know what to do, but this time I was not ready to betray the innocent trust that Charity had in me."

Nangurai gathered courage to knock on the door of the then District Commissioner Mr. Harry Wamubeyi and explained her problem. The results were not only dramatic but also very encouraging. Charity was to be protected by the Government and allowed to pursue education to her ability. She is today a nurse at Lenkitem Health Centre in Loitokitok Division, a facility run by the Catholic Church. "I could not forgive myself for all the girls I had lost without daring to seek intervention from the Government", the headmistress told the *Nomadic News*. As if to avenge for these girls, she henceforth accepted (and still does) and saves all girls who are brought to her school with open hands. To date, a total of 66 such cases have come to her and she has accepted them all and raised funds for their upkeep.

The school has received financial assistance from the Kajiado Semi-Arid Rural Development Programme (SARDEP) which until recently was known as the ASAL Programme. More help has been received from the Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE). Dr. Eddah Gachukia in her private capacity and a Ms Jean Gacheche who single-handedly supports two girls. SARDEP pays fees for the girls and sometimes provides uniforms and books. FAWE pays secondary school fees for girls who obtain over 500 marks and gain entry to national school. Ms Gacheche has pledged to support the two girls to whatever level of education they will attain. Dr Gachukia helped to feed the girls who remained at school during one holiday.

Other well-wishers include the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) who during school holidays visit the school every Saturday to occupy the girls with activities such as beadwork and tailoring. The headmistress says that the major problem the girls face during long holidays like December is boredom "but we hope to come up with recreational activities and facilities soon".

The situation will be saved when the ongoing construction of a hostel is

the stout award panel are drawn from leading print and electronic media.

Apart from her work at AIC, Mrs. Nangurai is a member of Nasaru Maa Women's lobby group which campaigns for girls' rights in Kajiado Central Division. She is also a board member of "Dupoto e Maa", a pastoralists development non-governmental organization made up of Maasai professionals. The NGO is involved in the promotion of education; land security and improved livestock farming



REFUGE: Christine Swaka, 16, one of the girls rescued by Nangurai at the foundation of the new hostel funded by FAWE.

complete. The hostel funded by FAWE is estimated to cost Kshs. 2.5 million and Nangurai hopes it will be complete this year. She hopes that once complete well wishers will assist in equipping it with the facilities such as computers, typewriters and raw materials for handicrafts that will help keep the girls productive and busy.

Nangurai's generosity to the needy girls despite limitation of space at AIC has led to her recognition both within and outside the country.

In November 1996, she was the recipient of the coveted Guinness Stout Effort Award for her endeavours. Members of

while at the same time fighting exploitation against Maasai community. At the Emmanuel Anglican Church, Nangurai is an active member of the Mothers Union and is also patron of the Church Youth Group.

A staunch believer in women's rights, she participated in the 1995 women conference in Beijing, China, where she presented a paper. A mother of three children—two boys and one girl—she is married to Mr. John Nangurai, a senior civil servant. She hopes to bring positive change to the district. Her greatest joy is to see girls complete secondary education and proceed to pursue professional careers.



# traditional constraints hamper education for Pastoralist Girl Child

By Nomadic News Writer

**A**ngela Naikan is in a dilemma. In standard eight and just about to sit primary examinations that will enable her go to secondary school she is being forced out of school. The reason being that John, a young man from her village who is a university graduate has identified her as his bride. Coming from a community that has just realised the importance of educating girls but still at cultural cross-roads as to whether girls still need to be educated Angela has no alternative but to drop out.

John on the other hand is an educated man who knows the benefits of education. But like other members of his community, he is also at a crossroad and sees no reason why Angela should not be his wife. The fact that she can at least read and write is all that is important to him. Her incomplete education is irrelevant because he believes that a girl who has been to the university like him will not be a subservient wife. Angela and John come from pastoralist area of Marsabit district that is home to many pastoral communities with the main groups being the Boran, Gabbra, Rendille, Arian and Turkana.

Among the pastoralists the girl child is considered as a temporary member of the family. Once married she belongs to her husband and his clan. Among the Rendille, when a girl is born, she is referred to as 'the child of other people'. Pastoral communities have a silent belief that the girl child does not need any formal education. Experience and records show that men in these communities far outnumber women in education and development.

It is an accepted norm that a girl's place is in the home. Hence very few girls if any are enrolled in schools. What many pastoral people are ignorant about is that education is a basic human right. They have refused to accept and believe that a girl's education is valuable because it



*A young Samburu bride (right) accompanied by her mother*

helps break down the cycle of deprivation, creates opportunities for the full use of her capabilities and equips her to be a better mother and care giver. Studies show that enrolment and drop out rate in primary school stands at 8.6 for girls and 7.3 for boys. As one ascends the education ladder, gender disparities become more pronounced. While both boys and girls are affected by high dropout rates among the pastoral communities, female survival is hampered by unique prevalent practices among them late enrolment, poverty, gender bias, societal perception and labour initiation rites, female circumcision, bride price and early marriages.

A pastoral girl child is at the centre of household chores from an early age. This makes her enrol late in school if she ever does. Most of them mature before they finish primary school and easily fall prey

to property seeking parents and lustful suitors. The mature girls also find some of the activities in school too childish and are unwilling to participate in them. This brings problems and confrontations with school authority and the girl may end up either running away or being expelled from school. Culture in most pastoralist communities dictates the merits of the boy child over the girl child since the boy is seen as a permanent security and asset rather than a girl who is viewed as being on transit to another destination—where she marries.

The discrimination against the girl-child among the Maasai, for example, is so evident in that the boys undergo moranism in which they are awarded goats on which they feast in the bush for months so as to be strong enough to 'protect' the community while the girl child languishes in the scorching sun herding livestock or attending to unending household chores. According to Mrs Pricillah Nangurai, the headmistress of AIC Girls' Primary in Kajiado: "At the

home front there is lack of encouragement from parents or other uneducated members of the society. When the girls see their peers getting married off, they feel like they are losing out and they don't feel encouraged."

Like in most African homes, the nomadic girls are victims of household labour before and after school. The same children lack facilities and conducive environment for homework leading to frequent school punishment. The girls hence have a negative attitude towards school. Those that remain in school perform dismally due to lack of concentration.

In the nomadic rural settings, the schools are far and apart. Children are forced to walk long distances to reach school and in the banditry prone areas it is not safe for girls to walk far. Other factors that

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impact negatively on the girls' education opportunities include female genital mutilation, early pregnancies and early marriages, which are all intertwined. After circumcision, a girl is treated as a mature woman. She is set free to engage in womanly activities notwithstanding that she is not married and this may lead early pregnancy. A girl may also feel that school is the wrong place for her as she is treated like a child. This in turn creates lack of interest and enthusiasm for education. Education at this point is not her priority.

An arranged forced marriage is often an unfair act and a trap. It is an unfair because it involves an innocent and immature human being whose rights are infringed upon without her knowledge and when she is not prepared for the role that trap puts her in. During such instances, the girl has to act very swiftly to her advantage by letting her plight known to those in authority. In the recent past, girls as young as ten have been forced into an adult life on the basis since that they have been circumcised they are adults. Brave acts have been noted from some girls who have reported their plight to the relevant authorities who in turn directed efforts to rescue the victims. Cases have been known of girls who have trekked up to 20 kilometres in search of rescue from forced marriages.

A cultural habit among the Samburu known as beading plays a major role in ruining a girl's education opportunity. Moranism and beading are some of the many cultural habits that have played a big role in hampering education in the district especially for girls. This habit has also contributed to early pregnancies, girls have drop out of school, put on beads and take off to the village to await marriage to the highest bidder. A moran i.e. a young man buys beads costing as much as Sh.20,000 and gives them to the girl after which he is considered engaged to the girl. This also allows him to have free sexual access to the beaded girl.

Because of the nomadic lifestyles, boarding schools are the most ideal. However, in most pastoralist areas there

are more boys' boarding schools than those for girls. The boarding schools would help reduce cases of early pregnancies and the children would continue with schooling even when their parents move to the more wet areas in search of pasture and water. In times of economic hardship, the option of who should go to school between boys and girls will always favour the boy. A father with a few heads of cattle would rather get the boy going to school than the girl even if the latter is more bright. Leaders like councillors and chiefs are bad examples. They do not take their daughters to schools. The rest of the people copy their examples. Rarely do these leaders talk about the need to take children including girls' to school. Members of Parliament should be commended for promoting education through fund raising and giving incentives to best performing schools and showing by example by taking all their children to school regardless of sex. However, the MPs are too few to make a major impact.

*An arranged marriage is often an unfair act and a trap. It is an unfair because it involves an and immature human being whose rights are infringed upon without her knowledge and when she is not prepared for the role that trap puts her in.*

Twelve students who come from Moi University students from pastoral areas and together with their friends started Movement for Equal Educational Empowerment (MEEE). MEEE when pronounced sounds like the bleating of sheep. Thus the sheep that was 'asleep' has woken up. MEEE's mission statement is: "To be a strong driving force in bringing all-round educational balance between men and women, boys and girls for the purpose of sustainable development among pastoral community members."

The organisation seeks to empower the girl child to take advantage of her potential and to have capacity to influence her future. MEEE believes that no greater assistance can be given to

the girl-child than putting her in control of her destiny. The primary objective of MEEE is to help avail to the girl-child equal choices with her boy counterpart while secondary objectives are, to impact on local community's attitudes using success stories, articulate ways and means to promote girl child education taking into consideration results of approaches taken earlier, co-operate with organizations with similar objectives, initiate help in case of early pregnancies, early marriages, and other social ills meted on girls, and to find ways and means of empowering women.

The movement plans to carryout education campaigns for girl child by organizing Saturday-talks in girls' secondary schools. The frequency of the talks will depend on availability of funds and accessibility to particular regions. The movement will give incentives to girls who do well in school. These could be in terms of books, pens, uniforms, and fees among other things.

It has always been said that information is power. This is done by getting in-touch with the girl child in the villages. Information however has to be geared to the whole community if change has to take place. The girl child cannot be educated in isolation. The Kajiado experience is that when girls threatened with forced marriages are rescued and brought to school, or come on their own, the relevant schools accept them and try to, among other things, get financial assistance mainly from the Arid and semi-arid lands ASAL (now SARDEP) to enable them continue with their education, offer guidance and counselling services to help them cope with the trauma especially those who might have gone through all stages of marriage including consummation, offer them shelter including during school holidays as the girls fear going home in case the parents decide to go on with their original plan, and seek placement in Form One for those who qualify and vocational training for those unable to join secondary schools. And this will best work out only if young men refuse to marry girls who have not gone to school and demand girls who are educated.



# Heroines who jumped the walls of cultural barriers

By Safari Gharama

**T**hey were little girls barely into puberty but their fathers see them as women ready for marriage. They were doomed to be victims of early marriages as child brides unless someone comes to their rescue. This is what happened to the 66 girls who over the years have been admitted to the Kajiado AIC Girls Boarding Primary School after they fled their homes to escape being forced into early marriages.

In a profile of courage, these minors saw a wider horizon beyond that of their conservative community. They defied a strict social code, inculcated into their minds since childhood, which dictated that a father is to be obeyed without question. Their determination is to lead a better life than their mothers' did by getting education. They are the young heroines who made small moves which in the long run may change the destiny of the Maasai womenfolk, and that of the entire community.

To the uninformed Maasai, educating a girl is a waste of resources and a girl is only important when she can get married to somebody able to pay dowry in large heads of cattle and barrels of local brew to her father. The media has publicised the issue of escapee child brides and forced marriages and this has helped a small percentage of the community realise the benefit of educating both boys and girls equally. This has put in the limelight the entire question of early marriage on the socio political agendas, with signs now showing that the community is beginning to frown upon men who remove their daughters from school for the purpose of marriage.

At the age of 14, Ngina Metiaki had not been to school when her agemates were joining secondary school. Although she was illiterate, she nurtured a dream that one day she'll go to school and become a doctor. Her father however didn't see

the need of taking her to school. She wanted to join the nearby Isajiloni Primary School but her plea fell on deaf ears. Ngina always prayed that her stubborn father would one day change his mind. Unfortunately that was not to be. One day she was shocked to learn that he had other designs for her. And that was marriage to a stranger.

That is when she realised that her dream of becoming a doctor will never become a reality. Escape was her only way out. The following day she took off very early and boarded a bus that would take her to an aunt's home in Ngong town, over 100 kilometres away. After narrating her ordeal, the aunt decided to take her to a girls' boarding school in Kajiado that always has room for victims of early marriages. Ngina was admitted to AIC Girls Primary School where she was admitted to Standard Two despite her age. Ngina says she is happy at the school because of the security it provides and best of all because she is receiving the education she so much craved.

Twelve-year-old Naataosim Mako was only saved from an early marriage after she took her father to court. A Sh 6,000 fine forced the old man to retract his resolve to marry her off. Naataosim had seen her two elder sisters withdrawn from the KMQ Primary School and married off against their will. She was determined to complete her education but her father couldn't hear anything of it. He argued that girls who are educated ended up becoming prostitutes. After several thrashings by her father who couldn't stand a ten-year-old refusing to take orders from him, Naataosim fled to her uncle's home in the neighbourhood. The uncle took her case to the authorities. The administration promptly arrested her father and charged him in court. Naataosim hopes her father has stopped being angry and wishes he could visit her in school.

For Christine Swaka, 16, who completed her primary education last year the future seems bright. At the time of this interview, she told us she was positive that she would get marks high enough to enable her join a national secondary school. It is the trust she had in her teacher and role model, Mrs Esther Kuyayi that saved her from an early marriage.

Her father had already received four cows, some sugar and lessos (sarongs) as bride price from one Ole Mike Musa, a young man in her village. The wedding date had been set when she decided to confide in Mrs. Kuyayi who helped her draft a letter to the District Commissioner. The DC immediately dispatched guards to collect Christine from her home at Ilparakuo in Magadi. She was then in Standard Seven. Christine dreams of becoming a lawyer something that will enable her fight the injustices done to Maasai women and girls.

Jedidah Nkadayo, 12, was a Standard Two pupil at Enharmonic Primary School when her father decided she was ready for marriage. Her father had already received ten heads of cattle from the elderly suitor. Her mother, who, was against the scheme advised the young girl to report the matter to the local chief, Ole Saidimu, who intervened and stopped the marriage but her father banished her from his home. The head teacher of AIC Girls' Primary School rescued her. Jedidah visited her home in December 1998 and spent the holidays with her family although her father was away. She was told that he has since softened. She looks forward to the day when they will meet and he will welcome her back home.

