

Pastoral Transformation: Shifta-war, Livelihood, and Gender Perspectives among the Waso Borana in Northern Kenya

Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) Thesis

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To My Daughter
Adi Mohamed A. Guyo

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the analysis of external and internal drivers of pastoral transformation (i.e. conflicts), their long-term impact on the pastoral livelihood, and community response mechanisms. The thesis examines the roles of a secessionist war and subsequent banditry and violent conflicts in the socio-economic transformation of the Waso Borana pastoralists of Northern Kenya. The thesis shows that a drastic decline in pastoral production following socio-political upheavals in the early years of Kenya's independence has had major ramifications for pastoral economy and societal coping strategies. The Waso Borana's responses to pastoral decline reflect changes as well as continuity of the pastoral way of life. The main change is the shift from the total dependence on pastoral production to a diversified economy that includes non-pastoral activities. Changes and continuity can be seen in the gendered responses to pastoral transformation, particularly in the roles played by women as part of their household's coping strategy. This thesis focuses specifically on how women engage in market economies and how they mobilise resources for their households using indigenous social networks. Moreover, the thesis examines external initiatives such as the introduction of formal women's organisations as part of the development agenda pursued by the state and other development agencies.

The thesis shows that processes of pastoral transformation are not linear but differ from one community to another and also between households within the same community. A fruitful insight into change and continuity in pastoral society cannot be adequately achieved without considering the peculiarity of the societal structure, historical background, and politics of a particular geographical location. In this regard, the thesis uses studies of three localities: Kinna, Kulamawe, and Merti, representing different livelihood strategies. Paper I examines the long-term impact of the *Shifita* war on Waso Borana pastoral production and societal responses. The main finding is that the protracted conflicts in the Waso rangeland resulted in human casualties, loss of livestock, and the displacement of populations. An assessment of livestock herd size in the three communities shows that households are not achieving the same levels of livestock growth compared to the pre-*Shifita* war period. The perception of the community is that the conflicts exacerbated the impact of environmental and economic turbulence. Recurrent drought, persistent banditry, and the changing ecology of the rangelands are blamed for the lack of recovery. The *Shifita* war has had numerous ramifications for the Waso Borana. Firstly, the massive loss of herds has had a long-term impact on pastoral economy, forcing many households out of pastoral production and into sedentary lifestyles. The responses of the community are discussed in papers II-IV.

Paper II shows that the conflicts reordered the economic system of the community, as many households have been forced to diversify their livelihoods. The type of livelihood adopted varies according to specific conditions and opportunities in each site, in addition to household characteristics. At the household level, factors such as the wealth status of the household as well as the age and gender of the household head have an impact on the diversification strategy. However, the opportunities for remittances from informal and formal employment by members of the family do not have a significant impact. The study also found that, despite diversifying their livelihood by adding non-pastoral activities, pastoral production continues to be a major

economic base for the majority of households in the area. People sell their livestock to generate capital to start businesses and also use the profits to purchase more livestock. Diversification and pastoral production are found to be complementary, rather than contradictory.

In Paper III, I examine the impact of pastoral transformation on traditional roles, particularly of women. There are structural changes as women have become important players in the household food security. The finding is that women's indigenous social networks, known as *marro*, manifest changes as well as continuities in the aftermath of the socio-economic transformation that followed the *Shifita* war. The continuity of *marro* is evident because all Waso Borana women participate in the social network, regardless of their social and economic status. The frequency of participation still varies with the needs and opportunities of the women. Across the three sites, factors such as the wealth status of the households and educational level of women have less impact on the frequency of participation. However, elderly women participate more in daily exchanges than young women. Comparing households with different livelihoods, it is evident that farming households have fewer reciprocal exchanges compared to others. Although, traditionally, food items were the more dominant form of *marro* exchange, today the sharing of labour is more popular. The introduction of cash loans within social networks is a new development for the Waso Borana. Introduction of the cash loan, however, transforms *marro* to a rational exchange and undermines its altruistic value.

Paper IV presents a case on the growth of formal women's organisations, also known as women's groups, among the Waso Borana. The study found that the growth of women's groups is linked to the decline in pastoral economy, availability of alternative sources of funds to alleviate household food security, growth of community development initiatives, and urbanisation. The perception of the Waso Borana is that women's groups provide opportunities for economic gains as well as a space for socialising, learning, developing awareness of women's rights, and networking. A scrutiny of group membership shows that the majority of members are from poor households. Participation is also higher among younger women. However, women's awareness of their rights does not automatically translate to political empowerment of women at community level. The political glass ceiling is blamed on the patriarchal power structures that are dominant within the Borana society.

The thesis concludes that pastoral communities are undergoing changes due to diverse external and internal pressures. Despite the challenges, pastoralism has proved to be resilient. This is evident from the fact that people continue to reinvest in pastoral production despite their involvement in other means of livelihood. This finding is essential for development agencies as it provides evidence that diversification does not indicate non-viability of pastoral production. Any development intervention in pastoral areas should therefore aim to complement pastoralism rather than replace it.

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- Paper II: Strategies for livelihood diversification by the Waso Borana of Northern Kenya (Submitted to *Journal of Development Studies*). Zeinabu Kabale Khalif
- Paper III: Transformation of indigenous social security networks among the Waso Borana women of Northern Kenya (Submitted to *Africa*). Zeinabu Kabale Khalif
- Paper IV: ‘One Hand Cannot Wash the Body’: The Multiple Roles of Women’s Groups in the Waso Borana Pastoral Economy (Submitted to *Pastoralism-Research, Policy and Practice*). Zeinabu Kabale Khalif

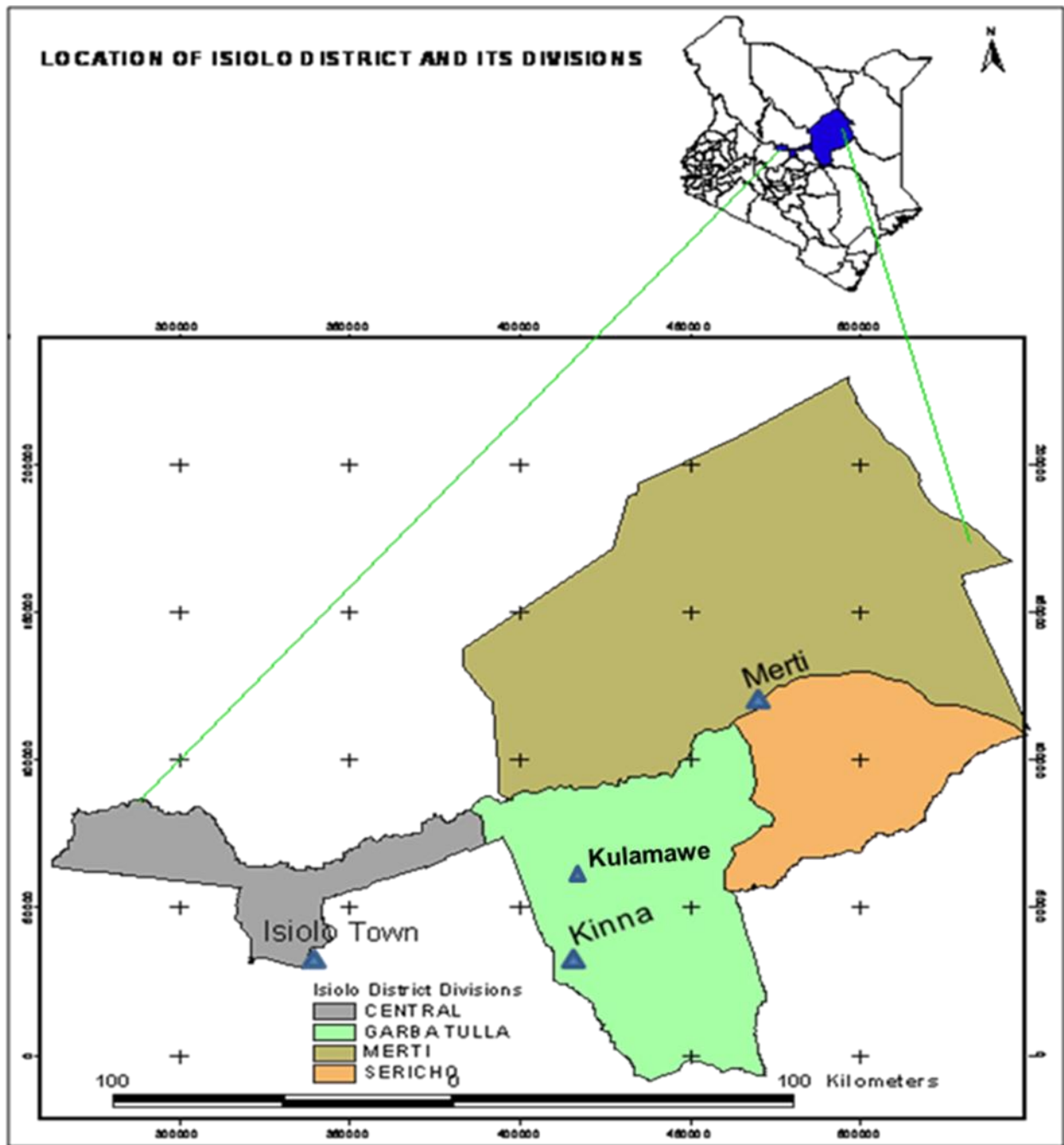


Figure 1: Location of the study sites on the map of Isiolo District

1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the role of external and internal drivers in the socio-economic transformation of the Waso Borana pastoral community of Northern Kenya by assessing the long-term impact of the secessionist *Shifita* war on pastoral production and societal responses. In particular, the study focuses on gendered responses by examining the roles of women at household and community level. Similar to the situation of other pastoral groups in eastern Africa, the socio-economic transformations of the Waso Borana pastoralists have been linked mainly to external drivers. Fratkin (1997) argues that pastoralists around the world are faced with diverse pressures emanating from the loss of herding land to private farms, ranchers, game parks, and urbanisation; the outmigration of poor pastoralists, resulting in increased commoditisation of livestock economy; and periodic dislocations caused by drought, famine, and civil war. The consequence of these pressures has been the decline in pastoral economy. Dahl (1981) notes that while, historically, the ecological milieu of the pastoralist was a predominant force in shaping society and economy, today, politics is emerging as a key instrument in moulding pastoral modes of life. In particular, the advents of the modern state system and contemporary conflicts have been the main drivers for pastoral transformation. The combined pressures of political and economic factors cause changes that have implications for the adaptive capacities of pastoralists (Galaty & Johnson, 1990). Due to the uncertainty of pastoral production, pastoralists must increasingly make socio-economic adaptations in order to survive. As noted by Kituyi (1990), the study of change in pastoral communities poses some conceptual challenges because there is always a temptation to view continuity and change as polar opposites. This thesis remains conscious of this conceptual positioning while discussing the external and internal drivers of pastoral transformation.

The study on pastoral transformation is timely because the diverse universal pressures on pastoralism and the decline in pastoral herds have generated scepticism on the viability of pastoral production. This has particularly sparked debate among pastoral scholars. The thesis presented by Sandford (2006) of “too many people, too few livestock” questioned the viability of pastoral production in the current socio-economic conditions. Among other adaptive strategies, Sandford (2006) suggests diversification and emigration out of pastoral production as a remedy

to pastoral problems. In contrast, the fact that millions of people continue to subsist on pastoral economy is seen by others as an indicator of pastoral resilience (Azarya, 1999). According to Galvin (2009: 194), “depending on one’s horizon, pastoralism as an economic activity may be seen to be dissolving in the short term, or it may be undergoing just another adjustment to changing circumstances in the long run”. One way in which pastoralists adjust to change is through diversification to other livelihoods to supplement pastoral production (Little et al., 2001; McCabe, 2003). Through diversification, the pastoralists can supplement their subsistence, thereby reducing pressure on the livestock herds. However, there is a challenge in the way pastoral diversification may be perceived by government and development agencies. Instead of considering pastoral diversification as a complementary strategy, there is always a danger of perceiving it as a replacement for pastoral production (Hogg, 1987). This has been the case in Waso Borana where the government and development agencies considered irrigation agriculture as a viable alternative to pastoral production and embarked on forceful sedentarisation of pastoralists.

Although, recently, more pastoral groups have engaged in multiplex and diverse livelihoods, the motivation and strategies differ from one community to another due to factors such as historical backgrounds, geographical locations, and environmental conditions. The pastoral responses to external pressures are, to a large extent, influenced by the internal dynamics of social institutions and societal structures. Pastoralists in Africa are known to have indigenous institutions to buffer shocks and ensure adequate resource distribution, providing a safety net for their members in order to mitigate environmental and economic insecurities (Croll & Parkin, 1992). Through such established institutions, pastoral households are able to receive material and moral support from other members of the community. Studies on pastoralism have often focused on livestock exchanges between men as the main source of support, and the various roles played by women in mutual exchange have not been given adequate attention. In this thesis, there is a deliberate effort to focus on women in relation to the social economic transformation. Women’s domestic role as the food manager is essential to the household’s survival in the situation of resource scarcity. Moreover, in the instance of herd loss, when pastoral men migrate to look for employment, women are often left behind to care for their families on their own. My aim is to understand how economic transformation brings about a shift in tasks associated with gender in societies such as

the Borana, where traditionally men are assumed to play the more important economic and social roles.

This thesis on the Waso Borana is a contribution to our understanding of how conflicts can exacerbate processes of socio-economic transformation in pastoral communities. The secessionist *Shifita* war of the early 1960s and the subsequent local conflicts in the form of ethnic conflicts, banditry, and cattle rustling have had a major impact on the Waso Borana pastoralists. The result of the conflicts was a collapse in pastoral production, the breakdown of indigenous institutions, and the pauperisation of a once wealthy pastoral group. They were forced to become dependant on externally-driven rehabilitation programmes, such as irrigation schemes and relief aid. The key questions are: how do households respond to food insecurity in a situation of socio-economic transformation? What economic strategies do households employ? How do these strategies differ across households? In particular, how do the social networks of indigenous women enable them to meet household food shortfalls and respond to change? Finally, how far can an external institutional innovation, such as a formal women's organisation, assist in the economic and political empowerment of women? Although not exhaustive, this thesis tackles some of these key issues.

Before contextualising the study within the global and regional drivers of pastoral transformation, I will give a brief background to the study.

1.1. Background to the study

The Waso Borana are part of the larger Borana ethnic group that inhabit Northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia where they specialise in cattle and sheep herding, but which includes other closely-related groups such as the Sakuye (who were camel herders)¹ and Waata (hunter-gatherers) who also speak the Oromo language. The term *Waso* is derived from the Ewaso Nyiro River that traverses the Isiolo District.

