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PASTORAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

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Re-Stocking Pastoralists in Kenya: A Strategy for Relief and Rehabilitation.

by

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This paper is based on work carried out as part of a pilot re-stocking programme funded by Oxfam in Isiolo and Turkana Districts, Kenya, in 1983–4

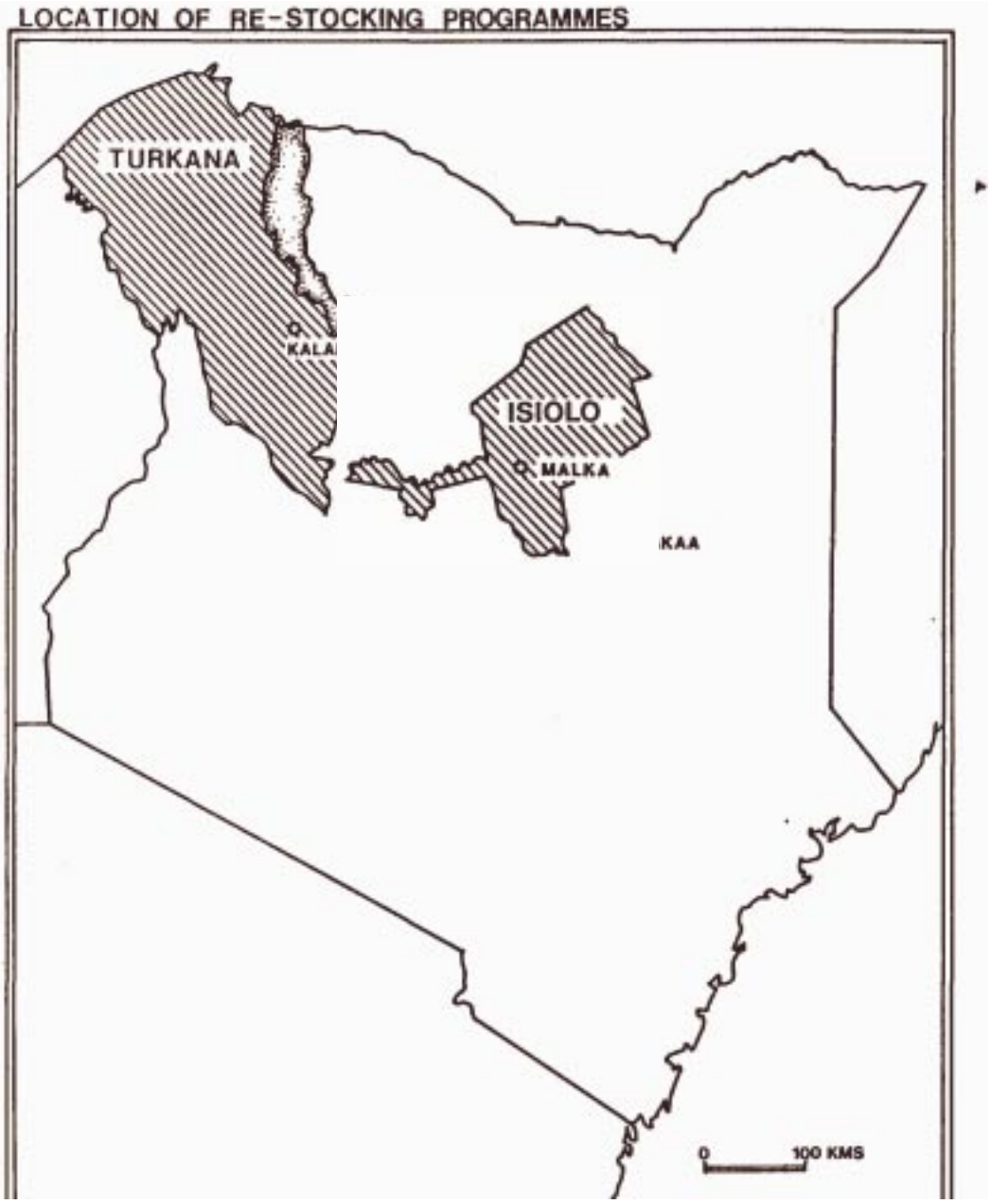
Introduction

1. The prevailing orthodoxy Is that destitution in pastoral areas Is the inevitable result of an overloaded pastoral system, caused by 1) human population increase 2) an vecologically unwise dependence on milk in a country where milk production should not be attempted" (Pratt & Gwynne 1977: 40) and 3) traditIonal range management practices. In this view the only solution to destitution Is for pastoralists to keep less livestock and to adopt new economic activities. In the following paper I adopt a different perspective. I argue 1) that destitution is the result of external interventions, In particular national incorporation and market Integration, 2) th$_9$t poverty and dependence is becoming a permanent way of life to many pastoralists, 3) that many rangeland areas are under rather than over stocked, 4) that government initiated attempts to remove excess human population into alternative economic activities are often disastrous, 5) that nomadic pastoralism is the only viable way of utilising rangelands in semi-arid and arid areas, 6) that livestock are increasingly concentrated in the hands of the wealthy, many of whom are absentee herdowners, and 7) that re—stocking offers a cost-effective way not only of alleviating poverty but of achieving a more equitable distribution of pastoral resources.

