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THE INDIGENOUS WORLD 2006

This Yearbook covers the period January-December 2005. Thanks to the contributions from indigenous and non-indigenous scholars and activists, The Indigenous World 2006 gives an overview of crucial developments in 2005 that have impacted on the indigenous peoples of the world.

The Indigenous World 2006 includes:
- Region and Country reports covering most of the indigenous world
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The Indigenous World is a source of information and an indispensible tool for those who need to be informed about the most recent issues and developments within the indigenous world.

Indigenous Affairs is published 4 times per year  
ISSN 1025-3283

INTERNATIONAL WORK GROUP FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Editor of this issue: Marianne Wiben Jensen
Price: Single copies US$ 7.50 + postage

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Sille Stidsen (Ed.)
IWGIA – 2006
ISBN 87 91563-18-6
576 pages, maps.
Indigenous peoples stress that unless their rights as indigenous peoples, including the right to self-determination, are recognised then the MDGs may do more harm than good to them. Indigenous peoples have often phrased this in terms of ‘development from a rights-based approach’. Focussing on indigenous peoples in Africa, this issue of Indigenous Affairs gives numerous examples of what a rights-based approach entails.

The first MDG is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. At the meeting of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2005 when this MDG was on the agenda, indigenous representatives expressed their concern at the definition of “poverty” within the MDG. Many statements from indigenous organisations stressed that it was restricted to the idea of economic deprivation and did not take into account the denial of social and cultural rights that is a definitive component of indigenous peoples’ poverty. As stressed by Nigel Crawhall in this issue, it is a major error if we reduce poverty reduction merely to a matter of earning one or two dollars a day. For indigenous hunter/gatherers and pastoralists, the non-cash economy is an insurance against hunger and extreme poverty. For the Bushmen of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana, it might be hard to see the advantages of development if this means they have to leave the Game Reserve, with its abundance of fresh meat, roots and other nutrition-rich foods for displacement conditions without proper food and work in the relocation settlements.

At the Fourth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2005, the chairperson Victoria Tauli-Corpuz said, “When we talk about extreme poverty and hunger, for indigenous peoples this is almost synonymous to talking about their increasing alienation from their territories and resources and their diminished capacity to continue producing their traditional foods and engage in traditional livelihoods…We should be able to use the MDG review process to look more deeply into the structural and systemic causes of these and seriously address them. The whole issue of rights and control over territories and resources may be a central issue that has to be dealt with if we are talking about extreme poverty.”

If we are unwilling to link poverty reduction to those relationships that are essential to peoples’ ways of life, development could create poverty. What sense does it make that the average cash income in Tanzania has increased if the pastoral Maasai, Sukuma and Barabaig have become destitute shantytown dwellers because they have lost their lands? Being Maasai, Sukuma or Barabaig entails fundamental relationships for these peoples, such as rights to land and, without these, pastoralists could fall victim to strategies intended to alleviate poverty. The chairperson of the Permanent Forum expressed it in this way, “Because the situation of indigenous and tribal peoples is often not reflected in statistics or is hidden by national averages, there is a concern that efforts to achieve the MDGs could in some cases have a negative impact on indigenous and tribal peoples, while national indicators appear to improve.” And she continued, “(...) The efforts to meet the targets laid down for the achievement of the MDGs could in fact have harmful effects on indigenous and tribal peoples, such as the acceleration of the loss of the lands and natural resources on which indigenous peoples’ livelihoods have traditionally depended or the displacement of indigenous peoples from those lands.”
It is the same story for all those people who increasingly identify themselves as indigenous in Africa: they lose their lands to logging companies, farmers, national parks, mining companies, etc. Indigenous peoples and communities see this as a cultural or ethnic conflict between themselves and the groups in power. In contrast, governments and developers see it as a sectoral problem, between pastoralism and agriculture, between hunting and logging. The implication of these divergent approaches is that even in those cases where governments have taken steps to protect pastoralists’ access to land by law – which is an indigenous demand – this gives no protection if the legal rights of other sectors challenge pastoralist rights. Thus, the pastoralists’ land rights may be protected by law but this means little if a water act allows this critical resource to be used for irrigation by farmers. Similarly an act protecting the land rights of forest dwellers is worth nothing if a forest act allows logging rights to companies on the same land. The articles in this issue, specifically the article by Hesse and Thébaud, exemplify such contradictions and, in cases of conflict, indigenous peoples are always the losers.

Such situations have led some indigenous peoples to emphasise that indigenous cultures are livelihood systems, claiming protection of these rather than separating land rights out from other rights. Livelihood systems are protected by cultural traditions that regulate internal access to resources such as lands and waters, the roles of men and women, etc. Livelihood systems can be destroyed or protected by law but their internal dynamics are linked to cultural traditions and not to national legislation.

Bolaane and Saugestad advise us not to focus too narrowly on implementation of the MDGs simply because, in the first instance, the challenge to indigenous peoples is to make an impact on the interpretation of these goals. Without tackling the structural causes of poverty among indigenous peoples, it is unlikely that efforts to achieve the MDGs will reach them. “While the MDGs carry a potential for assessing the major problems faced by indigenous peoples, the MDGs and the indicators for their achievement do not necessarily capture the specificities of indigenous and tribal peoples and their visions. Efforts are needed at the national, regional and international levels to achieve the MDGs with the full participation of indigenous communities – women and men – and without interfering with their development paths and holistic understanding of their needs. Such efforts must take into account the multiple levels and sources of discrimination and exclusion that indigenous peoples face.”

Poverty is not an absolute concept and means different things to different people. For most indigenous peoples, poverty is linked to racism and discrimination. To reach indigenous peoples in a positive way, poverty reduction strategies must incorporate cultural differences. Indigenous peoples become poor when pastoralism, hunting/gathering and shifting cultivation are considered as a problem in poverty reduction strategies. Likewise if indigenous languages, religion or other cultural practices are seen as obstacles to development.

Like poverty reduction, the MDG to achieve universal primary education risks becoming a threat to indigenous peoples and cultures. When achieving this goal for indigenous peoples, it should be ensured that “education will not be used to assimilate and integrate indigenous peoples into mainstream society and further undermine their own identities, cultures and traditional knowledge. Bilingual and intercultural education both for indigenous and non-indigenous peoples are crucial to sustain cultural diversity (…) This goal should be framed in terms of promoting the rights of indigenous children to have education which is appropriate and relevant for them.”

Education for all – yes, but who determines the language of instruction in the schools? Does it take place in a language that indigenous children speak? What are the implications for the learning process if the teacher belongs to another ethnic group that generally treats indigenous peoples as inferior?

Indigenous peoples are usually tiny minorities within states and their demands, even when the legitimacy of these are recognised on paper (as in many of those countries that have ratified ILO Convention 169), are often ignored by stronger groups. In this situation, indigenous peoples have to insist on having a few key conditions included in all measures aimed at implementing the MDGs. The first is naturally that their collective rights as indigenous peoples are recognised, and this includes their collective land rights. But this is, as mentioned, only a preliminary condition. The next is that the rights and concerns of indigenous peoples should be specifically included in the efforts of states, multinational agencies, NGOs and others when trying to achieve the MDGs and, where necessary, measures to reach the MDGs must include affirmative measures. The third condition is that, in all matters of their internal concern, the collective rights of indigenous peoples must take priority and this, in practice, means that all projects affecting indigenous peoples must obtain their free, prior and informed consent.

Notes

3 Ibid.
4 Closing speech of the Chairperson of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (May 2005).
MDGs, GLOBALISATION AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN AFRICA

Nigel Crawhall
This article is a brief introduction to some of the problems inherent in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the latent threat that UN policy makers are posing to the survival of cultural diversity in general and in the case of non-dominant indigenous peoples in Africa in particular.

In my years of working for the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC) and travelling to remote areas of Africa, I have spoken with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of indigenous elders and youth, men and women. I have asked indigenous people what they think about their relationship to the national economy, the value of education, the importance of money, whether they want more access to Western medicine, and other questions that fall under the category of ‘development’. I have heard many different viewpoints.

It is a big generalisation, but I believe it is fair to say that most UN and national programmes fighting poverty do not take full cognizance of the value systems of indigenous Africans. How hunting and gathering or nomadic pastoralism have managed to sustain both nature and people for millennia rarely figures in planning the national economy and food security. The foundation of decision making that impacts on indigenous peoples in Africa is mostly based on ignorance and a bias towards agriculture and creating a wage economy.

With the exception of a few specialists, government officials and UN experts rarely understand in any depth what indigenous peoples know about biological diversity, about wild foods and their management, about traditional medicine, or the indigenous approaches to stimulating cognitive, intellectual and moral development in children. If you do not know what systems exist, it is hard to imagine how the state intends adding value.

There are three themes that will be considered here. Firstly, statistical indicators of poverty presented in the framework of the MDGs assume that wealth is capital in the form of cash or wages. As most indigenous people in Africa live by traditional subsistence economies, which have relatively little reliance on wages, the indicators being used are already inappropriate and misleading. Secondly, woven into the MDG framework are assumptions about good governance that promote a narrow view of economic management linked to neo-liberal ideology and promotion of trade and foreign investment. This ideology has little to do with reducing poverty and reveals that the MDGs are being used to impress the priorities of Western states on the world economy. Thirdly, we will consider the conundrum of universal education. Many indigenous people in Africa see formal education as both a threat and an opportunity. State-designed curricula universally fail to recognise indigenous education methods, standards and competences. The goal for Africa is not how to force indigenous children to go to school, but how schools can add value to their lives.

Millennium Development Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

A fundamental problem with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and with the analysis of various UN agencies is that they suppose that livelihood can be defined in terms of the cash value of people’s labour or agricultural production. Livelihood is measured in terms of earning one US dollar a day or two US dollars a day.

In Africa, indigenous identity is associated with those people who have anteriority of occupation and have maintained substantially different economic and cultural systems relative to the dominant ethnic groups that control the state. This means that de facto, most groups claiming an indigenous status live either by hunting and gathering or by transhumant (mobile) pastoralism. Many groups have recently lived by these economically distinct subsistence systems but are now being pressured into new livelihoods. They are threatened in some way or other by externally driven economic and environmental changes. In South Africa and Morocco, there are people claiming an indigenous status based solely on anteriority and cultural distinctiveness and who are not economically distinct. These are the exception rather than the rule in Africa.
If *indigenousness* is closely associated with subsistence economies that do not produce agricultural products or surpluses and have only an occasional interaction with the cash economy, how are the MDG statistics supposed to capture the relative value of livelihoods?

The UN supposes that people live in a cash economy and are trying to get more cash and integrate themselves into the wage economy. That assumption leads to other assumptions such as that state education is necessarily going to help poor people. An insidious assumption in the concept of ‘development’ is that people who are poor are empty vessels, without skills or knowledge. They must be filled up with something external so that they start to be productive within the wage economy and have more self-respect.

But what if they have a viable economy? What happens if “poor people” eat fresh meat, fish and diverse plant products daily? What if the greatest threat to them is poverty created by multinational corporations cutting down the equatorial forest or mining uranium near their desert wells?

MDGs make no mention of the nutritional measures of people’s daily food intake. They do not mention the diversity of foodstuffs in people’s lives. And they do not mention the relative impact on the environment of different nutritional intakes. Typically, hunter-gatherers may be eating meat from twenty different species of animals, birds and fish in an equatorial rainforest. They may be consuming a broad range of seeds, berries, tubers, roots, leaves and branches. All of this is ‘free’ and highly nutritious. Hunter-gatherer diets typically far exceed the nutritional value of middle class urban dwellers.

In Gabon, IPACC met with agricultural specialists who were trying to promote high starch diets to enforce the sedentarisation of Baka Pygmies. The university educated experts were unable to explain to us what Baka people eat in the forest and what would be the health implications of changing their diet to low protein and high starch. In Botswana, San people are mapping wild foods in Ngamiland but the State Agricultural Products Board is not bureaucratically designed to recognise wild plants as food or medicine. Food can only be in the form of livestock or cultivated crops. The civil servants and the statisticians are uneducated about such a simple thing as what constitutes food.

Transhumant herders may also be hunting and gathering, as well as having ample access to milk and blood products from their stock, and access to meat under certain conditions. On a recent visit to Niger, nomads and activists explained how the MDG income measurements are useless and out of context. For a nomad family living outside Agadez with a mixed herd of camels, sheep and goats, they may spend in a week cash that would only last a family in Niamey one day. Nomads have sporadic need for cash, which will help buy medication, assist with transport, and buy consumables such as coffee, tea, sugar and fuel which they cannot produce themselves. The value of US$1 is estimated to be seven times different between the rural and urban economies. This pattern is reproduced in the equatorial rainforests, in the savannah lands of East Africa, in the Kalahari and other indigenous territories.

The failure of the UN to imagine how people live outside the cash economy (which was the norm for humanity until recently), and to define wealth and livelihoods based on indigenous indicators, has serious and dangerous policy implications.

If the UN and African governments want to stop hunger, why has almost every African government banned hunting by indigenous peoples in protected areas? Making hunting illegal on indigenous lands by declaring them protected areas poses a grave risk to hundreds of thousands of indigenous Africans across the continent. Typically, and sadly, we see poaching being conducted by national police, military and foreign agents, yet local people whose knowledge systems and health rely on these resources are turned into criminals for feeding themselves. Thoughtful consideration from UN economists and environmentalists would demonstrate that traditional subsistence hunting is not a threat to biodiversity in Africa, and that it is an important source of livelihood as well as maintaining cultural diversity and knowledge management.

Poverty is arising from policy, not being solved by it. Herders complain about all the unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles they must endure because their people are not represented in the government or the military. The economic policies of African states are mostly designed to extract money from herders, whereas the herders themselves only need limited access to cash as their wealth is held in their livestock, which must remain mobile. A Saharan herder explains:

“We do not like to sell our animals. We keep hoping the drought will break. We love each animal and want to keep it alive until next season. Maybe we are foolish like this. But then someone gets sick in the family. Now we must have some cash for the clinic. I must take a healthy sheep from my herd and travel one hundred kilometres to the market. I must find transport and pay a lot for this. On the way I must pay police at roadblocks [state corruption], then I must get a veterinarian certificate for the sheep. It must have injections. Then I must buy a permit to sell it. I have now paid five times
for the sheep to be sold the correct way. I hardly have any money left, and I must still get home. The government makes it very difficult for us”.