¹ The Sakuye camel economy completely collapsed as a result of the secessionist war and their population account for the greater population in the peri-urban centres and on the now collapsed irrigation schemes

In the 1920s, during the colonial period, the Waso Borana was considered one of the wealthiest pastoral groups in Northern Kenya. In the 1950s and 1960s, the wealthy Borana families owned cattle in hundreds and small stock in thousands (Hogg, 1985). The Waso Borana utilised vast grazing areas, which facilitated herd growth, and the presence of the Ewaso Nyiro River provided year-round water supply for the livestock.

The Waso Borana converted to Islam during the colonial periods due to the colonial policy of ethnic separation and the presence of the powerful Somali population (Baxter, 1966). Consequently, they are not directly connected to the *gada* system, unlike their counterparts in Marsabit and southern Ethiopia. *Gada* is a socio-political system that is used to govern all aspects of Borana life (Legesse, 1973). Although they no longer participate in traditional Borana *gada* organisation, they maintain the *gada*-related leadership structures, such as *jaalaba* (clan leaders), and other cultural practices, such as kinship and marriage patterns.

The office of *jaalaba* plays an important role in poverty alleviation as it deals with the redistribution of resources (*buusaa-gonofaa*) to needy members of the Borana community. Apart from poverty problems, the office also deals with resource mobilisation for clan members who have had accidents, with court fines and, recently, with the payment of school fees. A *jaalaba* is nominated by clan members on the basis of their leadership qualities and wisdom. The candidate may be the son of a former *jaalaba* or his forefathers may have been leaders among the clan. The *jaalaba* is expected to be a generous a person who is kind to the poor and morally upright. It is desirable that the *jaalaba* is rich or at least of average wealth; a person with the capacity to hold social gatherings for the clan men and take care of the expenses of such gatherings. This capacity is very important and, in evaluating candidates, the Borana use such expressions as “Does he have a shade?” (*gaddisaa qabaa*) or “Is he able to bring together a multitude of people?” (*gosa naannessaa*). These two qualities are essential for the *jaalaba* because he must host many guests and should be responsible for the clan’s social welfare.

Traditionally, there has been an elaborate gender role division within the Borana that depicts different spheres of power; women control the domestic resources and activities, and men are in charge of outside affairs such as the military, rituals, and economic resources including livestock

and wells (Legesse, 1973; Dahl, 1979; 1987). Men are also responsible for constructing the corrals and fences for livestock protection, for maintaining dams and wells, and for the general welfare of the community (Legesse, 1973). They are also responsible for the manufacture of wooden milk containers (*golondii*) and other household utensils (*qorii* and *buduunuu*) as well as other wooden tools. Metallic utensils and tools are manufactured by blacksmiths (*tumtuu*²) or purchased from neighbouring agriculturalists.

The domestic role of Borana women includes taking care of children, cooking for the family, and fetching water and firewood. The women weave mats and traditional guards (*qodaa* and *ciicoo*) and make butter from milk. In carrying out their domestic responsibilities, women are often assisted by their children, female relatives, or other women in the neighbourhood. The Borana women not only construct their families' huts but also own them and have the power to decide whom to admit (Legesse, 1973). Although the man is symbolically the head of the family, he has no power to serve himself food without the permission of his wife. Women are responsible for the allocation of milk and milk products for the benefit of different persons such as children, elderly people, and guests (Dahl, 1979). The domestic role of the women gives them autonomy and some degree of power at the household level.

Public life is, however, not within the domain of women, although a woman can build a reputation in the community through her role as a good wife who is kind and generous to her guests. A woman's hospitality is considered an important factor, especially for a man who seeks a leadership position in the community. In the context of an election to the offices of lineage leadership (*jaalaba*), an apt and munificent wife is thought to compensate for certain weaknesses in the character of the male candidate (Dahl, 1979: 116). Women do not participate in clan meetings, but they can share their views 'privately' with the husband or sons.

In contrast to the pastoral setup, where the duties of most women are similar and mainly centred on domestic duties and caring for calves and sick animals, in the towns, women's roles vary

² While the Borana respect the roles of blacksmiths, they also despise them and keep them at a distance. They are not permitted to marry Borana girls even though they are Borana themselves. Instead they are expected to marry the daughters of other blacksmiths.

across households. For example, women from wealthy families have more spare time because they have the opportunity to hire maids who take over the responsibilities of cooking, washing, and care of the children. Women from poor households have not only to attend to their own domestic duties but are forced to do extra work to earn income to support their families. In towns such as Kinna, poor women also work as hired farm labourers. Although the educational level is generally low in pastoral areas, there are a number of educated women who have formal employment as teachers, nurses, and secretaries. Some even work as military and police officers. A large number of women from sedentary households engage in different types of trade, such as retail shops, petty trade, and livestock trade. The sedentary women have managed to maintain the indigenous women's practice of *marro*; the reciprocal sharing of labour and household food items, such as sugar, tea or salt. The level of generosity and reciprocity however varies between different neighbourhoods and the household's economic status.

1.1.1. Study site

This study was undertaken in Merti, Kulamawe, and Kinna, divisions that are part of the larger Waso production system in the Isiolo District (see Figure 1). Historically, the Isiolo District was part of the Northern Frontier District (NFD) of Colonial Kenya, which consists of six districts (namely; Isiolo, Marsabit, Moyale, Wajir, Garissa, and Mandera). Colonial NFD shares borders with Ethiopia and Somalia and was, in the colonial period between 1900 and 1963, administered separately from the rest of the country. During this time, the vast region of NFD was administratively and politically isolated from the rest of Kenya by the legislations of 1902 (Outlying District Ordinance), 1926 (Closed District Ordinance), and 1934 (Special District Administration Ordinance). Within the NFD, the colonial administration of Northern Kenya split the different pastoral groups between controlled grazing zones. The Somali clans were divided from the Borana Oromo by what was referred to as the 'Somali-Oromo³ Line'.

Currently, Isiolo District is part of the Eastern Province and covers a landmass of 25,605 square

³ The Oromo, in general, were pejoratively referred to by the name "Galla", a term which was officially used by the Colonial administrators.

kilometres. Geographically, it is located at a longitude of 36°50' and latitude between 05' and 2' degrees north. Just before the general election of December 2007, Isiolo District consisted of six administrative divisions, namely: Central Division, Eldonyiro, Merti, Garbatulla, Kinna, and Sericho. The recent creation of more districts in Kenya has witnessed Isiolo split into two: Isiolo Central and Garbatulla districts. Currently, Isiolo Central district consists of the Central Division, Oldonyiro, and Merti while Garbatulla district consists of the Garbatulla Division, Kinna, and Sericho. The greater Isiolo District is characterised by an arid or semi-arid environment with an average annual rainfall of between 150mm to 700mm, falling in two rainfall seasons. The short rains come in October and November, and the long rains fall between March and May. The rainfall received in the District is scarce and unreliable, making pastoral production the main source of livelihood for most of its inhabitants. The Ewaso Nyiro River traverses Isiolo District and dissects it into two. Its catchment area lies in the Aberdare Mountains and the river drains into, or before, the so-called 'Lorian swamp'.

The three sites (Merti, Kulamawe and Kinna) were chosen because of their historical significance. In the 1960s, the Waso Borana joined the Somali co-religionists to agitate for the secession of the Northern Frontier District. Merti served as one of the administrative centres during the colonial period and in later years, after the *Shifita* war, it became a centre for the sedentarisation of impoverished pastoralists. Over the years, the population of Merti town has grown. In the latest Census, undertaken in 1999, it was estimated at 15,693⁴. The town has some basic social amenities such as schools, dispensaries, and shops, which are accessible to the settled population. Apart from the government, there are international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working with the local communities. The Merti area is very arid and the soil is too poor for any successful agricultural activities. However, there are some irrigated farms along the Ewaso Nyiro River where vegetables are grown. The town receives a supply of maize and other cereals from the nearby Gafarsa irrigation scheme. The Merti rangeland forms the backbone of Waso pastoral production. Even during severe droughts, the plains around the Merti settlement are suitable for livestock production due to seasonal flooding of the Waso Nyiro

⁴ Kenya Population Census 1999

River, which promotes the growth of nutritious grasses. Other economic activity includes retail shops, trade in livestock, petty trade (*miraa*; a stimulant, vegetables, and cigarettes), and trade in forest products (charcoals, firewood, and building materials).

Kulamawe is located 76 kilometres from Isiolo town and is administered under Kinna division. Geographically, Kulamawe is in close proximity to towns such as Meru and Maua. Kulamawe is an important grazing area in Waso because of its favourable ecological conditions and vegetation. The area is characterised by scattered thorny shrubs and grass plains, which are suitable for all species of livestock (cattle, camel, sheep and goats). The livestock in Kulamawe depend on water from local hand-dug wells. During the colonial period, several wells were established to supply water for the administrative and security officers involved in the patrol of pastoral grazing areas. People migrated to these areas occasionally to utilise the wells. During the dry seasons, people subsisted mainly on livestock products. They occasionally organised groups to travel to Garbatulla town⁵ to sell livestock and buy cereals. After the *Shifita* war, Kulamawe became a centre for famine relief distribution. Currently, it is an established town that provides diverse economic opportunities for the sedentarised pastoralists, who are now engaged in trade (retail, petty and livestock) and maize farming in the rainy seasons.

Kinna is one of the Divisional Headquarters for Isiolo District. The town is very close to Isiolo, Meru, and Maua towns, which provide strategic economic links. Kinna has extensive forest areas that are infested by tsetse flies so pastoralists avoid them during the rainy season, using them only during dry seasons and prolonged droughts. The town was established in the early 1960s. After the *Shifita* war, it became an agricultural centre. The pastoral economy collapsed following the *Shifita* war, and the government established irrigation schemes at Kinna and Rapsu (located seven kilometres from Kinna town) with the help of international aid organisations. Although the donors withdrew support for the irrigation schemes in the 1980s, the Rapsu community remains totally dependent on irrigation farming. Kinna is an agro-pastoral community, practicing both farming and livestock herding. Established as an administrative centre at the time of

⁵ Garbatulla town was established as the District's headquarters in 1920 and, during the colonial period, had shops that provided services for government officials.

independence, the town of Kinna has grown with more people sedentarising and pursuing economic activities. In addition to farming, major economic activities include trade in livestock, retail, and petty trade.

1.2. Objectives of the thesis

The thesis has two overall objectives: firstly, to understand the key drivers of pastoral transformation and, secondly, to assess how pastoral households respond to the drivers of pastoral transformation; in particular, how such responses are structured by gender. The specific objectives addressed by individual papers (part B of the thesis) are:

- a) To understand the role of the *Shifta* war in the transformation of the Waso Borana pastoral economy.
- b) To examine the livelihood diversification responses of Borana households in the aftermath of the *Shifta* war.
- c) To understand the role of women's indigenous social networks in response to pastoral transformation by examining the *marro* system.
- d) To examine the role of external initiatives, such as formal women's organisations, ('women's groups') among the Waso Borana women.

1.3. Organisation of the thesis

Part A of the thesis presents an extended introduction that develops a theoretical framework and presents a synthesis of the dynamics of pastoral transformation. This part is divided into six sections. Following a brief introduction with a presentation of the background and objectives (section one, above), section two presents a review of pastoral transformation where the key drivers of pastoral transformation are discussed. Section three offers a framework for understanding pastoral transformation and an application of the framework to the Waso Borana. The fourth section describes the various methods of data collection. The fifth section presents a synthesis of the findings on Waso Borana pastoral transformation. Finally, the different sections are tied together by a conclusion. In Part B of the thesis, I present four papers from the individual studies.

2. PASTORAL TRANSFORMATION: A REVIEW

The concept of 'pastoralism' refers to communities whose main livelihood is derived from livestock production. In Africa, pastoralists inhabit arid and semi-arid regions and generally experience harsh climatic conditions. The popular conception of pastoralism has often focused on 'pure' pastoralists who lead nomadic or transhumant lifestyles and subsist wholly on livestock production (Homewood, 2008). Now, the term is used to describe communities that derive 50% or more of their economy from livestock production (Niamir-Fuller & Turner, 1999). The livestock composition of herds and flocks reared by pastoralists varies from one community to another. The most common species tended by African pastoralists are cattle, sheep, goats and camels. Although the mobility of households and herds is a common feature of pastoral communities, today there are various categories of pastoralists including sedentary (immobile) groups. Livestock belonging to the sedentary families who reside in towns is often herded by relatives or hired labourers who engage in mobile pastoralism.

For pastoral groups, livestock is considered to have both economic functions and socio-cultural meanings that are linked to the pastoral worldview (Baxter, 1991). Thus, livestock serve as an instrument of value, as capital goods, and as socio-cultural symbols (Galaty & Johnson, 1990). They play important roles in the social lives of pastoral communities as they are used in all milestone rituals including child-naming, initiation, marriage, and funeral ceremonies. In most pastoral communities, livestock provide the essential means through which social relations are built and maintained (Sobania, 1990), and for this reason these societies traditionally measure wealth in terms of livestock. Today, it is common to find people from a pastoral background referring to themselves as pastoralists, even though they may no longer lead a pastoral lifestyle or own livestock. Such groups can be said to represent both change and continuity in pastoralism; the animals no longer provide the basis of subsistence, but pastoralism still represents an ideal (Hodgson, 2001).

In the current discourse on pastoralism, there are two contrasting narratives on pastoral transformation; one where pastoralists become the victims of change, the production system collapses and self-reliance is lost, and the other where pastoralism displays an inherent resilience

and pastoralists adapt to changes by employing various strategies. Such strategies include the use of mobility in response to drought, and the mobilisation of various social institutions to adjust to socio-economic perturbations. Pastoral transformation is experienced at various levels i.e. those of (economic) production, of social organisation, and of political arrangements. The changes are both the results of pressure exerted on the pastoral system and, in some cases, adaptations to perturbations. The transformation represents socio-economic changes on one hand and the continuity of the past practices on the other. As Meir (1997: 51) argues, “change is not necessarily associated with discontinuity but rather with recruitment of some institutionalised alternatives from cultural reservoir”. The disturbances (i.e. drivers of change) are not necessarily harmful to the social system, but the capacity to adapt to changes will determine whether the system can endure (Berkes et al., 2003). In some cases, such as those described by Buijn (1999), insecurities resulting from crisis can be internalised by society. As a result, its members devise new strategies and redefine their future expectations as well as experimenting with alternatives.

In this thesis, I describe transformation as a process influenced by both external and internal forces, also referred to as ‘drivers’. The concept of ‘external drivers’ refers to pressures on pastoralism by outside forces while ‘internal drivers’ are aspects within pastoral production, such as human population growth, social institutions and practices, etc. The drivers of change vary from one region to another and the effects are not uniform. In this thesis, the *Shifita* conflict is considered to be a major driver of change for the Waso Borana pastoralists. For the purposes of contextualising the case study of the Waso Borana within the wider debate on pastoral transformation, the next sections discuss some of the other drivers of pastoral transformation.