These girls' defiance in the face of high cultural barriers is a big step in the fight for the Maasai women's rights.



# Mobile schools

## keeping nomadic children on the education line

By Osman Mohammed

Nomadic pastoralists have often been wronged and ridiculed for following the cow's tail. This is in relation to their having to move up and down with the livestock in search of water and pasture. The pastoralists have to keep on moving in search of pasture, as the animals are their main source of livelihood.

Pastoralist children are unable to get quality education because they have to keep on moving with their parents. Non-governmental organizations in North Eastern Province came up with the solution that if the children cannot be left behind, then a teacher has to move with them, hence the creation of mobile schools. Adopting a curriculum that involves subjects that relate to the way of life of the pastoralists has proven that the pastoralists can equally perform well in education.

Oxfam, a British aid organisation, supports the mobile school project in Wajir district together with the UK based Mennonite Charity Groups. The mobile school project is run by the nomadic

primary health care personnel. According to the coordinator, Mr Abdikarim Mamo, the project is built on the basis of the existing Quran school system popularly known as the Duksi. A Duksi in pastoralist setting is a mobile Quran school in which the children are taught how to read, write and memorise the 30 chapters of the Holy Quran.

Mamo explains that in this system, families with children in the 'Duksi' pay the teacher. The teacher is paid a goat for each of the sections of the Holy Quran, the child completes. Also the Quran teacher (Maalim) is accorded a number of benefits such as a bottle of ghee every Friday and his livestock watered and looked after by the family. The best and leading child in the Duksi, usually called 'Kabir' assists the teacher. His duties are similar to that of a modern assistant teacher. He/she helps to prepare the students for lessons, keeps order and assists in teaching children especially when the teacher is away.

Mr. Mamo says the Duksi system has a number of advantages for the

programme. This includes the traditional system of renumeration the Quran teacher and provides a basis for a sustainable service delivery. Since its establishment in 1995, the project has benefited more than 5,000 nomadic pastoralists in four divisions in the arid Wajir district.

The mobile schools provide education to nomadic families while they move with their livestock. A visit by the *Nomadic News* to a mobile school at Griftu found a very impressive initiative. A member of the nomadic family that has already received some basic education provides the education. The family member then moves with the family and teaches the surrounding families up to the Standard Three syllabus based on the national curriculum.

A blackboard is carried on camel back as the family moves. The family based teacher is not paid any salary but is paid in kind by the family. However Nomadic Primary Health Care provides books, chalk and blackboards. Mr. Ali Omar a nomadic teacher at Griftu says he teaches the nomadic children very early in the morning before the livestock is moved away for grazing and in the evening when they return. Adults who are left behind can have their lessons during the day. He says a number of children in his class have joined the national primary schools. The subjects taught include Mathematics, Kiswahili, Health, Disaster Management and Animal Husbandry.

Mamo says lack of government support and funds is a serious drawback to the project. He says the Ministry of Education should recognize and support the mobile schools project to effectively reduce illiteracy in North Eastern Province. Poor infrastructure, frequent droughts and insecurity also threaten the project.



CLASS: A typical mobile school at Danaba in Wajir North.



# Turkana:

*from weather to terrain, nothing is friendly here*

By Nomadic News Writer

Lorna Ekidor is a 12-year-old girl from Turkana district. Lorna has not been to school but hopes that soon she will get married and have her own children.

In Turkana rains never go beyond 20mm annually. People here lead a nomadic life and their food includes milk, ghee, meat and blood. There are those who attempt agriculture when the weather is not too severe and millet, maize and beans can occasionally be found growing in the farms. Extreme weather conditions force the Turkana to rely on relief food provided by the Government and other international and non-governmental organisations. If that is not forthcoming, then they have no alternative but feed on wild fruits. During drought they lose many heads of cattle and many die from starvation.

Besides the natural disadvantages, the district is also exposed to man-made calamities such as cattle rustling by neighbouring and Samburu. As a result, people have lost lives, animals; and many women have been left widowed and children orphaned. According to Joyce Akai Emanikor, these problems have led to high poverty level. The worst hit are the illiterate whose number has continued to rise. Illiteracy rate in Turkana is probably the highest in the country.

Lack of education and the need to migrate in search of pasture and water makes it almost impossible to take a good number of children to school. Turkana problem started with marginalisation by the colonial government who declared it a "closed district". This situation was not improved after independence and has been a leading factor in making the district lag behind. In 1950s and 60s

Turkana remained a "closed district". There was no formal education and there was only one "African Primary School" in Lodwar. In the early 1960s, the first missionaries from Africa Inland Church arrived in the district. They were followed

*Besides the natural disadvantages, the district is also exposed to man-made calamities such as cattle rustling raids from neighbouring tribes of the Pokot and Samburu.*

by Catholics who opened two or three more primary schools. At that time only men went to school but only after two or three years of school they would join the tribal police force.

In the 70's a few girls went to school but none beyond Standard Seven. Girls who managed to complete primary education

were so few that everybody in the district knew them by name. In the 1980s, a number of charitable organisations moved into the district and helped alleviate the problem by offering bursaries for high school education to both boys and girls. This enabled the few bright and needy children complete secondary school. The few girls who completed secondary school joined teacher training or nursing colleges. Boys preferred joining the army or teaching.

However although they were offered bursaries, some girls dropped out of school in Form Two or Three to get married.

It was the 1990s that saw Turkana produce three female undergraduates. Currently, there are eight secondary schools in the district – only three are

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CEREMONY: Women at a traditional Turkana wedding.



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girls' schools with almost half the number coming from outside the district. Marriage and nomadic lifestyle does not offer an enabling environment for girls to attend school. Instead they are married off at an early age.

Turkana have a socio-economic value on both boys and girls. Boys can go raid and bring cattle home while girls can also bring cattle home through bride price. A girl can be married off for as much 50-100 big animals and 100-200 or more goats depending on the socio-economic status of the groom's family.

Apart from dowry, the Turkana relegate a woman to low levels of participation in decision-making. She is to some extent non-existent. Due to abuses hurled by fathers, brothers or even mothers, girls grow up with inferiority complexes and feel they can't measure up to boys. At school teachers offer no relief. They assign girls cleaning, fetching water, and cooking duties as opposed to the prestigious responsibilities assigned to boys such as being head boys and prefects.

In Turkana, it is the girls who fetch water for the animals and domestic use, help build their houses, gather fruit and firewood for the family and baby-sit. The cost of education is not in terms of fees but on "how much shall the family lose?" This is why it is easier to release boys to school than girls. The Turkana hold their culture dearly. Certain morals, dressing and behaviour are observed. They believe that once a girl goes to school, she is corrupted, becomes immoral and loses dignity. They prefer the girls to dress traditionally instead of wearing the more conventional outfits.



A WINNER: Joyce Emanikor beat odds and is currently reading for a degree at Daystar University.

There are about 250,000 Turkana. The majority of them live in Turkana District, but a good number have infiltrated neighbouring districts in search of water and pasture. Strangely though, the

*At school, teachers offer no relief. They assign girls cleaning, fetching water, and cooking duties as opposed to the prestigious responsibilities assigned to boys such as being head boys and prefects.*

Turkana have abandoned very many customs which are classic with other nomadic tribes. They have discarded both male and female circumcision.

The low literacy level and lack of awareness among parents plays a big

role in girls not going to school. Parents do not know the value of education.

Joyce Emanikor is one Turkana girl who has beaten all odds. She was married just after finishing primary school. However her vision for going further never let her rest. Married to a man who never felt threatened with an educated woman, Joyce studied privately and passed her O levels. She then joined a teacher training college taught for three years before she was promoted to be a primary school inspector. In a tremendous hunger to achieve more, Joyce left teaching and joined her husband at the Bible society of Kenya to translate the Bible in Turkana, a task they completed in 1997.

Currently Joyce is studying Development Studies at Daystar University. Her husband is studying Communications at the same university. Their first born

child is a student at Catholic University, the second born is at Moi University studying law and the third born is at Starehe Boys Centre. Joyce's sums up her challenge by saying: "Studying at Daystar with young people means one has to work extra hard. At first I thought I would be beaten especially after finding people with sophisticated English accents."

Government staff in Turkana are paid hardship allowance. Whether the allowance motivates them to work harder

or reminds them that they are in a different world is yet to be determined. The best contribution that can be given to the Turkana is Education. This endeavour has proved worthy for the few that have gone to school and returned to the district to make a difference in others' lives.








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indiscipline on parents' ignorance on the importance of education.

The headmaster with donations from sympathizers was able minimize interruptions from outsiders by building a stonewall fence around the classrooms and the four toilets facing the main road. However, there is still need to construct

a wall around the school to monitor movements of the pupils and keep away strangers from loitering in the school compound. This will also increase safety of the equipment and learning materials. This school was ranked second last in the district, last year. Asked whether there is hope for improvement, Abdi said: "We are geared towards restoring the lost glory and perform better given the right incentives and moral support." The

situation at Jaribu Primary is a reflection of what is happening in the other schools within the province. The ambitious headmaster and his staff have requested the Teachers Service Commission to post more science and language teachers.

They have also called for concerted efforts by parents, old boys and education officials to help restore the lost glory of Jaribu Primary School. 

## Garbatulla cries for a facelift

By Noor Ali

**I**t's academic performance has nosedived; physical facilities are in shambles and it cries for a facelift. This is Garbatulla High School; the once prestigious icon of Northern Kenya now facing imminent closure unless urgent measures are taken to reverse the trend. During a recent visit to the school, we found out that the once four-stream institution is now single-stream with a student population of less than 200 down from previous enrolment of 720.

The head teacher, Mr. Joshua Boru Godana, says the school is in dire need of financial assistance. This problem is as a result of poor payment of fees. Godana says it has been a nightmare to try to keep the school operational, as the parents owe the school more Sh4 million in outstanding fees. The school in turn owes food and stationery suppliers more than Sh1.5 million. The head teacher says the school's remote position forces them to use generator power that is expensive to maintain. He says the acute water shortage, frequent power blackouts and insecurity has led to mass exodus of students to other schools.

Majority of parents who have had the experience of being stranded when taking their children to Garbatulla have withdrawn them from the school. The school bus that once ferried students and teachers on opening and closing days was grounded eight years ago and is yet

to be repaired.


In the past two years, not as single student from this school that is expected to lead the other five secondary schools in the district has qualified to join university. Owing to the deteriorating academic performance, the school now faces the risk of being stripped of its national status.

Started in 1974 by the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) through funds from the German Government, the school was a centre of academic excellence for the people of Northern Kenya. Among prominent old boys of the school are doctors, lawyers, senior administrators, senior army officers and three legislators namely, Adan Kenyan (Wajir) Abdi Sasura (Marsabit) and Shaaban Isaack (Mandera East).

A member of the Parents Teachers Association, Adan Diba says the woes facing the school started immediately after the NCCCK reluctantly handed over the school management to the government in 1987 through the influence of local leaders who wanted to increase the number of local students. Although insecurity has been mentioned as one of the major problems facing the school, Diba insists it is not a new phenomenon in this area and even when insecurity was very rampant the school's performance did not suffer.

Teachers interviewed confided that ignorance on the management of the school by the board of governors, poor administration and a feeling that the school is serving outside students are some of the problems dogging it. Most buildings in the school have leaking roofs and walls are cracking. The otherwise beautifully constructed school with a modern basketball court today has no furniture and there is no single chair in the dining hall. Old and irrelevant reference books grace the library.

The school has no regular water supply and students have to spend most of their time searching for it. At times the students have to take breaks even during exam times when the only power generator breaks down. Out of the 40 students admitted to the national stream in 1997 only three were at the school by the end of last year. In a bid to salvage the school the area MP, Abdullahi Wako convened a meeting in July last year after a new board of governors was elected and an old boys and girls association formed.

The board of governors was informed that the school requires Sh.24 million to rehabilitate it. The MP said the school is a gem for the Northern Kenya communities and should not be allowed to collapse. 



# Food Bowl

## gets children going to school

By Penny Nyakio and Abdi Ali

**N**o one can go to school on an empty stomach and concentrate. In areas that poverty level is high the percentage of children going to school is relatively low. Poverty is common in all arid and semi arid regions. To get children going to school, programmes that give incentives and motivation are encouraged.

In pastoral areas that are characterized by arid and semi arid conditions, poverty has played a big role in keeping children away from school. A prolonged drought in 1979 kept many children away from school. This was an issue of great concern to everybody and a solution had to be found to get the children going to school. The Government realised that the relief food supplies were not adequate for families and school going children were not getting enough. It was out of this concern that the Kenya Government and United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) started a school-feeding programme jointly in 1980.

It was placed under the World Food Programme (WFP) with the objective of offering one meal a day per child in primary and pre-primary schools in the Arid and Semi-arid Lands (ASAL) of Kenya. The ASAL comprises 20 districts. Of these, nine are totally arid and they include Turkana, Marsabit, Samburu, Isiolo, Mandela, Wajir, Garissa, Tana River and Moyale. The other 11 are semi-arid and these include West Pokot, Embu, Kwale, Kajiado, Mwingi, Narok, Koibatek, Lamu, Laikipia, Kilifi and Baringo.

The schools are given white or yellow maize, beans or peas and oil. The ratio per child per day is 150 grammes of maize against 40 grammes of beans or peas and 5 grams of oil. Head teachers have been trained to calculate this by multiplying the amount required per child with the number of children in their respective schools. The introduction of the programme saw enrolment in many



*Nomadic children enjoy a meal at a feeding centre, thanks to school feeding programme.*

schools rise as hungry children who were attracted to school saw this as an opportunity to get a good meal. "The school-feeding programme has helped the pastoralists very much as most children depend entirely on this meal," the officer in charge of the programme in Kajiado district, Mr. David Ndilai, told *Nomadic News*. "Some of the children eat a little and carry leftovers to their brothers and sisters at home."

Ndilai says even children who have not enrolled can be seen hovering around the schools with the hope of being invited to lunch. It is said that WFP is already working on phasing out funding for this programme. The responsibility of feeding these children is being left in the hands of the community. "The WFP plans to be feeding only 75,000 pupils by the year 2003 in the whole country," Ndilai said. The process of phasing out beneficiaries started way back in 1993 when urban schools were left out. The WFP has been training communities since 1993 on how they are going to continue with the programme.

"The initial workshops targeted Ministry of Education officials but we have now included local leaders and parents."