This herder could be in many different countries. Of course there must be veterinary controls to protect people and animals from infectious diseases. The point here is that the state could facilitate people’s access to markets and release cash into the indigenous economy, but what is more normal is that the state is trying to extract wealth from a cash-poor economy.

One of the worst aspects of this extractive relationship between the state and the indigenous economy is corruption in the security forces. Instead of protecting the rights of citizens and vulnerable peoples, corrupt police and military often extract what little money indigenous people have accumulated. In Mali, IPACC travelled with indigenous activists who were pressed to pay false fines at five out of six police roadblocks. Only at one roadblock on the road to Timbuktu did the police actually conduct their business in a professional and reliable way.

If the UN and African governments co-operated just to stop military and police corruption, they would release millions of dollars back into the hands of the poor. Would it not make sense that one of the MDGs was designed to measure how much corrupt money passes from poor people to governments every year, and attempt to cut that by half?

**Neo-liberal economic ideology**

At the recent Congress of Saharan and Sahelian Indigenous Nomadic Peoples held in Agadez, Niger, the UN Development Programme’s (UNDP) local representative gave a stimulating talk on good governance. The talk was informative and greatly appreciated by the nomads, who are involved in the process of political and administrative decentralisation in a number of Saharan states.

However, tucked into the UNDP’s formal presentation was the idea that good governance requires the African state to promote liberal economic activity, to promote trade and not generate trade tariffs to protect national industries. Woven through the language of the MDGs is this recurring theme of economic liberalisation and an interdiction on developing countries protecting the integrity of their national economies through protectionist tariffs.

John Raulston Saul has written a treatise on the origins of ‘globalism’, an ideology of the (corporate - bureaucratic) state in relation to the market (which al-
In denuding the Central African rainforests. European no such constraints. Asian multinationals are involved legislation, civil society and NGOs, Central Africa has ness. Whereas the Amazon forests are protected by a safe place to do business. Africa is open for busi-
unrestrained multinational corporations see Africa as water have served to protect Africa’s oldest peoples.

Deserts and deep forests, Africa primarily due to environmental barriers that logical niche. Indigenous peoples have survived in

wealth. The objective in fighting poverty is that people have wages which would be stimulated by greater trade and investment. Economists, such as Martin Khor, have challenged whether trade really creates any real growth. Moreover, when people live below the poverty line in urban areas, very low wages actually sustain poverty rather than resolve it.

Logically, if the MDGs are based on the principle that the state must do more to protect the livelihoods of its citizens, then it is also logical that the state should promote protectionism and internal national subsidies for evolving private and public sector enterprises. Yet we are told that this is not good governance.

For indigenous peoples, their economic and cultural survival is directly linked to the ability of the state to guarantee the sustainability of their own ecological niche. Indigenous peoples have survived in Africa primarily due to environmental barriers that have held back agriculture. Deserts and deep forests, as well as endemic disease zones and a lack of surface water have served to protect Africa’s oldest peoples.

In the contemporary globalised economy, ethically unrestrained multinational corporations see Africa as a safe place to do business. Africa is open for business. Whereas the Amazon forests are protected by legislation, civil society and NGOs, Central Africa has no such constraints. Asian multinationals are involved in denuding the Central African rainforests. European

companies extract uranium from open pit mines. American and Australian companies extract petroleum products. Indigenous peoples live with the consequences.

Indigenous peoples cannot expect the multilateral bodies, which live and breathe ‘free trade’, to ever work in their interest. Their survival requires an alli-

ance with their own national state.

Indigenous peoples must convince African states not to see land and natural resources as commodities that are going to be traded away. Only if African gov-

ernments accept that biological diversity and cultural diversity are national treasures can there be any chance of a legislative framework that will recognise indigenous land and natural resource usage in concert with mechanisms for conserving nature.

**Millennium Goal 2:**

**Achieve Universal Education**

“Education gives people choices regarding the lives they wish to lead. It enables them to express themselves with confidence in their personal relationships, in the community and at work...” (UN, MDG Report 2005: 10)

Indigenous people who have been displaced and are living in townships tend to see education as their salvation. There are activists from humble nomadic origins, who were sponsored to go to school, and are now the only representatives from their communities who can speak confidently with government officials, travel to UN meetings, and change how the world understands the needs of indigenous peoples. Education changed their lives and brought those indigenous voices to the world stage.

However, the further I have ventured into the indige-
nous world, the less people are impressed by education. Formal schooling is often a place of sexual violence, of physical abuse, of racism, of ignorance, of hunger, of disease and of humiliation. Anikhwe adults fight back tears talking about the humiliation they suffered in Botswana schools. Research reveals Namibian San children being starved by Black school authorities. Rwandan Batwa talk about sitting in rags and being laughed at in school. The stories are painful to tell and to hear (see Leroux 1999).

Universal education is both a beacon of light and a dark shadow across rural Africa. It can be rigid, institutional, inappropriate, dominating, violent and ultimately ineffective. Ignorant teachers speak down to indigenous children and their parents. The teachers often do not speak the child’s language. They may make the child feel afraid, inadequate and alien in her
own world. Indigenous children in school often look scared, puzzled, bored, lost or lonely.

Teachers without school-leaving certificates can be seen speaking down to indigenous elders who have the equivalent of a PhD in both botany and zoology. By the age of 10, a Hadzabe child should be able to identify hundreds of varieties of plants, insects, birds, reptiles and mammals. Yet they are often treated with disrespect in the classroom. The elitism of colonial education confuses status with real knowledge and undervalues knowledge compared to competence and wisdom.

Transhumance is the other flash point of conflict. A senior government official in a West African country praises the life of nomads and indigenous knowledge systems. But then she says: It is the duty of each African government to make sure girls and boys have an education. They must go to school. Their parents are ignorant and cannot read and write. They just want to keep the children with them to take care of the cattle and camels. She has never been to such a village. She has never milked a camel. She has not, in fact, spoken to a nomadic child. Yet she is the expert. As with economics, there is only one option, there is no understanding of intellectual and educational diversity.

Indigenous peoples need to be mobile to survive. They know that for nature to survive, they cannot stay still and over-use the natural resources. Their animals need grazing. The rain is somewhere else. It is berry season across the valley. Indigenous children are strong. They can walk for days, for weeks, for months. Small children of five years old use a thin stick to control goats, camels or cattle. When I have seen indigenous children living in a well-integrated subsistence economy, with their families and other children, they are evidently more confident, competent and proud of their lives. They are alert and learning constantly. There is a lot to learn.

What do indigenous parents do? A Nigerien nomad in a remote bush camp explains the dilemma. They have seen schools, they realise writing can be helpful, but they also know that a child who goes to school is otherwise useless. They are developmentally backward and unskilled to live in the real world. They are ignorant and sometimes struggle to speak their own language. So instead of having two children, as their ancestors have for centuries, now they have a third one. This one is the one that goes to school. It is risk management. Indigenous peoples are the ultimate experts in risk management.

A Gabonese healer is more forthright. Schools ruin children. They teach them to be ashamed of their culture, their language and their ancestors. The children cannot name the trees, the leaves or the medicines. They cannot hunt. They cannot feed themselves. They are zombies who have no place to go but the townships of the cities where they are swallowed forever. Only a few have ever come home. Only one became a human rights activist. The forest is our school, our ancestors are our teachers, he says.

San, Hadzabe, Babongo, Nama, Wodaabe and Samburu people will tell you the same story. Schools are used to indoctrinate indigenous peoples. They are told to stop moving around. They are taught in foreign languages. They are taught to be somebody else and not to trust their families. They are taught shame and to be quiet. When foreign nature conservationists need trackers and species experts they invariably turn to unschooled indigenous peoples rather than youths who have matriculated but cannot identify more than one or two tree species. Rural African schooling often reduces rather than increases the skills of indigenous youth.

More emphasis needs to be placed on schools that respect indigenous cultures, that involve parents and respect their traditional knowledge. There also needs to be a solution to the issue of transhumance and learning. There are examples of transhumant schools in Kenya. In Botswana and Namibia there are examples of community-sponsored schools that teach in indigenous languages and try to integrate traditional knowledge and culture into the curriculum.

Education in Africa needs to be cut free from its colonial constraints. We need to challenge the idea that education is there to build an elite class. It is false and untenable to argue that reading and writing makes a person more open minded, creative or intelligent. We need to understand African knowledge systems, the intellectual measures and skills competences of indigenous education, then find a way of adding value to these. Education needs to be culturally and linguistically additive not subtractive.

In 2004, San language-in-education activists spent a week analysing why indigenous children are marginalised from schooling and how this can be reversed. A central theme became the disrespect for San culture in the education system, and the marginalisation of elders and San knowledge systems. A breakthrough came in the analysis of the participants when one leading activist realised that educated San youth treat their parents like children when it comes to dealing with the school. By reversing the power relations between parent and child, the education system ruptures the primary learning relationship. A better curriculum would recognise and use the knowledge of San adults and elders to teach everyone more science,
but also to maintain the intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

If the MDG process only succeeded in making African governments aware of the knowledge and learning systems of indigenous peoples, and what powerful resources these are, it would go a long way to reversing the crisis of poverty in Africa. The African state must add value to peoples’ lives, not break down the ecological niche in which they have survived for so long.

Role of the United Nations

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) was created to help assess, analyse and advise UN agencies on their co-operation with indigenous peoples. The extra pressure on the UN agencies to share information both internally and between agencies is an opportunity to learn what is going on and to cross-fertilise initiatives. In IPACC’s almost ten-year relationship with the UN in Africa we have come across dedicated individuals, some interesting projects and a general increase in awareness as to who the indigenous peoples in Africa are and how they have been marginalised from policy making.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has created a special department dealing with drylands issues. Many African indigenous peoples live in arid and semi-arid areas as transhumant herdsmen or hunter-gatherers. UNDP and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have been co-operating to obtain small grants from the Global Environment Fund (GEF) for indigenous peoples’ projects on the ground. UNEP and the World Bank have co-operated on plans to recognise indigenous peoples under World Bank Operational Directive 4.1. UNEP / GEF produced a comprehensive report on the situation of indigenous peoples in Gabon in 2005.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has its 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and its 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. It is time for the ‘development agencies’, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNDP, UNEP and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to understand what UNESCO is talking about in terms of cultural diversity and the intergenerationality of intangible cultural heritage.

The growing awareness and analysis of UNESCO is that the intellectual and cultural worlds of humanity are much more complex than we had assumed.

When we look at languages dying out across the planet we see that there is a correlation between biological diversity and language diversity (see Nettle et al 2000). If human knowledge and culture is so closely tied to ecosystems, particularly in the case of indigenous peoples, then we cannot talk about sustainable development unless we understand the interaction between natural resource management and cultural resource management. This is a major paradigm shift for the industrialised world, which thought that there were going to be no consequences to the over-consumption of natural resources and pollution.

The United Nations needs not only to disaggregate statistics about the situation of indigenous peoples in Africa. It also needs to rethink what is causing hunger, how existing state policies create marginalisation and poverty rather than resolve these problems. The neo-liberal analysis woven into UN mechanisms and analyses needs to be unpicked and set aside. African governments can also enter into a greater dialogue with indigenous peoples to start challenging dominant ‘development’ paradigms and offer more sustainable and thoughtful solutions to current problems.

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UNDP’s programme on sustainable pastoralism
http://www.iucn.org/themes/cem/ecosystems/drylands/wisp.html

For a review of UNESCO’s work on indigenous knowledge:

A major review of nomad education by UNESCO:

Nigel Crawhall has a PhD in Linguistics and is working with the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC).
Ced Hesse and Brigitte Thébaud

WILL PASTORAL LEGISLATION DISEMPOWER PASTORALISTS IN THE SAHEL?
To many observers, pastoralism - long considered by governments as a backward, uneconomic and environmentally destructive land-use system - is finally receiving the recognition it deserves. The combination of a succession of pastoral laws and the opportunities offered by decentralisation are fuelling expectations that pastoralists’ rights of access to and control over key resources essential for their livelihood systems will be assured in the future.

The pace of policy reform in support of pastoralism has been considerable. In 1993, Niger passed legislation that explicitly addresses pastoral land use through provisions for the definition of pastoral “home areas” and the identification and delimitation of livestock corridors. Various pastoral laws have since been passed in Guinea (1995), Mauritania (2000), Mali (2001) and Burkina Faso (2003), while Niger is in the process of defining specific legislation to regulate the pastoral sector.

**Mobility enshrined in law...**

These laws do represent a major step forward. The formal recognition of pastoralism is in itself significant, and in many respects these laws do provide an improved institutional framework for the better management of rangeland resources in the Sahel (the boundary zone between Sahara to the north and the more fertile zone to the south). This is an important step towards securing better livelihood opportunities for pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in these areas.

Whereas governments have in the past been hostile to herd mobility, the new wave of pastoral legislation recognises it as a key feature of pastoral systems in the Sahel. The pastoral charter (Mali) devotes a whole chapter to this issue, specifying that pastoralists have the right to move with their animals both within and between countries. The pastoral code in Mauritania is uncompromising on this issue stipulating that “pastoral mobility is protected under all circumstances and can only be limited temporarily and for reasons of the safety of animals and crops, and this in accordance with the provisions of the law”.

Such provisions vindicate pastoral indigenous knowledge and practice as well as many years of scientific research which has consistently provided scientific evidence of the critical role of livestock mobility in preserving the environment and maximising livestock productivity in dryland environments characterised by dispersed and unpredictable natural resources (see box 1). The future of pastoral production in the Sahel is wholly dependent on mobile livestock production systems being maintained. The legal recognition of the right of herders to move with their livestock in search of pasture and water coupled with legal provisions to protect grazing lands and livestock corridors from agricultural encroachment, and to secure herders’ access to key strategic resources such as wetlands in drylands, is therefore very positive.

The pastoral laws include other positive features. There are provisions for giving herders’ rights over the common use of rangelands, priority - albeit not exclusive - rights over resources in their “home areas” as well as rights to compensation in the event of losing their lands to public interest needs. These provisions are an enormous improvement on past legislation, which not only failed to recognise pastoral land...
use but also gave priority land-use rights to agricultural production, to the detriment of pastoralism. Greater recognition of customary tenure arrangements, including the principle of decentralised natural resource management, the multiple and sequential use of resources by different actors at different times of the year (e.g. herders’ access to harvested fields) and the need to manage conflict at the local level, are other innovative features of significance. Social relations play a central role in enabling pastoral communities to negotiate access to water and pastures, particularly in the dry season. Rights of access constantly need to be re-negotiated with different groups at different times of year, partly in response to the seasonal and inter-annual availability of resources but also due to the fact that high value land (e.g. wetlands, forests) are used by a diversity of actors for different purposes at different times of the year. Negotiating reciprocal agreements over resource use in a consensual manner is thus essential if resource-related conflicts are to be avoided.