2.1. State and pastoralism

As an external driver, the influence of the state, particularly in Africa, has played an important role in pastoral transformation. Integration of marginal parts of the newly established colonial state has affected pastoral communities in various ways. Far from improving the lives of pastoral communities, the colonial government has often employed tactics that undermine pastoralism. Various studies have shown the impact of colonialism on the pastoral economy. Among them is Kauffman (1998), who reports that the French subdued the resistance of Malagasy pastoralists by

destroying the Raiketa cactus, which had provided them with security from intruders and food for their livestock. The French introduced the cochinnelle parasite that destroyed the cacti, making the landscape barren and unable to support pastoralism. As a result, droughts became more critical in their effects, killing many people and livestock, and forcing young herdsmen to migrate for jobs. Although some tactics were intentional and aimed at subduing pastoralists, others were unintentional but had detrimental consequences. For example, Kapteijns (1995) reports that the Somali pastoral economy was transformed by the colonisation process, which split the community between four colonial states: Italy, Britain, France, and Ethiopia. The boundaries of the new colonial states often split grazing areas, which were, in the past, utilised by the pastoralists, thus restricting their migration routes and patterns (Khazanov, 1998: 9). In Kenya, the land policies of both colonial and independent governments have been unfavourable to the pastoralists. The Maasai lost major parts of the grazing areas to the creation of national parks. The subdivision of pastoral commons into private ranches has resulted in the Maasai losing their land to other communities who use the pastoral land for crop cultivations (Galaty, 1992). Furthermore, the colonial policies of Northern Kenya have undermined the previously fluid societal boundaries that are essential for social relationships (Sobania, 1990: 13-14). Sobania argues that, although ethnic demarcations were aimed at reducing inter-tribal raids, they have bred more conflicts as previous social interaction between communities is curtailed.

Both colonial and independent governments have pursued policies that undermine pastoral production. The government's promotion of agriculture and industry has been aimed at commercial production and further marginalises the pastoralists' subsistence economy. In the late 70s and early 80s, aided by donor funding, the Kenyan government's focus was to increase beef production for local or export markets rather than traditional pastoralism (Hjort, 1981). The government also embarked on the development of ranches, which dispossessed pastoralists of vital grazing areas, pushing them to poorest ecological zones (Bourgeot, 1981; Galaty, 1999). Moreover, arbitrary development of water points in pastoral areas has turned out to be destructive to the environment due to its effect on traditional patterns of pasture utilisation and the impact on the indigenous system of water management (Helland, 2001). Other government development projects have also been detrimental to the pastoral communities. Ensminger and Rutten (1991: 892) report that the Orma pastoralists have lost a considerable portion of their

grazing areas as the government converted them to irrigation schemes and game reserves in addition to establishing non-Orma commercial ranches. The continued loss of pasture land to other land use systems serves to undermine pastoralism by accelerating processes of socio-economic transformation of the pastoral communities. The marginalisation of pastoral communities and especially the restriction of important grazing areas have often resulted in deadly conflicts in pastoral areas.

2.2. Conflict as a driver of pastoral transformation

Conflict is one of the major transforming agents of the pastoral economy, particularly in the context of the Horn of Africa. Conflict is defined as the forms of interaction that include violence or the threat of violence (Ellis & Ter Harr, 2004). Conflict often varies in its scale, intensity, and character (Eriksen & Lind, 2009). In recent years, especially in the Horn of Africa, the endemic nature of conflicts has been associated with the decline of pastoralism in the region (Markakis, 1998). In the past, pastoral conflicts have been understood within the realm of pastoral traditions, with emphasis primarily placed on the role and symbolism of the raids (Almagor, 1979). Examples include enabling young herdsmen to speed up their acquisition of an independent herd, and maintaining de facto control of usage rights. According to this perspective, conflict is considered an inevitable part of pastoral tradition. Such an assumption may be applicable in the past where communities used simple weapons, such as bow and arrow, and the number of casualties was minimal. Today, the sophistication of weapons and the magnitude of disasters caused by automatic weaponry change the perspectives in which conflicts are interpreted.

In the recent history of the Horn of Africa, conflicts have been fought with diverse motivations. Markakis (1998: 5) argues that, in the Horn of Africa, conflicts are fought under many banners representing nations, ethnic groups, regions, religions, social classes and clans, and fuelled by historical, cultural, and ideological, as well as material, factors. One such type of conflict is the insurgency in pastoral zones, for example, the secessionist conflict in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and the *Shifita* war in Northern Kenya. Others include the wars fought by the Lord Resistance Army in northern Uganda and the liberation war in southern Sudan in areas that neighbour pastoral and agro-pastoral areas. These insurgencies are what Bøås and Dunn (2007:

36) refer to as the African guerrilla movements. They are the creation of and response to the crises of modernity and its dysfunctional political institutions. The grievances in the NFD that led to the emergence of the *Shifita* war emanated from the dysfunctional state-society relationship during the colonial era (Markakis, 1998). The political and economic marginalisation of communities provides an infrastructure for the emergence and support of insurgency movements (Bøås & Dunn, 2007). The emergence of the *Shifita* war in pastoral areas of Northern Kenya fits within this framework, with marginalisation as a cause of insurgency. The large-scale conflicts in neighbouring countries contribute to the influx of small arms that enable bandits to prey on vulnerable border communities for livestock, causing dislocation of populations (Mburu, 1999). The mutations of insurgencies from their political course to local banditry have led to increased insecurity in pastoral areas, especially in the northern regions of East Africa and the Horn of Africa in general.

As Miall (2004) notes, local conflicts are increasingly influenced by wider economic and political forces. As a result, the nature of conflict is becoming more complex, defying single explanations. Suliman (1999) argues that:

To continue treating conflicts in Africa as purely ethnic, tribal or religious, ignoring in the process the growing impact of restricting and denying access to resources and growing ecological degradation and depletion of renewable resource base, could, ultimately, lead to a distorted understanding of real situation... (p.27).

The complexity of the matter has resulted in diverse interpretations of pastoral conflict. According to the environmental conflict paradigm, conflicts in pastoral areas are linked to resource scarcity (Homer-Dixon, 1999). The 'resource-scarcity' approach considers limited resources and environmental degradation as key motivating factors in local conflicts. Pastoral conflicts are depicted as a response to relative or absolute scarcity (Baechler, 1994). For example, Bennette (1991: 31) argues that conflicts increase between Somali clans during drought periods as clans intrude into one another's territories, due to the scarcity of pasture and water. In some instances, competition for limited resources is seen as the main reason for escalating hostilities between pastoral groups (Unruh, 1991). Suliman (1999) also argues that degradation of resources is the main factor that aggravates protracted conflicts or provokes new ones.

Resource competition has been contested as the main cause of conflict. According to Markakis (1998), the connection between resource and conflict is not always obvious and not necessarily direct because parties to the conflict may use other explanations, such as ethnicity or ideology. Indeed, Baechler (1999) argues that resource scarcity cannot cause conflict unless there are other conditions, such as ethnic tensions. Resource scarcity arguments are criticised for ignoring the political ecology of conflict; failing to take into account the local and extra-local linkages (Turner, 2004; O’Leary, 2005). The political ecology approach considers how people’s interactions with the environment are transformed by the wider political economy (Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987). According to political ecology, scarcity or degradation of local resources are experienced by relatively powerless people responding to capitalist economies. It is due to the competition introduced by political economy that conflicts arise. Political ecology has been used to explain herder-farmer conflicts in Tanzania (Benjaminsen et al., 2009). The study links the herder-farmer conflicts to two main factors: a) the modernisation policy that marginalised pastoralists, and b) problems of governance and corruption. Turner (2004) ties the farmer-herder conflicts in Sahel to social tensions and conflicting long-term strategies within and among the warring groups.

The resource competition paradigm is accused of neglecting the agency of pastoralists and their ability to adapt to changes (Hagmann, 2005). The studies of Witsenburg and Roba (2007) among the Borana and Rendille herders of Marsabit show that pastoralists have developed institutions to cope with situations of increasing scarcity. Their finding was that the Borana and Rendille herders engaged in conflict during the wet years when there was an abundance of pasture and water but that they reconciled during the drought years for survival. Thus, in the Borana-Rendille context, resource scarcity, rather than being a driver of conflict, was a facilitator for cooperation. In the context of my study, which investigates the role of the insurgency war and politically-motivated local conflicts on the pastoral economy, understanding the role of the state in these conflicts is essential. Thus, in the next section, I present the linkages between the roles played by the state and politically-motivated conflicts as they affect the pastoralists in the Horn of Africa.

2.2.1. Role of state in pastoral conflict

To a very large extent, the states in the Horn of Africa have a major role in pastoral conflicts.

Derman et al. (2007) argue that:

Indeed African government have been seen to contribute to the escalation rather than avoidance or resolution of conflicts. A weak presence in rural and remote areas is one aspect of this. More importantly, government frequently give appearance of taking sides in the conflict, either because of wider objectives (e.g. a move towards more sedentary land use or more privately owned land) or because one of the parties to the conflicts have managed to populate the offices in which decisions germane to the trajectory of the conflict are taken...(p.25).

In many countries, those in political power determine the allocation of resources. For example, the government can allocate the communal grazing areas for development of agriculture or convert it for other uses, such as creation of national parks. Utilising the lands for other purposes restricts grazing lands, causing environmental degradations and heightening competition and hostilities. Intensive resource competition coupled with ineffective state structures produces social conflict (Markakis, 1998: 4). In some cases, states are involved in the plunder of resources. Suliman (1999: 28) reports that the political elites of Sudan are involved in resource extraction and expand their exploitation using aggression against their own people and neighbouring countries.

Poor governance and corruption are among the main contributors to pastoral conflicts in most African countries. Benjaminsen and Ba (2009) report that herders and pastoralists in West Africa spend considerable sums bribing court judges to influence decisions in their favour; only those paying the highest bribe are heard by the administrators and courts. In Northern Kenya, corrupt government officials contribute to the escalation of conflicts. Similar to other countries in the Horn of Africa, the system of governance is generally characterised by the manipulation of ethnicity and patronage, and a political culture of exclusion (Mkutu, 2001). This seems particularly evident in Kenya and Ethiopia where ethnicity is becoming a framework for official politics (Abbink, 1997). The government uses conflict to achieve political support from certain ethnic groups (Mkutu, 2006). Rather than being viewed as a product of history, ethnicity is increasingly recreated and strengthened as people re-tribalise due to pressure or gains (Fukui & Markakis, 1994).

Turton (2005) argues that the recent ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia should be understood within the state-building process where the government aims to solidify its structures of control. The ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia are connected with state interests (Hagmann and Mulugeta, 2008). An example is the arbitrary land demarcations that led to the loss of a large part of the Borana pastures to the Somali territory (Tache & Oba, 2009). The new state structures introduced in 1992 changed the dynamics of the Borana and Degodi pastoral conflicts from resource competition to administrative boundary issues (Abdulahi, 2005). The conflict is linked to competing claims over the ownership of, and exclusive rights to, the prime grazing areas and water points. The claims and counter-claims over resources have often caused violent clashes with great ramifications for people's lives, including the loss of livelihoods. In such high-stakes conflicts, the indigenous systems of conflict resolution cease to work as the nature of conflict has changed. The government's interventions for conflict resolution are often biased by political interests. Where peace committees are formed, they often lack legitimacy within the local community (Hagmann & Mulugeta, 2008).

In Northern Kenya, the government has been accused by pastoralists of doing little to curb the escalating pastoral conflicts. In most cases, government intervention has been considered discriminatory against some ethnic groups (Hendrickson et al., 1998). The favoured groups are given extra security measures by arming the home-guards and disarming the 'enemy' group (Mkutu, 2001; 2006). Similarly, Baxter (2001: 241) has argued that "in both Ethiopia and Kenya the Borana are driven out of their grazing areas by Somali pastoralists with tacit government approval". Governments in the Horn of Africa are also accused of using pastoralists in the border zones to fight proxy wars on their behalf. Mburu (2005) reports that the Dassanech were armed by the Ethiopian government to safe-guard their interest in the contested Ilemi Triangle. All these regional pastoral conflicts are intertwined through a web of arms transfers.

2.2.2. Role of raids in pastoral conflicts

Contemporary events such as the collapse of the Somalia government, the change of government in Ethiopia in 1990s, the continued war in Sudan, and armed conflicts in northern Uganda have all contributed to the influx of arms that are used for cattle raids. The insecurity in pastoral areas

has worsened as national governments have been unable to protect the pastoral population from cattle raiding and violence (Baxter, 2001). In the past, cattle rustling was a traditional activity practiced by pastoralists for the redistribution of wealth, to make food available in times of scarcity, and as a resource for paying bride price or making alliances with other groups (Mkutu, 2006). Historically, the purpose of raiding was less economic and more social, linked to a group's solidarity and prestige (Blench, 1996). There is now a transformation of raiding into large-scale armed conflict, resulting in many deaths and the emergence of racketeers and bandits (Anderson, 1986). Recent raids have been used to serve various purposes, such as self-enrichment and the removal of competition from coveted areas, leading to the strategy of inflicting maximum fear on rivals (Suliman, 1999). Kätli and Swift (1999) report on deserter and ex-combatants drifting into Kenya from neighbouring war zones, living off banditry or working as mercenaries in commercial raids. As livestock raiding has become more commercialised, powerful and well connected businessmen and politicians have recruited young men with limited economic opportunities (Buchanan-Smith & Lind, 2005). The influx of small arms in pastoral areas has also had a devastating impact on the pastoral economy.

2.3. Impact of conflict on pastoral economy

The conflicts fought in pastoral areas have had major ramifications for the pastoral economy. In the case of Northern Kenya, pastoral economies suffered double losses in the insurgency movements, firstly through the punitive government's reactions to *Shifita* insurgencies in the 1960s and 1970s. Major livestock losses have been attributed to indiscriminate bombardment of livestock by security forces in their bid to curb the insurgents. Other livestock losses were, however, due to confiscation of livestock by the government. Studies conducted in Northern Kenya in the years after the *Shifita* war showed the socio-economic consequences of the conflict (Dahl, 1979; Hjort, 1979; Dahl & Sandford, 1978; Hogg, 1980; 1985; 1987), but the long-term consequences of the *Shifita* war have never been evaluated.

In pastoral areas, the state's failure to provide security has served as an additional incentive for pastoralists to arm themselves (Markakis, 1998). According to Haro et al. (2005), the change from spear to automatic weapons has contributed to a state of insecurity and mutual suspicion.

The constant fear of attack motivates pastoralists to arm themselves for protection. This has also contributed to more frequent and grave confrontations over water and pastures. Unruh (1995) reports that, among the pastoral Somali, the indigenous alliance-building mechanisms that facilitated different groups' access to each other's territories during scarcity are undermined by the availability of ammunition. Easy access to ammunitions among the Somali is said to have distorted peaceful institutional arrangements as people resort to confrontation and to the forceful eviction of weaker groups (Samatar, 1989). Moreover, modern weapons kill many people so quickly that the time available for mediation and intervention is drastically reduced, undermining the resolution of conflicts (Suliman, 1999).