Ndilai said. So far, chairpersons of school committees, lobby groups, Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation, religious organisations, local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), chiefs and councillors have been enlightened on the school feeding programme and have assisted in looking for ways to sustain it.

For 21 years, the WFP has imported food and transported it to schools. From there, the programme provides funds to the Ministry of Education to facilitate monitoring of the programme. "The WFP has bought two lorries for the transportation of food to schools in most districts and motorcycles to ease monitoring," Ndilai said. The divisions being covered at the moment are Namanga, Mashuru, Central and Magadi while Loitokitok and Ngong, being relatively productive areas were phased out of the programme in 1993.

Ndilai is positive that the community, assisted by NGOs operating in the district will ably take over the feeding programme. He said whenever the lorries supplied by the WFP break down, members of the community collect allocations to their schools.



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The school feeding programme officer is also confident that some schools in relatively productive areas will generate funds to run their own feeding programmes. He, however, wishes that some schools could be assisted as they are located in dry and remote parts of divisions generally considered high potential areas. "It is ironic that areas like Mosiro and Ewuaso in Ngong were left out while urban areas like Kitengela and Isinya are still being supplied with food because they are in the central division," he says. He attributes this situation to the fact that WFP did not consult the Ministry of Education before making this decision.

Amboseli zone was also affected by the decision to phase out Loitokitok division from the programme. Enkong'u Primary School in Narok which is in this zone was so badly hit it had to close for sometime as children failed to attend school because of hunger. Ndilai has already written appraisals on the situation and has recommended inclusion of Ewuaso, Kiasmis, Oloolotikoshi, Amboseli Kimana zones and parts of Rombo into the school feeding programme.

The district currently receives food enough for only 19,856 pupils although enrolment in the 100 schools covered is 28,763. This could be an indication that the community's input is needed ahead of the year 2003. To prepare for the future, Ndilai is calling for the support of extension officers in the Government departments to assist schools decide on

the most suitable income generating activities to facilitate continued feeding.

"The ministry proposes that schools start projects and keep proceeds from these in fixed accounts to be used when WFP pulls out," Ndilai said. Some schools have already proved their potential to take up the programme. At Isinya Primary School where water is in plenty, pupils are growing maize and vegetables that they later sell at the local market. They also harvest grass to make hay for sale.

At Ilparakuo in Magadi Division, Ndilai said the pupils have an interesting goat project. "Each parent at the school is expected to contribute a goat to the school feeding programme. The goats, whose ears have been branded SGP (school goat project,) will multiply after which they will be sold to raise money for the feeding programme. The project at Ilparakuo got a boost from Neighbours Initiative Alliance (NIA) a local NGO that donated a superior he-goat to improve the quality of the offsprings of the school goat project.

Paranae is another school in central Kajiado that is growing maize, beans and potatoes. The pupils run a tree nursery and sell the seedlings to parents and farmers around the school. The school feeding programme entered its third phase in 1997 with WFP targeting only the most arid districts and other educationally deprived districts in the arid and semi-arid lands. The gradual reduction of covered areas envisions that all the semi arid districts will be withdrawn from the programme by the end of this year.

According to the former WFP, country Director Mr. Michael Sackett, the programme has been around long enough for the affected parties to identify sustainable alternatives to support and ensure sustainability.

The programme had the highest number of beneficiaries in 1991 when 600,000 pupils were fed. In 1992, pockets of divisions and districts were phased out and by 1997 when phase III of the project commenced, 350,000 pupils were benefiting.

In Isiolo and other parts of northern Kenya it has not been a success story as in Kajiado writes Ali Abdi. In its infancy, SFP in the north was doing well. The food did not include any vegetables or potatoes but was well cooked and fried and the ratio of maize to beans was 3:1. But in 1988 something went wrong and since then the programme has never been the same again. Besides so many wrongs, the food quantity was reduced. Items such as pans, spoons and plates disappeared gradually. By 1988, schools in Isiolo did not have a single utensil and parents for whom SFP's was supposed to lighten the burden were forced to chip in and equip the kitchen. In 1990, school heads made it mandatory for every Standard One pupil to bring money for paying the kitchen staff and the rest were to bring plates and spoons from home.

Although the children take the plates back home to be washed, they continue paying unofficial fees to cater for non-existent services. School heads ask parents to buy spices, onions, tomatoes and cooking oil. A survey carried out recently in Isiolo Central division schools showed that only poorly boiled dry, 300-gram maize is provided per child. The survey also discovered that the children share plates. About five can eat from the same plate at the same time. Nobody supervises to ensure that every child brings in his or her plate. In several schools, children do the cooking. This exposes them to fire risks.

According to one source that requested anonymity the most lucrative item in SFP is the oil. In some cases, a school head receives ten-five litre containers of oil per term but whether this oil is actually used for the intended purpose is anybody's guess. SFP was supposed to boost the morale and act as an incentive to make the nomads take their children to schools but this is not the case today. One can safely say SFP has failed to live to its promise and intentions in North Eastern province.



*A school boy enjoys a meal.*







# Kids growing before their time

By Noor Ali

**H**ussein Maalim is a eight year old livestock herder in the dry lands of Isiolo. Accompanied by other boys of his age they look after hundreds of livestock. The boys have to walk many kilometres in search of pasture and water for the animals.

At 11 years, Abida is already earning a living working as a domestic servant to a family of 12. She has to take care of the family's water and fuel needs. She has to go fetch firewood from the banditry prone area as well as trek long distances in search of water that is a very rare commodity in these dry lands. At their age, Hussein and Abida should be in school at lowest Standard Four in the Kenyan system of education. They are not alone in this category of children denied a chance to be children. They are among the ever-increasing number of child labourers being exploited not only in the pastoral areas but also in other parts of the world.

The rising socio-economic environmental and political problems have led to an increase in the abuse and violation of child rights in the world. Many children below 15 have been denied the right to food, shelter, health care and education. A significant number of school-going children are engaged in jobs that are hazardous and harmful to their growth both physically and mentally.

Children, because of their vulnerable position are easily exploited. They offer the cheapest form of labour and due to ignorance they cannot demand for better working conditions or pay package. A child worker is exploited when whatever she or he does infringes on education opportunities and worse when the child is denied the right to his or her rights. Currently there is a global campaign for the elimination of child labour but emphasis has been placed on farming communities and plantation areas. No programme aimed at elimination of child labour has been drawn in pastoral areas

where child labour has been growing at very alarming rate in the past few years.

The Isiolo DC, Mr. John Egesa, said in a recent workshop held in Isiolo town that a high number of children have been employed as livestock herders in the remote parts of the district. "The rich livestock owners, who know the benefit of education take their children to school but employ those from poor families as herders," he said adding that poverty has forced many families to withdraw children from school due to lack of school fees. When the children drop out of school, they are employed as herders or domestic workers.

"These children are denied the opportunity to enjoy their childhood, and when they grow up, they will make poor parents," said the DC. He said child labour exposes many children to banditry. At least six children who were herders were shot dead during ethnic feuds and rustling activities between the Somalis and the Samburu in October and November in Isiolo district in 1998.

The Isiolo District Social Services officer, Mrs. Fatuma Wako, says traditional practices among the communities in Isiolo have promoted child labour. Young girls are married early to elderly men, some as old as 90-year-old. These forced marriages are also a form of child labour and should be discouraged. The administrator of the Al-fulah Children Centre in Isiolo, Mr Ahmed Set says a number of street children accommodated in rehabilitation homes in the district have deserted and gone back to the street. "Some of these children prefer the streets where they can beg for money to home," he said.

He says the high number of children engaged as child labourers in order to supplement families' income has resulted



*Child labourers at Iffo refugee camp use donkeys to carry firewood for sale.*

in high rate of drug abuse, insecurity and immorality. The ethnic animosity has forced some communities to engage young boys as tribal militia to protect their livestock, he says. The upsurge in insecurity has led to loss of livestock, rising number of displaced families, poverty and hence the high number of children looking for work to sustain themselves and their families.

A report prepared by the Isiolo Child Welfare Society of Kenya co-ordinator, Mrs. Margaret Bwirie indicates that most children in the district are employed as herders, hawkers, miraa sellers and traditional dancers at tourists lodges, while others are petty traders selling curios to tourists. Others are employed as donkey-cart pullers.

The report calls for school fees aid and an end to ethnic conflicts as an effort towards elimination of child labour in the district. The report recommends natural family planning so that parents can have the number of children they can support satisfactorily in the view of increasing poverty.



# War of gender equity reigns high in Samburu

By Nomadic News Writer

**T**he question of gender roles as played by both men and women has been a bone of contention in many societies.

In the pastoral societies, getting men to agree that they can work on similar roles with women has been difficult because of deeply rooted traditions. Talking to pastoralist men about gender equity is like a slap in their faces. A woman is treated as a second-class citizen. You cannot tell a father to allow a bright girl go to school and his not so bright son stay at home. No father can allow a daughter to inherit property because she is regarded as one who does not belong. Her opinion as a woman, mother, or daughter in any matter is never sought and she is not supposed to question the decision that has been made by the man of the home.

To find a Samburu girl who has gone to University is a tall order. She will have beaten many odds to attain such an achievement. Sophie Lepuchirit is a Samburu girl who beat enormous odds to attain a successful personal and professional life. At a time when girls in her community were being forced out of school into early marriages, Sophie struggled to reach an unexpected level of being a university graduate. She was lucky to be educated by the Consolata Catholic Missionaries all through to her secondary school. She attributes her success to Father Talone who made sure that she got sponsorship.

Sophie attended St Mary's Girls Primary School in Mararal. This was the first primary school in the district built and managed by the missionaries. She later joined St Teresa's Girls Secondary School Wamba, also the first boarding secondary for girls by the same missionaries. She passed her O levels

and joined Butere Girls in Western Province for her 'A' Levels before joining University of Nairobi. After her graduation she worked in the Public Service Commission and Central Bank for several years. Despite her achievement, Sophie was restless. She felt that there was an unfulfilled yearning in her life. This she realised could only be done if she went back to her rural home and get involved in work that would make a difference in the lives of women there. "I am glad that despite all the constraints I have faced, I have



*A Samburu woman*

managed to make a breakthrough, thanks to the Gender Equity Support Programme of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the Nomadic Peoples Project (NOPPO) which recruited me as a Gender Consultant," Sophie says.

NOPPO works among the Samburu, Turkana, Rendille and other pastoralists nomadic ethnic groups in Samburu and part of Marsabit District. With the support of CIDA, Sophie's group has conducted various workshops and seminars on group dynamics and business leadership and decision-making, gender and legal rights awareness. These workshops have

increased awareness among otherwise uninformed pastoral communities. "We stress on the need to improve girls education and eradication of harmful traditional practices like: wife beating which is very rampant here; early marriages, female genital mutilation, beading of girls by morans (young girls are given beads and sexually abused, by the morans), wife inheritance among the Turkana, legal rights and others." Sophie says the teaching and participation in the various community workshops have been successful because of the several Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA) conducted by NOPPO.

"Before joining NOPPO, I worked as a community mobiliser, where I conducted Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in 36 communities in Waso, Wamba Lorroki and Kirisia together with SDDP/GTZ staff and Kenya Wildlife Services Department in Waso and Wamba Group ranches. "PRA has been instrumental in creating awareness among these communities. This has enabled them identify their needs and come up with suggestions on how to improve their own situations," Sophie says.

Unfortunately, Sophie laments, education opportunities for girls are still very few in Samburu District. She blames cultural practices that marginalise the girl child and women in general as a hindrance to the enrolment of girls in schools. Cattle herding, a very strong phenomenon is respected more than education. The "Lchekuti" or out of schools programme together with Indigenous Information Network, Action- Aid, NOPPO, and others like Ministry of Education have assisted these herders acquire basic education. Travelling in Samburu is a big problem because the area is insecure.



# Rendille:

## A disappearing tribe

By Ali Abdi

**T**he Rendille are classified as Cushites along with the Somali and Borana. Historians say the group was the first to enter the present day Kenya before other dominant groups like the Bantu and the Nilotes. Later, they were pushed to the climatically hostile areas by the stronger agriculturalists in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Cushites are said to have migrated to Northern Kenya and the Horn of Africa from the direction of the Red Sea. Some historians say they came from the Arabian Peninsular. They were and still are pastoralists, keeping camels, goats, sheep and cattle. Their physical features are similar – light in complexion and curly hair. Majority are lean and tall.

However, what is distinct between the Borana and the Somali is the language.

Apart from having few words with the same meaning their languages are distinctively different. But to a stranger, Somali and Rendille languages sound similar. Many people including the Somali themselves believe that the Rendille and the Somali were until recently one people.

It is believed that the present Rendille language and culture is a mixture of many dialects borrowed mostly from the Somali and to some extent, their dominant neighbours, the Borana, Sakuye, Gabia and Samburu.

Somalis believe the Rendille were as recently as 19<sup>th</sup> Century, one of their clans who lived around the lower Juba River in Southern Somalia.

Hussein Adan from Somalia and who now lives in Kenya said the word Rendille was derived from a Somali word



*Rendille elder in his typical position when hearing and judging matters of his clan.*

Rer-deede, meaning those who declined or refused to go back to their people. He said the Rendille were formally known as Bimal or people who in an incident diverted or stopped the course of river Juba and crossed it. The lower Juba River where the Rendille lived as Bimal were other people mainly Jamame, Turda, Nenalle and Homboi clans. Traditionally, all pastoralists keep some herds near their homesteads for purpose of obtaining milk. The rest of the herd usually graze far away.

One day, a group of Bimal, the biggest clan that had memorised the Holy Quran left their traditional grazing zone with cattle that was not needed for milk. The group, composed of only young men

took longer than normal and when anxiety gripped the elders, a message was relayed, instructing them to return home immediately. The message was ignored.

The group moved towards Kenya in the present North Eastern Province, until they reached where they now live – Laisamis, Merille, Logologo, and Marsabit town, Korr, Kulal and South Horr. Back at lower Juba, the group was condemned and excommunicated and became Rer-deede or Rendille, those who denounced their homeland.

The Rendille allegedly buried the copies of the Quran they carried with them at a foot of a hill somewhere within Korr. I could not establish whether the hill is the present Mount Kulal in Marsabit District. The Rendille call the hill "Hali Lukhun deer" the hill with long neck. Hali, according to the Somali is a female camel with a long neck.

It remains unclear why the group left their original home. But one point is clear, the Rendille were originally from Somalia before they arrived at their present settlement. Whether they were a clan of the greater Somali community or an independent tribe who perhaps were forcibly assimilated is not known.