…but threatened by a technocratic vision

While these laws offer some innovative features, they contain a number of provisions which, if applied, will threaten the future of pastoral and ago-pastoral livelihoods in the Sahel.

It is striking that with the exception of the pastoral code in Mauritania all the laws adopt a very technocratic and development-oriented approach in support of pastoralism. This is particularly apparent in Burkina Faso’s pastoral code. Provisions exist, for example, for the establishment of special grazing reserves (zones pastorales aménagées) through a complex national land-use planning exercise that follows a top-down approach. These areas belong to the State which, while associating a range of actors, including pastoral groups, in determining the overall management objectives of these areas, reserves the right to fix the specific conditions of access and use. The latter are skewed towards controlling stocking densities and investing in physical investments and infrastructure such as firebreaks, vaccination pens, permanent water points, etc. There are also provisions for improving forage production and controlling access through the delivery of permits. Similar, though less stringent, provisions and controls exist in the pastoral laws of Mali and Guinea and the rural code of Niger.

These measures confirm that governments in the Sahel still fundamentally believe that pastoralism needs to be modernised, and that this is best done by identifying specific areas dedicated to livestock rearing that are legally protected and in which the parameters of production and resource access are clearly defined and carefully controlled. It is a very bureaucratic vision. It seeks to replace customary systems of resource access, driven by what is perceived by outsiders to be rather “messy” processes of social and political bargaining between actors, with a more orderly and technical system. This, it is believed, will make pastoral production in the Sahel more secure. Yet, this could not be further from the truth. Customary systems, for all their apparent “messiness”, allow pastoralists to respond in a very flexible and opportunistic manner to the unpredictable Sahelian environment where pastures and water resources are highly dispersed in time and space. Social networks and offers of reciprocal arrangements allow herders to negotiate access to a wide range of resources in any given year, while maintaining their social capital. Replacing this system with a more orderly one in which pastoral areas and their rules of access and manage-
ment are predetermined and fixed by law will drastically reduce pastoralists’ options to negotiate access to resources in response to local conditions. This will reduce livestock mobility thereby undermining the ecological resilience of the Sahelian rangelands and the economic viability of pastoral systems.

Government’s definition of what constitutes rational and productive pastoral land use (mise en valeur) is another area of great concern. Although the pastoral laws recognise pastoralism as a legitimate form of land use, there is still great confusion and ambiguity as to what exactly this entails. The Code rural (Niger) has tried to define what constitutes the productive use of natural resources by listing “positive” and “negative” land-use activities. Most of the “positive” actions involve some form of physical or material investment (e.g. planting trees, establishing private forests, fencing off land), which are heavily skewed towards the agricultural and agro-forestry sectors. There is no recognition of the positive actions of pastoralism through the simple transformation of biomass into animal products for pastoralists or the national market. The “negative” activities, on the other hand, tend to be highly subjective and open to interpretation, take no account of local specificities and are virtually impossible to monitor. Furthermore, the responsibility for establishing whether land is being put to productive use or not is confided to local land boards, unelected bodies largely composed of civil servants (rarely aware of the complexity of pastoral systems and the interface between livestock and the environment), which only have one pastoral representative. These boards have the power to withdraw access to pastoral land if they consider it is not being put to good use.

These provisions weaken rather than strengthen pastoralists’ tenure rights, particularly over high-value resources such as wetlands in drylands, areas that are critical to the survival of pastoralism in the Sahel. Pastoralists have little control over the process and are highly dependent on local government officials and technical officers who do not necessarily have a sound grasp of the dynamics and rationale of pastoral systems, and who are frequently vulnerable to political manipulation by powerful groups.

**Sector approaches artificially divide local livelihood systems**

The highly sectoral approach to natural resource management in the Sahel is another factor that severely undermines pastoral livelihoods. Although the Code
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**Box 2: Confusing legislation**

The relationship between the Rural Code and the Water Code in Niger illustrates the confusion between land and water rights. The Water Code governs water resources while the Rural Code governs all resources and socio-economic activities in rural areas, including rangelands and water points.

The Rural Code states that herders have a right to use rangelands in common and have priority rights in their home areas. This includes both land and water rights. Outsiders may gain access to water and grazing resources on the basis of negotiations with the right holders. These provisions imply that the creation of modern wells must be associated with priority rights to water and grazing resources, and that open-access wells are possible only in no-man’s-land situations or on transhumance routes.

On the other hand, the principles underlying the Water Code are:

- Access to water for livestock is open to all, including outsiders such as transhumant herders.
- Construction of water points with an output equal to or exceeding 40 m³ per day must be authorized by the regional administration and follow a set of rules.
- Public water points have to be managed by Management Committees, formally established by the administration and composed of a President, a Secretary-General, a Treasurer and one person responsible for the hygiene of the well and its surrounding area. The total number of Committee members should not be greater than nine persons.

- Management Committees are responsible for the general maintenance of the wells and the collection of users’ fees.

Such principles have created a number of problems. The Water Code does not establish a functional link between access to water and access to grazing, as if these resources were independent of each other. The role of Management Committees is limited to surveillance of the water infrastructure, excluding the use of grazing resources or control over the number of livestock using the well. Their capacity to control access to water and grazing resources is limited. When problems arise, the regional administration intervenes and, if necessary, closes the well. The Code gives almost no recognition to the controlled access systems developed by pastoral communities, and traditional wells are not even mentioned. The texts do not take into account the specific circumstances characterising pastoral life. For instance, mobile communities are not always in a position to maintain their members around the well throughout the year, and the election of additional treasurers and committee members would often be necessary. But the law allows only nine members.

other forms of land use. This “packaging” of land-use systems into discrete entities bears no relation to local reality as people tend to practice multiple land-use activities, often changing the use of one piece of land over different seasons as well as from year to year. It takes no account of the fact that the majority of rural Sahelians are agro-pastoralists who practice a combination of agriculture, livestock rearing and other activities, nor of the fact that farming areas provide important resources for livestock at particular times of the years (e.g. crop residues).

Lack of ownership and capacity

Although the past decade has seen a promising shift by Sahelian governments towards recognising and protecting pastoralists’ rights of access to natural resources, many questions remain as to which policy and legislative instruments are most effective. A major hurdle is the profound lack of understanding by policy makers about the dynamics of pastoral systems and how they operate in response to the unstable environmental conditions of the Sahel. This has severely undermined the policy and legislative-making process, and this clearly needs to be addressed with some urgency.

But the problem is also due to the fact that policy design is essentially controlled by the State. Citizens are rarely invited to participate and, if they are, as was the case with the design of the pastoral charter in Mali and is the case with the design of the new pastoral law in Niger, insufficient attention is paid to creating the conditions for their effective participation. Not only is the process rather mechanical and driven by central concerns with very short deadlines, but citizens themselves lack the skills to debate the issues and provide alternative policy options backed by strong arguments. Furthermore, even if citizens are able to provide strong evidence-based arguments, these are not necessarily sufficient to ensure appropriate policies. Policy design is often driven by political considerations aimed at reconciling the divergent needs of multiple stakeholders and, as with all processes involving conflicting and diverging interests, it is those interests that are backed by political and/or economic power that prevail.

If they are to improve their livelihoods, pastoral and agro-pastoral groups in the Sahel need to play a greater role in, and have greater ownership of, the policy process. The past has shown only too clearly that the design of policies cannot be left to policy makers alone. Putting this into practice, however, is a challenge. Although pastoral civil society groups are beginning to occupy a prominent place on the Sahel development scene, and are commanding an increasing proportion of development aid, they remain relatively weak. They lack the skills to articulate and defend the interests of their members, have difficulty in establishing a common front with each other or forging strong institutional links with other groups, and have limited financial resources and management skills. Almost exclusively established by an educated elite following the waves of democratisation that shook the Sahel in the 1990s, many organisations do not have a strong rural constituency and have weak links with customary pastoral authorities. By using many of these organisations as conduits for the implementation of rural service delivery, well-meaning northern donors and NGOs have to a certain extent diverted the attention of pastoral associations away from the need to address their internal institutional weaknesses (e.g. accountability, representation) and strengthen their lobbying and advocacy skills.

Notwithstanding these problems, there are some notable exceptions. In Niger, in particular, and in Senegal, Benin and Burkina Faso to a lesser extent, pastoral associations are emerging, often in response to assaults on their land by agricultural encroachment. These groups are the product of an endogenous process of self-determination and as such do represent the beginnings of a civil society movement and the means by which local people can participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives, particularly in the context of decentralisation.

Opportunities and threats of decentralisation

Decentralisation offers real opportunities for local people to have a say in natural resource management and planning, and how their areas should be developed. Under the provisions of the laws of most Sahelian states, locally-elected government bodies (rural councils) are legally responsible for delivering social and economic services (health, water, education, marketing, etc.), and for drawing up local land-use plans for agricultural, forestry, pastoral and other uses. According to the law, they are expected to consult the local communities under their jurisdiction, and to ensure participatory and equitable planning and decision-making processes.

In practice, however, many challenges remain, particularly for pastoral and agro-pastoral communities. Poverty and high levels of illiteracy impede their active participation. In many cases, the information...
is unavailable at their level, or if it is, it is in a format or language they do not understand. Local government officials often have a poor understanding of the rationale of pastoral systems and, as such, have little interest in supporting a land-use system which, to their understanding, brings few economic returns. Many councillors have no experience of conducting participatory planning processes and many of the tools that they are trained to use do not explicitly address issues of equity or the fact that rural communities are often highly differentiated. As a result, they fail adequately to address the specificities of certain groups such as pastoralists, but also women and other marginal communities.

Even in areas where pastoral people are a majority, the situation is not necessarily any better. Rural councils are often dominated by local elites such as customary leaders, retired politicians, businessmen or former civil servants who, despite coming from a pastoral background, tend to use their powers to pursue their own short-term political and economic agendas rather than policies and development activities for the common good. Because of these factors, social and economic services are often inaccessible to mobile pastoralists, and inappropriate land-use planning has led to the loss of pastoral lands to agriculture and other uses. In many cases, this has restricted herd mobility and exacerbated conflict between “farmers” and “herders”.

Training in support of pastoral self-determination...

Building the capacity of pastoralists to participate in and appropriate the process of decentralisation is a complex and slow process that has to be driven from within society if lasting change is to be achieved. It involves not only acquiring information but also changing perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. This takes time and requires a fundamental review of enduring power relations that are often enshrined in long-standing customary and/or religious practice, and sometimes deep-rooted prejudice.

A strategic partnership between ARED, an organisation specialising in training and publishing in African languages, Dr. Thébaud, a pastoral expert and researcher, and IIED, an international policy-oriented research institute, has designed a training process to kick-start a process of pastoral self-determination (see box 3). The training takes as its

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**Box 3:**

**Training programme on pastoralism in the Sahel**

The training is based on the principle of self-discovery on the part of participants, assisted by course “trainers” who deliver additional information only when necessary, rather than on conventional top-down teaching approaches based on the trainer imparting knowledge to participants. The training challenges participants to review and reconstruct their understanding of pastoralism as a livelihood system on the basis of a complete and multidisciplinary understanding of its dynamics. By the end of the course, participants are not only more knowledgeable about pastoral systems in the Sahel, they are also equipped to argue the case for pastoralism within current policy debates and reform processes on land, natural resources, decentralisation and private investment. Through these arguments, they are also able to directly challenge many of the deep-seated misunderstandings and prejudices widely held by policy makers on pastoralism. It is in this sense that the course is “empowering”.

The course consists of three components:

1. **The first component analyses the dynamics of pastoral systems in the Sahel.** It demonstrates how pastoralism is a “system” made up of three distinct components that interact with each other (the family, their herds of animals and the resources they depend on) and which is driven by a set of rules and livelihood and risk-spreading strategies.
2. **The second component analyses a number of policy challenges in the Sahel and the contribution that pastoralism can make to sustainable and equitable development if supported by an appropriate institutional framework.**
3. **The third component allows a herder to put all this knowledge to use in analysing the livelihood and coping strategies of his or her individual family.**
Pastoral land in Eastern Niger: camel herds around a modern well. Photo: Brigitte Thébaud

Mixing groups and helping participants to develop arguments to challenge the prejudices held by policymakers on pastoralism are key features of the pastoral training programme. Photo: Brigitte Thébaud
starting point the fact that pastoralists need to understand the dynamics of their own livelihood system in relation to the dynamics of the Sahelian environment, and understand how the broad policy context affects their livelihood systems. This knowledge not only restores their confidence in the value of their livelihood systems but also allows them to identify their own solutions to current problems and speak in an informed and authoritative manner on policy issues of concern to them. The ability to use the “language” of policy makers will give them a more equal footing in discussions with government and the development community, as well as the confidence to challenge outsiders’ perceptions of pastoralism. Extending this understanding to the grassroots membership of pastoral groups will trigger internal processes of accountability as local people start to understand the issues and demand more democratic control over their associations.

The training programme in the Pulaar language has been running for just over a year in Senegal, and early experience is already showing the impact it is having on the participants. Ordinary men and women speak of the sense of liberation from shame and uncertainty the training provides. They explained how for years they had endured humiliation by government officials and project workers, who accused them of practicing a primitive and environmentally-damaging land-use system, saying that they were the agents of their own poverty and were contributing to the desertification of their land. Participants speak of how they believed these accusations, provoking severe loss of confidence in their lifestyle, culture and even personal identity. Participating in the training sessions has changed their perceptions and given back their dignity and faith in their livelihoods. A similar impact is being observed in Niger not only among local communities but other players with whom they interact (local councillors, government technical staff, etc.).