Conflict resolution becomes difficult in conflicts that have multiple stakeholders and multiple issues. While, traditionally, clan elders resolved disputes between warring groups, the traditional structures have been undermined by modern political alliances (Unruh, 1995). Hagmann and Mulugeta (2008) argue that today, ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia remain unresolved because the government has followed a coercive approach and lacks any long-term solutions to conflict. In Northern Kenya, due to the limitation of formal security forces in resolving pastoral conflicts, the government has called for cooperation between the administration, the police, development agencies, and communities to reduce ethnic conflicts (Haro et al., 2005). Although a few cases were, indeed, resolved through joint cooperation, conflicts and insecurity continue to plague the area. Lind (2006) reports that peace committees formed by the Kenyan government in pastoral areas are not effective because they are, in most cases, disconnected from the local support base and lack legitimacy.

In the absence of effective mechanisms to control insecurity, pastoralism is being put under pressure. The result is the transformation of grazing patterns in order to save the remaining stock. Eriksen and Lind (2009) highlight some of changes that have been brought about by raids against the Turkana pastoralists. Because many pastoral households possess too few livestock to sustain the labour required for herd movements, they have resorted to the use of larger herding units known as '*arumrum*'. The movement of '*arumrum*' is determined by the elders and the group is guarded by armed men. Through such adjustments, the Turkana have been able to utilise remote

pastures that were earlier abandoned due to insecurity and have therefore been able to continue pastoral production.

Baxter (2001) argues that armed conflicts not only threaten the pastoralist 'way of life', they are also a threat to future pastoral livelihoods; pastoral migration in search of pastures is curtailed due to insecurity and, as a result, unutilised pastures revert to unusable bush. The traditional grazing patterns employed by the pastoralists are undermined as they often avoid exploiting pastures that are not easily defensible (Blench, 1996). Pastures on the borders have increasingly become zones of confrontation rather than cooperation (Suliman, 1994). Hogg (1985) notes that insecurity in the Waso rangelands has resulted in overgrazing of the few safe pastures, due to increased competition for the limited resources. Insecurity in pastoral areas thus has the negative impact of limiting access to good pastures. In drought years, this can have a devastating effect on livestock productivity and mortality (Buchanan-Smith & Lind, 2005).

Conflict in pastoral areas has also been a major cause of herd loss, damaging both human and social capital (Barnett, 2006). The commercialisation of livestock raids has contributed to a tremendous drain of livestock from the pastoral economy, widening the economic gap between pastoral areas and the rest of the country (Buchanan-Smith & Lind, 2005). The raids contribute to a depletion of livestock holdings, forcing many pastoralists out of livestock rearing. As the young pastoralist men move out of pastoral areas in search of alternative livelihoods, pastoral production suffers a loss of essential labour (Dahl, 1981). The frequent raids have also driven so many pastoral households to destitution that the traditional mechanisms for deflecting or redistributing stress are undermined (Gray et al., 2003). In a situation of widespread livestock loss in a community, the indigenous social institutions are unable to effectively cushion the poor as scarcity hampers stock redistribution (Tache, 2008; Oba, 1994). The overall impact of conflict is the destitution of pastoral communities. The decline in pastoral production and looming food insecurity are the main reasons why the pastoral communities have increasingly diversified their livelihoods.

2.4. Livelihood diversification

The concept of livelihood is widely used in writings on rural development, but its meaning often differs from one writer to another. A commonly used definition, derived from Chambers and Conway (1992: 7) states that “a livelihood comprises the capability, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable if it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resources base”. Another widely quoted definition is that of Ellis (2000: 10), which states that “livelihood comprises the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or households”. If a particular livelihood becomes unsustainable for the household by itself, there is a tendency to diversify by engaging in alternative, supplementary livelihoods. Livelihood approaches are widely used to analyse development and food security amongst the agricultural and pastoral communities in Africa.

In simple terms, livelihood diversification is the engagement in multiple sources of income; it is found in all locations (rural and urban) and across all ranges of income and wealth (Ellis, 2000). Many researchers, such as Bryceson (1996), consider risk to be the fundamental motive for diversification. Diversification is seen as the means through which individuals reduce risk (Little et al., 2001). Multiple motives prompt households and individuals to diversify assets, incomes and activities. Households may diversify their income as a deliberate strategy to earn extra income (Stark, 1991). In some cases, it is not a deliberate strategy, but a response to food crisis (Davies, 1996). These motives for diversification are often classified as the ‘pull’ and ‘push’ factors. Some households engage in diverse economic activities as a measure to increase wealth (pull factor), while for others, diversification is for survival purposes (push factor). Voluntary diversification may reflect an individual’s conscious investment of assets into various activities so as to achieve optimal returns (Little et al., 2001).

According to Ellis (2000: 6), “the causes and consequences of diversification are differentiated, in practice, by location, assets, income levels, opportunity, institutions and social relations; it is

therefore not surprising that these manifest themselves in different ways under different circumstances”. Davies (1996: 34) argues that risk avoidance by diversifying on- and off-farm activities is a common household strategy throughout the Sahel zone due to climatic conditions. Although environmental factors are important in determining the kinds of economic activities into which households can diversify, the causes and motivation for diversification may change from one time to another depending on circumstances. Households and individuals can also combine different economic activities at different points i.e. seasonally and across years (Holtzman, 1997; Little, 1992). The combination of activities that make up a typical local livelihood is decided by the knowledge and technology available to the average household: the available natural resources; the demands that various productive activities put on labour in terms of the number of people required, energy spent, and time available at different times of the year; and how these forms of production or resource extraction can be combined simultaneously or in seasonal combinations. Any local livelihood is likely to be based of a combination of activities, depending on what is feasible with the resources they have.

2.4.1. Pastoral livelihood diversification

A pastoral community’s diversification can be within pastoralism or outside pastoralism. Diversification within pastoralism refers to the inclusion of other livestock species in the traditional herd. In the case of the Borana, who are predominantly cattle herders, camel rearing forms an example of diversification within pastoralism. In this thesis, however, the main focus is on diversification into non-pastoral economic activities, such as trade, farming, and employment.

Several studies show that, historically, East African pastoralists have engaged in the exchange of livestock for other commodities. The Tanzania Maasai traded livestock for grains with the neighbouring Arusha in the mid nineteenth century (Spear, 1997) and, by 1930s, the Maasai were selling 8 to 10% of their cattle to purchase grains (Zaal & Dietz, 1999). Baxter (1993) also states that, in the past, most pastoralists traded livestock for other commodities, such as clothing from merchants. Although pastoralists had occasional exchanges with neighbouring groups with other economic adaptations, recently, the pastoralists have diversified by themselves engaging in livelihood pursuits other than livestock rearing. Livestock herders in East Africa increasingly pursue non-pastoral income strategies to meet consumption needs and buttress against shocks

caused by climatic fluctuations, animal diseases, market failures, and insecurity (Little et al., 2001).

The motivations for diversification into non-pastoral activities by pastoral communities are diverse and defy simplistic explanations. Generally, such diversification is linked to the decline in livestock holdings as a result of diverse pressures placed on pastoral production (Fratkin, 1997). As mentioned, push and pull factors influence the forms of pastoral diversification. Pastoral destitutes with unviable herds are pushed out of pastoral production to seek alternative livelihoods. They often send family members to nearby towns in search of food aid, or migrate to urban centres in search of wage employment (Hogg, 1980). The wealthy pastoralists diversify for wealth accumulation purposes, often converting livestock to other assets, such as permanent buildings or shop-keeping (Little et al., 2001). They also use income from the businesses to reinvest in pastoral production by purchasing more livestock.

In regions where rainfall is insufficient for farming, and droughts are common, diversification of livelihood activities can be used to reduce risk and overcome the subsistence instability caused by fluctuations in climate (Ellis, 1998). For example, a study by Coppock (1994) in southern Ethiopia reported that the Borana would face increasing food energy deficits by the end of the century due to diverse pressures on pastoral production. This decline in pastoral economic bases is a push factor for pastoralists to diversify into other livelihoods. There are, however, differences between the wealthy and poor households as far as risk management is concerned. Desta (1999) notes that the rich pastoralists and medium-wealth families diversify because holding all assets in livestock may invite losses. However, for the poor households, diversification is not necessarily a risk deterrence strategy because they do not diversify out of choice but, rather, they are forced to engage in other activities as an immediate rescue procedure without taking into consideration the long-term consequences (Berzborn, 2007). For most people with a smaller capital base, alternatives to pastoralism tend to generate low incomes and may actually increase risk during periods of stress (Little et al., 2001).

We should, however, be aware that much of what is written on pastoral diversification is generalised and lacks context. Although two particular communities may face similar crises,

their diversification strategies may vary because of geographical location. This is because a particular site may promote or deter the elaboration of a particular type of livelihood. For example, trade in remote areas may remain rudimentary due to lack of infrastructure and access to markets. Similarly, in sites where rainfall is adequate or water is available, farming provides an important diversification option for pastoral households. However, the site conditions on their own are not enough to explain pastoral diversification. Analysis must also take into consideration the micro-level factors, such as household characteristics. The diversification trajectories of individual households vary due to factors such as wealth, and the age and gender of the household's head. Thus, certain livelihoods dominate more among households of specific social status positions. The analysis of livelihood diversification using such an approach allows us to capture and aggregate responses using a variety of indicators of change across space and time.

These points are raised because there are contrasting views about the pros and cons of diversification in pastoral economy. While some studies indicate that livelihood diversification has a positive impact, especially in the current socio-economic situation, others consider it to be detrimental. Some studies suggest that livestock become less important to households that diversify (e.g. Homewood et al., 2001). However, a study conducted among herders in Richtersveld, South Africa by Berzborn (2007) shows that even in communities marked by considerable dependence on wage labour, many households are directly involved in livestock production. Berzborn notes that pastoralism still plays an important role for these households as it diversifies the portfolio of economic activities and thereby increases resilience to hazards. McCabe (2003) argues that a livelihood based exclusively on livestock is becoming unsustainable for the Maasai pastoralists due to population growth as well as integration into the market economy. Increasingly, engaging in farming is seen as a way of contributing to pastoral food security. Reporting on Samburu pastoralists that have adopted farming, Lesorogol (2005) reports that cultivation supplements pastoral economy by providing additional food and cash, thereby helping households to preserve their livestock wealth. Similarly, the Maasai of Ngorongoro argue that they have adopted farming in order to maintain pastoral identity (McCabe, 2003). The farming households are able to 'save' their livestock as fewer animals are sold to cater for the family's food needs (*ibid*). In some cases, farming is considered a source of economic empowerment for pastoral women and youths (Smith, 1999). Several studies have also

shown that destitute pastoralists have used income from farming to purchase livestock and revert to pastoral production (Merryman, 1984; Little, 1992).

However, the expansion of agriculture into pastoral areas has become a major source of concern as it encroaches on available grazing areas (Angassa & Oba, 2008). Increasing cultivation of pastoral areas undermines the mobility that is essential for pastoral production. Mobility ensures that animals continuously get fodder of good quality and varied nutrition. The loss of important grazing areas may cause over-exploitation of the remaining pastures, making livestock vulnerable to starvation, especially during droughts. The loss of pasture can also contribute to heightened competition and, in some instances, trigger pastoral conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1999).

At this point I would like to summarise the effects on pastoralism. First and foremost, pastoral diversification has not always been considered positive. In terms of the effects on pastoral activities, there has been a loss of essential capital for pastoral production. In the past, destitute pastoralists remained in pastoral production by herding the livestock of wealthy households. The herders were allowed to use some of the milk from the livestock they herded to feed their families. Herders were paid mainly in livestock, thus enabling them rebuild their herd. Today, the sons of the destitute migrate to urban centres in search of wage employment and other opportunities. This outmigration undermines pastoral economy as the labour necessary for pastoral production is lost; this may also imply a loss of opportunities for the transmission of knowledge and skills essential for pastoralism. Loss of essential labour for livestock movement further undermines livestock growth when the livestock cannot access remote pastures (Little et al., 2008).

Diversification and integration into the market economy have led to the growing polarisation of the members of traditionally 'pastoral' ethnic groups into haves and have-nots (Fratkin, 2001). The integration of the market economy promotes individualism and undermines the communal sharing that maintains the social fabric of pastoral societies. The growing stratification of pastoral societies is linked to the decline in the maintenance of traditional rights and responsibilities (Ensminger, 1992). As indigenous social institutions for resource redistribution become weaker, the poor lose their opportunities for herd restitution and the return to pastoral

production. In fact, Davies and Bennett (2007) argue that diversification into agriculture could threaten the pastoral Afar's livelihoods because it diverts labour away from pastoral activities that yield 'social capital', raising the risk of destitution for the Afar. Moreover, the transformation from pastoral production to a diversified economy has major implications for social organisation and, specifically, gender roles in pastoral communities.

2.5. Gender and pastoral transformation

The change from a more purely pastoral production to a diversified economy has a major impact on the roles men and women play at household level. In the past, most East African pastoralist men not only managed the livestock by herding and watering them but also controlled their use and allocations, while women were responsible for managing the livestock products, ensuring that families had adequate food and that there was also a share for guests or for exchange with neighbours (Dahl, 1987). However, with the diversification of livelihoods, the dichotomy of male-female roles is blurred as responsibilities are either swapped or shared by both. This change is more evident among impoverished pastoral households where the wives are required to contribute to the subsistence needs of their families (Oba, 2001). Although, traditionally, men had overall responsibility for their household's economic wellbeing, the income from pastoralism is, today, often not enough to cater for all the family's needs. It is for this reason that contribution by other members of the family is needed to meet the subsistence. This has necessitated that many women participate in income-generating activities. Pastoral women can be observed taking up responsibilities such as farming, trade, and wage labour to support their families. For example, among the Samburu, women are actively involved in the food-for-work projects aimed at meeting the subsistence needs of their families (Straight, 2000). Women's involvement in income-generating activities is becoming essential for the many pastoral households that are experiencing herd decline.

There are contradictory views on the effects that the new roles of pastoral women have on general female welfare (Joeke & Pointing, 1991). Some studies indicate that participation in trade in the sedentarisation centres has been beneficial for women. For example, Fratkin and Smith (1995) and Smith (1998) report that the Rendille women of Songa have been economically

empowered by engaging in town trade because it allows them to access money that was previously controlled by men. The camel milk trade among the Somali women is considered an important source of income that buffers families against food insecurity (Little, 1994). Merryman (1996) also notes that living in urban centres gives Somali women more access to cash-earning activities such as petty trade or retail trade than the pastoral setup. Income-generating activities are especially beneficial to widows and divorcees who are able to pool their resources and assist each other (*ibid*). Shehu and Hassan (1995: 61) argue that the market economy empowers the Fulbe women of Nigeria as it enables them to counterbalance their husbands' power at household level and also to become conveyors of the latest news and events due their frequent visits to the markets. Among the Orma pastoralists at Tana River, the settled women are closer to political authority and are more aware of national issues in comparison to the nomadic women (Ensminger, 1987). Another positive effect is that a sedentary lifestyle provides an opportunity for pastoral girls to enrol in school. Education provides opportunities for formal employment and the economic benefits that go with it.