Loipahilis, Laibon, 65, from Laisamis quoting his parents says the Rendille have their origins in the Somali and confirms the Quran was buried on the said foothill but he has no details. One thing is indisputable. There is massive

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linguistic similarity between Rendille and Somali. But the Rendille language has continued to be eroded over the years and because of what seems to be frequent contact with the Samburu, Rendille have incorporated the Samburu language.

The most affected lot are those in Merille and Laisamis which neighbours Samburu District. Unlike other Cushitic communities, the Samburu are Nilotes and have the features of Nilotes with very different tongue and culture. Today Rendille in the affected areas can be heard swearing and cursing in Samburu language.

It is only in places around Mt Kulal, Kargi and Korri is the Rendille language still in its 'original' form despite a long association with Somali-speaking people. The fear is not like that of the impact of western civilization on other Kenyans where the young at worst cannot speak their mother tongue. For the Rendille, their language has been affected so much that it is now a mixture of more than three languages. Culturally, the Rendille are equally influenced by other cultures of the Somali, Samburu, Sakuye, Gabra and Borana.

Salle clans are associated with Sakuye clan of Harsuwa where both are classified as "Ebiffu" the clan believed to have

religious powers to heal the sick through prayers. They also have a similar way of cattle identification – ear notching, and deep cutting of ear lobe like the Sakuye clan of Warfura. Their form of dressing, both casual and ceremonial, has striking resemblance with those of the Samburu – red shukas (sarongs), beads decoration on the head, neck and hands.

Rendille men also lead the life of 'moranism' like the Samburu. Naming among them revolves around those they lived and interacted with. Lekuton is derived from the Samburu and Laibon from the Maasai and Dorobo.

# Ilchamus:

## The Fishermen Maasai

By Michael Tiampati

**A**t the crack of dawn, the Ilchamus, a breakaway Maasai sub-tribe venture out in Lake Baringo to cast nets and retrieve any fish caught in the night.

This is an unusual sight for those who know the Maasai and indeed most pastoralist communities most of whom do not carry out any fishing leave alone eat fish. But the Ilchamus are an exception. Fish is a main dish in their homes. History has it that in the turn of the century, there was a mass exodus of the Maasai to the Southern plains of the Rift Valley. According to 80-year-old Araule ole Sita, in the midst of the pilgrimage the Ilchamus decided they had had enough of travelling and decided to stay behind pitching tent on the shores of the then small lake Baringo. "Two rogue homesteads", the Ilkumpa and the Ilkaleiya were left behind because they had no livestock and therefore had no reason to follow the others.

The Ilchamus continued living the traditional Maasai lifestyle and since livestock and cattle were their lifeline,

something had to be done quickly and in that regard; "We organised ourselves into small raiding partners after building two manyattas surrounded by with four fences for security. We raided other communities for livestock because the resident communities were hunter-gatherers, whom we the Ilkeroi displaced strategically by shooting one by one all the time pretending it was an accident. Through the raids, we got the few livestock we have today," explains Olisida.

But this was not without repercussions. The Ilchamus were attacked by the Laikipia Maasai from the East and being foreseers as their name tricked the raiders by pretending to remove their sandals. Unaware of the trap, the raiders removed their sandals as well only to realise the Laikipia Maasai had put many thorns on the path. This slowed their movement to the advantage of the latter who according to the oral history, were slaughtered and those who surrendered taken as prisoners of war and later accommodated. Ole Olisida says: "These tests forced us to wade through

the little mass of water and on the Olkokwa Island with our livestock, women, children and the old for safety and the strong ones remained on the mainland."

"Eventually on the onset of colonialism, these animosities stopped and life evolved around the few livestock and as we continued to struggle to survive. It became apparent that other sources of food were necessary because the number of our livestock was dwindling fast and the next thing we did was use spears to fish.

There are about 10,000 Ilchamus spread out in five locations along the Eastern Southern shores of Lake Baringo. Twelve households comprising 400 inhabit the Olkokwa Island. The residents of Olkokwa are expert swimmers and needless to say fishermen. The 200 kilometres mass of fish water provides the much-needed supplement for foods available on the islands and mainland.

The Ilchamus still consider themselves as essentially Maasai: "We still practise the old traditional Maasai way of life. We have retained the language although its slightly laced with a little Samburu and our brothers from the south are welcome here just like we are down in

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their lands," says James Ole Weri. For the Ilchamus, fishing is not only a source of their diet. It is also an important source of income more so due to the reduced number of livestock as a result of disease and lack of pasture. They sell their catch in the local Kampi Samaki market.

The Ilchamus or fish singly or in small groups in light rafts called *Kadishes* made of balsa wood. Fishing is done by men. Ole Leyian from Kajiado, thinks that the Ilchamus are weird because real Maasai don't eat fish or birds. "We feed on meat from our livestock and occasionally from wild game like antelopes but never on reptiles. Those people are really strange," he says. Life at Olkokwa though, is not as idyllic as it may seem to a passing tourist holidaying at the island camp nearby. The Ilchamus have gone out of their way to acquire expensive motor boats in a bid to cash in on tourism but it is not easy as they are not very aggressive.

James ole Weri spells out the problems afflicting his people: "As you can see, there's hardly any grass on the island and our livestock get sick when we take them across to the mainland because they become exposed to diseases like mastitis and foot and mouth which are

unheard of here." The price of fish is between Sh.3.00 and 10.00 thanks to the middlemen. The fishing license is another expense imposed on the poor fishermen. The cattle trade is no better.

"We would appreciate a little assistance on veterinary medicine to jump-start the livestock trade. But the most important thing is that time has come for us to do farming like other communities because it is ironic that we should receive food aid while surrounded by this mass of water. If only we could get a water pump and reservoir tanks on the island, I believe we would do irrigation and grow crops and grass. We have been beggars for far too long," says the 70-year-old veteran fisherman.

Mothers bear the brunt of hardships. Napenkurra Lekireno, a 30-year-old widow struggles to sustain her family of five by selling firewood and charcoal. She outlines the pains of an Ilchamus mother, without any livestock due to a recent drought and her fear of fishing. "The main problem we are facing currently is food shortage because with the loss of livestock, I have no other means of earning a livelihood to clothe, educate and feed my family."

But education is no longer cause for worry to the 400 residents of the island thanks to a pilot project by the

management of Island Camp in conjunction with Ilchamus elders and the Christian Children Fund. There are 15 primary schools and three secondary schools with about 4000 students. A beneficiary of the programme, 20-year-old Elijah Leweri, a university student acknowledges the academic potential of his people. "Everybody is bright enough to make it in education but life here is so hard and many hurdles are to be overcome before one can attain a good education."

On the subject of girl child education, Elijah was quick to point out that parents are now fully aware of the need to send everyone including girls to school. Unlike boys some of whom drop out of school during the bumper season to cash in on fishing trade, girls do not fish and many of them are going on with their schooling up to college level. Positive as it may sound there still hangs a shadow of uncertainty on girls' education as some parents are marrying them off. The other factor that has immensely contributed to the girl child not realising her potential in school is circumcision. According to Grace Lemeraa: "After circumcision, some girls feel they are now grown up and treat teachers with contempt thereby affecting their education. The rite makes them feel that they are ready for marriage and when the parents plan for it very few of them resist."



*Ilchamus fishermen with their catch at Lake Baringo*

The Ilchamus depend mainly on herbal medicine and their faith on Lopri-the earth god they believe resides deep under the hot springs on the island who helps them to deal with the ups and downs of life. During a crisis a specially appointed group of four women and four men accompanied by the traditional healer and elders visit the springs, carrying honey beer, milk and soda ash (Magadi) and tobacco. Women sing sacred songs to the god and leave the offerings behind. The following day a messenger is sent to check if they offerings are missing. If they are found missing, then it is taken to be a good sign, implying that their offerings were accepted and prayers will be answered. But now thanks to well-wishers like CCF they no longer have to depend on this god. A well stocked clinic has been built for them.



# Settling of refugees leaves a trail of degradation

By Mohammed Adow

**A**n unprecedented human and ecological disaster is wreaking havoc on the environment in Africa and efforts to make situation better has met with little success.

The indiscriminate and wanton destruction of tropical and temperate forests is a global concern. According to the World Resources Institute (WRI), the world is losing up to 20.4 million hectares of tropical forest every year due to human activities. Deforestation, overgrazing and cultivation along the riverbanks have caused considerable destruction to vegetation. The degradation has led to destruction of installations, depletion of water sources and pollution, both at the source and in the supply systems.

According to the 1996-1998 District Development plan (DDP) Garissa District has a total forest area of 383,500 hectares, situated mainly along the River Tana and the southern part of the district. Forests in Garissa are not gazetted, except for Boni Forest, to the southeast, which is gazetted as a National Reserve under the Kenya Wildlife Act. According to Sessional Paper Number One of 1994 on recovery and sustainable development to the year 2010, the government stresses the environmental consequence of sustained development policies and processes.

Environmental wear and tear in Garissa district is most pronounced in the refugee camps of Iffo, Dagahley and Hagardera. The origin of the problem can be traced to the arrival of refugees from Somalia. Other refugees came from Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda. By May 1995, Garissa was hosting 112,229 refugees. Heavy earth moving machines were used to clear and flatten areas to settle the refugees and create space for various international agencies like Care

International, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Red Cross Society and Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF).

As a result, dust storms became a daily

degradation, increased evaporation leading to lowering of the water table. This situation is manifested at Iffo and is worse at Hagdera.

*Indiscriminate clearing of vegetations in refugee camps has contributed to massive environmental degradation, increased evaporation leading to a lowering of the water table.*

occurrence, exposing the topsoil to erosion. Soil compaction by heavy earth moving machines resulted in poor water percolation and this led to flooding. According to the latest district environmental report, the over-exploitation of vegetation is common within a radius of 60 kilometres of each camp. Indiscriminate clearing of vegetation in refugee camps has contributed to massive environmental

The estimated more than 100,000 domestic animals in this area have been forced to feed on the remaining young trees. According to a report prepared in 1996 by the Oak Ridge Associated Universities (1989) and submitted to the Kenya Renewable Energy Development Project (KREDP), wood energy supplied about 70 percent of total energy needs in Kenya. About 29.9 million tonnes of wood fuel were required in 1983 alone.

The insatiable demand for fuel wood for cooking has been a major contributing factor of deforestation and fuel wood consumption in the refugee camps is estimated at 67.7 tonnes a day, which is equivalent to between 5.0 and 9.0 hectares of scrubland cleared daily. Fuel

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*ON SALE: Building materials on sale at a market in Iffo refugee camp. Many trees have been cut, resulting in environmental degradation.*



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wood price per tonne is Sh.8,000. Because of the acute poverty in this area, some local people and refugees in Dadaab and the surrounding camps have taken to selling fuel wood to earn an income.

Jamal, a refugee from the Hagdera camp says: "Fuel wood collection which used to take an hour now takes days because there are no more trees and one has to move from one area to another looking for the precious commodity." The environmental degradation as well as the clearing of thousands of acres of land in search of fuel wood rose steeply when the very organisation that was given the duty of reclaiming the barren lands commercialised the collection of firewood.

GTZ who were contracted to do deforestation allowed the collection of wood as a commercial venture in the hope that this would reduce rape cases in the camps. Many women were being raped as they went to the bushes to collect firewood. So GTZ thought women would be safer if the wood was brought to the camps instead of the women going to the bushes. Hundreds of people who got contracts to fetch wood invaded the forests surrounding the camps indiscriminately cutting wood and bringing it to the camps for sale.

A ton of wood was bought by GTZ at Sh 8,000. As the forests near the immediate surroundings of the three camps became more empty, the unscrupulous wood merchants went to the neighbouring constituencies of Wajir south and Fafi in Garissa district where they continued cutting wood. Officials of GTZ who spoke to *Nomadic News* in Dadaab claimed only dead wood was collected as firewood.

according to Mzee Abdillahi Samatar, a herdsman in Dadaab, the contractors used chemicals and petroleum products to kill live trees to make them ready for collection in a week or sooner.

Samatar laments that there is no vegetation left for pastoralists who herd goats in Dadaab township and its environs.

# Drug destroying families in Isiolo

By Noor Ali

**T**he stimulant drug *khat* commonly known as miraa is grown and produced in the larger Meru District but is widely consumed in the Northern Eastern region of the country. The chewing of miraa is not a preservative of a particular group in society. It is a leisure affordable to the poor and the rich alike. Prices of this precious twig grown by the Ameru vary with the different types.

Apart from being a costly leisure for this region, the drug has a long list of disadvantages and is of benefit only to the producers. Before he was removed from power, former Somalia President Siad Barre banned consumption of miraa in Somalia. "The consumption of miraa has ruined many families, is costly and encourages laziness," Barre is quoted to have said.

The Isiolo Jamia mosque committee member Sheikh Haran Rashid says he handles many domestic problems that originate from chewing of miraa. "A number of men have been accused of abandoning their families and failing to provide meals as they prefer to chew miraa which is addictive," said Sheikh Rashid.

Rashid says miraa has destroyed many homes and individuals. "This is an evil drug that makes you lazy and keeps you away from God," he said. Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim, the head teacher of Isiolo Boys Secondary School says many homes have financial problems when fathers who are bread winners fail to provide the basics as well as paying school fees as they engage in excessive chewing of miraa, cigarette smoking and other leisures that accompany these practices. He says many students have dropped out of school, as both parents have to cater for their daily need of miraa costing about Shs.500. He says miraa chewing by students at secondary school is the major cause of constant riots by boys and early pregnancy among girls.

A teacher at the boys' school attributes poor performance and indiscipline to miraa chewing by many students.

A doctor in Isiolo says health problems caused by miraa include liver and kidney problems as well impotency among men. He says the drugs increases the urge for sex among girls and many have fallen victim to sexually transmitted infections and early pregnancies. He says girls who are addicted will exchange the drug for sex. Records at the Isiolo District Hospital mental unit indicate that most of the patients suffering from acute insomnia (lack of sleep) were taking miraa before they were admitted. Bad as the drug may be, it has helped many single mothers in the district to sustain their families and educate their children.



An old man holds a bundle of miraa.

"We know this drug is bad, but we sell it because of the high profit margin," says Mrs. Mariam Abdi, chairperson of the Garbatulla Self Help Group. More than ten widows whose husbands were killed by bandits recently sell miraa to maintain their family.