2 To illustrate the argument I describe the background to and implementation of a pilot re-stocking programme funded by Oxfam and the World Food Programme In Northern Kenya in 1983-4.

Background

3 In the nineteen sixties and seventies large numbers of pastoralists were made destitute in Northern Kenya by drought and war. In Turkana District after the 1960—61 drought some


LOCATION OF RE-STOCKING PROGRAMMES
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11,000 Turkana were reported to be in famine relief camps. Twenty years later, after the 1979-80 drought, in which over 90% of cattle herds, nearly 80% of small stock flocks and 40% of camels died In North Turkana alone (Hogg, 1982), there were some 80,000 Turkana In relief camps, about half the district population of 169,400 (Ecosystems, 1983). In Isiolo District, which bore the brunt of the undeclared Shifta war between Kenya and Somalia in the mid-nineteen sixties, Boran herds and flocks were decimated. Between 1963 and 1970, largely as a result of a government policy of human and livestock population concentration, the camel population declined by over 95% from 200,000 to 6,000, the small stock population by over 90% from 500,000 to 38,000, and the cattle population by about 7% from 150,000 to 140,000 (UNDP/FAO,1971). The end of the war was followed by four long periods of drought, 1970-73, 1975-76, 1979—81 and 1983—84, which caused further~losses. especially to the cattle population. Between 1970 and 1979 cattle herds declined by about 40%.

4 The government and donor response to this massive destruction of livestock was to distribute famine relief and to establish 1) a fisheries Industry at Lake Turkana, and 2) small scale irrigation schemes at suitable locations to provide a new way of life to pastoralists. The indigenous response was various: many Boran and Turkana went ‘down-country’ to look for work, others drifted to local towns to eke out a living as charcoal burners, distillers of illicit alcohol, prostitutes, odd-job men, or to the famine relief camps to become permanent paupers (Dahl 1979; Hogg 1980, 1982). This change in the local economy was reflected in a population shift from the pastoral areas to the new towns and relief camps, and to the Turkwel and Ewaso Rivers, both traditional dry season grazing areas. In both districts this population shift was exacerbated by banditry.

5 By the early 1980s as a result of widespread destitution, and the establishment of permanent settlements - relief

camps, administrative/trade centres, schools, irrigation schemes - an increasing number of Boran and Turkana were living within a few kilometres of permanent settlements. In 1982 not only was only half of Turkana District occupied, but within this half 46% of the population were living within 5 km of a permanent settlement. Similarly in Isiolo District large areas to the north of the Ewaso River were empty of both people and stock, and upwards of 40% of Boran were living In small towns and irrigation settlements.

6 Such is the concentration of both people and livestock near to permanent settlements that large areas of the best grazing lands are left to bush, and in the areas of permanent settlement there are increasing dangers of permanent degradation as a result of deforestation and overgrazing by-settlement herds/flocks.

7 Those wealthy Turkana and Boran who have access to secure employment are increasingly in a position to buy up livestock at the expense of the poor. There are thus increasing inequalities in access to livestock and grazing. The wealthy can afford to buy cheap livestock in times of drought and to employ shepherds/herders to look after them in the best grazing areas, but the poor, who are caught In a variety of the poverty trap are increasingly vulnerable to drought. They are reduced to the status of marginals, dependant on a national economy and polity for survival.

8 Government and donor interventions intended to provide a viable alternative to pastoralism have failed to achieve their objectives, irrigation agriculture especially has proved a costly mistake. In Turkana District the Irrigation schemes depend on heavy government and donor subsidies. According to a recent report the development costs of the three government schemes of Kekarongole, Katilu and Amolem amount to $61,240 per hectare or $21,800 per tenant household, and the operating costs alone amount to over three times the gross margin any farmer can expect from his plot (Kenya, Ministy of Agiculture, 1984). in spite of the high cost farmers’

returns from their plots are inadequate for subsistence, amounting, after deductions, to on average less than 1000/—(US $77) per year, or the equivalent, after sale, of one large cow.