Other studies addressing gender and pastoral production, however, suggest that women are the losers in the recent socio-economic transformation because they have progressively lost control over productive capital (Ensminger, 1987; Kelly, 1990; Broch-Due, 1983). On the basis of her study among the Maasai, Talle (1988: 268) shows how the hierarchical division between the sexes has been widened to the disadvantage of women across social and economic groups. In Omdurman in Sudan, the pastoral women have lost their centrality in the household as sales of milk, which they traditionally controlled, have been taken over by men (Salih, 1985). Mitchell's (1999) assessment of the milk trade among the Ariaal pastoralists suggests that milk marketing undertaken by women is detrimental to their children's nutrition as most families deprive their children and sell the milk to buy other food stuffs. Buhl and Homewood's (2000) findings on the Fulani women milk traders show that, although women spend some of their income on household items, most is used to buy jewellery and clothing. However, in some cases, such as the Rendille pastoralists, women's involvement in trade does not translate to any economic autonomy through the build-up of personal capital because either the income is given to the husband or, as in most cases, it is used to provide food for their families (Smith, 1999).

The increased monetisation of pastoral economy is also blamed for the breakdown of traditional entitlements and obligations that formerly cemented social relations (Joeques & Pointing, 1991; Ensminger, 1992). Women's sharing of milk among neighbours, which is essential for building social relations, has been affected by the commoditisation of milk (Buijn, 1995). Among the Maasai, the sale of live animals in order to buy food has reduced the slaughter of animals for household consumption, thereby denying pastoral women the opportunity for building social relations through the sharing of meat (Talle, 1987).

Pastoral women also suffer due to increased workloads because, in addition to their own domestic roles, they are often expected to step into the roles of their husbands when they migrate to urban areas for wage employment (Getachew, 2001). On the other hand, among sedentary households, women with formal employment and those from wealthy families may have a reduced workload because they can afford to hire poor women to take over some of their domestic responsibilities. However, regardless of the changes experienced by pastoral women, the traditional social networks continue to play important roles in their lives.

2.5.1. The social networks of pastoral women

Pastoral women play an important role in the social and economic wellbeing of their households, particularly through their involvement in the social security networks. Pastoral social security networks are closely linked to the structure of reciprocal obligations sustained through a system of gifts and loans (Dahl & Hjort, 1979). Such long-term and flexible networks are essential because they promote social stability and enable pastoralists to mitigate stressful periods (Johnson, 1999) and handle the 'ups and downs' of the economy (White, 2000). Reciprocal exchanges enable women to mobilise the labour and other resources necessary to meet shortfalls within their households.

One way in which women can establish social relations is by sharing food, household items, and labour. In many pastoral communities, women also utilise their dairy management roles to build their own social networks, either by giving dairy products (milk, butter and meat) to other women or by allowing other women the use of one of their milking animals (Joeques & Pointing, 1991; Kettel, 1992). In so doing, they build reciprocal exchange networks that ensure a supply of

food into households during periods of stress. The more people with whom one has reciprocal relations, the better the chances of meeting shortfalls in the household's needs. Johnson (1999) notes that among the nomadic Turkana, sharing food is not always altruistic; people give in the present with the conscious intent to receive at some point in future. Kettel (1992) also reports that Rendille women often keep track of those who have successfully begged a share of resources from them so that they can ask for their help in the future.

Generally, pastoral women are reported to keep good contacts with their agnates, husband's kin, neighbours, and a wider range of kin through the gift of milk and other small gifts (Dyson-Hudson & Dyson-Hudson, 1999). These broad networks can be drawn upon when the family faces hardship. Getachew (2001: 147-148) reports that the Afar women demand donations from their own kin in order to relieve pressure on the household budget. The donations are said to include cows to milk and small stocks to sell to meet the subsistence needs of the household. Talle (1987) notes that, among the Maasai, poor husbands often encourage their wives to 'beg' animals in order to increase their herd.

Apart from contributing to food security, women's social networks are essential for women's social lives. For example, Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson (1999: 80) report that Turkana women work in groups as a way of combining leisure and friendship, and to lighten the labour. Talle (1987) describes the companionship that characterises the lives of Maasai women who fetch firewood and water together, lend each other milk cows, help each other in house-building and child care, and cooperate in arranging celebrations. Women's social networks are also important for psychological and emotional support. Sharing stories helps to alleviate the strain caused by the demands of daily survival (Dyson-Hudson & Dyson-Hudson, 1999). The elderly women play a major role in building social cohesion by providing advice to younger women; they also play an important role in settling disputes between them.

Among the Arsi-Oromo of Ethiopia, women's social networks play an important role in protecting women from abusive husbands. A woman's support group of female friends may threaten to curse a man whose wife complains of mistreatment during childbirth (Jeylan, 2004). Among the Borana, women sing work songs (*kaarrilee*) that are intended not only to lighten the

burden of their chores, but to make comments or give criticism on issues that they consider to be unjust or caused by unwise decisions taken by men (Legesse, 1973: 20-21). Similar approaches have been recorded among women from agricultural communities in other parts of Africa. For example, the Igbo-speaking women of Nigeria have long-established practices of making *egwu* (songs/dances) in order to embarrass local male authorities and communicate the women's collective grievances and demands (Bastian, 2001). Today, formal women's organisations have been introduced in various parts of the world with the aim of empowering women at domestic and community level.

2.5.2. Women's formal organisations

In recent years, women have become the main target group in development interventions by state and international organisations. The growth of women's organisations, especially in Africa, is linked to factors such as the growth of democratic space in the 1990s as a result of multiparty democracy, and the 1995 Beijing conference that gave great publicity to the issues concerning the position of women in society (Tripp, 2005). Focus is also placed on women by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Agendas 3 and 5, addressing gender equality and maternal health. These factors have strengthened the mainstreaming of gender in development interventions, contributing to the spread of formal women's organisations, which are also known as women's groups.

Cornwall et al. (2007) argue that the promotion of women's self-help and savings groups is based on the ideas of female solidarity and female autonomy. The formation of women's groups is specifically aimed at the alleviation of poverty through the financial empowerment of women as well as by drawing on their social capital (Mayoux, 2001). The assumption is that women can make gains by working in a team. The advocates of participatory development argue that by involving women in development, they would be able to break out of the cycle of disempowerment (Mercer, 2002). The economic emancipation of women is considered important because of the direct influence that women wield on the wellbeing of their families (Mahmud, 2003).

In Kenya, the agenda of women's empowerment has become a centre piece of the Kibaki administration. The government has created a Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services, which gives special consideration to the development of women and youths. Moreover, the government's creation of Constituency Development Funds (CDF) has provided new sources of financial support, accessible to women's groups across the country. In the pastoral areas of Northern Kenya, women can use the economic gains achieved through the efforts of women's groups to start income-generating activities to meet the subsistence needs of their households. Although formal women's organisations continue to play a significant role in pastoral communities, this fact has not received adequate attention from the research community. However, research in this area is necessary to give an up-to-date picture of the methods used by pastoralists to survive in the current socio-economic climate.

3. FRAMEWORD FOR UNDERSTANDING PASTORAL TRANSFORMATION

Pastoral transformation is a complex phenomenon and the processes differ from one community to another. Based on empirical studies among the Waso Borana, I present a simplified version of this complexity. In this framework, pastoral transformation is conceptualised as operating at three levels (see Figure 2). The first level, 'External Drivers', is the general level of change which affects the majority of pastoralists in Africa. This level actualises the external drivers of pastoral transformation and includes factors such as policies, globalisation, market economy, climate change, and development agencies, among others. In most African countries, policies, especially with regard to land tenure, have led to the fragmentation of pastoral land. In most African countries, a large part of the pastoral communal lands have been converted to non-pastoral economic activities. This has resulted in the constriction of grazing areas. At this level we find other changes at a macro scale, such as climatic fluctuations, which may lead, for example, to more frequent droughts. Trends in global markets for grain and meat may impact directly on the pastoral economy. In the Horn of Africa, politically-motivated conflicts such as insurgencies, raids, and ethnic conflicts are some of the major external drivers of pastoral transformation. The protracted conflicts in pastoralist areas have contributed to the decline in livestock holdings and increasing poverty among pastoral communities.

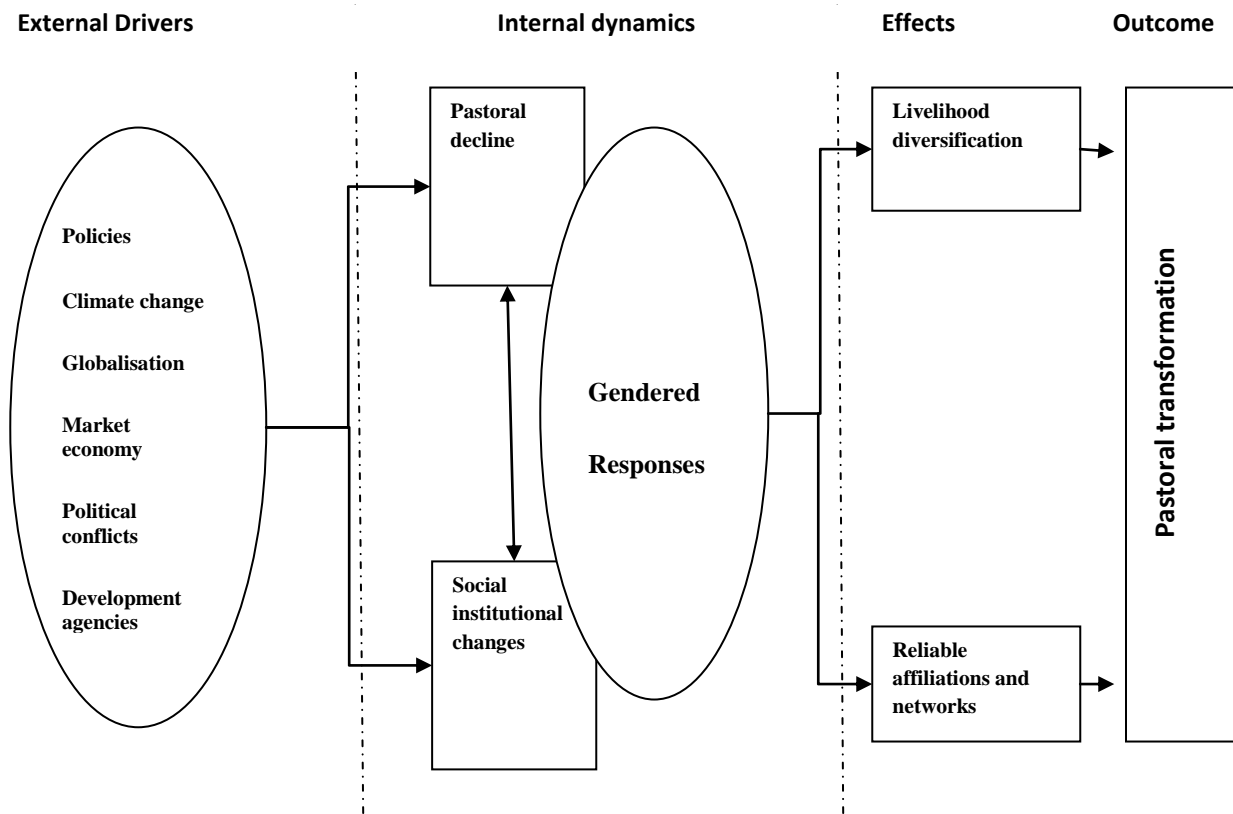


Figure 2: Framework for understanding pastoral transformation

The second level is referred to as ‘Internal Dynamics’. Within pastoral communities, the impact of external drivers can be observed from two aspects: the production level and the social institutions. In most cases, external drivers cause a decline in pastoral production and undermine the function of social institutions. Especially in a situation of widespread poverty, redistribution of livestock within the community is hampered. This can weaken the social institutions and, as a result, needy people may lose their safety net. There are gendered aspects to these internal dynamics because of differences in the roles played by men and women in pastoral communities.

The third level, ‘Effects and Outcome’, concerns the effects of external and internal dynamics on individual households. The assumption is that all households experience the macro-level and community-level pressures. However, the capacity to diversify and remain food secure depends on the characteristics of the household, in terms of its composition and wealth as well as the age and gender of the household head. The social capital amassed through previous generosity and

the numbers of friendship affiliations that individual households have built in the past are crucial in determining their food security.

3.1. Application of the framework on the Waso Borana

In this somewhat rudimentary model, I summarise the main aspects of the transformation of Waso Borana pastoralism (Figure 3). Marginalisation and political conflicts are the main external drivers of change (Paper I). Livestock losses were directly caused by government bombardment and confiscation as well as raids by guerrilla and neighbouring ethnic groups. The conflicts have thus caused a collapse in livestock holdings and transformed the social institutions. At the community level, these two effects of external change have become the internal drivers of change. As a result of protracted insecurity, the efficient utilisation of pastures has been undermined, causing more livestock to die from drought. The widespread impoverishment that followed has, in turn, affected the operation of the indigenous institution of resource sharing (Paper I). The response to pastoral decline and institutional transformation is structured by gender. Such a structuring can be seen in the household's diversification strategies (Paper II), in women's use of indigenous social networks to cope with socio-economic challenges (Paper III), and in the way women utilise external opportunities by becoming members of women's groups that receive funding from government and development agencies (Paper IV). (See Figure 3 below).