# NEMWS brings development and hope to the north

By Mohammed Adow

**A** predominantly Muslim community, the people of North Eastern Province as per the government allocation were having a myriad problems. In 1964 they came together to start a welfare association that would look into their problems and come up with solutions. Hence the birth of the North Eastern Muslim Welfare Society (NEMWS). However the organisation could not start operating immediately.

This was when the shifta war was raging and the government had declared a state of emergency in the region. The organisation started its operations in earnest in 1985 with its headquarters in Garissa town. It was a non-profit making organisation that was to look into the welfare of the inhabitants of the region. Since 1985, the organisation has dedicated itself to alleviating problems faced by the people not only in the province but also in other parts of the country.

The welfare association has initiated more than 20 projects, eleven of mosques constructed in different parts of the Wajir, Garissa, Mandera and Isiolo districts while the rest are wells and water dams. One of the biggest projects successfully undertaken by the organisation is Garissa Al-Faruq Orphanage that caters for more than 350 orphans. The organisation spends Sh. 8.3 million annually in running the orphanage.

The orphanage caters exclusively for boys. However there are about 909 orphan girls taken care of by NEMWS at their homes. There is a full-fledged school run at the orphanage that is also open to children with no families. Children living at the orphanage have established a home away from home. Most of them agree that they are leading a much

better life that most probably their parents would not have been able to offer. The older boys can take care of themselves but female staff have been employed to take care of the younger orphans some as young as below six years old.

There are 60 orphans in secondary school, while the first group of orphans assisted by the organisation is now in university. Garissa Mayor, Siyat Osman Ibrahim says were it not for the organisation, most of the orphans would have ended up as street children. Although the Government pays teachers at the Al-Faruq Primary School in Garissa, the organisation also employs other teachers to ensure there is no shortage of staff.

The children also attend Islamic classes where they are taught the Holy Koran. Currently there is a total of 70 teachers in the organisation's payroll. They are not only stationed at the orphanage but also in other schools within Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Tana River, Mombasa, Lamu, Moyale, Nairobi and Migori. Those orphans who do not do well in national examinations are placed in

technical training institutions. NEMWS has projects in other parts of the country. The Abuhureyra Muslim School in Mombasa was started by the organisation and it has both secular and Islamic schools. Classes for secondary school have been built but there has been no intake yet.

The Migori Muslim Primary School in Nyanza is another project started by the organisation. The Vice Chairman of the NEMWS Sheikh Hassan Abdirahman says the organisation gets its funding from Ahyauturaath and Baitul-Zakaat organisations which are based in Kuwait. Sheikh Abdirahman says currently they are looking for additional funding to strengthen already existing projects as well as effect several other projects that are needed by communities that the organization serves. NEMWS has been at the forefront in the distribution of relief food to drought stricken families that have settled in the outskirts of Garissa town. Other than initiating development projects the organization has also donated food and clothing.

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*OUR HOME: Orphans at the Al-Faruq Orphanage in Garrisa playing.*



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The Garissa District General Hospital has benefited greatly from the NGO's generosity. The welfare association has on numerous occasions donated drugs and foodstuffs to the hospital that always experiences acute shortage of drugs. During religious celebrations like the Idd, the organisation slaughters hundreds of cattle and goats for the poor who cannot afford any meals. NEMWS has not been left behind in the field of arbitrating between feuding clans. Recently when two clans residing in Garissa District clashed in a fight that claimed several lives, the NGO managed to bring together elders of the two warring clans to round table peace talks.

The organisation solicited for the support of Muslim Imams, political leaders and the provincial administration in ending the bloodshed. Sheikh Abdirahman says top on the agenda is building and equipping of three secondary schools and primary schools that they currently run in Garissa, Mombasa and Migori. He says the organisation hopes to build dispensaries at each of the three schools.

In order to ease the acute shortage of clean water at the Al-Faruq orphanage and its surrounding environs, Sheikh Abdirahman stresses there is need for a water treatment works at the orphanage because the water piped from River Tana is not safe for drinking. The organisation also plans to dig a number of water points and boreholes for the nomadic pastoralists of the North Eastern Province.

There are also major plans by the NEMWS to start an Ostrich Farm in Garissa as a tourist attraction. Sheikh Abdriahman says his organisation is indebted to the Mombasa Municipal Council for their assistance in constructing four classrooms at the Abu-Hureyra Primary School in Mombasa. He says he is also indebted to the Provincial Administration in Northern Eastern for their support as they go about implementing their numerous activities.

# WAJIR-A town with no toilets

By Osman Mohammed

It is 10'00 o'clock in the evening at Wajir town and a foul smell emanating from human waste fills the air. This is the time the employees of the cash - strapped Wajir County Council start disposing the contents of the buckets. The buckets contain human waste. To the inhabitants of this remote town, the smell is a reality they have learnt to live with but to first time visitors, the smell is appalling.

Wajir town stinks from all sides. Foul stench from the bucket-latrine makes one's stay unbearable. More than 36 years after independence, this is the kind of sanitation found in the town that is the headquarters of the second largest district in Kenya. This mode of disposing human waste introduced during the colonial days poses a great health hazard to the predominantly Muslim community of the town. Since the buckets are not covered, it is a breeding ground for rodents and flies that can easily lead to an outbreak of diseases like cholera and dysentery.

Human waste along the town's main streets is a common sight. A small imitation of a toilet is built on a raised cement platform with an opening at the outer wall. When somebody wants to go to the toilet, a bucket is pushed from the outer wall and placed directly under the raised platform and he or she sits on the raised platform. It takes only three days for an average family of five to fill the bucket. Disposal of the human waste is done manually by removing the full bucket from the outside opening and emptied into a trailer tank which takes the waste to a site about six kilometers away. Employees of the cash- strapped County Council who do this work are called 'night soil men'.

Wajir town residents are nurturing an epidemic. During the rains, surface runoff containing traces of faecal matters are washed down into the local wells polluting water sources. According to the local public health

officer, if the general standards set by World Health Organisation were to be followed, water from all wells in Wajir town would be declared unfit for human consumption. Unfortunately the people of Wajir town have no alternative source of water. According to documents available at County Council offices, the council can no longer cope with the increasing population of Wajir town as far as disposal of human waste is concerned. The available machinery and staff can only serve 500 households a night.

Wajir town's population is 70,000 and covers an area of 140 square kilometers. Those who collect the waste can only do it at night for fear of social stigma. Most residents have adopted a more dangerous way of disposing the waste. This is called the cat style. The human waste is collected and buried just behind the toilet. This is usually done by the very desperate and not very normal youths who are paid a little money for the service.

Wajir council town clerk Abdhullahi Gullied says a proposal for sewerage facility has been in the books since 1975 but has not gotten any funding from the government or non-governmental organisations. He says this type of sanitation drains more than 65 per cent of the council revenue through salaries, maintenance of machinery and equipment. Gullied says more than Sh300 million is needed to establish an up-to-date sewerage facility.

A collector who declined to be named said they were exposed to risk of contracting diseases as they work without any protective clothing or gloves. He claims some of his colleagues have died from mysterious diseases whose causes are attributed to this dangerous work. Although the waste is taken six kilometres away from the town it still poses dangers of enormous environmental pollution.



# The sad plight of Nelikia Wuapari

By Penny Nyakio

**S**he will never forget the morning that a hungry wild animal changed her life for good. Nelikia Wuapari's life was transformed by a mad hyena, which mauled both her forearms rendering the formerly active woman dependant on other people for even the most intimate tasks.

When the *Nomadic News* visited Nelikia at her home at

Entepesi village in Oloontulugum, Kajiado, she was out. She had gone to a neighbour's house to look for somebody to send to the shops to buy exercise books and pencils for her two children—son Saitoti in class two and daughter Kamwanka in nursery school.

As she came back walking towards us I couldn't help imagining how she looked five years ago.

A beautiful Maasai woman clad in clean cloths dorned with the traditional colours of blue, white and red while around her neck hang, the many beaded necklaces, which every Maasai woman makes for herself.

In a moving interview, Nelikia narrated how every morning she would wake up at around 5.30 am, light the fire, milk her cows and then prepare breakfast for her two children. Her first born Saitoti would then leave for nursery school while Kamwanka who was still breast-feeding would play around the compound. After finishing these morning chores Nelikia would then go to fetch water and firewood and as she told me "fetching these two most important commodities consumes the most of a Maasai woman's time".

Whenever the need arose, she would with bare hands repair her traditional Maasai house using cow dung. Today, all that is history, and Nelikia is a shadow of her former self. She is feeble following the attack by a hyena and the consequent long stay in hospital. She wears no ornaments since she can no longer make any and the only ones she had were destroyed in the course of receiving first-aid following the savage attack. Besides it's virtually impossible for her to put them on or even tie the knot of the traditional Maasai lessso usually done on one shoulder.

Since the attack and subsequent loss of both her forearms, Nelikia has

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NEW LIFE: Nelikia minus her hands after leaving hospital with daughter Kamwanka.



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lost balance and staggers as she walks. But she can still afford a smile for anybody who visits her. Nelikia's trauma began on the fateful morning of September 8, 1995 at her Entepesi village in Kajiado Central. On that day, Nelikia who was in early pregnancy woke up as usual, milked her cows, lit a fire, made breakfast and woke up her son to go to nursery school.

After the boy had left, she headed for the Olkeriai River, from where her family usually collected water from a sand well. It was while she bent to fill her container that she heard some movement behind her and looked up. That is when she saw it. "It was the biggest and the most ugly hyena that I had ever seen. It started growling loudly and coming towards my direction," she narrates. Although Nelikia knew that wild animals cannot just attack human beings unless provoked, she immediately sensed danger and started screaming loudly.

"The hyena pounced on me, biting several parts of my body. As I fell down and it ripped off my blood-soaked 'shuka' (traditional dress)," she said. Within seconds, the hyena had severed both her hands as she tried to fight it off and had also bitten off a huge chunk of flesh from her head and one of her thighs. Then she must have lost consciousness because the next thing she remembers is finding herself at a health clinic.

Nelikia's village mates who heard her scream were not sure the screams were coming from the river area but they decided to investigate. When they arrived at the scene, they found the hyena devouring Nelikia's blood-soaked clothes while she lay down looking lifeless." Nelikia's stepmother, Naisiae Wuapari joins in to narrate how they found her.

"In anger, the men speared the hyena to death while Nelikia was rushed to the nearest health centre at Mashuuru," Naisiae said. The health centre is 20 kilometres from the scene of the attack and health personnel there could only administer first aid to the poor woman whom they referred to the district hospital in Kajiado over 100km away. "This was the beginning of Nelikia's long stay at hospital. From Kajiado, she was referred to Kenyatta National Hospital where she was to stay for eight months," Nelikia's stepmother interjects.

At Kenyatta, her badly damaged forearms were amputated. Later she was fitted with a hook on one arm but her body rejected it. In a bid to help her get

*A sympathiser, Mrs. Esther Parsaris has become a close friend of Nelikia and is importing an artificial arm for her at a cost of Sh150,000*

limited use of her remaining arms, the inner and outer bones (ulna and radius) have been separated in an operation at the Kikuyu Hospital but this has not earned her much independence. A sympathiser, Mrs. Esther Parsaris has become a close friend of Nelikia and is importing an artificial arm at the cost of Sh150,000. Mrs. Parsaris also donated 200 T-Shirts, which were sold by other well-wishers and the proceeds went to Nelikia's account.

Some well-wishers, mainly from the Department of Social Services have formed the Friends of Nelikia Welfare Group that was registered on October 13, 1997. The group was an initiative of Mrs. Phoebe Mollel, the district women's programmes organiser in the department of Social Services. Mrs. Mollel is the chairperson of the nine-member group.

"Membership is however open to all who are willing to assist Nelikia and donations of whatever amount and kind are welcome, Mrs. Mollel told "Nomadic News". I visited Nelikia's home in the company of some members of the group who were on their monthly visit to deliver foodstuff and clothes to her.

"The clothes and shoes are a personal donation from the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Director, Dr. Nehemiah Rotich," Mrs. Mollel told me. This was in addition to Sh25,000 he and his friends had given to her earlier in the year.

Since tragedy struck, Nelikia has received assistance from many people. Among the first was the Intermediary Technology Development Group (ITDG) an NGO, which runs a Maasai housing project in parts of the district. ITDG built an improved house with two rooms and a kitchen for Nelikia and her children.

"But the house is now falling apart as termites have eaten the timber supporting the mud walls," Nelikia told us. Her primary need is a house on the part of the farm the family has allocated to her.

Nelikia would also like to ensure that her children get a good education and would therefore appreciate any help that would help her realize this wish. She is extremely grateful to all those who have come to her aid since the tragedy because without them it would have been virtually impossible to cope with the tragedy.

Anyone wishing to assist Nelikia can channel donations through the Friends of Nelikia Welfare Group c/o Semi-arid Rural Development Programme (SARDEP), P.O. BOX 213 Kajiado-Telephone (0301) 21052, fax number 21216 or to her account at the Kenya Commercial Bank, Kajiado Branch Number 191 10 905 0.



# Sora Ali Galgalo-The man who helped end the Shifta war

By Ali Abdi

**F**lashback 1963: Newly independent Kenya was facing its first acid test. The residents of the vast region of the colonial Northern Frontier Districts (NFD) are up in arms. They wanted to cede and be part of Somalia. A secessionist movement with an armed wing came into being and the newly independent government was in dilemma. The bloody shifta war of 1966 finally crushed the rebellion at the stronghold of the secessionists but the government's diplomacy paid dividends in NFD.

The colonial NFD province comprised the capital Isiolo (cosmopolitan), Marsabit, Moyale (both predominantly Borana), Garissa, Wajir and Mandera (inhabited mainly by Somali clans). Kanu's 19th senator and the first MP for Moyale, Ali Sora Galgalo was an instrumental figure in ensuring that NFD remained part and parcel of the Republic of Kenya. The Senator, as everybody from Isiolo fondly knows him, gave me an appointment after I expressed an interest in wanting to interview him.

In the two bed-roomed mud house I chatted with this man who once joked and dined with the famous Chinese communist leader, Mao Tse Tung among other world dignitaries in the 60's. Sora Galgalo's political career began in 1962 when he resigned as a police inspector to take up a job as a Senator for Marsabit (which included Moyale) in the upper House.

How did he get his new job? He got his orders through a letter dispatched from the office of the colonial governor instructing him to resign and take up the new job.