**Conclusion**

Although the new pastoral laws bring innovations to the management of pastoral resources in the Sahel, they contain many conceptual and practical problems which ultimately risk further marginalizing pastoral people, depriving them of their land and resources, and exacerbating conflict between different groups of users. Crucially, by seeking to control the conditions of access to resources through complex, bureaucratic and technical procedures controlled by the State and/or local government, these laws disempower pastoral communities. They neither understand nor have any control over these provisions and, in most cases, they are unaware of them. Worse, many of the legal provisions if fully implemented will reduce livestock mobility and encourage the privatisation of the commons as local elites or “new actors” (civil servants, merchants, politicians) use the law to register exclusive rights to water and land. The ambiguities surrounding the notion of productive land use and the confusion reigning over the water and land rights are critical in this regard, and need urgently to be addressed.

Decentralisation can work for pastoral and agro-pastoral communities. But if they are to benefit, local communities have to appropriate the process and build their capacities to influence local government decision-making processes, particularly over land and other natural resources. To do this, they need a thorough understanding of the key legal provisions within decentralisation, pastoral and other sectoral laws. More importantly, they have to understand the issues at stake, develop the capacities to hold local government to account over the manner in which local affairs are managed, and articulate a vision for pastoralism in a manner that can be understood and accepted by policy makers. Capacities also have to be built at other levels and among other actors. Critically, policy makers and local government officials need better to understand the dynamics of Sahelian environments, the complex but essential role that social and political networks play in the management of natural resources and the central place of pastoralism as a viable system and major contributor to national economies, particularly in a context of increasing climatic uncertainty.

Training programmes in pastoralism and policy (described above) are playing a crucial role in changing attitudes and perceptions towards pastoralism, but they are not enough. Policymaking is a complex, highly dynamic and politicised process. Pastoralists, through their associations, have to develop the skills to operate in this ever-changing environment and develop the necessary “leverage” to ensure that improved knowledge and understanding is actually used to improve policy and legislation in support of pastoralism as a livelihood system.
References


Direction Nationale de l’Elevage, 1995: Loi N° 1/L95/051/CTRN portant code pastoral (Guinée).


Notes

2. Loi N° 1/L95/051/CTRN portant code pastoral.
7. Article 10.
8. Rural Code Niger (Art. 28. 31) and Pastoral Charter Mali (Art. 51).
11. Additional benefits: livestock play an important role in the distribution of seeds; they manure the soil and consume dead biomass that would stifle new growth if it was left in the ground; their hooves break up hard soils and redistribute seeds. Their mobility means animals rarely remain for long on a single area of land. Herders keep different livestock species in order to make rational use of environmental diversity.
12. For example: bush fires are banned, yet it is now recognised that under certain, controlled conditions, fire is a very useful management tool for clearing brush and stimulating the re-
15. Certain provisions within the pastoral code in Mauritania appear to segregate pastoral activities from agricultural areas (art. 17-19).
16. Interestingly, the pastoral code in Burkina Faso does recognise fallow farming land and post-harvest crop residues as comprising pastoral resources.
17. This misunderstanding is equally found among many NGOs, government technical departments, researchers, the media and the broader public.
18. Structural adjustment and the withdrawal of the State from the provision of basic services provided some justification for such an approach.
19. Associates in Research and Education for Development based in Senegal and the International Institute for Environment and Development based in the UK.
20. In Niger, the French version of the training is being used. With support from ARED, CARE-Denmark and their in-country partners are currently training a team of community-based trainers in its use.

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Brigitte Thébaud has been active for the past 30 years in the pastoral sector in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Senegal, as a researcher and a development agent. Her fields of expertise include pastoral land tenure, delivery of water services among nomadic communities and the management of pastoral resources in the context of decentralisation. For the past 7 years, Brigitte Thébaud has been actively involved in the design, experimentation and implementation of training modules to improve capacity building among pastoralists.
CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION OR CELEBRATION OF A CAUSE:
PASTORALISM AND POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES IN EAST AFRICA

Michael Ochieng Odhiambo
have borrowed this title from an article by Issa Shivji in which he analysed the gains for women in the 1999 Land Acts of Tanzania. I find the title appropriate for an analysis of what has happened in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania with respect to the handling of pastoralists’ poverty in the Poverty Reduction Strategies. Just as was the case with women’s land rights and the Tanzania Land Acts, there has been celebration among pastoralist NGOs and those who support them of the fact that the Poverty Reduction Strategies of the three countries have recognised pastoralism as a legitimate livelihood and land use system.

This article analyses what has actually happened and advances a note of caution in the celebrations. The article argues that, even though the PRSPs mark an important milestone for pastoralism, a lot more needs to be done in order for them to truly mainstream pastoral poverty and articulate strategies to address it. In particular, pastoralism is still constrained by the negative perceptions that dominate the policy landscape, and the lack of effective organisation of pastoralists for advocacy.

**Poverty Reduction Strategies: the cure for poverty?**

Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPs) have been celebrated as providing a framework for poverty reduction and development that is driven by the poor countries rather than the donors. Across East Africa, the three countries’ (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) governments are using PRSPs as the organising framework for development and poverty alleviation. The framework is named differently in each country but is based on the same template designed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).2

Although these strategies are not entirely homegrown, they have significantly opened up the policymaking process to participation by citizens. The quality of the participation is still an issue, with claims that it is more about consultation than actual participation in policy making, and a lot more remains to be done for the processes to become truly democratic and participatory.

Over the past three years, there have been reviews of the initial PRSPs in order to prepare a new phase. These reviews have shown that, although the strategies have empowered developing countries in the design of policy interventions and strategies for poverty reduction, within the countries themselves the levels and effectiveness of participation by the citizens remain low. Thus, if one conceptualises PRSPs as devolving development processing, there has been greater achievement on the first level of devolution, from the global to the national than on the second level, from the government to the people. While it is true that the PRSPs have placed more power in the hands of developing countries with regards to development planning, the ultimate objective of these strategies and their processes has to be the empowerment of the citizens.

The greatest claim of the PRSPs is that they have empowered the poor to take control of designing strategies for poverty alleviation. In this connection, the quality of their participation in the PRSP processes has to be the determining factor in assessing their effectiveness. Oxfam identifies two ways in which the PRSPs can truly contribute in a meaningful way to overcoming poverty. First, they have to address ‘voice poverty’ – “the denial of people’s right to influence the decisions that affect their lives, and to hold decision makers accountable”. Second, the PRSPs should lead to the re-orientation of governments and donor policies in favour of and in the interests of the poorest sectors of society.3

A lack of voice for the citizenry, and a lack of accountability on the part of those who manage the affairs of government are key constraints to development to the extent that they limit the involvement of the citizens in decisions that have a bearing on their livelihoods, and reduce the scope for the citizens to hold officials accountable for their resource allocation and use.

**Poverty among East African pastoralists**

These considerations apply even more directly to the situation of pastoralists in East Africa. They lack a voice in the policy arena, with the result that policies and strategies for their development have often been founded on the wrong premises, and designed without reference to them and without their participation. Pastoralists have been marginalized from policy processes since colonial times, with their land use and livelihood system being characterised as backward. This, combined with the difficult ecological circumstances in which they live, has contributed to a situation whereby the areas in which pastoralists live constitute the most undeveloped parts of the three countries.

Not surprisingly, pastoral areas score very low on the key indicators of development. They lack facilities and infrastructure for education, health, sanitation and other social services. As if missing out on the opportunities for development available to other parts of their countries were not enough, pastoralists also
have to contend with the collapse of their traditional systems and coping mechanisms due to the appropriation of their land and natural resources by the states. The traditional institutions that governed and mediated relations between them and their natural resource base have lost their vitality in the face of the onslaught of the modern state and its institutional apparatus.

PRSPs: giving a voice to pastoralists

A key characteristic of PRSPs has been the requirement that citizens articulate their needs and priorities in order to inform strategy design. This rhetoric of participation has been used by civil society organisations advocating for pastoralists’ rights in order to expand space in which pastoralists are able to make an input into the design of national development policy. In all the three countries, significant effort has gone into articulating a specifically pastoralist agenda on poverty eradication.

Kenya: PRSP, ERS and pastoralism

In the first phase of the PRSPs, it was only in Kenya that pastoralists constituted a distinct thematic group for the purposes of Participatory Poverty Assessments. In the process leading to the drafting of the 2001 PRSP, pastoralists were identified as a separate category of the poor and pastoralism constituted a separate theme with a Pastoral Thematic Group to work on the specificities of pastoral development challenges. The Group produced a Pastoral Poverty Reduction Strategy that was ultimately incorporated into the PRSP, thereby ensuring that the specific needs of pastoralism were identified and addressed in a manner that would not have otherwise been possible. The PRSP committed the government to actions to improve the provision of veterinary services, infrastructure and marketing opportunities for pastoralists.

In many ways, the work of the Pastoral Thematic Group and the focus it placed on poverty in pastoral areas can be credited for setting the stage for the serious approach that the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government took to the development of the arid lands when it assumed power in 2003. Their Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation 2003-2007 has devoted an entire chapter to the arid and semi-arid lands, a significant departure from the practice of the KANU government, which invariably treated semi-arid lands as a section within the chapter on Agriculture and Rural Development.

The ERS (Economic Recovery Strategy) does not address pastoralism as a livelihood system. It focuses on the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) occupied by the pastoralists, and pushes for greater productivity of the ASALs. The strategies and action plans it sets out are aimed at improving livestock production and marketing. Indeed, it makes no reference to pastoralism with respect to food security. This raises a question regarding the extent to which the strategy can be said to be supportive of pastoralism as a livelihood system. Indeed, the specific interventions it enumerates for the ASALs denote a commitment to modernisation of the livestock sector, and little interest in supporting subsistence pastoralism, which is the backbone of the livelihood system. Box 1 sets out the interventions the ERS proposes for the ASALs.

Uganda: the 2004 PEAP and pastoralism

In Tanzania and Uganda, it was the reviews of the first phase of the PRSPs that provided the impetus for

Box 1: Specific Interventions

- Providing adequate water for the rangelands by sinking boreholes and constructing dams at strategic locations in the region;
- Conducting research on livestock breeds, with a view to improving the local breeds;
- Putting in place measures to control environmental degradation, and carrying out a periodic national livestock census;
- Strengthening the Animal Health delivery system and disease control by providing mobile animal health clinics and screening units and disease surveillance mechanisms;
- Addressing legal and policy barriers to livestock trade, such as livestock movement quarantines and cess/taxation;
- Developing supporting infrastructure, including roads and stock routes with water facilities;
- Creating strategic Disease Free Zones to facilitate export of live animals;
- Increasing cross-border disease surveillance and cross-border conflict resolution and management mechanisms.

Source: ERS: The Shorter (Popular) Version, pp. 29-30
placing pastoral poverty squarely on the agenda of national development planning. CSOs working with pastoralists in Uganda, and pastoral CSOs in Tanzania, mobilised for the mainstreaming of pastoralism in the second phase of PRSPs, and succeeded in both countries in getting pastoralism recognised as a legitimate livelihood group requiring specific policy interventions and strategies.

An informal network of CSOs working on pastoral issues was formed in Uganda to strategise for inclusion of pastoralism in the 2004 Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). The CSOs’ Pastoral Task Force held a number of consultations among themselves and with other stakeholders in the participatory assessments for the review of the PEAP during 2002 and 2003, culminating in a Pastoral Analysis Workshop held at Jinja in July 2003.8 In these consultations, it was noted that the 2001 Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) had ignored pastoralism entirely, and therefore failed to provide space for the promotion of development specific to the needs of pastoral communities.

The second Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process (UPPAP 2) in 2002, which reviewed the 2001 PEAP, had a more positive perspective on pastoralism.9 It undertook a much more thorough analysis of pastoral poverty, conducting research in eight pastoral communities along the cattle corridor (the area spanning diagonally from Karamoja in the north-east, through Masindi District in the centre and down to Mbarara in the south-west). It identified pastoralists as a specific category, recognising that they experience poverty differently from other categories of the poor. Most significantly, UPPAP 2 recognised that mobility was a critical coping strategy for pastoralists, and appreciated much better the livelihood challenges facing them, including the prejudices of government officials against nomadic pastoralism. Furthermore, the review recognised the regional dimensions of pastoralism and the challenges to pastoral livelihoods as well as the increasing diversification of those livelihoods. In sum, for the first time, UPPAP was mainstreaming pastoralism as a development concern and agenda in Uganda.10

Building on the outcome of UPPAP, the current PEAP11 has taken up issues related to poverty among pastoralists, and makes specific reference to pastoralism. Box 2 sets out the main reference to pastoralism in the PEAP.

To achieve this objective, the PEAP specifies two priority actions for the livestock sector, the first of which states that “Government will develop a strategy for the livestock sector, covering disease control and addressing the needs of pastoralists.”12 However, in the results and policy matrix, the commitment is reduced to one of preparing the livestock policy to support the livestock sector. Pastoralism literally disappears when it comes to specific strategies for the implementation of the PEAP.

Tanzania: NSGRP and pastoralism

A paper on Rangelands Livelihoods and Vulnerability was prepared as part of the Tanzania Participatory Poverty Assessment (TzPPA) process. The paper sought to analyse the livelihoods and vulnerability of those who derive their livelihoods from rangelands in order to inform the revision of PRSP I and production of PRSP II. The paper was subsequently discussed at a two-day consultative workshop organised jointly by the Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Government Organisations (PINGOs) Forum and the Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF).13 This consultative workshop marked the culmination of a consultative process that had informed the preparation of the paper.

Apart from organising the workshop, the PINGOs Forum was involved in the assessment through its membership of the TzPPA Implementing Consortium. PINGOs also independently organised consultations and mobilised pastoralists and hunter-gatherers to contribute ideas to the process, including a workshop.

Box 2: Pastoralism in the 2004 PEAP

Government will therefore develop an over-arching policy and strategy for the livestock sub-sector that explicitly recognises the main national policy objective of poverty reduction. The current focus on maximising livestock production alone needs to be replaced by one that recognises the multiple contributions that livestock make to livelihoods. This will require a greater understanding of who are the clients of livestock development efforts/services and what their priorities are. Lack of understanding is the reason why there has been only limited uptake of ‘improved’ livestock technologies, which have been largely inappropriate to meeting the needs of livestock keepers in general and pastoralists in particular. Hence pastoralists and their farming systems will be a key component in the new policy.

Source: PEAP, p. 55
in Arusha attended by over 100 participants, at which comparative experiences from Uganda and Kenya on pastoralists and PRSP were presented and discussed. These processes constituted the most comprehensive consultation ever to be undertaken with and among pastoralists of Tanzania in relation to a national policy process. It was also the first time that pastoralism had received such elaborate and distinct attention in national planning.