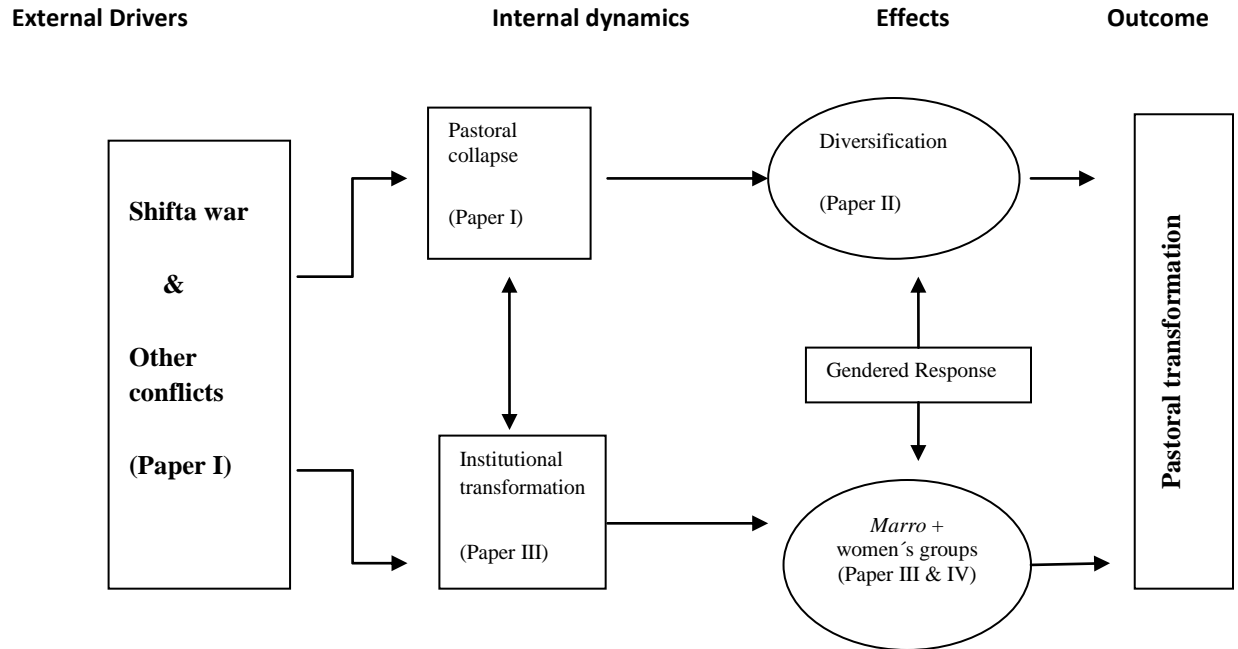


Figure 3: Framework for understanding the transformation of Waso Borana pastoralism

To achieve a broader understanding of the transformation of the Waso Borana pastoral economy, various methodological approaches are employed in this thesis.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study uses primary data derived from the field studies conducted in Merti, Kinna, and Kulamawe, as its principle source of information. Other sources of data include archival materials from the Kenya National Archives and official documents from the government offices. The study has employed both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Data has been collected with the help of questionnaires, enabling aggregation and statistical analysis in order to predict relationships (Holland & Campbell, 2005). The qualitative method used in this study essentially provides an interpretive understanding of the human experience (Nelson et al., 1992), and is inherently multi-method in approach (Flick, 1998). The qualitative methods used include participant observations, interviews, in-depth interviews of key-informants, and focus group discussions. A multiple approach has been used in an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The blend of data collection methods provides a wide spectrum for data analysis, which could not be

achieved if only a single method was employed. The choice of the methods employed at a particular time depended mainly on the type of questions asked and the context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). I have adopted the perspective of Berge (2009: 5), that “each method is a different line of sight directed towards the same point”. Each of the qualitative methods has been used in a particular context to maximise the amount of data collected and enhance its quality. The use of multiple methods of data collection is also aimed at triangulation, which reinforces the validity of the data collected.

In communities that have no written records, oral history provides an important source of data. The recall data are based on social memories, personal history, and oral narratives. Important events form part of the society’s oral history and are passed from one generation to another. In the current study, more direct recall data have been used to reconstruct events in relation to the *Shifta* war and other major phenomena, such as conflicts and drought since the *Shifta* war. In particular, recall methods are used to understand the impact of the war and other occurrences on the Waso Borana pastoral economy. Similar approaches have been used by scholars to understand the livestock trends among the Borana pastoralists (Desta & Coppock, 2004; Angassa & Oba, 2007; Tache, 2008). Although this approach is instrumental in collecting data in non-literate societies, it is not without challenges. There is a tendency for people to romanticise the past in relation to the present, especially when their community is facing hardship. Moreover, there can be the problem of ‘selective memories’ as people tend to forget some details of the past (Yow, 2005). In the case of the Waso Borana, recall memories, especially of the *Shifta* war, are, for triangulation purposes, compared to data found in previous studies and in other written sources that could be obtained from the official archives.

Generally, combining various methods of data collection has its own limitations. As an example, the quantitative and qualitative methods are anchored on different epistemological stances. While quantitative methods are positivist in approach and aim at objectivity, the qualitative methods are constructionist and subjective (Bryman, 2008). Combining the two may pose challenges for the researcher. Also, all methods of data collection have inherent problems. For instance, interviews are never neutral tools of data collection as they always involve an interaction between individuals, leading to negotiated results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The neutrality of the

researcher and participants is affected because they mutually influence each other through the phrasing of questions and answers, and in the ways words are used. Moreover, a study conducted by a researcher that shares the same ethnicity with those researched may evoke some sympathy and affect neutrality. I was aware of these pitfalls and tried to practice reflexivity throughout the study, from data collection and analysis to the presentation of research findings. The use of multiple data collection methods is also aimed at minimising bias and validating the research findings. The methods used in the collection of data are presented below.

4.1. Participant observation

During the field work that lasted from July 2007 to January 2008, I spent most of my time with individuals in the Waso Borana community, interacting more intensively with the women. After I had explained the aims of my research, it was easy for the women to open up and invite me into their homes and to various functions, such as weddings and women's group meetings. My ability to earn their trust was due to my identity as a woman and, more specifically, due to the fact that I come from the same community although from a different district. Most of the afternoons after my formal interviews, I spent time with the women, listening to their stories and joining in with their discussions about topics that ranged from household affairs to the latest gossip in the village. I attended group meetings, which often took place in the late afternoons, and had follow-up discussions with individual women or their group leaders on key research issues. I also joined some women in the market, observing the items they sold and their interactions with customers. I discussed their businesses and other topics of research interest with them. Due to a lack of alternative accommodation in the Rapsu irrigation scheme, I was accommodated by a woman in her home. This gave me an insight into the lives of poor women in the Rapsu irrigation scheme. I could observe how my hostess borrowed and shared almost everything in her house, ranging from bedding and utensils to food items.

Participant observation has been essential in this study because it has enabled me to have an insight into the lives of various categories of women. Women often shied away during formal interviews. The informality of participant observation put the women more at ease, making it possible for them to talk and share experiences of their lives. The barrier created by my

membership of the educated 'elite' and my role as a 'researcher' was lessened as the women were able to perceive me as a fellow woman and one of their own with whom they could share their lives; revealing their achievements as well as their challenges. Each day before retiring to bed, I recorded their stories and my observations and interpretations of activities in my field notes. This material provided an important basis for reflection and follow-up discussion, influencing the format of subsequent interviews.

4.2. Interviews

Interviews with individual informants were conducted with the aim of obtaining their ideas and thoughts in line with the study objectives. Interview settings varied from place to place and from one individual to another, depending on convenience. In most cases, interviews were conducted in homes but, occasionally, they were carried out in a market place or farm, according to the preference of the informant. Two types of approach were used for interviews. Firstly, I used a semi-structured approach where the discussions were guided by lists of topics within the study objectives. The approach was, however, not rigid as, in most cases, I would allow deviations from the core themes of the study. The interviews were as short as thirty minutes or as long as two hours depending on the amount of information provided by the informant and their availability. Interviewees responded to the list of questions, drawing on their own individual experience and life history or from experiences from the wider community. The second approach involved open-ended discussions around study themes. Key-informant interviews, in particular, had this character.

4.3. Key informant interviews

At the initial stage of the research, key-informants were identified with the help of the local chiefs in the respective study areas. Partners for subsequent interviews were obtained through a snowballing approach where the key-informants I had interviewed identified others with similar experiences. The key-informants interviewed included both men and women with specific knowledge of the topic of interest. For example, with regards to the history of the *Shifita* war, I interviewed older individuals who were knowledgeable about aspects of the war such as its causes and the impacts of war on people and the pastoral economy. The key-informants

provided essential information, drawing on their personal stories as well as collective experiences. Women of various ages and social statuses (wealth categories, educational level, and marital status) were also interviewed with regard to specific issues affecting women. These interviews were recorded by either note-taking or tape-recording depending on the convenience, as well as willingness, of individual informants. Taking proper research ethics into consideration, the consent and approval of informants were sought, particularly for tape-recording. Occasionally, the tapes were played for the individuals to enable them to listen to the recorded discussions.

4.4. Interviews with government officials

Interviews were conducted with senior officials in the Department of Social Service in Isiolo District Headquarters. Both structured and open-ended discussions were used in the collection of data. The structured interviews were aimed at obtaining specific information, such as the number of women's groups registered, membership totals, the year they were formed, the funding available, and the basic by-law rules, among others. Open-ended discussions were also conducted on the role of social services and the experiences of the officials regarding women's groups and women's welfare in general. Both note-taking and tape recording were used to record the data.

4.5. Focus groups

I also used focus groups in collecting data from each of the study sites. Focus group discussions are useful in collecting qualitative data because it can reduce the distance between the researcher and the researched (Madriz, 2003). The open and unstructured discussion during a focus group enables different views to be exposed, allowing the researcher to gain a broader view. In this study, the focus group interviews were conducted with the main aim of resolving issues of concern or contradictions that had emerged from discussions with individual informants. The open discussions helped in clarifying issues such as the wealth ranking system in the community. Through brainstorming, a general consensus was reached on how to rank a household's wealth status: very poor (*qolle qunqumtuu*), poor (*Iyeesa*), medium (*bulti-qaba*), and wealthy (*dureesa*). The discussions also helped to clarify the chronology of events and historical issues that

happened pre and post *Shifita* war. The focus group also provided an important arena to understand the community's perceptions regarding the impact of food aid on pastoral economies. Other key topics discussed include the viability of pastoral production in the current socio-economic situation, and the impact of livelihood diversification on the pastoral economy. The focus group interviews revealed the perceptions of men on topics related to women, such as the changing role of women in the household economy and the involvement of women in women's groups.

4.6. Questionnaires

A standardised set of structured questions were administered to 300 selected households with the aim of collecting quantifiable data. At the start of the study, in each study site, specific villages were selected to capture the livelihood diversity. Thus, villages (*olla*) from pastoral, peri-urban, agro-pastoral, and farming areas were identified. For each village chosen, random sampling was then used so as to capture households of diverse characteristics (i.e. age, wealth, etc.). The questionnaires have two main parts: part one deals with general information about the household and part two is targeted specifically towards the women of the household. The general part collected information on household characteristics, such as the age of the household head, the number of dependants, the main sources of livelihood, and the number of livestock and species owned. The women's section attempted to collect specific information such as the woman's age, level of education, whether they participated in the indigenous social network (*marro*) and women's group, and other follow up questions specific to these topics. The questionnaires were prepared in English. Since the majority of the households are illiterate, the questions were translated for them to *afaan Borana* and their responses recorded in English. I trained research assistants in undertaking questionnaire-guided interviews. All the assistants were local men and women with education levels varying from secondary to university. Through the rigorous evaluation of completed questionnaires on a daily basis, quality control was ensured. In some cases, where entries were inconsistent due to the assistant's lack of rigour, results were rejected and the interviews repeated using a different research assistant. This problem occurred only at one site.

4.7. Archival research

Archival materials have provided important data regarding historical events. The data is mainly derived from police records, official correspondence, Districts' Annual Reports, and newspaper captions. The unclassified archival documents were photocopied and used alongside other data obtained through interviews.

5. SYNTHESIS

5.1. Pastoral collapse

The socio-economic transformation of the Waso Borana is linked to the marginalisation of the Northern Frontier Districts' (NFD) pastoral society in the modern state system, which began with unfavorable policies pursued by the colonial government towards pastoral communities. The war, popularly known as the *Shifita* war, had regional and local dimensions. Regionally, it was linked to the irredentism policy of the newly independent Somali government, which aimed to unite all the Somali territories that were subdivided into various countries by the colonial powers. This Somali regional interest in reuniting Somali territories gained support from the NFD residents who had suffered underdevelopment and marginalisation under the colonial administration. The insurgency war was fought from 1963 to 1968 and ended with a peace deal signed in Kinshasa and Arusha by the governments of Kenya and Somalia. The peace deal is popularly known as the Kinshasa/Arusha Declaration. Although the declaration marked the end of the insurgency war, the war was transformed into local conflicts. Paper I provides details of the complexity of these conflicts in terms of actors and issues, and the inter-linkages between one conflict level and another.

The insurgency war has had an immediate and long term impact on the Waso Borana pastoral economy (Paper I). During the insurgency war, the Waso Borana livestock economy collapsed due to the bombardment and confiscation of livestock by government security agencies. Other livestock were looted by members of the *Shifita* guerrillas as a source of subsistence. Moreover, the government forcefully settled pastoralists in detention camps and restricted the grazing radius of their livestock. As a result of grazing restrictions, many livestock died of starvation. In

summary, the impact of the *Shifita* war on the Waso Borana pastoral economy has been devastating.

In the aftermath of the *Shifita* war, the pastoral economy has not recovered to the level of the pre-*Shifita* era due to many factors. The end of the *Shifita* war marked the end of the collaborative relations between the Waso Borana and Somali communities. As a result, politically and economically motivated conflicts were waged in the Waso Borana grazing areas. Subsequent conflicts have been fuelled by two main factors: the influx of small arms and poor governance. The instability of governments in neighbouring countries in the Horn of Africa provides greater local access to ammunition and weaponry. Automatic weapons emanating from the wars in Ethiopia and Somalia are used locally in ethnic conflicts, cattle raiding, highway banditry, and poaching. For the Waso Borana, the effects of conflicts after the *Shifita* war have been aggravated by poor governance and corruption at local and national levels. These problems undermine conflict resolution and often fuel further conflict.

The persistent insecurity has further devastated the pastoral economy in many ways. Firstly, the conflicts have resulted in human casualties, additional loss of livestock, and the displacement of populations. Secondly, the persistent insecurity has changed land use patterns. The elaborate system of rangeland utilisation, including the apportioning of pastures into wet season and dry season grazing, which had acted as a coping mechanism against the vagaries of environmental and climatic conditions, has broken down. Due to insecurity, dry season pastures have become inaccessible for livestock utilisation. As a result, safer areas are overused and livestock is more vulnerable to drought and the outbreak of disease. This causes more livestock loss. Thirdly, those who have become destitute through the large-scale livestock losses have been forced to migrate out of the area, withdrawing from the pastoral economy. This accelerates the processes of sedentarisation and livelihood change (Paper II).

The overall consequence of insecurity is that the livestock economy has failed to recover. Even forty-three years after the *Shifita* war, most households in the area are still seen as economically unviable (Paper I), and some families had been unable to resume pastoralism despite a wish to do so (Paper II). The study has found that herd sizes for the communities of Merti, Kinna, and

Kulamawe have not reached the levels achieved prior to the *Shifta* war. The sustained exposure to conflict, risk, and uncertainty has undermined pastoral economy. The decline in livestock holdings implies that households have to diversify their livelihood by adding non-pastoral activities in order to meet their subsistence needs and also to spread risk by investing in diverse economic activities (Paper II).