"They (the colonial government) must have gone through their records and found me as one of the elites from the region who qualified for the job," the



'Senator' Ali Sora Galgalo shows son Hassan his picture of a trip he took to Peking in 1963.

former senator said. In a short time he rose to become the secretary of Senators Parliamentary group. Between 1962 and 1963 he became Assistant Government Agent and outside his political career he joined the Kenya Chamber of Commerce as its Public Relations Officer.

Galgalo was born in 1931 in Moyale according to the book *Who is Who* in

senator Galgalo for advice on the affairs of NFD after the first African DC for Isiolo, the late David Dabasso Wabera was assassinated by bandits supporting the secessionist movement in 1962. NFD residents like the late Wabera who were in the government were perceived as collaborators and a decree to kill them was pronounced.

*Sora Galgalo's political career began in 1962 when he resigned as a police inspector to take up a job as a Senator for Marsabit (which included Moyale) in the Upper House.*

Who and how was the seed for secession sown? The Senator blames the British colonial government's administrative policy. The six districts forming the NFD region had not been incorporated into the rest of the country since Kenya became Britain's sphere of

influence. Secondly, the residents, on the run up to independence, were made to believe that they would get a separate country.

"Between 1962 and 1963, NFD was electrified, courtesy of a promise by the

East Africa between 1965-1966 and educated at Pumwani Government African school and Kijabe AIM. On completion of his schooling, he joined the police force. He was a Senator for three years and Moyale MP up to 1969 when the late Haji Osman Araru visited him. The late founding father of the Nation, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta turned to

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British but the hope diminished and all hell broke loose..." Galgalo said.

Feeling betrayed by the British, the residents armed themselves against the government and the only alternative was to join Somalia, which supported the movement secretly.

Politicians and the chiefs were used to disorientate and break up the movement. In Isiolo the late Daudi Wabera and senior chief Galma Dido spearheaded the campaign but were killed by the rebels.

In Marsabit and Moyale senator Galgalo, Guke Galgalo and the late Ilaisamis M. Haji Adichareh played a major role through formation of associations and political parties allied to KANU. The Northern Peoples Patriotic Party (NPPP) and Northern Peoples United Association (NPUA) led by Adi Charels and Galgalo respectively played a major role i.e. preparing the region for a joint independence with the rest of Kenya and control the secessionists.

Residents of Moyale and Marsabit districts were easily convinced to join the rest of the country and denounce the movement and the diplomacy paid dividends. NEP was considered a staunch supporter of the idea of seceding to Somali. However, Isiolo, which was also inhabited by the Haudi and Issack clans from Northern Somalia, proved a thorn in the flesh in Kenyatta's government. The Shifta insurgency of 1966 assumed the trend of a guerilla war and the government was inflicted a big blow until it adopted the ruthless and indiscriminate tactics mainly in Isiolo district.

The war between the rag-tag rebels and the government was violent and raged up to 1969. Galgalo led a team of local

politicians on a campaign trail to convince their people to lay down arms. They capitalised on ethnic rivalry between Boranas and the Somalis. They told their people to choose either being part of Kenya or be ruled by the Somalis. Recalling old historical rivalry, the Boranas chose to be in Kenya. Galgalo says he disagreed with the secessionists

***Galgalo led a team of local politicians on a campaign trail to convince their people to lay down arms. They capitalized on ethnic rivalry between Boranas and the Somalis.***

not out of sheer ethnic rivalry but out of conviction and self-conscience.

"I had a vision of a prosperous Boran nation. It was sad we could not get it because we were half here (Kenya) and half there (Ethiopia). The other option was to remain Kenya," he says.

"Why not Somalia?" "Look at how they (Somalis) are," he replies referring to the current stateless Somalia. However the Senator regrets the violent trend, which was experienced mostly at Isiolo. "We advised the government against the use of excessive force but we were ignored," he says.



*Sora with wife Amina and grandchildren Saadia (right) and Darmi at their house.*

When a concentration camp was set up in Garbatulla and the scorch earth tactic effected, the then MP for Isiolo South, Adan Wako Bonya quit KANU in protest and joined Odinga's camp.

Galgalo says both Kenya and the colonial government should compensate the residents of the region. He blames

Britain for misleading the residents and the government for committing crime against its own citizens. Apart from the anti-secessionist campaign, Galgalo moved a motion in 1967, which called for improvement of veterinary services in Northern Kenya.

The motion was unanimously approved despite amendments made by the then Agriculture Minister Bruce Mackenzie.

He recalls his parliamentary days with nostalgia. He made 18 trips to the United States and attended a month's course on parliamentary procedure at the House of Lords, West Minister Abbey in Britain.

His most memorable trip was when he led a delegation of 20 KANU MPs on a weeklong tour of China in 1963 where the famous Chinese communist leader, the late Mao Tse Tung, hosted them. After losing his parliamentary seat, he was appointed as a District Officer and served in the Provincial Administration for ten years between 1970 and 1979.

In 1981 he joined Pan American Airlines (Pan Am) as a security officer but quit in 1983 after he started experiencing a hearing problem as a result of brutal attack by gangsters.

Galgalo who now leads a quiet life in Moyale town is married to Amina and has six children and his first-born daughter is married to Ford Kenya nominated, MP Mohamed Galgalo.



# Marketing has let down livestock traders

By Ali Abdi

**P**astoralism in Kenya is viewed as a primitive form of economic activity and pastoralists have been subjected to untold suffering with glaring neglect, condemnation and inappropriate development strategies in the areas they inhabit. A lot of misconception and myths have been associated with this group of people and they have been accused of being irrational, conservative and not conscious of the harm they do to the environment. However, pastoralism is deeply rooted in the social fabric of the pastoralists. It has been acknowledged by scholars as it embodies an integral part of their culture, their identity.

Pastoralists have not only to make do with difficult natural difficulties such as harsh weather but also lack of market for their livestock. The origin of these problems in Northern Kenya can be traced back to 1951 when the British colonial government condemned and restricted movement of animals because the region is wrought with contagious Bovine Pleural Pneumonia (CBPP). At independence, the livestock marketing division (LMD) replaced the colonial African Livestock Marketing Organisation (ALMO). LMD acted as an alternative buyer of livestock along with the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC) but these operations ended in 1984 and 1987 respectively.

Thus livestock keepers have never enjoyed a ready market and have been subjected to untold exploitation by middlemen for many years. For example a Borana zebu bull, considered the best beef producing worldwide goes for as little as Sh4,000 (about US\$60). Eighty per cent of the total land in Kenya is basically rangeland wherever indigenous breeds of cattle, goats, sheep and camels do very well. It



*A herdsman grazing his livestock. Poor marketing is blamed for poor livestock*

is a vital component of the overall agricultural sector economy where it contributes 10 per cent of the country's GDP. Its development trend notwithstanding

According to the 1994 Sessional Paper on National Food Policy some of the renewed functions that were to benefit the pastoralists included assisting

refrigerated trucks to transport the meat.

Greater participation of producers in management and meat marketing was to be done to improve pastoralists' financial status through soft loans and purchase of majority shares in KMC.

The Sessional Paper identified market information at a liberalised industry as the greatest single constraint in both livestock and livestock products marketing. The paper considered broad dissemination of timely and quality market information to farmers, traders and consumers as a basic public responsibility. However, the renewed functions of the paper became history just like the previous ones of between 1963 and 1992.

To mention but a few, no abattoirs were set up in Isiolo or Garissa while KMC is yet to be revived.

With exception of lack of market information the livestock social sector

*Thus livestock keepers have never enjoyed a ready market and have been subjected to untold exploitation by middlemen for many years.*

them in difficult areas where private stock traders cannot operate profitably. They were also to facilitate establishment of abattoirs at range areas terminal markets by private entrepreneurs in order to cut down on transport cost and reduce spread of diseases. Areas to be considered for slaughterhouses were Isiolo and Garissa towns. They were also to buy

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in Northern Kenya faces the following constraints: -

◆ **Infrastructure:** These include poor roads network, collapsed holding grounds, stock routes and market outlets. Transport is a nightmare during rainy seasons where vehicles (trucks and other four wheel drive) take as long as ten days to cover a distance of 600 kilometers between the border town of Moyale and Isiolo.

◆ **Security and market risks:** Northern Kenya, 36 years after independence has continued to be as insecure as a country at war. Bandits and cattle rustlers, armed with sophisticated weapons rule this part of the country. The Government spends millions of shillings of its budget for the provincial administration and the police have been unable to contain the menace.

In mid 1999, the only livestock market in Isiolo district located at Kirira trading centre was closed down. It had just been reopened three weeks before after bandits killed four traders.

◆ **High marketing costs:** This is caused by frequent enforcement of quarantine measures, lack of transport forcing herders to trek long distances with the cattle. There is also the problem of long distance between production areas and terminal market outlets

◆ **Disease control restrictions:** There are no veterinary services, no dips spray and this has exposed livestock to numerous diseases such as east coast fever and foot and mouth. This has resulted in frequent quarantine imposition.

◆ **Weight loss:** Resulting from transportation stress. Animals are usually transported aboard trucks and are on the road for as long as two weeks between Moyale and Nairobi's Dagorreti Market. The animals can lose an estimated 4 to 10% of body weight on the journey.

◆ **Disorganised terminal markets:** The KMC was closed down in 1987 and other markets like Dagorreti, Kariobangi and Dandora occasionally get flooded with livestock and offer prices far below production costs.

◆ **Traffic price and veterinary officers:** Producers complain bitterly about heavy traffic police and veterinary officers who insist on kick

Historically, pastoral communities have relied on the one-to-one secret system of price termination as opposed to modern open systems like auctions. The outdated information network is unreliable and inaccurate and cattlemen owners have to contend with unscrupulous middlemen.

Livestock traders do not know markets that offer best animals at most reasonable prices just like the owners do not know whether they can get the best prices for their animals with the least marketing costs and risks. The government policy, planning and food supply position has failed in the livestock sector while institutions like universities and research centres have done little to come up with desired documents on livestock marketing.

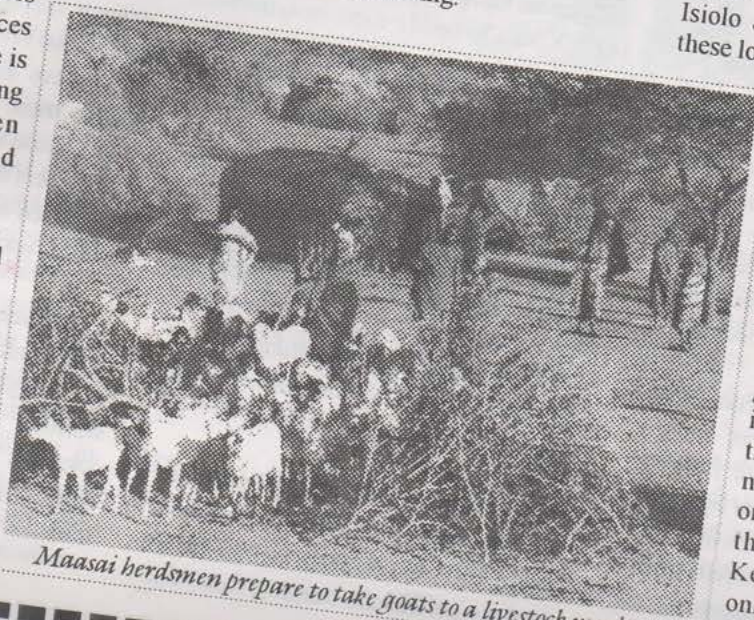
Another major obstacle to livestock development in the country is the failure of those in authority to recognise, invest in and market this sub-sector. For example Kenya's livestock products especially beef has failed to meet the required standard set by the World Trade Organization (WTO) particularly after the closure of KMC.

Entrepreneurs like the Saudia Livestock Agency that used to export live animals to the Middle East countries crumbled due to political interference. It is sad to note that tourist lodges within Isiolo and Samburu game reserves get their meat supply from businessmen in Nairobi while the animals are brought in from Isiolo and Garissa. The managers of these lodges claim they do this because there is no quality (read hygiene) beef or mutton in Isiolo or Maralal.

Expatriates working in Isiolo buy their meat from Nanyuki town, 77 kilometres away from other dominant Kenyans who run high-class butcheries. The government and the international community through donor agencies and non-governmental organisations should rescue the nomads of Northern Kenya by developing its only source of livestock.

*There are no veterinary services, no dips spray and this has exposed livestock to numerous diseases such as east coast fever and foot and mouth.*

backs and bribes from traders as they transport their animals to the far away markets. Lack of timely and quality information is considered to be the leading cause of poor local livestock marketing.



*Maasai herdsman prepare to take goats to a livestock market.*



# Konso, a people with no place to call home

By Ali Abdi

It is 1 pm and Dana Mengiste is a worried man. Weak from a bout of malaria, he has not been able to get any casual job for a while. That means no supper for his family of seven. Mengiste and about 600 other Konso are coolies in Moyale, Kenya. They originally came from Konso Woreda district, Southern Ethiopia. They fled from their motherland to live on the Ethiopian side of Moyale and on the nomad's land along the common border to look for manual jobs on the Kenyan side.

In Moyale, the Konso have no names. Everyone, including a child old enough to speak call them Konso or Hamali (Kiswahili for coolie). Communicating with them is difficult because the Konso have a dialect that is not known even to their employers, the populous Borana of Moyale. However, Mengiste who has lived in the area for the past 20 years speaks a little Oromo and through my guide, Shukri Wario of FARM Africa, I was able to get his name, which he at first seemed to have forgotten.

He insisted that his name was Konso and not Mengiste, a name not mentioned by anybody including his wife. The last time anybody called him by that name was 30 years ago. That person was his late mother, Talbayo. One outstanding feature that I noted among the Konso men is their mode of dress. They wear dirty, worn out shirts and shorts. My guide, Shukri gave Mengiste a long trouser on the first day of our visit but when we went back the following day, he had trimmed it to a pair of shorts.

When I asked him why he had done that, Mengiste replied: "Trousers are for those who lead a luxurious life. Besides, I need the extra material." For Mengiste and his people it seems the life they lead cannot be transformed. Although Mengiste wore a disillusioned faced mixed with fear underneath his eyes one

could read the longing for a better life. The Konso, whose population is estimated at 100,000 mostly live in Southern Ethiopia but a few have illegally migrated to Kenya and can be found in Moyale and Marsabit districts.

Short and heavily built, the Konso people unlike other Ethiopians have the physical features of the Bantu of East Africa. Their dominant neighbours - the Amharas, Tigreys and even the Oromos - despise them and treat them like outcasts or slaves.