Following these consultations, the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP) has for the first time given prominence to pastoralism as a distinct land use and livelihood system. It has identified land issues for pastoralists as a category of issues arising from national stakeholders’ consultations and defined a strategic action targeted at pastoralists. The strategy commits itself to “promoting efficient utilization of rangeland, empowering pastoralists to improve livestock productivity through improved access to veterinary services, reliable water supply, recognising pastoralism as a sustainable livelihood”.

However, when it comes to the implementation matrix, the strategy becomes a little fuzzy as to what is to be done. The table above is adapted from the annex to the strategy, setting out the broad outcomes, goals, operational targets and priority cluster strategies.

### Pastoralists of East Africa counting their blessings

East African pastoralist civil society organisations and those who support them have celebrated these modest but significant victories as marking an important threshold in pastoral development discourse. They are significant because, through them, pastoralism and pastoral development have become legitimate concerns for national policy. They signify an important turning point for pastoralism, when national development policy begins to see pastoralism not as a problem but as an opportunity that can be harnessed for national development.

Yet as we have suggested above, a lot more remains to be done if these provisions in the PRSPs are to be translated into meaningful policy action in favour of secure pastoral livelihoods. In particular, the promises of these provisions are limited by the negative mindset that pervades officialdom in the region with regard to pastoralism. Although the PRSPs constitute the major framework within which sectoral policies have to be designed and implemented, it is still evident that sectoral policies and decisions play a significant role in defining priorities that impact on individual and communal livelihoods. Thus, in Uganda the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture, in Tanzania, the Rural Development Strategy, and in Kenya, the Strategy for Revitalising Agriculture constitute the operational framework for planning and implementation of rural development. All these policy documents emphasise the modernisation of the agricultural sector, with a focus on commercial crop and livestock production for export. The policies commit the governments to transforming the rural economy from a subsistence to a commercial orientation with the active participation of the private sector, preferably foreign investors.

In other sectors, especially those that are involved with land tenure generally and the management of rangelands in particular, pastoralists are still seen as the problem. As a land use system, pastoralism is seen as inferior to other land use systems, especially crop production. It is thus not surprising that in Tanzania, for instance, although the NSGRP recognises pastoralism as a legitimate livelihood system, this has not stopped the articulation of policy statements related to land generally and rangelands in particular that...
blame pastoral land use for the degradation of the rangelands. Until the acknowledgement of pastoralism in the NSGRP is replicated in sectoral and other cross-cutting policies, the translation of that acknowledgement into real gains for pastoralists and their livelihood systems remains a mirage.

However, the importance of these policy achievements for pastoralism lies more in process than in substance. That pastoralists have had the chance to participate actively in the design of development policy, that they have been recognised as key players in the policy development process, and that their livelihood system has been categorised separately for the purposes of national development planning means more for pastoralists and pastoralism in the long run than the specific measures proposed. Whatever qualitative issues may be taken up with the participation, the fact is that by virtue of these achievements, the discourse on pastoral development has changed for the better, and irreversibly. Henceforth, the discourse has to be on how rather than whether pastoralists and their needs merit specific policy attention.

Conclusion: building on the gains made so far

The PRSPs have provided an important strategic victory for the pastoralists of East Africa in their quest for national development policy frameworks that are empowering and that secure their livelihoods. Although the victories that the pastoralists have achieved in the current phase of PRSPs across the region are modest, they nevertheless constitute an important milestone in the struggle for security of pastoral livelihoods. They establish a critical foundation for the promotion of sustainable pastoral livelihoods.

What is important is that pastoralists build on this foundation to enlarge the space for their livelihood system. To do this, pastoralists need to organise at local, national, regional and even global levels, in order to create a critical mass and ensure political leverage. If the history of pastoral marginalisation in East Africa, as elsewhere in the African drylands, has taught us anything, it is that policy processes are more political than they are technical. That knowledge and information, though important for the policy-making process, will not on their own tilt the balance in favour of pastoralists. Rather, pastoralists and those who support them need to back scientific knowledge, arguments and information with political organisation, capacity building in advocacy and networking with other livelihood groups, with a view to creating a viable political constituency that policy makers will have no alternative but to engage with. Only thus can pastoralists influence political decisions in their favour and create an enabling policy environment for sustainable pastoralism.

Notes

5 Pastoral Thematic Group, 2001. ‘Pastoral Poverty Reduction Strategy’
6 note 4 above, p. 37-38
7 compare the less than one page treatment of ‘arid and semi-arid lands’ in the National Development Plan 2002-2008
10 Chapter 3, section 3.3.3 Livelihoods in Pastoralist Communities, pp. 83-88
12 p. 56 (emphasis added)
16 p. 39

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IN THE SHADOW OF THE MDGs:
PASTORALIST WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN TANZANIA

Ndinini Kimesera Sikar and Dorothy L. Hodgson

Maasai women sell beadwork at the MWEDO booth at the 2005 Gender Festival in Dar es Salaam. Photo: Dorothy L. Hodgson
Although Tanzania has reported selective progress toward meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the situation of historically marginalized peoples within the country, such as pastoralists and hunter-gatherers, shows little improvement. Available data suggests that pastoralist women and children, in particular, face a difficult present and a harsher future without increased understanding of and attention to their specific needs. The lack of reliable, disaggregated data is itself a problem, making it difficult to monitor progress toward overcoming social and economic disparities within the nation. For example, although Tanzania reported a decline in the under-5 infant mortality rate from 161 deaths per 1,000 births in 1990 to 126 per 1,000 in 2004, the predominantly pastoralist districts (Kiteto, Monduli, Ngorongoro and Simanjiro) showed a statistically impossible range of between 40 (Ngorongoro) to 168 (Kiteto) in 2002 as a result of marked differences in reporting and systematic data collection.1

Worsening prospects

As a nation, Tanzania has not only embraced the MDGs but set out an even more ambitious set of goals in two key policy documents: Tanzania Vision 2025 (which outlines a “new economic and social vision for Tanzania”, including good, quality lives for all; good governance; and a competitive, neoliberal economy); and MKUKUTA (the latest Poverty Reduction Strategy Proposal). Although both documents discuss the need to direct resources and thought toward overcoming pervasive economic inequalities among Tanzanians, neither addresses the specific social, cultural or economic needs of pastoralists, who currently number more than 1,000,000 out of a population of over 34 million (including Maasai, Sukuma and Barabaig). Moreover, the strong neoliberal assumptions and goals of both documents, and recent related sectoral policy initiatives, suggest a bleak outlook for pastoralists as their land, livestock and livelihoods come under increasing threat from national and international economic interests.

Under pressure from the World Bank, IMF and northern countries to meet global demands for increased competition, the Tanzanian government has privatized key industries, revised land regulations to encourage the sale and alienation of land, promoted large-scale commercial agriculture, expanded the highly profitable wildlife tourism and big-game hunting sectors, instituted service fees for healthcare (primary school fees were instituted then revoked), withdrawn support for education and other social servic-
es, and encouraged pastoralists to replace transhumant pastoralism with more “productive” and less “environmentally harmful” modes of livestock “keeping” (as opposed to “herding”), such as ranches. As a result, there has been increased alienation of pastoralist lands (especially drought and dry season grazing land), competition for water sources and other livestock-related resources, decline in the use of health facilities, and increased impoverishment. As pastoralism becomes less economically viable, growing numbers of pastoralist men are leaving their homesteads to seek work as miners or guards and laborers in towns.

Pastoralist women are often now the de facto heads of household, although their increased workloads and responsibilities are rarely matched by increased rights and decision-making control. Over the past hundred years or so, resources such as land and livestock have become commoditized; men have been targeted as political leaders, household “heads” and livestock “owners” by first colonial then postcolonial authorities; and women’s moral authority and spiritual significance have been dismissed. As a result, pastoralist women and their children have occupied increasingly vulnerable and dependent positions in their households and homesteads. They now hold only limited rights to livestock, lack inheritance rights and significant decision-making power, and have few ways to earn cash. Yet they are increasingly responsible for feeding and caring for their children, including paying any school fees or health-care costs. Very few are literate or speak Swahili, the national language.

Seeing the way

Pastoralist men and women increasingly see the education of their children, both boys and girls, as the key path to a better future. Many speak of “being blind”, that is without the skills to cope in their radically changing world and hope that, through schooling, their children will be able to “see the way”. Yet few can afford the high fees charged by private secondary schools, and the lack of quality education in pastoralist areas means that few students qualify for the available places in less expensive government secondary schools. The recently instituted government Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) has provided money to pastoralist and other districts to build classrooms and teachers’ houses, purchase textbooks and other school supplies, and provide teacher training. Disparities in the infrastructure and quality of education between pastoralist and non-pastoralist districts are, however, still evident in the lack of classrooms, teacher: student ratios, and availability of textbooks and other academic resources.
The table below indicates some difference in the gross enrolment rates in primary school between the national average and the two pastoralist districts for which we have the most detailed information. The discrepancy is even greater if attendance and completion data is considered. In 2000, 70% of the national cohort completed primary school. But in Simanjiro District in 2003, there were a total of 2,759 boys and 2,115 girls enrolled in Standard I, as compared to only 729 boys and 527 girls in Standard VII – a dramatic decline suggesting a completion rate of approximately 26%.

Most striking are the gender ratios for pastoralist districts, which point to enduring cultural and social barriers to the education of pastoralist girls, such as the value of their household labor, parental fears over early pregnancy, the persistence of arranged marriage and bride wealth, and parental doubts about the value and “return on investment” of female education. Clearly much has to be done to achieve universal primary education and eliminate gender disparities in education by 2015, in accordance with Goals 3 and 4 of the MDGs.

Secondary school data is more mixed. Although the pass rate in Simanjiro District for the secondary school exam in recent years has been approximately the same as the national average of 22%, anecdotal data suggests much lower pass rates in the other pastoralist districts. Moreover, the stark lack of secondary schools within pastoralist districts (2 in Simanjiro, 2 in Kiteto, 4 in Monduli and 4 in Ngorongoro, as compared to 22 in neighboring Arumeru District), means that the few pastoralist children who pass the exam and obtain secondary school places must attend boarding schools far from home. Recent initiatives by organizations to promote, provide and fund secondary education for pastoralist girls have done much to rectify the former gender imbalance in secondary school attendance by pastoralist girls as compared to pastoralist boys. In 2004, for example, 129 of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative education indicators, national vs. pastoralist districts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gross Enrolment, Primary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Data</td>
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<td>78% (2000)</td>
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<td>Ratio of boys:girls in primary school</td>
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Maasai women and young men participating in an HIV/AIDS Workshop in Orkesemut, Tanzania. Photo: Dorothy L. Hodgson
175 girls (74%) from Simanjiro District who passed the exam were selected for secondary schools, in addition to 132 boys (out of 186 who passed – 71%). Nonetheless, the total number of pastoralist boys and girls who complete primary school, successfully pass the exam and attend secondary school is still a trickle as compared to non-pastoralist districts. And without significant supplementary funding, year-long pre-Form I training programs and consistent efforts to uphold the rights of girls to attend school despite sometimes severe parental refusal, the trickle would be even smaller.

Healthy futures?

Pastoralists also suffer from disparities in healthcare in comparison with national averages, resulting in limited progress toward meeting MDGs for reduced child mortality, improved maternal health, and reversals in the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases. As with education, their situation needs to be understood against the broader background of the long history of political and social marginalization of pastoralists, Tanzania’s recent embrace of neoliberal economic policies, and enduring derogatory stereotypes about pastoralist lives and livelihoods. In addition, the limited economic opportunities and political rights of pastoralist women make them, and their children, particularly vulnerable to health problems.

As noted in the introduction, health indicators in pastoralist districts are notoriously underreported, in part because they do not include deaths outside of health facilities. Traditional birth attendants assist about 90% of deliveries, and few report maternal or infant deaths to health centers. Moreover, Mother-Child Health clinics are not offered at all health facilities, decreasing the likelihood of referrals and routine data collection. The recent introduction of fees for health services (except for Mother-Child Health clinics, which are supposed to be free) and the escalating costs of medicines have created further barriers to healthcare for poor pastoralist women and their children, who must often ask their husbands for money. Even those who try to use the health system in pastoralist districts face innumerable challenges and frustrations, including absent doctors, cancelled Mother-Child Health clinics, and lack of medicines – all symptoms of the lack of government resources and commitment to provide basic health services in these areas. Many women must still travel long distances for more than rudimentary healthcare, such as in difficult pregnancies and deliveries, further contributing to maternal and infant mortality. In recent interviews, Hodgson found that most Maasai women cited accessible, affordable, quality healthcare as one of their top priorities.

The top causes of morbidity and mortality in pastoralist districts are malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea and tuberculosis. While the national average in 2004 for under-five mortality and maternal mortality was 126 children per 1,000 births and 1,500 per 100,000 respectively, our research and experience suggests that these figures are substantially higher in pastoralist districts. Although the distribution of dispensaries by population in pastoralist districts seems equitable when compared to other districts, even the government acknowledges that “when viewed in terms of land area per dispensary then it is quite obvious that it is the districts of Ngorongoro, Kiteo/Simanjiro [then one district] and Monduli which are underprivileged”. There is also a notable lack of health centres and hospitals, with only 3 serving the 4 pastoralist districts. In other words, pastoralists are at a significant disadvantage because of their remote, dispersed locations. For example, in 1995 there was only one health facility per 780 square kilometers in Ngorongoro District, as compared to one per 52 square kilometers in Arumeru District. These difficulties are further magnified by the poor roads and lack of viable transportation within pastoralist districts. Not surprisingly, although Tanzania is making slow progress nationally in reducing under-five and maternal mortality, there is little hope that MDG goals will be met for pastoralist women and children by 2015.

HIV/AIDS

The health situation of pastoralists, especially pastoralist women and children, is further complicated by the lurking menace of HIV/AIDS. Between 1992 and 1996, there were a total of 126 cases (50 male and 76 female) of HIV/AIDS diagnosed in the four pastoralist districts. But in 2004, 213 people (18.36% of those tested; 95 male and 118 female) tested positive for HIV/AIDS in Simanjiro District alone. Similarly, at Endulen Hospital in Ngorongoro District, recorded cases of HIV positive patients rose from seven in 1998 to 21 in 2002. Despite a lack of systematic testing, the adult (15-49 years) prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS is estimated to range between 15% and 18% among pastoralists (as compared to the national average of 8.8%), with slightly higher rates among adult women.