5.2. Livelihood diversification

The result of the *Shifta* war and subsequent conflicts has been a major decline in livestock holdings across the Waso Borana households. Paper II describes how the pastoral households reorganised themselves in order to cope with the shocks caused by conflict. One way in which they responded to the shocks was by transforming the pastoral economy through livelihood diversification. The food insecurity faced by the majority of pastoralists has forced some pastoral community members to withdraw in favour of a sedentarised lifestyle in a town where they rely on diverse means of survival, including a range of non-pastoral activities. The study has found that the forms of diversification vary due to site-specific conditions and opportunities, in addition to household characteristics. Depending on the suitability of ecological conditions, some economic activities have been more prominent in particular areas. For example, farming is more dominant in Kinna due to its water supply and fertile soil, which enable irrigation. Merti and Kulamawe have favourable rangelands suitable for pastoral production. Also, a proximity to other trading centres may play an important role in livelihood diversification. For example, the growth of the camel milk trade in Kulamawe can be attributed to its closeness to Isiolo town. Serviceable road networks between Isiolo and Nairobi have made it possible for camel milk to be transported to Nairobi where there is a high demand from the large population of Somali refugees. At a household level, the main finding of the study is that diversification strategies vary according to the wealth status of the household as well as with the age and gender of the household's head. A majority of wealthy households are engaged in pure pastoral production while a larger proportion of the poor are involved in farming as a diversification. In trade, the rich are engaged in businesses with higher returns, such as retail trade, while the poor households engage in forms of petty trade, which are vulnerable to failure. This finding is similar to other

reports on pastoral diversification, stating that the wealthy households diversify to spread risk and for investment purposes whereas the poor do it mainly for survival (e.g. Little et al., 2001).

Gender analysis of livelihood diversification strategies shows that more male-headed households are involved in pure pastoral production than female-headed households and female-headed households are more involved in farming. This is an indication that female-headed households have diversified more by engaging in non-pastoral activities compared to male-headed households. The male-headed households have greater involvement in more secure businesses that also require higher capital, such as retail trade. The female-headed households are engaged in petty trade, which is less secure but requires less capital. The difference in livelihood options reflects a difference in economic capabilities between male and female-headed households. Traditional gender roles may also have influenced the kind of economic activities undertaken by households. It was found that the age of household heads has a significant impact on the type of livelihood activities pursued. Pure pastoral production is more prevalent among households headed by the elderly. In contrast, farming is more common among the young household heads. This may imply that younger household heads are more open to embracing non-pastoral activities. However, the households headed by elderly persons have more income from formal employment and, due to the maturity of their offspring, have access to a wider range of economic opportunities.

The thesis further shows that the decline of pastoral economy and the resulting diversification by engagement in non-pastoral activities does not portend an end to pastoralism. Despite diversification, pastoral production continues to be a major economic base (Paper II). The involvement in non-pastoral livelihood activities does not necessarily undermine pastoral production. True, households have sold livestock to raise capital for business but they also use the profits from business to purchase more livestock (Paper II). Therefore Sandford's (2006) recommendation that emigration out of pastoral areas and out of pastoral production could be a solution to pastoral decline, does not seem to hold in the case of the Waso Borana pastoralists. The study has shown that pastoral households adapt their production to meet the demands of the market economy and modern lifestyles. They do so by engaging in diverse economic activities, which include commercialisation of livestock and livestock products, trade in non-pastoral

products, farming, and employment in both formal and informal sectors (Paper II). Therefore, diversification to non-pastoral livelihood activities should be viewed as the exploitation of opportunities that spread risk and maximise benefits, rather than ultimate replacement of pastoral production. The study has also shown that, although pastoral production faces numerous risks, many people continue to pursue it, while those who moved out of it or have diversified into non-pastoral livelihood reinvest in it. There are numerous reasons for pastoral production's continued popularity: a) pastoral production is linked to the social identity of the pastoralists, b) there are limited alternative economic opportunities in pastoral areas, which are remote, under-developed and lack basic infrastructure and services that could attract investors, and c) most pastoral areas are dry and the soils are not suitable for farming; pastoral production provides the most viable economic option to utilise the arid lands.

Whether in a pastoral setup or in sedentary settlements, pastoral women play an important role in the household's food security. One way in which they contribute to the wellbeing of their households is by mobilising resources from the social networks to which they are affiliated. One important social network is the women's indigenous social network (*marro*).

5.3. Women's indigenous social networks

A transformation of the Waso Borana pastoral economy is evident not only from the way in which the community has diversified its livelihood but also the way in which the social structures have responded to change. The study shows that responses to pastoral change are gendered (Paper II, Paper III), reflecting the dichotomous nature of the roles played by men and women in pastoral communities. Pastoral women, in general, rely heavily on each other's support to carry out most of their domestic responsibilities, such as cooking, child care, and small-stock herding. Indigenous social networks enable pastoral women to mobilise resources within the neighbourhood in order to meet shortfalls within their own family. Among the Waso Borana, women engage in a network of reciprocal exchanges known as *marro* (Paper III). Paper III illustrates both the continuity and change in the form and function of these networks in the aftermath of socio-economic transformation. One conclusion of the study is that all women participate in *marro* in some way, regardless of their social status but the frequency of

participation varies with the needs and opportunities of the women. Wealth status and educational levels do not particularly influence the frequency of participation though it appears that the age of women has some impact. For example, elderly women participate more in daily exchanges compared to younger women, which may indicate that they are more dependent on the network. Also, a comparison of women involved in different livelihoods shows that households involved in pastoral or peri-urban economies are more involved in daily sharing than the agro-pastoral and farming households. With regards to the impact of external interventions on the functions of *marro*, such as food aid, responses differ across livelihoods. A perception held by the majority of the agro-pastoral women is that food aid has a positive impact on *marro* as there is more food available for sharing. However, some pastoral households reported it to have a negative impact on group solidarity.

One significant change in the *marro* social network is in the type of support that women share. While, in the past, food sharing was the most dominant form of resource mobilisation, the sharing labour is now more popular. Another major change is the introduction of cash loans within the women's social networks. Although less popular than labour or food items, cash loans have been reported by the poorest farming households. Cash loans could also be considered as an adaptive mechanism to the market economy as they enable women to access cash for investments. However, there is a limitation in the volume of cash circulation within these households as a result of their poverty status. The drawback of cash loans is that they affect the moral value of *marro* and may constrain relationships if there is a failure to repay the loan.

The *marro* system is under continuous strain due to increased food insecurity among the pastoralists, and the impact of the market economy and modern lifestyles in terms of neighbourhood patterns and political rivalry. The introduction of monetary economy offers both challenges and opportunities for the indigenous institution. Formal monetary debt can cause tension between lenders and receivers, especially if there is a failure in repayment. However, a cash loan can provide capital for the receiver, which she can use to strengthen her business. Due to lack of collateral, cash is, in most cases, inaccessible to the pastoral women; however, membership in formal women's organisations can provide another avenue.

5.4. Formal organisations: the role of women's groups

In paper IV, the study shows that, in addition to the women's indigenous social network, formal organisations have become an essential part of women's coping strategies. Compared to other parts of the country, women's groups are a relatively recent phenomenon in the pastoral communities of Northern Kenya. The steady growth of women's groups in recent years among the Waso Borana can be attributed to two main causes: a) the decline in pastoral economy and the ensuing diversification into non-pastoral activities and b) increased external funding opportunities for women's organisations. The Waso Borana women regard participation in women's groups as an opportunity to increase household food security and to contribute to community development. The study finds that women's groups are more prominent among settled categories of women living in a peri-urban and agro-pastoral (including farming) communities. The remoteness of pastoral areas is one reason for women from pastoral households being less involved in women's groups. However, sedentary households experience an increased need for cash to pay for necessities such as school and medical fees. This pushes these households to look for sources of support. In addition to engaging in farming and trade activities, women are now involved in formal organisations, such as women's groups, with the aim of broadening their sources of income. The majority of women's group members are illiterate and come from the poorest households. This finding confirms that economic factors are the main reason for membership. A woman can access labour support, and opportunities to start income-generating activities that can benefit her family. Women's groups also provide a space for learning, developing awareness of women's rights, empowerment, socialising, and networking.

Although development agencies and the Kenyan Government have targeted women for economic and political emancipation, neither has been achieved satisfactorily for the Waso Borana women. Their economic gains are hampered by ecological factors, such as droughts and diseases, that affect livestock trade. Economic gains were also affected by insecurity and lack of markets in the area. As for political empowerment, women's groups provide fora for civic education. Some women argue that, through participation in workshops, they have learned their rights as women and as citizens. Such awareness of their rights has not, however, led to any automatic empowerment of women at the community level. Very few women have managed to

gain political positions because of the dominance of traditional practices that confer political authority to men. The traditional social structures that relegate women to roles at a domestic level have impeded their ability to seek political roles in the community.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis addresses various issues in relation to pastoral transformation. The case of Waso Borana shows that external forces, such as conflicts and state policies, were the main drivers of pastoral transformation. External forces and internal dynamics have a long-term impact on the social and economic wellbeing of the community. This study has shown some of the long-term effects of conflicts and other pressures in transforming pastoral ways of life. Firstly, conflicts cause the loss of lives and human displacement due to insecurity. Secondly, they affect the pastoral economy by causing herd decline and affecting herd growth. Thirdly, conflict stimulates a diversification of livelihood as households are forced to engage in diverse non-pastoral economic activities in order to mitigate food insecurity. Fourthly, pastoral transformations elicit gendered responses as demonstrated by men and women's engagement in the market economy as well as by women's indigenous social networking. Finally, pastoralists do not operate in isolation. They are increasingly becoming incorporated into national and global agendas that accelerate processes of socio-economic change for pastoral communities.

Despite various challenges, pastoral production remains a major economic base for the majority of pastoral households. The resilience of pastoralism, despite numerous pressures, attests to its viability as an economic source and as a sustainable livelihood. Thus, there is a need for development efforts to take pastoral resilience into consideration in the face of socio-political perturbations. The goal of development interventions should never be a complete overhaul of pastoral economy but a supplementation of the traditional pastoralist coping mechanisms. Development agencies should promote pastoral policies based on robust policy-oriented research aimed at sustainable pastoral production. The contents of the policy and its implementation should be gender-conscious and offer explicit affirmative action, stimulating women to participate in the local, national, and global political economy. The study therefore recommends

further research in understanding the most suitable entry points for external intervention to implement pastoral livelihood recovery in the post-conflict society.

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PAPER I

Legacies of *Shifita* Conflicts in Northern Kenya: Pastoral Economic Collapse and Transformation

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Abstract

The pastoral regions of Northern Kenya have experienced many conflicts and much violence, with major ramifications for the pastoral economy. The conflicts have resulted in human casualties, loss of livestock, and displacement of populations. However, the common presumption that pastoral conflicts are caused by conflicts over resources masks the complexities of the impact of these tensions. The analysis of the conflicts has been lacking in the degree to which it has taken the historical context into consideration and failed to consider the overall impact on the pastoral economy. This paper addresses these lacunae by examining the legacies of the *shifita* insurgency war of the 1960s from a long-term perspective. More specifically, the research aimed to understand the extent to which the impact of the *shifita* insurgency, the army's arbitrary destruction, and the subsequent insecurity contributed to the lack of recovery of the pastoral economy. Through interviews conducted within the three communities of Kinna, Kulamawe and Merti in the Isiolo District, information was gathered about local perceptions of the impact of the *shifita* war and the recovery of the pastoral economy. The study shows that the livestock herds of the three communities have not achieved the levels of growth prior to the *shifita* war. Recurrent drought, persistent banditry and the changing ecology of the rangelands were blamed for the lack of recovery. The paper argues that political and ethnic conflicts have long-term impact on the pastoral economy and have the propensity to transform the system over time. The sustained exposure to the risk of conflict has important implications in terms of socio-political issues and coping strategies of the society.

Introduction

Pastoral communities in East Africa continue to be engulfed in violent conflicts. In the past, conflicts were often considered to reflect cultural issues, linked to rites of passage of the various communities (Almagor, 1979). A common underlying assumption is that pastoralists have aggressive cultures, characterised by their social institutions such as age and generation sets and classes, a system in which success is measured by the number of successfully organised raids against neighbouring groups to capture livestock (Fukui & Turton, 1979). Recently, most conflicts in pastoral areas have been explained as resource conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 2004). However, linking conflicts to resources *per se* hides the multi-dimensional nature of conflict and fails to take into account the unique local and geopolitical system within which conflicts occur. This is especially so in the case of conflicts linked to insurgencies. In the early years of independence, the Horn of Africa was an arena of secessionist insurgency conflicts that transcended international frontiers (see Markakis, 1993; 1998). Such insurgencies, which have

geopolitical linkages, often transfer national and international conflicts onto the local level, with a resulting destructive impact on production systems. The effect of one conflict may become a 'trigger' or 'proximate cause' of another conflict (Miall, 2004). The literature on such wars and their consequences for local economies is extremely sparse. Most texts were produced rather soon after the wars they refer to and do not take the long-term consequences into consideration.

In Northern Kenya where regional politics and ethnic conflicts, banditry, cattle rustling and poaching have contributed to losses of livestock during previous decades, the paucity of research data is an impediment to proper understanding of the long-term impact on livestock population dynamics. Moreover, the combined effects of droughts, livestock diseases, dwindling access to labour, and unfavourable markets during post-conflicts have not received adequate attention. These pressures are considered to be some of the major contributors to the general decline of the pastoral economy (Sandford, 2006; Coppock, 1994). Recent studies on the pastoral economy have shown that slow herd recovery after episodic droughts has forced many households to depend on herds below their subsistence requirements (Cossins & Upton, 1988; Roth, 1996; Campbell, 1999; Oba, 2001; Desta & Coppock, 2004; Angassa & Oba, 2007). Thus substantial proportions of pastoral populations are forced into other means of livelihood in order to meet the shortfall in income and produce. This phenomenon is demonstrated in particular by the impact of political conflicts in the former Northern Frontier Districts (NFD) on the pastoral economy of the Waso Borana.

Between 1963 and 1968 the pastoral economy of the Waso Borana suffered from the war referred to as the *shifita* war¹. This was a war fought by the guerrillas of the Northern Frontier District Liberation Front (NFDLF) supported by Somalia (Drysdale, 1964; Mburu, 2005), against Kenya's security forces. The warring parties targeted the pastoral economy for different reasons. The guerrillas raided herding groups and home camps to get access to food, as well as to punish those whom they suspected of opposing secessionism. The security forces focused their attacks on the same pastoral groups for their alleged sympathy with and practical support for the guerrillas.

¹ The word '*shifita*' (bandits) was the official term used by the Kenyan Government for the secessionist insurgency of the time. The term, probably derived from Amharic, is an old expression used when referring to general types of outlaws.

Previous studies relating to the *shifita* war were conducted in the 1970s and in the early 1980s². Those studies described the impact of the war and subsistence changes soon after the conflict. The present study has a major focus on the assessment of long-term impact of the war on livestock economy. The main aim is to re-evaluate whether the pastoral economy has recovered almost forty years since the end of the *shifita* war. Another aim is to understand how members of the community perceive the collapse of the pastoral economy in the aftermath of the *shifita* war and to analyse their views on the degree of pastoral recovery during the subsequent decades. The paper is structured as follows: after a brief background to the *shifita* conflict, the next section presents a description of the study community, and describes the methods of data collection and analysis. This is followed by a discussion on the *shifita* war with particular attention to its impact on the pastoral economy. The paper then discusses the pastoral economy after the *shifita* war, focusing on the change in livestock holdings in recent periods and people's perceptions as to why the pastoral economy has failed to reach the pre-*shifita* level. This is followed by a conclusion summarising the long-term impact of conflicts on pastoral economies.