Shukri told me a Konso life is that of being at work during the day and a few hours of drinking at night before one sleeps. Of Mengiste's six children, only two were born after he migrated to Kenya in 1979. What is the immediate remedy for the Konso? According to a manual by the FARM Africa 1998 1999 annual/Review, there exists a Konso capacity building project called Konso Development Association (KDA). KDA, with funding from FARM Africa has been able to set up a dairy goat project at Southern Ethiopia.

"The project is designed to harness the indigenous knowledge, skills and efforts of the Konso, to build a more sustainable and robust agricultural base that is able to withstand the occurrence of drought. The KDA is an officially registered and recognised local NGO, but it has not yet had the resources to tackle many of the development problems that it regards as important. They are one of the indigenous people who face possible extinction as a result of their disadvantaged position. Farming in their homeland is difficult and the constant drought is a frustrating reality.

Constant drought meant constant hardship in the 80's and 90s, and most Konso were left with no option but to migrate elsewhere in search of food. The

drought that hit Ethiopia in 1984 drastically reduced the Konso population, as they were the hardest hit and the least recipients of relief food. These people are in dire need of capacity building. They need a base to start economic activity that can help them better their lot. Shukri, who works for FARM Africa said very few of Konso children go to school in Ethiopia while Kenyan education officials say none of them has been enrolled in the schools in Marsabit or Moyale.

In Moyale/Ethiopia, no Konso child was in school during our visit although most parents from other ethnic groups take their children to schools on the Kenyan side where the standard of education is regarded superior. The exodus of Konso into Moyale has made labour very cheap and the demand has outstripped supply. As little as Sh20 is the fee for carrying a 100 kg sack of sugar for a distance of ten kilometers. If one Konso rejects the offer, which is rare, there is always another one nearby ready to seize the opportunity.

Since I had not seen any Konso woman on the streets of Moyale, I decided to find out where they were hiding. Konso women are specialists in making the traditional brew *borde* or *cheka*. Their customers are the poor but mostly Konso men. They, like thousands of Third World women are drawers of water and hewers of wood. They are confined in the open-air markets selling their brew at throw away prices.

A container of approximately 500 ml costs a paltry Sh 5. Five such containers are enough to condemn a man to a deep slumber in seconds. Mengiste, who consoles himself with a glass or two daily says the brew is good for them as it makes them forget their troubles.



# Banditry and drought wreak havoc

By Noor Ali

**T**HE vast northern region has for a long time been a kind of battlefield, courtesy of organised bands of lawless merchants of death, commonly referred to as bandits. They frequently raid, kill and loot property as the different ethnic groups in these areas engage in clan feuds that has displaced many people and led to loss of many lives. Recurrent drought has also claimed many lives and disrupted the lives of many people in this region and because of this, little economic and social activity takes place compounding the already desolate situation. The availability of automatic guns in this area has resulted in increased cattle raids.

Cattle rustling has become for some, a commercial activity. The raids have also led to artificial pasture shortages as pastoralists avoid some rich grazing areas fearing for their lives and cattle raids. The bandits when they come, kill and steal at will. They kidnap women and young girls but in most cases rape them just within their homes. Cattle raid notwithstanding, other factors have contributed to underdevelopment in this region.

The biggest culprit can be said to be the lifestyle of the pastoral communities themselves. Pastoralism—as the dominant activity in arid and semi arid areas that covers about 80 per cent of the country — has proved to be a major challenge to development of education in these areas. In the recent past, many pastoral families have been reduced to paupers after losing livestock to drought and banditry. A report from the Garbatulla development office states

that about 300 families in Garbatulla and Sericho division lost 30,000 heads of cattle and camels to drought and banditry in 1996.

“Most of these people moved to urban centres after losing their only source of livelihood as their children dropped out of school and were employed as herders by better off families,” says the report. Besides the mass exodus to urban centres, poverty as a result of drought has led to conflicts among the various clans. A drought assessment report prepared by the Action-Aid Kenya in Merti and Sericho division of Isiolo early

parents cannot provide or guarantee even a single meal during the drought. Father Ojja says the centre that caters for about 600 pupils at Merti, Bulesa and Korobesa has helped to sustain enrolment and concentration among pupils.

The Isiolo District Education Officer, Mr. Timothy Ndila, says persistent drought has adversely affected the financial status of many families. “Payment rate of school fees in secondary schools has been very poor and a number of students have abandoned school due to these problems.” He says widespread poverty caused by drought and banditry to these communities has denied many children an opportunity to education. Ndila says students in the six secondary schools in the district owe more than Sh12 million in outstanding fees.

In Samburu, the situation is not different. At Wamba Secondary, students owe more than Sh2 million in outstanding fees. The school administrator says parents’ paying capacity has been eroded by loss of livestock to drought and banditry.



*Pastoralists suffer human and livestock loss when bandits and drought strike.*

last year indicated that more than 160 children in the pre-primary and lower primary schools dropped out of school to join their parents who moved in search of pasture. A similar report by the district drought management unit showed a shortage of food in many households as milk yields reduced.

The head of the Merti Macci Education Centre that runs a school-feeding programme, Father Sisto Ojja said many children drop out of school because their

Last year the Samburu East MP, Sammy Leshore told Parliament that more than 15 primary schools that had been closed down two years before were yet to reopen. A modern and well built KOM Primary School that was constructed by Action-Aid Kenya along the Samburu-Isiolo district boarder has been converted to an army camp after the communities fled the area due to insecurity.



# Moran Turned Pharmacist

## Profile Of Johnson Parmuat Osoi

By Penny Nyakio

**H**e single handedly killed seven cheetahs and three leopards but this did not give him the thrill he later felt when in a group of more than 50 young men, they killed a lion. He was now a total man. I listened mouth agape as Johnson Parmuat Osoi narrated these achievements and I couldn't help marvelling at the diversity of yardsticks used to measure achievement. One may be forgiven for imagining this 26-year-old man in full Maasai traditional regalia when he spoke of his life. The truth is that he was dressed in a smart navy blue suit on top of which was a spotless white overcoat usually worn by medics. Parmuat is today the pharmacist in charge at the Guru Nanak Ramgarhia Sikh Hospital in Nairobi.

He nearly missed this position when the magnetic pull to moranism got the better of him, prompting him to drop off from a national secondary school and going to raid cattle and roam the vast wilderness surrounding his village. Parmuat was born on March 9, 1973, to Mzee Mereyian ole Osoi and his wife Tumpes Wuapari at Oloongulugum village of Dalalekutuk in Central Kajiado.

"I joined Oloontulugum Primary School

This achievement did not quite excite young Parmuat for as he prepared to go to school, his peers were plaiting their hair, others were applying ochre on their bodies after which they adopted a walking gait that left Parmuat green with envy.

"This mental picture of how attractive my age mates looked haunted me throughout 1988 while at Nairobi School and by the end of the year, I could take it no more," Parmuat recalls. "After the first term in 1989, I gathered my belongings and said good bye to school to the amazement of my classmates and teachers."

"I immediately had my hair plaited and had my body decorated but I was still too skinny compared to my friends who had been feasting on roast meat with little mental work," he narrates, "but I soon caught up with them." Parmuat and other morans spent days on end either hunting lions or cattle raids. They carried out raids as far as Ukambani areas of Kalemwani and Konza. During the raids, the morans would



*Parmuat at a public rally in his home village.*

*"I immediately had my hair plaited and had my body decorated but I was still too skinny compared to my friends who had been feasting on roast meat with little mental work," he narrates, "but I soon caught up with them."*

in 1979 and in 1987 obtained top marks in KCPE and was admitted to the Nairobi School," he says. His parents organised a funds drive and a total of Sh23,000 was realised for his school fees for the first year.

move in groups of five while the lion hunt required a minimum of 50.

After one year of this freestyle life, Eunoto, the day when morans graduate into men arrived. Parmuat and his friends

freshened their braids and applied fresh coats of ochre on the now well-toned muscles. "We stood tall and handsome and heads turned wherever we passed," he told *Nomadic News*. This elation was however short lived. The days that followed the graduation ceremony were an anti-climax for Parmuat. He became bored by continued idleness, as his father did not have many cows that he could look after. At the same time, his mother though illiterate begged him to go back to school and he gave in to her wishes.

"So one day in 1990, I packed my belongings and headed for my old school where a rude shock awaited me. My former classmates whom I had left in Form

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Two were now in Form Three and the vacancy I had created when I left had long been filled," he said with a tinge of regret in his voice.

He went back home a dejected person. Parmuat counts himself lucky. One of his neighbours, Reverend Baxton Kasyiani came to his rescue. He introduced Parmuat to the Assistant Education Officer (AEO) for Mashuuru Division where he explained his predicament. The AEO, then a Mr. Anthony Mepukori immediately took the matter to the District Education Officer who secured two places for Parmuat; one at the Olkejuado High School and another at Kimana Secondary School in Loitokitok Division.

"I chose Olkejuado High School and I joined Form Two in February 1990," Parmuat says. His uncle who is a pastor with the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya Church at Emali paid his school fees for the whole of that year. For the rest of his secondary school education, a German NGO that was sponsoring several students in parts of the Rift Valley Province paid his school fees.

By a stroke of luck one of the students they were sponsoring dropped out of school and the NGO said it was willing to pay for a serious student. The then Olkejuado High deputy head teacher, Ms. Lucy Mbutia, picked Parmuat. Parmuat decided to put all his efforts in his schoolwork. The mistake he had made a year earlier had cost him a chance in a better school but he would make up for it, he vowed.

During the holidays, he worked as a night watchman at the residence of a Dr. Nizar Varjee at Gigiri and when the job was not available, he did stints as a labourer in neighbouring farms

to raise pocket money. He remembers once getting a manual construction job at the current Village Market at Gigiri.

The fact that he could have missed out on education had apparently jolted young Parmuat and immediately after rejoining Olkejuado High School he became a born again Christian. He was a house captain and chairperson of the school's Christian Union. Parmuat sat for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) in 1992 where he obtained a C+ grade. He had vowed never to accommodate idleness in his life again and instead of just sitting at home while planning what to do next he got a job with Securicor Kenya as a security guard and was posted to Runda Estate.

He did this work for only three months and then decided to serve God as an evangelist. He moved to the Gospel Revival Centre in Ruaka area of Kiambu where he served under the guidance of a Bishop Mdzomba. This stint as an evangelist was also short-lived. In September 1993, Parmuat was admitted to the College of Health Professions at the Kenyatta National Hospital where he

successfully studied for a diploma in Pharmacy. The Gospel Revival Centre offered to pay his fees for the whole of the first year. His uncle, Reverend Osoi, supplemented the centre's contribution.

"During my second year, my community back home organised a funds drive to raise my fees. I was to share the money with one of my siblings and a neighbour's two children who were in teachers training colleges," Parmuat told *Nomadic News*. The money raised was not enough and in the third year, Parmuat had to look for part time jobs in pharmacies and retail chemists to raise his fees. Come 1996 and Parmuat was among the proud graduates at a big graduation ceremony held at the college. Immediately he got a job at the Kenyatta National Hospital. In 1998, he moved to greener pastures at the Guru Nanak Hospital where he is still serving as the pharmacist in charge.

In that same year, he married Jane Kishoyian and they have a son, Collins Maiyani. Parmuat hopes to pursue a Bachelor of Pharmacy Degree abroad.

He shudders to think what might have become of him had he ignored his mother's advice to go back to school. He says most of his age mates are now polygamists with many children but with meager incomes, which cannot cater for their families as well as they would like. Few of their children have a hope of ever going to school.

The plight of his peers is not lost on Parmuat. He plans to start an awareness campaign to sensitise his community on the importance of education. "I often attend public functions where I try to influence my fellow Maasai to embrace education," he said. "Recently, I bought 15 cows and 35 goats for my parents to pass the message that education gives one purchasing power and can be translated into the livestock they love so much."



*Parmuat the pharmacist at a laboratory.*



# Henriette fights for the cause of indigenous peoples

By Nomadic News Writer

**C**oming from an indigenous community, she was a teacher and a minister before she moved on to one of the top most United Nations Organisations, International Labour Organisation (ILO) as chief technical advisor. What she has achieved as a member of an indigenous tribe, is a far away dream to many women coming from other indigenous tribes in Africa. Henriette Rasmussen is an Eskimo from the Inuit community in Greenland. The Inuits are the indigenous people and sole inhabitants in the high Arctic occupying one third of North Pole, Greenland, Canada, Alaska, and Russia. Their total population is only 120,000.

Henriette is a former Minister in Greenland. She went to school and trained as a teacher in English and Danish. She taught in both primary and secondary schools in 1976-79. Then she taught in Alaska as an exchange teacher. Later she studied journalism and worked

in Radio Greenland in 1979-83. The Greenland National Radio and Television have connected cultures and great distances together. The transmission on TV and Radio is only in Inuit language. Previously there were some programmes transmitted in Danish but now broadcasting is totally Greenland from 7.00 o'clock to 11.00pm.

Henriette was among the first students

*She learnt to negotiate. She could now bring out an argument. "I was now able to shout and not shut-up even if my ideas were not liked," Henriette says.*

in Greenland journalism school where women were the majority. After a brief stint in journalism, Henriette went back to education, heading the Department of Radio Education for radio and TV broadcasts to school.

"But my political ambitions were running high and I decided to join active politics," says Henriette. "I first became a member of the Municipal Council in Nuuk-the capital city of Greenland. This was my initiation into politics. I was the only member of my party, the opposition," says Henriette.

What Henriette gained in politics was the ability to promote herself. She had to be pro-active and forget about shyness. Hence she became a respected member of the council. She learnt to negotiate. She could now bring out an argument, convince a person and when not winning be persistent and fight on.

"I was now able to shout and not shut-up even if my ideas were not liked," Henriette says. After eight years Henriette was elected to parliament. She decided to resign from the Municipal Council and concentrate on Parliament. In Greenland, the Council and Parliament run parallel but one can be in both at the same time. In 1991-95, Henriette was Greenland's Minister for Social Affairs. She worked in Parliament for 11 years before retiring in 1995. "But this is just a short break. I intend to go back, she says with determination.

What Henriette liked most about being a minister is that you have a secretary. "As a minister you get power and support. When you have an idea, you only have to float it and leave it to the experts to work on. The only problem with being in politics is that you are exposed," she says. "You cannot hide. You have to struggle to protect the private life of your children and family."

"As a politician or minister you need to be open to the people or your constituents. You must inform them

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Silole Mpoke, a Maasai from Kenya talks to Henriette, an Eskimo from the Inuit community in Greenland at the Nairobi conference.