9 In Isiolo District the development costs of Malka Dakaa, Gafarsa and Merti schemes run to nearly $17,000 per hectare (Kuester and Wiggins, 1982). Yet since UNDP withdrawal in 1981 they have virtually collapsed, and nearly all the farmers are back on famine relief. Over the last three years few farmers have managed to harvest anything from their plots. At Malka Dakaa despair hangs like a pall over the scheme.

10 It was against this background of failed development projects, and increasing ~nequal1ty in access to resources, and permanent impoverishment that Oxfam launched a pilot restocking programme In Isiolo at the end of 1983 and in Turkana in mid-1984 (see map).

Re-stocking Programme

11 The main reasons for launching the programme were:

1) Both Turkana and Isiolo Districts are especially suited to extensive livestock herding.
2) Both Turkana and Boran have a long history of pastoral nomadism and, contrary to the popular view, are efficient herd managers.
3) Livestock, especially small stock, offer the best prospect of rapid capital growth, and thus an escape from relief camps and failed irrigation projects.
4) Both Districts have large areas which are undergrazed, while small areas are heavily grazed. Re-stocking offers the hope of a more even distribution of both people and stock.
5) There is increasing Inequality in the distribution of livestock, with livestock Increasingly concentrated In fewer and fewer hands. Re-stocking through a re-distribution of

livestock between households offers the hope of a more equitable distribution of wealth.
6) There is a large population of pastoralists who have been destitutes for some years and who want to return to the pastoral sector.
7) Alternative development programmes, such as irrigation development, have proved costly failures.

12 The main objective of the programme was to re-establish in the pastoral sector through the provision of grain for one year, a viable flock, baggage animals and camping equipment (water containers, cooking pots, pangas) destitute Boran and Turkana families. The World Food Programme agreed to supply maize with which to buy stock.

13 Certain conditions were attached to the purchase of stock 1) all stock were to be bought locally and 2) as many stock as possible were to be bought with maize. As far as the selection of families was concerned this was to be left to whoever was to implement the programme. The guiding principle was that each family had to be both willing and able to look after the stock they received.

14 Because of my knowledge of Isiolo District Oxfam asked me to implement the Isiolo programme. They later asked me to Implement the pilot programme in Turkana.

15 The Islolo programme was implemented over 3 months from September to November 1983. All of the 70 families selected to take part were former tenants of Nalka Dakaa irrigation scheme. Twenty-one per cent were female headed, which reflected the large number of such families at the scheme. The average family size was 7.

16 Each family received 50 small stock made-up of the following stock:

Goats	5 milk tooth does
	3 bucks
Sheep	35 milk tooth ewes
	1 ram

	6 wethers

In addition, each family received 1-2 donkeys, 180kg maize, 2 jerrycans, 2 metal cooking pots and 1 panga. The maize-livestock exchange rate was 2.4kg maize to 1kg liveweight. Only 60% of the small stock were bought with maize, the rest, Including all the donkeys were bought with cash. The total cost of the package, including staff salaries, transport and camping equipment, was 16000/- or US$1230 per family, fifteen times less than establishing the same family on an irrigation scheme In Turkana.

17 The stock was given outright and there was no expectation of any ‘payback’ In the form of lamb/kids at a later date. The only expectation was that those who received stock should look after them responsibly and,that Oxfam be allowed to monitor the progress of the flock at regular intervals. For this purpose three local Boran schoolleavers were employed.

18 Many of the features of the Isiolo programme were replicated in the later pilot programme In Turkana, which was carried out at Kalabata, some 120km south—east of Lodwar, between May -September 1984. Like the Isiolo programme each family received a minimum package of livestock, food and equipment. However, the amount of grain was increased from 2 to 8 bags and the number of small stock to 70, made—up of the following stock:

Sheep	10 milk tooth ewes
	1 ram
	2 wethers
Goats	50 milk tooth does
	2 bucks
	5 castrated males
Donkeys	1 donkey

The increase In the amount of grain and in the total number of stock reflected concern over the size of the Isiolo package, and the increase in the proportion of goats to sheep reflected the greater availability of goats in Turkana District.

19 The main difference with the Isiolo programme was the use of a ‘cultural broker’ in the guise of an ex-Turkana shopkeeper, who agreed to buy livestock for Oxfam. In the Isiolo programme I had bought most of the livestock myself. This use of a local ‘cultural broker’ to act for the programme was necessitated by my own inability to speak Turkana and lack of knowledge of the Kalabata area.

20 WithIn 2 weeks of the start of the programme 127 goats had been bought at an average rate of 3 goats per 90kg bag of maize, and the fIrst family, a widow and her 5 children from Nakurio relief camp, had been re-stocked. Before the programme ended in September a further 9 families were re— stocked. On the basis of the initial success of the Kalabata pilot Oxfam approved funding for a much larger and more ambitious re—stocking programme in Turkana (due for implementation in 1985/86).