Numerous factors contribute to almost unanimous agreement that the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS among pastoralists will only increase in coming years. Since the
primary mode of transmission for pastoralists is heterosexual sex, relevant factors include the practice of polygyny, the tolerance if not encouragement of pre-pubescence sexual activity for girls, high levels of sexual networking inside and outside of marriage, low levels of condom knowledge and use, strong cultural resistance to condom use, and high levels of untreated Sexually Transmitted Diseases among all age groups and both sexes. Moreover, most experts agree that mother-to-child transmission is on the rise because of high fertility and prolonged breastfeeding. Finally, some researchers suggest that Maasai girls will have a substantially lower age of infection than girls from other ethnic groups, in part because of their early sexual activity, with consequent reductions in fertility levels.

The vulnerability of pastoralists to HIV/AIDS is further exacerbated by the lack of health services and infrastructure described above (including very few Voluntary Counselling and Testing centers in pastoralist districts), the increasing reliance by men on migration and women on sex as livelihood strategies, and low levels of education and literacy. For example, although anti-retrovirals are now free in Tanzania, there is substantial inequality in access. Since there are no facilities in Simanjiro and Kiteto for referral and distribution, patients are referred to hospitals in Arusha town. Thus, in addition to the normal difficulties of following a complicated medical regimen, pastoralists from these districts must cope with the costs of travel and lodging in Arusha and repeated absences from work and family. Finally, although the Tanzanian government has launched a widespread HIV/AIDS education and awareness initiative through the Tanzanian Commission for AIDS, most of the materials and workshops are conducted in Swahili and designed for literate audiences, and therefore unsuitable for pastoralists.

**Working for change**

Fortunately, several organizations are working with pastoralist women to better their situation through programs focused on education, economic security, political empowerment and health. The Maasai Women’s Development Organization (MWEDO), based in Arusha, works through its over 788 members to provide leadership training and workshops on relevant topics such as HIV/AIDS, human rights, entrepreneurship skills and policy analysis. Recently, it has begun a Pastoralist Girls’ Education Fund with donations from communities and donors to fund secondary school and college education for pastoralist girls.

Similarly, the Pastoralist Women’s Council (PWC), based in Loliondo, works with over 175 women’s action groups to promote access to essential social services and the economic and political empowerment of pastoralist women and children through the transformation of patriarchal property relations, education and literacy, political participation, a revolving credit scheme, and more.

Finally, EMUSOI (which means “we’ve realized” in the Maasai language) supports secondary school education for pastoralist girls by offering a pre-Form I preparatory course (a rigorous, year-long, remedial academic program designed to make up for their poor primary education and improve their chances of passing the entrance exams for secondary school), assisting them in their secondary school applications, and paying for their tuition, fees, transport, clothing and other expenses to attend secondary school. In 2005, EMUSOI supported 85 girls in its Pre-Form I course and 320 girls in secondary school.

In addition, coordinating groups such as the Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organization’s Forum (PINGOs Forum) and the Tanzanian Association of Pastoralists and Hunter-Gatherers (TAPHGO), as well as NGOs, Community Based Organizations and Civil Society Organizations working for the interests of pastoralists and hunter-gatherers are increasingly addressing the needs and interests of women and children, including the implementation of health improvement and HIV/AIDS programs. Recent initiatives include participatory research in all of the pastoralist districts to survey knowledge, attitude, practices and behavior relevant to HIV/AIDS, the design and provision of workshops and materials on HIV/AIDS in Maas and other pastoralist languages, targeted at illiterate audiences, and sensitive to the cultural beliefs, social practices and economic realities of pastoralists; and efforts to expand and improve the medical services and infrastructure in pastoralist districts (including wider distribution of Voluntary Counselling and Testing centers). A network of key organizations working on HIV/AIDS and pastoralism has just been formed to coordinate these activities and advocate for pastoralist needs.

**Toward a better future**

In conclusion, although the situation of pastoralists, especially pastoralist women and children, may seem bleak at present, we believe that there is hope for a better future. Progress toward the MDGs can be realized, but only if the specific situations, histories and
practices of pastoralists are addressed. Education, particularly the education of pastoralist girls, is an obvious priority, as countless studies have shown the enduring value of literacy, numeracy and self-confidence for the empowerment of women (and through women, their children). MWEDO, PWC, EMUSOI and other organizations have made a start, but there is still a critical need for increased assistance to funds and programs that support the primary, secondary and university education of pastoralist girls.

But education without the possibility of economic security is only a partial answer. More efforts must be made to design and support income-generating programs, challenge the disparities in ownership and inheritance rights for pastoralist women, and seek other ways to foster their economic independence, diversity and security. Pastoralist women themselves are desperately seeking ways to earn their own income, including dairy projects, goat businesses, and producing beadwork crafts for the tourist market. As one woman explained, “We can no longer depend on our husbands, we must support ourselves”.

Disparities in health and HIV/AIDS programs must also be addressed, following many of the initiatives by pastoralist organizations described above. Most importantly, all of these interventions must be designed “from the ground up”, through discussions, the sharing of information, and decisions of pastoralist men and women themselves in culturally, socially and linguistically appropriate ways.

The Tanzanian government can do much to improve the situation of pastoralists, in light of its public commitments to meet the ambitious goals of the MDGs, Vision 2025, and MKUKUTA in order to improve the lives of all of its citizens. In addition to expanding and improving the education and health infrastructure in pastoralist districts to overcome historical disparities, the government should support initiatives to strengthen the viability and security of transhumant pastoralism as a livelihood best suited to fragile rangelands (such as restocking efforts, provision of livestock services and medicine, construction of permanent water supplies, strengthening the marketing facilities for livestock and livestock products, and legal protection of pastoralist rights to their remaining rangelands). All such initiatives, however, should recognize and enhance the critical roles and responsibilities of women in livestock care and production and their rights to livestock and livestock products.

Thanks, in part, to the relentless advocacy of pastoralist civil society organizations, the Tanzanian government is beginning to recognize and address the needs of pastoralists as people, not just their livestock as productive assets, in its policies and programs. But pastoralist women are still absent and overlooked in many of these debates and decisions, contributing to their continued marginalization from economic and political power. Both the government and civil society organizations could do far more to solicit the perspectives of pastoralist women, address their specific needs, encourage and support their initiatives, and empower them to attain their rights – including their rights to quality healthcare, education, economic security and political participation.

Finally, all government and non-government agencies should obtain and provide more disaggregated data (by gender and district at best, ethnicity or major livelihood if possible) on progress toward the MDGs as well as other social and economic indicators so as to better monitor and evaluate the situation of pastoralists in general, and pastoralist women specifically, as we all work with them to come out of the shadows.

Notes

1 Data reported in this article is culled from international and national sources, consultancy reports and recent research by local NGOs. Qualitative data is taken from Hodgson’s long-term research with Maasai and Sikar’s years of development experience. Specific citations are available from the authors.

2 For detailed historical and ethnographic analysis of these processes, see Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development (Indiana, 2001) and The Church of Women: Gendered Encounters between Masaai and Missionaries (Indiana, 2004), both by Dorothy L. Hodgson.

3 These factors, among others, are listed in Dr. Ernestina Coast’s 2002 report on HIV/AIDS in Ngorongoro for ERETO-NPP, one of the most detailed and thorough reports available (available online at: http://personal.lse.ac.uk/coast/Coast%20-%20HIVAIDS%20in%20Ngorongoro%20District.pdf). Other recent reports and research confirm most of her findings for other pastoralist districts.

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Dorothy L. Hodgson is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Rutgers University in the USA. She has worked with and studied pastoralists in Tanzania, especially Maasai, since 1985. Her current research explores the historical, political and social dynamics of pastoralist civil society organizations (CSOs).
THE HEALTH SITUATION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN CENTRAL AFRICAN PYGMY PEOPLES
We are completely neglected and forgotten. Even our wives do not have access to midwives. They are permanently exposed to death because of lack of care during their pregnancy and deliveries. This came with the so-called modern life into which we were dragged. It did not exist when we were living in our natural environment. We had so many plants for such problems...

Twa man from Kalehe district, Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Pygmy peoples' health situation is changing due to changes in their traditional forest-based hunter-gatherer livelihoods and culture. Logging, farming, infrastructure projects and the creation of protected areas are restricting Pygmy peoples’ access to forest resources; many Pygmy groups are spending more time in road-side settlements, have closer contact with neighbouring ‘Bantu’ farming communities and are more involved in farming, wage labour and the cash economy. These changes are most pronounced in the Great Lakes region where most of the Twa communities have had to abandon a forest-based lifestyle, and have become landless and impoverished. Pygmy peoples’ health situation is also affected by the negative stereotyping, exclusion and subjugation they encounter from their neighbours and dominant society. This article looks at the way environmental and social factors impact on Pygmy women and children’s health, and the health of Pygmy communities in general.

Reproduction

Available data indicates that the fertility of Pygmy women is generally high. For example, in the late 80s the cohort total fertility rate reported by Aka women from different communities in Central African Republic (CAR) was 5.1, 5.6 and 6.2, and for Mbuti women in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was 5.0. These rates are similar to those in many traditional societies. The very low fertility (2.6 births/reproductive life span) of Efe women in DRC in the mid 90s was attributed to sterility caused by diseases such as gonorrhoea. Efe women may...
be more exposed to STD infections due to a relatively high rate of marriage with the neighbouring Lese farming communities (see discussion on HIV below).

**Infant mortality**

Mortality rates of Pygmy children are high. Among the Aka in CAR and the Twa in Uganda, infant mortality rates (deaths before 1 year of age) are reported as 20-22% and 25% respectively. Under-five mortality rates for Mbendjele Aka in northern Congo are 27%, and 40-59% among the Twa in Uganda. These rates are twice those in the nearby non-Pygmy populations. The infant mortality rates are similar to those of other hunter-gather populations such as the !Kung and the Yanomami.

One of the main causes of childhood death in Pygmy communities is measles, accounting for 8-20% of deaths of Aka children in CAR. In Congo, mortality from measles was five to six times higher in Pygmy children than neighbouring non-Pygmy communities.

**Nutrition**

Pygmy communities that have access to forest and farm resources have seasonally variable, but usually adequate, nutrition due to a varied diet of game, invertebrates, fruits, mushrooms, forest leaves, oily nuts, wild yams, honey and cultivated starchy foods. Pygmy women participate in hunting, and gather a wide range of forest food products. Consumption of steroid-containing wild yams may be a means whereby Pygmy women can regulate their fecundity.

Depletion of forest food resources through logging, commercial poaching or restricted access to protected areas increases the risk of malnutrition and mortality, particularly if Pygmy communities lack alternative lands on which to grow their own food. When Ugandan Twa families were given land, under-five mortality rates dropped from 59% to 18%, demonstrating the crucial importance of land for survival. As traditional egalitarian social systems have become eroded, the responsibility for children’s well-being and household food provisioning has fallen increasingly on Twa women, whereas in traditionally-living, forest-based communities these roles are more equitably shared between men and women. Twa women who have to rely on begging or badly-paid
wage labour to obtain food have great difficulty meeting their family food needs. Children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable, exacerbated by the breakdown of traditional food sharing mechanisms. Loss of access to forest lands and resources also deprives Pygmy communities of their renowned traditional herbal pharmacopoeia. Many of the plants used by Baka women in Cameroon to treat family ailments include active compounds against intestinal helminthiasis, guinea worm, jaundice, malaria, diarrhoea, toothache and cough. An anti-malarial treatment based on traditional Pygmy medicine is reportedly being used in Mbalmayo Hospital, southern Cameroon. Morbidity

As the forest frontier is pushed back, Pygmy communities spend more time in fixed settlements along the roads, closer to farming populations. Here health problems increase due to increased exposure to infected malarial mosquitoes, and the build up of parasites due to increased population density and lack of adequate sanitation. Heavy infestations of chiggers (burrowing fleas) in fingers and toes cause painful and crippling infections. Spiritual health also suffers as communities have less access to forests for traditional nocturnal singing and dance ceremonies to maintain harmony between the forest and the community. Social tensions, alcohol abuse and domestic violence against women increase.

Compared with nearby non-Pygmy communities, forest-based Pygmy communities are reported to have lower prevalence of malaria, rheumatism, respiratory infections, goitre, scabies, syphilis, *Loa loa* nematode infections, hepatitis C (3 to 7 times less), high blood pressure and dental caries. On the other hand, leprosy, conjunctivitis, chiggers, periodontal disease and dental attrition are more common. Intestinal nematode, helminth and bacterial parasite loads are also higher, which may explain cases of anaemia in Pygmy communities despite their high protein intakes. In some parts of Central Africa, filoviruses causing haemorrhagic fevers (e.g. Ebola) are more prevalent in Pygmy populations than in nearby farmers. However, the epidemiology of haemorrhagic fevers, the role of wild animals as a reservoir for these diseases, and the risks to Pygmy populations, are not well understood.
Pygmy children are particularly affected by yaws, a painful skin infection that can progress to destruction of bone, cartilage, skin and soft tissue, and which is more common in Pygmy communities than neighbouring communities. Serological examinations in Pygmy communities in CAR, Cameroon and DRC during the 1970s, 80s and early 90s showed that 70-90% of individuals were infected, with 5-50% showing clinical symptoms.30

Twa communities in the Great Lakes region report malaria, intestinal worms, diarrhoea and respiratory complaints as their most serious illnesses.31 Comparative health data is lacking, but the impoverished living conditions of the Twa can be expected to cause significant health inequalities compared with neighbouring communities. Forty-three percent of Twa households in Rwanda and 53% in Burundi have no farm land - 3.5 times more than the respective national populations. The situation of the Ugandan Batwa is similar.32 The connection between landlessness and increased child mortality was noted above. Twa households are also likely to be more at risk of respiratory illness and parasite infections due to inadequate housing, lack of sanitation and lack of safe drinking water, which are respectively six times, seven times and two times higher in Rwandan Twa households than the national population.33

**HIV-1**

The HIV-1 virus is generally thought to have originated from a Central African chimpanzee strain of simian immunodeficiency virus, probably entering the human population via hunters coming into contact with blood of infected primates.34 Simian retroviruses are still actively crossing into forest-dwelling human populations35 - a potential risk for those Pygmy communities whose economies are still based largely on hunting. However, HIV infection in Pygmies is probably via contact with Bantu rather than from simian populations.36

Studies in the 1980s and 90s in Cameroon and Republic of Congo showed a generally lower prevalence of HIV-1 in Pygmy people (range 0% - 1.6%) than in neighbouring populations (range 0% to 5.4%).37 Isolation may have protected Pygmy communities from contact with sexually transmitted viruses such as HIV and hepatitis C. Intermarriage with Bantu people is infrequent, and is almost always by Pygmy women marrying out of their communities – their low bride price and their perceived higher fertility making them a more attractive prospect for Bantu men.38 However, once the HIV virus has been introduced into a Pygmy group, it could spread rapidly as it is common for Pygmy men and women to have serial marriage partners. The lower rates of polygamy reported in Pygmy communities compared with neighbouring communities39 may nevertheless confer some protection on Pygmy women.