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about what you want to achieve," says Henriette. "Openness and transparency is the key to your success and co-operating with your people and the media.

"If you are closed up, the media will be hard on you. As a politician, you need to be open and transparent since you are working for society and this makes your life easier. "That you are on the top post doesn't make you any different from the citizen at the bottom."

Political life in Greenland is young. It was imperative that the Inuits created their own space and didn't inherit corrupt politics. Currently Henriette is the chief technical advisor in the project for promotion of International Labour Organisation Policy and Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

Her duty is to raise awareness and encourage the application of the ILO standards on indigenous and tribal peoples and also enhance the capacity in knowing and taking advantage of these standards. Henriette's job also includes encouraging dialogue between governments and indigenous and tribal peoples in policy formation, and by strengthening the capacity of indigenous and tribal people at the regional, national and local levels. This is hoped will facilitate harmonious co-existence with respect for each other's differences.

Henriette was in Kenya on 23-25 August 1999 for the African Indigenous Women Organisation conference. She easily integrated with the rural women who came from different parts of Kenya and others who came from as far as Morocco, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and South Africa.



*Henriette pays attention to the conference proceedings.*

Henriette says she has always been fascinated by Africa and has never felt alienated when with Africans.

As an indigenous person, she loves to experience black people who are proud Africans in their own land. Having lived in a country that was colonised by Denmark, Henriette knows what it means to be discriminated against and feel inferior. A mother of two, a girl aged 20 and a boy aged 23, Henriette says African women have impressed her as articulate and knowledgeable. She describes the rural indigenous women as articulate, knowledgeable and expressed themselves competently.

The Inuits have a strong and healthy culture of sophisticated technology. They used oil from seals and whales for heating and burning. Their food comes from land and sea. In Greenland, the

sun never goes down beyond the horizon in the two or three months of summer and the people will experience the midnight sun.

Henriette comes from a family of eight siblings. She is the first among three sisters and four brothers. Having come from a large family, Henriette feels that her children are very lonely because they are only two. She is sad that she has not been able to give her children the feeling of security of being in a large family.

"I even find the Chinese policy of one child peculiar," she says.

Her success has been in bringing up her children since they love their culture. "They are curious about the rest of the world but they love where they belong. Her children, however, have been unable to adapt to living in Europe. "They don't like Europe," she says. "They prefer staying at home." She is all by herself in Geneva while the rest of the family is in Greenland.

Henriette's parents are both typical Greenlanders. Both her paternal and maternal grandparents were hunters. They hunted in the sea from a *kyak* (a tiny seal skin boat). It was a one-man boat but sophisticated and water proof. Although her grandparents were hunters, Henriette's parents were industrialists. When Henriette retired from politics, she wanted to see the world before she was too old. But she never got that chance as her government appointed her to the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

She started working for ILO in 1996. Henriette manages the ILO project for the Promotion of ILO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Geneva. She works together with another colleague known as Chandra Roy. She qualified for her job because of her political background. In her country, the Inuits who are the sole inhabitants of Greenland, are one of the few indigenous people who have negotiated for self-autonomy and succeeded.



# HARD TIMES alter old traditions

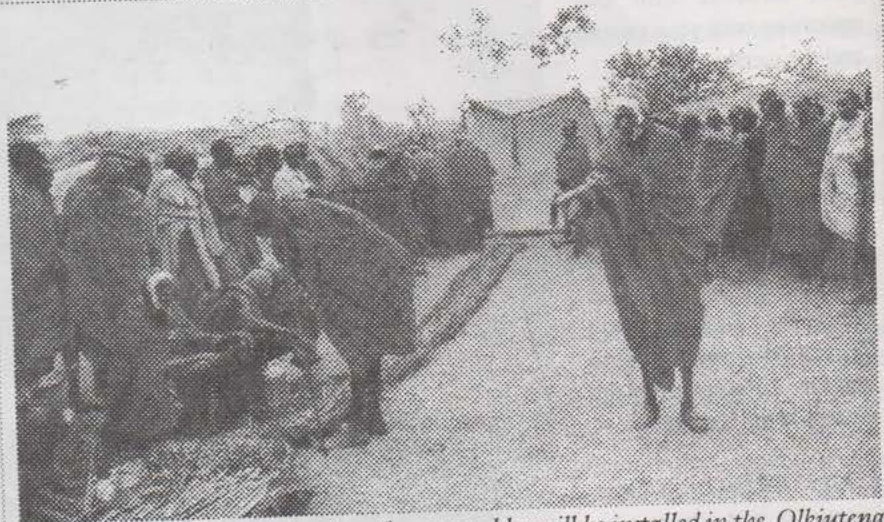
By Michael Tiampati

**I**t all started with 38-year-old Oltmati ole Tardoi, a member of the Rang'irang' age group. He intended to have his social status elevated from that of a common family man to an important elder. Ole Tardoi did careful planning and consultations last December before he could perform this important Olkiuteng Loolbaa ritual or the ox of the wounds, used to cleanse a man thus making a division between his importance and his past life. Preparations were then set on high gear and as Ole Tardoi himself willfully confirmed: "It is a ritual which every young elder longs for and now that it's finally here I am overjoyed."

Nine containers of honey beer were brewed for this day. There was a gourd without a crack in which the beer was brewed, it being the most important gourd of the ceremony. In the heart of Maasailand a festive mood hang in the air around Kikinyian village. Olenkamasiai, an age mate of the elder performing the ceremony said: "It is not everyday that the aroma of the roast-meat wafts the air considering the situation that we are living in. Such a feast is a privilege and both the hyenas and the birds can tell that something out of the ordinary is about to take place."

At dawn Ole Tardoi with an uncle from the mother's side, both donning the ceremonial Elkilani went outside to perform the ritualistic prayer.

As darkness gave way to daylight, the women embarked on their traditional duty of milking and sprinkling the first drops towards the rising sun as thanks giving to God and the ancestors. Soon preparations got underway in readiness for the day with instructions being shouted here and there and one would not help but admire the order and coordination existing in the social structure of these traditional community.



*Maasai elders bless the path where the young elder will be installed in the Olkiuteng Loolbaa ritual. - Pictures by M. Tiampati.*

Ole Nkukuu, a guest from a neighbouring manyatta, said: "Everybody from children to the old know their obligations and that is why there is no need to remind anybody of what is expected of them."

It is this co-operation that is fibre holding the community together. Out in the forest came the throaty voices of men singing. All eyes turn towards the direction of the godfather group of the Rang'irang' age-set. They are all dressed in the traditional Ilkilani-an outfit made from treated hide and decorated with beads. Their faces smeared with ochre and all clasp the authoritative flywhisks as they majestically stride to Ole Tardoi's manyatta. And with this the whole village breaks into song and dance to welcome the distinguished guests without whom the Olkiuteng Loolbaa would not happen.

Meanwhile, Ole Tardoi, the elder holding the ceremony would normally have offered a faultless ox, but this time though, he could only afford a sheep. This was due to the reduced number of cows owing to drought and the demands

of modern life. He apologised by saying: "I have only 20 cows and one bull and if I slaughter it I would have none to sire calves. And besides what would I sell to send my children to school or pay hospital bills if someone fell sick?" A logical reason that leaves not a shred of doubt as to the priorities of most Maasai today.

As Ole Tardoi allowed the 40 cows, sheep and goats that the family owns out of the manyatta, the elder of the godfather-group led by 74-year-old Ole Surum trapped the sheep that was to be slaughtered. Then a specially selected group of Ole Tardoi's age-mates let him in the company of his uncle go back home so that his wife could bless the sheep by pouring milk on it. This is done from the forehead down the spine right up to the tail. After the blessing, the sheep is driven by the age-mates and the Olpiro elders to be slaughtered.

The slaughtering took place on the highlands between two olive trees. In the lowlands, according to Olesurum, a member of the godfather group, "where olive trees are rare the ceremony takes

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# Economic empowerment a dream for Kajiado women

By Penny Nyakio

**N**adutari Sikayia's day begins at 5am every morning. She milks the cows, prepares food for the children, does more household chores and then begins the 8km trek to Namanga town to earn her livelihood by selling milk. It should take her between one and a half to two hours to make the trip daily. When business is good it takes her just over an hour to distribute the milk then start the long trek back home, a total of 16km in all.

Nadutari's situation describes that of other women in Kajiado District who depend on selling milk to earn a living. Nadutari's story paints a grim picture of the economic status of women in this part of the country. Most of the women depend on milk sales to make ends meet and for those who don't have cows the situation is worse. Despite working hard this business is almost grinding to a halt. The major problem being that milk is not always available. During the dry season, which is almost half the year, milk is scarce and people have to migrate in search of pasture. At such times no milk is sold. However, when it rains there is plenty of milk and this also presents another problem—prices plummet to almost rock bottom.

Noonkipa Kilel has been selling milk in Kajiado town from as far back as she can remember but has never reached that state of satisfaction. She explains: "The worst part of this business is the poor prices offered for our milk. Prices are never constant and sometimes you wake up not knowing what to expect." Noonkipa's sentiments echo that of her colleagues. In most cases, it is the con-



*Lorna Maika from Kajiado is one of the few women who have been empowered*

sumers who set the prices for the milk, sometimes a litre can cost as little as seven shillings and the women have no choice, they can't afford to take the milk back home.

In cases where the women have set their own prices it does not last due to lack of cooperation among them. Mary Nashipae from Olkiloriti in Kajiado explains: "Most consumers take advantage of the women's ignorance and dictate prices. It is a question of take it or leave it. This puts many women in a compromising situation, and once one or two women compromise, the situation cannot be salvaged."

Mary wishes they could form a co-operative society to help them sell the milk as a block. The women have tried to form a co-operative society before but it just didn't work. Most of the women agree however that forming a co-operative society without having an idea of proper marketing strategies remains an illusion.

However, poor pricing of milk cannot entirely be blamed on the consumers, the women too share the blame. Jack Kimani, a shopkeeper in Namanga town explains: "Initially, the milk we bought from the Maasai women was very good, but that has changed. The women nowadays tamper with the milk by adding either water, cooking fat and even selling diluted powdered milk. We just don't trust the milk anymore, so we buy it cheaply." Strong accusations, but does this happen? Nalepo Medoori says: "We've heard all the complaints but if they are true then it's just a case of a few rotten eggs in the basket."

Another problem faced by these women is long distances to trading centers. Most of the manyattas are located several kilometers away from market centers, deep in the interior. The women therefore have to trek long distances as they can't afford to board matatus. This usually takes most of the day leaving little or no time for other duties. The women's health is also at stake here, not to mention the danger of wild animals and thugs. Incidences of women being attacked by wild animals are rampant. De-

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on foot "if one does not engage in luxuries of a rest". At Nguruman, they cultivate vegetables like *okra*, *Karella* and *brinjals* that they sell to horticultural companies and after making enough money trek back to their country to see how their families are doing. Asked why they make this huge sacrifice for their families, Gimerey pauses for a while and then says: "The Sonjo community puts a lot of pressure on young men. Every young man is expected to marry and raise a family and this enormous responsibility leaves us with no choice but to work hard."

Among the Sonjo, marriages are regarded highly. A wedding ceremony with plenty of beer (made from millet flour, honey and herbs) and food is the talk of the village for months. But such a wedding is only possible after a young man pays 60 goats and ten cows as dowry. "This is a very difficult feat as most young men do not have any livestock," Gimerey, 29, and newly married, told *Nomadic News*.

The young men in the Sonjo community know only too well the frustration of those who cannot raise enough money to enable him marry. "They are given the

derogatory term of 'Wasunji' and are the laughing stock of the village," the young man says. Those who succeed in raising enough money to marry and to fend for their families are sensitive to the plight of those who are not so lucky. "We often help our friends get dowry to enable them acquire the respected status of a married man," Gimerey told us.

When Gimerey and his friends arrived at Ngurman, they leased a virgin piece of land for which a lot had to be done before it could be cultivated. "The task was both dangerous and difficult as we feared we would be attacked by wild animals such as buffaloes. We decided to name the area Congo because then the civil strife in the Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire) was raging. The name has since stuck." The Sonjo, who are Bantus have a lot of similarities with Bantu communities in Kenya and in particular the Kikuyu and Kamba.

Their language is similar to that of the two communities. Their favourite food is a mixture of maize and beans called 'garurum' (read *githeri*) mainly a Kikuyu dish. They also eat dehusked maize (*muthokoi*) a Kamba dish and *ugali*. Asked whether they live in a 'kitara' back home, Gimerey told us that a Sonjo

house back at home is different. "We live together in villages and go to cultivate outside the villages and the 'kitara' are only built by those keeping watch over their crops.

Although they are generally welcomed by the Maasai at the Nguruman area of Magadi in Kajiado District from whom they lease land, the Sonjo are always reminded that they are outsiders "which makes us fear to report to the authorities when our crops are destroyed by the Maasai livestock". Like any other community, the Sonjo have a few rotten potatoes among them, according to Gimerey, who tarnish their name by stealing farm produce and other items.

They have defined a system to compel all to adhere to high moral standards. "The young are not allowed to indulge in alcohol and when they are considered old enough and ready to drink, an elaborate 'weaning' ceremony is held and they are allowed to drink," Gimerey said. During circumcision done to both boys and girls at the onset of puberty, the initiates are advised to be responsible and hard working members of the community, "and that is why we can survive this far from home" one of the two other men stressed.

## CALENDER OF INDIGENOUS MEETINGS 2000

### Dates

20<sup>th</sup> March – 28<sup>th</sup> April  
26<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> March  
10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> April  
  
13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> April  
  
24<sup>th</sup> April - 5<sup>th</sup> May  
  
15<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> May 2000  
June 2000  
24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> July  
31<sup>st</sup> July – 25<sup>th</sup> August  
  
16<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> October

### Organs

Commission on Human Rights - Geneva, Switzerland.  
Ad Hoc inter-sessional working group on Article 8J - Sevilla, Spain.  
Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations - Geneva, Switzerland.  
Advisory Group of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People - Geneva, Switzerland.  
New York role and contribution of Indigenous Peoples to sustainable development during CSD8 - New York, USA.  
Nairobi COP5 - Biodiversity convention meeting - Nairobi, Kenya.  
New York Beijing +5 - New York, USA.  
Working Group on Indigenous Populations - Geneva, Switzerland.  
Sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities - Geneva, Switzerland.  
Working group on the Draft Declaration of Indigenous Peoples - Geneva, Switzerland.