Programme constraints

21 There were a number of important programme constraints (I restrict my comments to the Isiolo programme):

1) The programme was implemented in only three months at the end of a long dry season. Because of this I was under considerable pressure to buy stock in a hurry. I knew as soon as the rains fell in October/November the flow of stock to market would dry-up. As a result I gambled on reducing the total livestock biomass to be given to each family from the originally proposed 50 female small stock to the 40 female small stock actually distributed.

2) There was a shortage of goats in Isiolo District so, while it may have been preferable to distribute more goats than sheep, this was, in practical terms, impossible.

3) There was pressure from WFP to buy livestock with maize rather than cash. This restricted the buying of stock to small stock, for neither Boran nor Somali were prepared to barter large stock (cattle/camels) for grain.

Programme evaluation

22 It Is too early to evaluate the programmes. Initial indications show that most families survived the 1984 drought with most of their flocks intact. In Isiolo some men who returned home from Nairobi to receive stock have since gone back 'down-country' to look for work, leaving the care of their stock In the hands of relatives or wives. Generally, most herdowners seek to diversify their resources, and it is unlikely that the Oxfam livestock packages are in themselves sufficient to support a family. However, 1) many of the families already had a few sheep and goats, even one or two large stock, 2) many of the families had members who were in wage labour, 3) a number of the Boran families farmed along the borders of the Lorian Swamp, so for the majority of families the packages were an additional economic resource.' As such they provided the basis fo~ a more secure and independent way of life.

Conclusion

23 Today, largely as a result of outside intervention, most Turkana and Boran are more not less vulnerable to drought. Sedentarlzation has meant a declining resource base and increased Insecurity, and overgrazing, as a result of population and livestock concentration, has continued unabated and largely unchecked. If this decline Is to be halted then government and donors must make a positive commitment to the Importance and preservation of pastoral nomadism.

24 The Oxfam re-stocking programme represents a radical departure from most hitherto tried and implemented pastoral development programmes.[2] These programmes are all too often based on the assumption that destitution represents a 'natural' process of adjustment to carrying capacity. But this argument is not only unduly harsh on the poor pastoralist but seriously flawed:

1) Overstocking is more often than not asserted rather than proved. What is remarkable about pastoral areas is their resfl[4]ertce rather than their fragility.

2) While droughts are a recurrent feature of marginal pastoral environments, their consequences for the local population vary. These consequences, I suggest, are most severe not as a consequence of the degree of livestock and population increase, but of the degree of external interventions which restrict mobility and cut—off important grazing lands.
3) Destitution often has little to do with drought at all, but, as in Isiolo District, with the consequences of being involved, even passively, in war.
4) In most of the areas which pastoralists occupy there are no real economic alternatives to livestock herding. A lot of money has been and continues to be invested in Irrigation agriculture, but irrigation agriculture is best used, where it is possible at all, as a supplement rather than an alternative to pastoralism.
5) Leaving rangeland understocked may be just as harmful as leaving It overstocked. For a start grass which is unused means potential milk and meat lost to the pastoralist. But it also means range degradation through the invasIon of bush.
6) By not re—stocking development planners may be effectively abetting in the build—up of residential flocks and herds and local overgrazing around permanent settlements. This could possibly be avoided by the planned distribution of viable flocks.
7) A re-stocking programme need not mean an increase In the local livestock population. Rather it would mean a redistribution of livestock from wealthier to poorer households.

25 Increasingly as large scale pastoral development projects become discredited planners will have to turn to modest programmes which rely for their success not on expensive external inputs and bureaucratic management but on local resources, knowledge and management skills. The Oxfam programme is therefore a possible model for future interventions in the pastoral sector to alleviate poverty and destitution.

Notes

1. In selecting families for the programme I deliberately excluded the very old and weak, and those who, In my opinion, would not ‘make it’ back in the pastoral sector. I positively discriminated In favour of those with at least a few livestock (the cut-off point was a somewhat arbitrary 15 small stock).

2. The Oxfam programme, although probably the most comprehensive, is not the first re-stocking programme. Other notable programmes are the Oxfam—Abala project in Niger reported by Scott and Gormley (1980) and the ongoing UNHCR programme in Ethiopia to re-stock Somali returnees from Djibouti and Somalia. Neither of these pro~rammes distribute anything like a viable herd/flock: the fixfam-Abala project distributed only a few livestock per family on a ‘pay-back later basis’, and the UNHCR programme distributes less than 20 small stock, or their large stock equivalent, (many of which are brought in from Highland areas), per family.

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