Indications are that HIV prevalence is increasing in Pygmy populations. Until 1990 no clear-cut case of HIV infection had been demonstrated in Pygmies in Cameroon. Between 1995 and 2003, HIV infection of Baka people around Yokadouma in eastern Cameroon is reported to have increased from 0.7% to 4%.40 Logging, road building and infrastructure projects, such as the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline, increase STD transmission by employing transient male labourers who seek sexual services from the local women. Pygmy women are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection due to the widespread belief of other ethnic groups that sexual intercourse with Pygmy women confers protection against back-ache, AIDS and other ailments, due to their special powers as forest dwellers.41

**Access to health care**

Rural communities throughout Central Africa suffer from inadequate health care facilities. For example, in the mid-90s, 80% of the rural population in two northern provinces of Republic of Congo were estimated to lack access to health care.42 Pygmy people are particularly disadvantaged as they are less able to pay for treatment, often lack ID cards needed to travel or obtain treatment, and are liable to be humiliated by health centre staff because they are Pygmies.43

Pygmy communities’ mobility and remoteness makes it harder for public health campaigns to reach them, but discrimination is also an important factor. Several reports note that medical resources, including vaccination materials, childhood immunizations, intravenous infusions, anti-malarial drugs, aspirin and oral rehydration mix, were preferentially given to Bantu.44 In northern Congo, local Bantu intermediaries responsible for delivering medication to Mbendjele leprosy sufferers often made the patient work for them in order to receive their pills; unwilling to endure months of servitude, the Mbendjele preferred to abandon their treatment.45 However, with good planning and commitment, health campaigns can reach remote Pygmy communities: during the mid-1990s a private campaign treated hundreds of Aka people in northern Congo
with the single injection of penicillin needed to cure yaws, and UNICEF has succeeded in reaching Pygmy children in its polio vaccination campaigns.46

The attitudes of health staff in some cases are beginning to change47 and more Pygmy communities are now aware of free government health services. In Rwanda in 2004, 68% of Twa women received antenatal vaccinations and 90% of under-fives received one or more of DTaP, polio, TB and measles immunisations.48 Rwandan Twa communities benefiting from NGO-run income-generating projects are now enrolling in local health insurance schemes and investing in improved housing and sanitation, which should reduce illness.

Missionaries, NGOs, logging companies and development agency health programmes are often the main source of health care for Pygmy communities. Several such programmes have trained ambulant Pygmy primary care workers and established community-run dispensaries, giving communities a stake in their own health care provision.49 Indigenous support organisations have also set up health projects, such as the nutrition centre run by the Programme d’Intégration et de Développement du Peuple Pygmée au Kivu during the 1990s, which eventually had to close due to lack of funding and damage during the armed conflicts in eastern DRC. Also in eastern DRC, L’Union pour L’Emancipation des Femmes Autochtones provided a counselling and medical aid service for Twa women victims of sexual violence.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

According to the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2005 Progress Report, sub-Saharan Africa has shown no progress or a deterioration in reaching the MDG 4,5 and 6 targets i.e. a 2/3rd reduction in child mortality, a ¾ reduction in maternal mortality and a halt and reduction in the incidence of HIV-AIDS, malaria and TB infections. Primary health services are grossly inadequate in most of Central Africa, affecting millions of rural and urban Africans. The relative extent to which the MDGs are being realised for Pygmy peoples is very difficult to assess, as reliable and comprehensive data on Pygmy peoples’ health is scarce, government data rarely disaggregat-ed by ethnic group, and research by anthropologists, missionaries and NGOs often localised and based on small sample sizes. The existing information, however, indicates that Pygmy peoples’ health is frequently worse than that of their non-Pygmy neighbours. The remoteness of forest-based communities has limited their exposure to some diseases but also increased the difficulties of health service delivery. The high mortality of Pygmy children from measles and the higher prevalence of endemic diseases such as yaws and lep-rosy in Pygmy communities are indicators of lack of access to government health services.50

To ensure that national health policy efforts towards MDGs 4 (Reduce child mortality), 5 (Improve maternal health) and 6 (Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases) also reach Pygmy communities, governments and health service providers need to address the issues of remoteness, poverty and discrimination against Pygmies, as well as landlessness, which is a key factor in child mortality as shown by data from Uganda. The increasing trend towards ‘cost sharing’ in health service provision must be complemented by dispensation schemes for very poor families, and state services should educate their staff to eradicate discriminatory attitudes that deny fair treatment to Pygmy patients.

Pygmy associations and support organisations can help by supporting income-generating activities and mutual saving schemes that enable Pygmy families to pay for health care, or enrol in health insurance schemes. They can also relay information about HIV and malaria prevention and testing facilities, as well as free health services, monitor Pygmy families’ access to such services and support families to claim these rights from local service providers.

Conservation NGOs and missionaries have implemented a range of different models of health provision for Pygmy communities, adapted to local situations. The experience gained from these initiatives indicates that health services for Pygmy people should incorporate both mobile and sedentary strategies, including methods of community-based health provision involving traditional healers who are accountable to communities and have their trust. Trained community members can help deliver primary health care to remote communities. Regular refresher training and support is important for the sustainability of such schemes, as is their endorsement and support by the state health service.

Land is crucial for survival and access to forests is a vital component of Pygmy peoples’ physical, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing. Meeting the health MDGs for Pygmy peoples will require strategies based on secure rights to lands and forests, developed in consultation with Pygmy communities.
References


Sarno L., 1993: Song from the forest: my life with the ba-Banjelle Pygmies. Houghton Mifflin


Notes

1 Dorothy Jackson is a freelance consultant working on environment and development issues. This paper draws on a longer paper on indigenous peoples’ health in Africa that will be published in The Lancet and will also be freely available on The Lancet’s website.

2 Barume 2000

3 The term ‘Pygmy’ is used here as a term adopted by indigenous activists and support organisations to encompass the different groups of central African forest hunter-gatherers and former hunter-gatherers, and to distinguish them from other ethnic groups who may also live in forests, but who are more reliant on farming, and who are economically and politically dominant. Pygmy peoples live in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo (Congo), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, and comprise several distinct groups including the Baggil, Baka, Aka, Bongo, Efe, Mbuti, Sua and Twa. Their estimated total population is 300,000-500,000 (Jackson 2005).

4 A term conventionally used for settled farming peoples, although these groups include Oubangian and Sudanic language speakers as well as Bantu language speakers.

5 Jackson 2003, 2005; Lewis 2000


7 Average number of births measured in women who have already completed their reproductive span.

8 Hewlett 1991; Pennington 2001

9 Pennington 2001

10 Hewlett 1996


12 Hewlett 1991

13 Lewis 1999; U.S. Department of State 1996

14 Yamauchi et al. 2000, Jenike 2001

15 Doulias 2001

16 Lilley 2005; Kabanankuye and Wily 1996; Wily 1996

17 Balenger et al. 2005

18 Jackson 2003

19 Hewlett 1991;

20 Jackson 2003


22 Betti 2004

23 Macchi and Verotta 2004

24 Sarno 1995; Kretsinger 1993; Froment 2001

25 Lilley 2005

26 Jackson 2003; Sarno 1993; Froment 2001


28 Lilley 2005; Dietz et al 1989; Froment 2001

29 Nyang’ori et al. (forthcoming)


31 Jackson 2003

32 Jackson 2003; CAURWA and Forest Peoples Project 2005; Forest Peoples Programme and UOBDU 2005

33 CAURWA and Forest Peoples Project 2004

34 Anon, n.d.

35 Wolfe et al 2004

36 Ndembé et al 2003

37 Ndumbe et al 1993; Kowoo et al 1995; Salomone 2000; Moula-Pelat et al 1992


40 Kowoo et al 1995; Tchoumba 2005; 17

41 Jackson 2003; Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l’Homme 2004

42 Lewis 1999

43 Lewis 1999; Lewis 2000; Kabanankuye and Wily 1996; Bailey, Bachu et and Hewlett 1992

44 Lewis 1999; Hewlett nd; U.S. Department of State 1996

45 Lewis 1999

46 Salomone 2000

47 Jackson 2003:13; Balenger et al 2005

48 CAURWA and FPP 2005

49 Jackson 2005; Lewis 1999; Kretsinger 1993; Wilkie and Morelli 2005

50 Mbeus and Antal 1992

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The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are action-oriented and present challenges not only in terms of implementation but also in terms of interpretation. This is particularly the case when considering the relevance and achievement of the MDGs for indigenous peoples. In southern Africa, one of the legacies of racist policies is that available statistics on the sub-goals and indicators provide no breakdown on a level that makes it possible to assess the special situation and problems of indigenous peoples. The present article, then, is more an analysis of efforts than an evaluation of achievements.

By focusing on the second Millennium Development Goal “To achieve universal primary education”, and relating the discussion to the third MDG goal “To promote gender equality and empower women”, we are however addressing an area of particular significance for indigenous minorities. The United Nations recognises education as a basic and fundamental right, and inadequate and inappropriate education has proved to be among the greatest barriers to full and equal participation for indigenous peoples. Moreover, this is an area in which it is possible to identify some feasible measures of a practical and policy nature that, according to available expertise, would have a positive effect on the situation.

The decision as to which languages to use as medium of instruction in primary schools is one of the factors that determines school performance and proficiency. In southern Africa the arguments for use of mother tongue in primary education have been taken up by San organisations and support NGOs for a number of years. Old arguments are now linked to new initiatives, culminating – thus far, in a large regional conference that took place in Gaborone, Botswana in June 2005, on ‘Multilingualism in Southern African Education – Celebrating and Sharing Experiences and Practices’ (Hays 2005). The conference gathered representatives from communities and government bodies responsible for education, linguists and other academic researchers together with language and education practitioners. The inclusion of this variety of stakeholders reflected a wish to balance the intimate understanding of problems that communities and practitioners face on the ground with the theoretical knowledge and experiences of teachers and researchers, and the more reluctant support of policy makers. The conference was officially opened by the Minister of Education in Botswana, who challenged participants to provide viable solutions to the problems minority language speakers are facing.

This article will give an overview of the situation of San people in the region, and mention some of the factors that characterise the education situation, illustrated by cases from recent research in Botswana. The second part outlines the initiatives taken by San and support organisations, and highlights the main recommendations from the regional conference.1

Regional context

Africa is still a continent in which many governments deny that some of their citizens meet the criteria used by the UN and the international community to characterise indigenous peoples and indigenous issues are, in most contexts, ignored. Approximately 100,000 people living in the region of southern Africa fall within the internationally accepted criteria for indigenous peoples. They are referred to as San, Bushmen or Basarwa (which is the official term in Botswana), and Khoe in South Africa. (Saugestad 2001, Hitchcock and Vinding 2004).

Across the region they share many of the same traits of dispossession and marginalisation, although the state context varies considerably: South Africa has opened a discussion on indigenous issues, and ILO Convention 169 and other international instruments are regularly consulted. Botswana pursues a more outdated policy of assimilation, generally denying the relevance of a more multicultural approach to deal with its cultural diversity, but with some open-
ings such as the conference reported on below. Namibia is somewhere in-between, sharing with South Africa the more open approach in government following a successful struggle for independence, while its hierarchy of different ethnic groups leaves the San at the bottom. In Angola, San survivors are only recently beginning to organise themselves after a devastating civil war.

Like hunting and gathering peoples worldwide, San communities are currently facing drastic social change, extreme marginalisation and poverty. Literacy, numeracy and other skills learned at formal schools are increasingly necessary for survival, and San communities want their children to succeed in the school system and to obtain these skills. San communities across southern Africa experience serious problems with education. Compared to other ethnic groups, San children have far lower attendance rates and far higher drop-out rates than children from other ethnic groups. The pattern of a weak learning environment and low academic performance repeats itself in numerous studies (Kann 1989, le Roux 1999, Motshabi and Saugestad 2004, Bolaane and Mafela 2005, Motshabi 2006). One of the primary reasons San learners and their communities give for their low levels of participation and success in southern Africa’s education systems is the language barrier they face in the schools.

The differences between Khoesan and Bantu languages are often overlooked because they are spoken by populations that have coexisted for centuries. But differences between Khoesan, Bantu and Indo-European languages are considerable in both morphology, phonology and syntax. If we give an illustration using other, better known languages, a normal learning situation for a San student would be tantamount to a child growing up in a family speaking Chinese, going to school where the teacher speaks Swahili, and gives basic instruction in reading and writing in Swahili, while from the third year onwards she starts to learn French and, after two more years, French becomes the main medium of teaching for all subjects.

**Botswana context**

To achieve universal education is a question of resources, but also of political will. South Africa, Namibia and Botswana are at the lower end of the ‘median human development’ countries according to the UNDP human development index (119,126 and 128 respectively, UNDP 2004) but still rank above all other countries in sub-Sahara Africa, and they all have reasonably good universal primary education.

The government of Botswana has articulated its commitment to provide equal and equitable access to basic education for all children of school-going age in a policy document entitled Vision 2016. One of the challenges implied by this goal is to provide an education system that empowers citizens to become innovators, and that supports and strengthens Botswana’s wealth of different languages and cultural traditions. So far, the reality has not matched the objectives. Persisting socio-political, cultural and economic factors have resulted in serious disparities in terms of access, participation and performance of disadvantaged groups, particularly the San. Even at a time when the international donor agencies are withdrawing from Botswana, citing it as a middle-income country, cases of serious poverty and illiteracy in the Basarwa/San communities of the western districts are being reported (Nthomang 2004, Bolaane and Mafela 2005).

The problems faced by the San can be assessed along two dimensions: spatial distance, which makes provision of infrastructure costly and economic enterprises cumbersome, and the cultural distance manifested in a school system that fails to accommodate local language and culture. The two dimensions converge in an institution that represents considerable challenges for San children: the school hostel.

**The School Hostel situation**

Hostels for children from remote areas in Botswana are part of the affirmative action package called the Remote Areas Development Programme, which seeks to bring basic social facilities to people living in remote areas. While the programme defines its target groups in neutral terms, identifying geographical distance rather than cultural differences, they are nevertheless identified primarily by their deviation from the ruling norm (not speaking the majority language, no traditional tribal organisation, lacking control over resources.) More than 70% of the people living in remote areas are San (Saugestad 2001).

If they are from settlements so small that they cannot accommodate even the smaller type of village school, the children are taken to hostels, lodgings set up in the vicinity of some select larger schools. Even though these students may not make up a large number in absolute terms (presently there are some 25 hostels in Botswana) they epitomize a situation of - at times - extreme cultural conflict.
For a number of reasons, the hostel environment is experienced as ‘hostile’. It is in part the distance from home, which may allow only a few return visits per year. Another factor is the frugal furnishing, with little or no stimulation in the off-school environment. A third factor is the insufficient care provision, catering only for the barest necessities of food and shelter. This is the ‘home’ context for a child that is coming into contact with a totally alien school system, presented through a language that - to varying degrees - is unfamiliar.

A recent study from a school in Central District provides a very common picture: (Mokibelo and Moumakwa 2005): The children are picked up by trucks at the beginning of the school term from the cattle post where their parents are working as herdsmen, and they are transported back when the school closes. The District Council supplies the hostel with food, books and other basics, some clothes and shoes once a year. There is one matron, cooks and a guard to look after some 250 children (some stay on their own or with relatives but eat at the hostel). The school they go to has 500 students and, by the time they reach standard seven, some 100 of them will have left.

The teachers belong to the majority, Tswana group, the same as the cattle post owners that employ their parents. Their subservient position is described as follows: “They normally cannot share the same tree shade with their masters unless they have been called to discuss a crucial matter concerning the job they are doing.” (ibid:6)

The study finds that the San children cannot read their English language text books effectively, even though the texts are supposed to be at their grade level. In other words, the teaching material is not adapted to their needs. Teachers complain about the students’ lack of interest in schooling in general, and reading in particular: “Ah, these students are too stubborn to talk in class.” “No matter what you do they won’t talk.” “English is their third language and they cannot express themselves in it.” Students confirm the teachers’ negative impression: “English is difficult.” “I don’t know a lot of words”. They are described as passive in the classroom situation, and careless about their homework. On all counts they perform lower than the few Tswana children that attend the same school.

The resulting pattern is an inadequate learning of English – the key to further education - and a love-hate relationship with Setswana, the dominant national language (Bolaane and Mafela 2005). Language loss is occurring all over southern Africa. When children are taken to hostels away from their language community, they may lose their ability to communicate in their mother tongue within a few years of starting school.3 The extent to which Setswana has
eroded the cultural-linguistic discourse can be further gauged in the names that San now give their children, as both first and second names are in Setswana.

**The gender dimension**

All the factors described above affect the girl child more than the boy. The egalitarian relationship that was a hallmark in the traditional hunting and gathering adaptation is not easily maintained under the new social and economic order. Rather we find that two hierarchies have a multiplier effect: men over women and Tswana over San. While school enrolment is at first fairly equal, the differences appear – not surprisingly - as the girl reaches sexual maturity. Its main manifestation is that the high school drop-out rate for San students is generally even higher for girls and rising (Le Roux 1999, Polelo 2003). A large but undocumented cause is pregnancy following a Tswana male – San female relationship of the kind that does not lead to marriage. The hostel situation makes the girl particularly vulnerable.

Case studies of school and hostel situations consistently report assaults on girls, even perpetrated by teachers or guardsmen, or a lack of supervision allowing older boys to satisfy themselves. However, such cases are rarely reported to the police, as San children find it difficult to talk about such issues, and probably also doubt that any report would be followed up. Moreover, the hostel situation is generally characterized by a lack of resources, boredom and much unsupervised free time, and it is difficult to draw a clear line between cases of physical abuse and girls accepting offers from males in the hostel environment who entice them with money.

**A San perspective**

A UNICEF study from 2000 shows that San children are constrained from talking openly about ethnic relationships, and particularly issues that have to do with cultural alienation or sensitivity, for fear of a backlash. In the case of students coming from remote villages, parents have expressed concern regarding the hostel situation and the general educational environment. They feel there is a lack of due consultation and engagement with local communities. This is leading to bitterness and alienation on the part of the parents concerned, who would be more likely to participate if they were properly acknowledged. Typical statements would be:

*We do not know why they do not consult with us in order to try to resolve many of the problems we hear our children experience in the hostels. It is surprising that even though many of our children reside in the hostels we are not involved ... we would prefer that the caretakers be from our own village, as we would know how to tackle the issues relating to the behaviour of our children. (Mafela 2000)*

Contrary to the belief held by some teachers, many San are aware of the need for, and benefits of, schooling. San would like to reduce their dependence on the government and outside agencies, they would like to promote economic self-sufficiency, but they are still facing the challenges of high unemployment, and a lack of formal education. San of the Khwaai community find it important to keep sending their children to school, hoping that upon their return they will be in a position to assist their communities in strengthening decision-making and establishing local institutions that can become vehicles for development purposes and for increasing the power of the Khwaai community in the tourism sector (Bolaane and Mafela 2005, Bolaane 2003). Communities try to bridge the gap between traditional hunting gathering in areas they consider their own and modern-day ecological tourism in the same areas, now leased from the government on contract. Appropriate education means curricula that combine traditional knowledge with modern technologies, helping the communities to benefit from the new systems of community-based natural resource management.

**NGO initiatives – the regional process**

The Regional Mother Tongue Conference, held in Gaborone, Botswana from 1-2 June 2005 grew out of a process originally designed to address the specific educational problems described above, especially the language problems faced by the indigenous minorities of southern Africa. The process started with a regional assessment sponsored by the Kuru Development Trust in Botswana and the regional Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA), and the results were published as *Torn Apart: San Children as Change Agents in a Process of Acculturation*, (Le Roux 1999). This volume presents a comprehensive outline of the complex barriers that
Participants at the Regional Mother Tongue Conference, Botswana 2005. Photo: Sidsel Saugestad

Teaching material display. Photo: Sidsel Saugestad
San children face in southern African formal education systems.

In 2000, WIMSA established the Regional San Education Programme, which has co-ordinated a variety of educational initiatives, conferences and workshops across the region, most importantly the Southern African San Education Forum (SASEF) formed in Kimberley in 2002. The conference in Botswana built upon these earlier discussions but was broadened to allow for the participation of a wider range of stakeholders in mother tongue education.6

The Minister’s challenge

The opening speech by the Minister of Education in Botswana, J.D. Nkate, set the tone for the conference, expressing a spirit of collaboration. However, he also described the many challenges facing his ministry in its efforts to provide mother tongue education. His main concerns were twofold. Firstly, financial: each language is small in population, yet the cost of developing the orthography and teaching materials would be huge. Not enough literature would limit choice. Secondly, political: teaching would be localised, promoting regionalism instead of nation-building. (Nkate 2005). He asked the conference to advise his government on how best to address these challenges.

The primary recommendation from the conference was that the formulation and implementation of language policy should draw upon existing research, and should reflect the various perspectives voiced by minority groups in previous declarations on language and education issues. The main conclusions emphasised the benefits of mother tongue education and the need for special attention to minority languages, in particular for the indigenous peoples of southern Africa, the San. Multicultural education was recommended as a general approach to addressing both of these issues.

The benefits of mother tongue education

Participants argued that the benefits of mother tongue education were so well established, that one ought now to be focussing on making mother tongue education available, rather than arguing why it should be available. Early transition to a second language as the language of instruction, although it is the norm in most African countries, puts African students at a severe disadvantage educationally. Minorities who have no mother tongue education at all are even more alienated. Given the proven pedagogical advantage of mother tongue education, making this option available becomes an important rights issue.

Some young people who have begun to experience this shift have become passionate activists for the preservation of their languages. Elizabeth Naoadoees described having lost her first language, Naro, as a child when her parents moved to a predominantly Nama-Damara speaking area in Namibia. Over the past few years, she has been using materials developed in Botswana to teach herself to speak Naro again, and to read and write this language. Not having had the advantage of mother tongue education, Elizabeth has a strong desire to learn to read and write in her own language, and to work to promote the language among other Naro in Namibia:

“Why have I worked so hard to learn and write my language? I feel deep down inside that I am doing something very important in my life. Almost as if it is something I am meant to do. I know in my heart that I have found something very important to me that I lost as a child. I do not want to lose it again. Naro is my past; it is part of who I am”.

Do indigenous peoples need special treatment?

The question of a special status for indigenous peoples is a difficult issue to address in Africa. While it is generally acknowledged that the ancestors of today’s San-speaking peoples were the original indigenous inhabitants of southern Africa, there are different views on whether this status entitles indigenous peoples to special recognition, treatment or rights. San communities are clearly not alone in their desire for mother tongue education. At the conference, representatives from other minority language groups also emphasised the importance of having access to mother tongue and culturally relevant education, and described the efforts of their communities in this direction. As Nyati-Ramahobo noted in her keynote address, all of these groups would benefit from a multicultural approach to education, one that recognises and values linguistic and cultural diversity. Uniting the voices and efforts of minorities would make all of them stronger, and benefit not only these minority groups but society as a whole. But there was also a general feeling among participants that although other minorities also needed help, San minorities proba-
bly had the greatest hurdles to leap and thus were in need of targeted measures to an extent that other groups were perhaps not.

**Innovation depends on NGOs**

Two meetings held at the Penduka Training Centre in Windhoek, Namibia have been crucial events for San language development efforts, and represent regional collaboration on the part of San language activists to develop orthographies. Delegates from Namibia, Botswana and South Africa, representing the languages of Ju’hoansi, !Xun, Khwedam, Khoekhoegowab and Naro, met for a workshop that included training in the principles of phonetics and orthography.

Efforts are currently underway in Botswana to design a model education project that will serve as an example for San and other minority groups across the region who wish to develop alternative educational approaches for their communities. The project is still in its early phases, and there are several potential stumbling blocks ahead. One core question is how to balance San communities’ consistent requests for schools that cater for individual language groups with the Botswana government’s (and general southern African governments’) wariness of schools that are identified with a particular ethnic group. Concerns also revolve around the potential for excluding other ethnic groups (including other San language groups) and the desire to ensure that San communities have access to education that is considered equal to that of other groups.

Other recent initiatives include the Regional San Education Programme in Namibia, which has worked with WIMSA to support tertiary students, and a collaborative programme between the University of Botswana and the University of Tromso, Norway, to assist young San to access higher education and further training so that the skills and knowledge acquired can be used to support the development of San communities and organisations in the future.

**Conclusion**

The recent Mother Tongue Conference confirmed that both San parents and learners view education as crucial for the survival of their communities. San and other minority communities consulted on educational issues have consistently expressed the desire for an education that respects and values their own language, culture, background and knowledge, that addresses their social and economic realities, and provides their children with a positive learning experience. Furthermore, the right to such an education is guaranteed by numerous international and regional human rights and educational rights documents. The objectives of the Millennium Development Goals reflect those of UNESCO and other organisations, and in the case of Botswana the objectives of Vision 2016 also.

But resolutions mean little if they are not implemented. Botswana, as the country lagging most behind compared to its neighbours, now has the opportunity to come into line with international trends, not only in addressing the MDGs but more specifically by acknowledging the specific steps that need to be taken to include its indigenous minority in this process. How this can be done is expressed in great detail in the report from the Mother Tongue Conference (Hays 2005). It requires action on two levels:

Practical measures should be taken to improve the provision of educational facilities according to currently stated objectives. The school hostel situation has been highlighted as one area where better care provision and simple measures such as recruiting caregivers who speak the children’s home language would represent a significant improvement for minority language speakers. Increased cross-border cooperation and exchange of teaching materials is another practical measure that would be relatively easy to undertake.

However, even such small concessions require a minimum of political will, and recognition of the needs arising from the diversity in the cultural and linguistic landscape of Botswana. An open and more permissive attitude to NGO or civil society initiatives may be the ‘best case’ outcome from these conferences. The international community could play a constructive role here in pointing out how much affirmative measures have become part of mainstream policies (as expressed in e.g. UNDP 2004) and by supporting specific initiatives. There is no realistic prospect that the government will change its policies in the foreseeable future, and attainment of the Millennium Goals in education and gender equality will remain dependent upon local NGOs.

**Notes**

1 The article can be read as a continuation of the contribution by Jennifer Hays in *Indigenous Affairs* no.1 2005 (Hays 2005a). The authors would also like to acknowledge our debt to earlier drafts of Hays’ report on the Mother Tongue Conference, which
are paraphrased extensively (Hays 2005b). The full report is available from WIMSA: wimssarg@iafrica.com.mw, or ubtnmsmo@ub.bw.

2 Vision 2016 sets out targets to be reached by 2016, that is to say, 50 years after Independence in 1966.

3 Mokibelo and Moumakwa (2005) note a declining rate of Setswana spoken at home, from 77% in standard 4 to no standard 7 pupils, according to their self-reporting.

4 The Ministry of Local Govt. Lands & Housing 1994 RAD Programme Monitoring Studies noticed an increase in enrolment in RAD settlements and a growing awareness among parents of the value of education, although high drop-out rates were also reported. Pregnancy and accommodation problems were named most commonly as the reasons for the high drop-out rates. In 1995, the San had the lowest literacy rates of all ethnic groups in Kgalagadi District. At 24% for males and 22% for females, the San’s rates fall dramatically below the national rates of 81% for males and 60% for females...Van der Jagt (1995) found that of the total population (over 12 years of age) of the district, 28% had completed primary school compared with 9% of the San. Only 8% of San in Kgalagadi District had obtained their Junior Certificate. In both cases they were the lowest percentages of all ethnic groups (le Roux 1999:45-46).

5 The San Capacity Building Programme at the University of Botswana finds that out of 67 applications for support, 19 (28%) are female.

6 The conference was organised by a steering committee including representatives from the University of Botswana and its Collaborative Programme for San Research and Capacity Building, WIMSA, SASEF, the Naro Language Team and the Kuru Family of Organisations (KFO).

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