Background to the shifita conflict

The collapse of the pastoral economy in the former NFD in general, and the Waso area in particular, cannot be understood without analysing the motivation for secession and its political and economic consequences. The collapse of the pastoral economy of the Waso Borana between 1963 and 1968 is linked to the regional border politics between the secessionist guerrillas supported by the Somali Republic (that gained independence in 1960) and the Republic of Kenya (that gained independence on 12 December 1963). The Somali Republic, as part of its national agenda, incorporated within its constitution and national emblem (the flag with five stars) symbols of the lands occupied by Somali pastoralists in the former British Somaliland (which later joined with the Republic), the Somalis of the former Italian Somalia (part of the Republic), the Haud and Ogaden regions of Ethiopia (still experiencing conflict), French Somaliland (now the independent Djibouti), and the Northern Frontier District of Kenya (the subject of the current study). The reasons often used to agitate for secession were that during the colonial period (1900-1963) the vast arid and semi-arid region of the NFD was administratively and politically isolated

² Dahl & Hjort, 1976; Dahl & Sandford, 1978; Dahl, 1979; Hjort, 1979; Hogg, 1980.

from the rest of Kenya by the legislations of 1902 (Outlying District Ordinance), 1926 (Closed District Ordinance) and 1934 (Special District Administration Ordinance). Therefore, the inhabitants of the NFD, the majority being Somalis and Oromo,³ distributed in the six districts⁴ ‘never’ considered themselves citizens of the independent Kenya (Hogg, 1990). The closed policy of the colonial administration of Northern Kenya separated the different pastoral groups into controlled grazing zones with the Somali clans and the Borana Oromo divided by what was referred to as the ‘Somali-Oromo⁵ line’.

The Waso Borana are Oromo speakers historically made up of the lowland Borana Oromo population. As a result of colonial demarcations they were detached from their kith in the Moyale and Marsabit districts and across the border in Ethiopia, and were isolated from ritual centres in Ethiopia. Thus the Waso Borana population was dominated numerically by people who, from the temporal point of view, were born to be marginal in relation to the *gada* system of the Oromo (Dahl, 1979). The period of isolation brought the Waso Borana closer to the Somalis who, on the one hand competed with them over grazing lands, while on the other hastened the process of ‘Islamisation’, which Baxter described as ‘Somalization’ (Baxter, 1966). Islam as a common religion, and pastoralism as a common economic strategy, therefore provided the two cultural groups with similar political slogans in support of secessionism, as opposed to remaining in independent Kenya.

The impetus to the conflict was Somalia’s claims to the NFD which accounted for about 50 percent of the land mass of Kenya (McEwen, 1971: 115). As early as the late 1940s, a pre-independence political organisation with roots in Somalia was actively recruiting throughout the six NFD districts before the organisation was proscribed in 1948⁶. The lifting of the proscription

³ The Oromo (referred to in the literature as ‘Galla’) is a large language-based population category which includes the Borana, represented by the Waso group which is under consideration in this study.

⁴ The six districts (comprising Isiolo, Marsabit, Moyale, Wajir, Garissa and Mandera) were administered separately from the rest of the country between 1909 and 1963. The districts were ‘closed’ from the rest of the country through district ordinances that obliged travellers to carry a ‘pass’ when travelling within and outside the region (see Mburu 2005). Internationally the NFD shared borders with Somalia and Ethiopia.

⁵ In historical sources, the Oromo in general are often referred to by the name ‘Galla’, an Ethiopian term which was officially used by the colonial administrators and which has more recently been rejected by the Oromo as being pejorative.

⁶ The pro-Somali independence movement was commonly referred to as the ‘Somali Youth League’ (SYL) or locally called ‘Somali *quulub*’, a corruption of the word ‘club’. The main slogan of the league called for unification with the future independent Somalia using the argument that the British colonial policy of ‘closed districts’ had

in 1960 led to a political revival and to the formation of new pro-secessionist parties (Turton, 1975)⁷. Other events heightened political temperatures in the NFD. Firstly, a union was formed between the former British Somaliland with Somalia that gained full independence as the Somali Republic in 1960. The political situation was such that the majority of Somalis strongly supported self-determination with options for unification with the Somali Republic. Secondly, in calls for preparation for the registration of voters for the 1961 general election in Kenya, the Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs, Mr. Reginald Maudling, announced at the Lancaster House Conference in 1960 that the views of the NFD residents would be sought on the thorny issue of secession (op.cit.). However, the strong anti-secessionist views of the Kenyan nationalist parties (such as KANU and KADU) raised the stakes in the conflict. The situation was further aggravated by pro-secession propaganda through ‘radio warfare’ between Mogadishu and Nairobi that sucked the neighbouring country of Ethiopia into the conflict, which supported the Kenyan side (Drysdale, 1964).

By October 1962, the Commission of Enquiry on the Northern Frontier District had visited all six districts in the NFD to gather the opinions of the residents⁸. The results were reported in March 1963 by Mr. Duncan Sandays (the new British Colonial Secretary), who announced that the pro-secessionist views were rejected. The decision was that the Somalis would be accommodated within the existing boundaries of Kenya. This was followed by discontent and an uprising throughout the NFD, forcing the Kenyan Government to detain all the pro-secessionist leaders (Drysdale, 1964: 149)⁹. The events which led to the heightened political volatility were

subjected the Somalis to ordinances that practically disrupted the movement of people from the NFD, which was a tangible recognition of separate identity from the rest of Kenya.

⁷ The pro-secessionist political parties registered in the NFD were dominated by the Northern Province People’s Progressive Party (NPPPP) and the Northern Province Democratic Party (NPDP). The pro-independence parties were the Northern Peoples United Association (NPUA), the Northern Province People’s National Union (NPPNU), the Galla Union (GU- based mainly in Nairobi with a pro-Oromo agenda), and the United Ogaden Somali Association (UOSA), which had the support of business communities of ethnic Ogaden Somalis living in Nairobi and Garissa. The pro-independence parties were associated with the nationalist Kenyan parties – the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU).

⁸ The commission found divided opinions between those who wished to secede and those who opted to remain in the independent Kenya. Overwhelmingly, the Somali opinion was for secession and union with Somalia. The Islamised Waso Borana to a large extent supported the Somali views. The rest of the population, mostly those inhabiting the Marsabit and Moyale districts, remained in favour of pro-Kenyan views.

⁹ The often quoted claims made were that the *shifita* were provided with food and other supplies and intelligence by the pastoralists of the NFD, who were sympathetic to their cause. While the state security was brutal to those suspected of supporting the bandits, the bandits in turn terrorised those whom they thought supported the state. Many

followed by the assassination of two prominent Borana personalities¹⁰. With the Kenyan leaders expecting full scale insurgency, the country's security forces were put on high alert to quell the turmoil (Touval, 1972: 148).

The security forces considered the whole of the NFD as an operational area for their struggle against the guerrillas. The brunt of the operations was however suffered by the pastoralists, particularly after the guerrillas increased the use of road mines (Mburu, 2005). With considerable supplies of military hardware and training provided by Somalia, the *shifita* created widespread terror. They operated in military units identified with different Somali clans, and targeted the non-Somali pastoral groups (Touval, 1972: 101-103). By 1967, the Borana pastoralists were forcefully removed from their grazing lands and confined in security settlements established at Merti, Garbatulla and Madogashe (Figure 1). This is the period which the Waso community refers to as *gaafa dhaabaa* (the period of 'stop'). They applied the phrase *dhaabaa* to describe the 'end' of pastoral production and human survival. The use of the word 'end' implies a break from a past that had been characterised by plentiful pastoral production (*gaafa quufa*) and the continuous multiplication of livestock (*gaafa hoormaata*). An estimated 20,000 people and thousands of livestock were forced into the three settlements (Dahl & Sandford 1978). Forcing the pastoralists into security camps was a collective punishment as a reaction to the casualties suffered by the Kenyan army. Within a short period of time, the economy of the formerly wealthy pastoral population had been shattered (Dahl & Sandford, 1978; Hjort, 1979; Hogg, 1980).

The political and economic imprint of the 1960s period of collapse can be compared only to the great rinderpest epizootic of the 1890s when the same society, as with other pastoralists in East Africa, had been struck by a disaster beyond human perseverance (Hogg, 1980). That period of the rinderpest epizootic, followed by large-scale human starvation and epidemics, caused demographic shocks and a fundamental transformation of pastoral survival conditions (Waller, 1988). More than a century later, it remains a benchmark of pastoral economic collapse for the

types of atrocities were committed by both sides. Extensive descriptions of those atrocities are given by Nene Mburu (2005).

¹⁰ There was tension throughout the region after the assassination by the Somalis of Mr. Daudi Dabasso Wabera, the first African District Commissioner and the senior chief, Haji Galma Dido. "The two assassins, who were residents of Kenya, escaped across the Somali border"... (Drysedale, 1964: 151).

Waso Borana. The *shifita* period had three additional consequences. Firstly, the collapse shifted the population from rural areas to local trading centres (Hogg, 1980: 48); secondly, the residual herds had substantially lowered reproductive capacity (Hjort, 1979: 38-39); and thirdly, the impoverished population had become dependent on external food aid and in need of rehabilitation (Hogg, 1980).

Study communities

The three Borana communities in which the study was conducted are Merti, Kinna and Kulamawe (Figure 1), which represent traditionally different production systems. Merti represents the *chaffaa* – the floodplain production system of the Ewaso Nyiro River. Before the *shifita* war, this community was widely distributed in different parts of the grazing lands east of the river and comprised many of the wealthiest among the Waso Borana. They used the pastures of the floodplain as their dry season reserve. During the wet season they took livestock into the open rangelands where they relied on surface rainfall pools. The community of Kinna has grazing areas that border the highlands of the Meru district and are endowed with natural springs. Due to the presence of tsetse flies during the wet season, the area is suitable for livestock grazing only during the dry season. The Kinna area therefore serves as a drought reserve for all the Waso pastoral production. After the *shifita* war, the area attracted greater populations of destitute people from the security settlements, who had lost all their livestock due to the establishment of irrigation schemes by government and donor agencies. Some of the destitute from Kinna also became internal refugees and settled on the farms of the Meru highlands (*badda*) and towns where they engaged in wage labour. The town of Kinna is linked by roads to the towns in Meru, from where food and the stimulant *khat* are imported. Kinna had once served as a regional livestock market centre.

The third community is that of Kulamawe. The town of Kulamawe is a transit point on the Isiolo-Wajir highway and the area was historically part of the *chari* system¹¹, the rangelands which are renowned for the breeding of small stock and camels. Here the pastoral economy is

¹¹ Waso Borana use the name *chari* to refer to rocky areas characterised by scattered thorny bushes and shrubs. During the rainy season *chari* has plenty of grass that grows between the stones. This grass is highly useful for livestock during the dry season.

vibrant because of good ecological conditions and access to the markets in Isiolo and Meru. Recently, many households in Kulamawe have commercialised their pastoral economy and become the main suppliers of milk to towns like Isiolo and Nairobi.

Methods

The study methods included both structured and unstructured interviews. To understand the impact of the *shifita* war on household livestock holdings, a total of 60 households from Merti, 120 from Kulamawe, and 120 from Kinna were interviewed. For the purpose of data analysis, a further selection was done based on the age of the household head. The assumption was that collapse and recovery can be explained best by the people who experienced them. Thus, 32 households from Merti, 58 from Kulamawe and 40 from Kinna, with household heads aged over 59 years, were used for analysis. To gain insights into the pre-and post-*shifita* pastoral dynamics, key informants were selected, who were mainly elders over 60 years old. In-depth interviews were carried out with 12 key informants from Merti, 15 from Kinna, and 10 from Kulamawe. The key informants (both men and women) were knowledgeable about the history of the Waso pastoral production system and had personal experiences of the *shifita* war. Their experiences varied which is important in order to provide a broader understanding of the communities. Among the elders selected were those who had participated in the guerrilla units, and delegates who had represented the Waso Borana in the peace conference held in Arusha/Kinshasa that ended the *shifita* war in 1968. Others included local administrators in the 1960s, as well as government security agents, pastoralists who fled to Somalia, and those who had remained in the security camps.

The key informants provided detailed descriptions of Waso pre-*shifita* pastoral production in terms of the main livelihood strategies of the people, livestock production issues such as estimates of the livestock population in Waso, the main livestock species reared, rainfall and grazing patterns. They provided information on the impact of the *shifita* war at the community level and on pastoral production, by answering questions such as: What was the impact of the *shifita* war on the people? How was livestock production affected by the war? Which livestock species were most affected? Household interviews were conducted on the same issues, focusing on information specific to their own households. They were asked to report on the estimated

numbers of livestock and the species owned by the family just before the start of the *shifita* war and at the end of the *dhaabaa* period in 1968 (the time in the security camps). With the help of the selected family members, the households' livestock holdings from 1984 to 2007 were reconstructed based on recall data. The selected years were 1984, 1990, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2006 and 2007. The main aim of collecting livestock holding estimates for recent years was to assess the increase in animal numbers, which might indicate the possibility of pastoral recovery since the collapse (1968). It should be noted that recall data are subject to error due to memory loss. To minimise this error, we interviewed the household heads in the company of their family members so that they could assist each other. Furthermore, the key informants and the households were asked to report on what they considered to be the major factors that impeded herd growth and the possible recovery after the *shifita* period. Another data collection method was a one-day focus group discussion which was conducted in each study site. The focus groups provided a forum for further discussion on Waso pastoral production during different periods (pre-*shifita*, at the collapse, and currently) in order to enrich the data collected through the interviews with key informants and individual households.

Official data were obtained through documentary research at the Kenya National Archives. The archival materials, including colonial District Annual Reports for the Northern Frontier District of Kenya (NFD), police reports, and newspaper articles were consulted and photocopies made with the permission of the Kenya National Archive librarians.

Data Analysis

The following methods were used to analyse the processes of economic collapse and recovery. First, we utilised the Kenyan archives to find information on the *shifita* activities related to the impact of the insurgency on the pastoral economy. To understand the direct and indirect impact of the *shifita* and army actions on the pastoral economy, we focused on letters written by individuals to the government (through the district commissioner) regarding claims for compensation. From this data, we obtained official records on livestock lost due to army actions (destruction and looting), the *shifita* activities, or through tribal raids. Secondly, using this background information, we analysed the narratives of individual key informants and households about their experiences related to the pastoral collapse and recovery.

In the analysis of the collapse of the pastoral economy, we calculated the mean estimated livestock holdings for the selected households just before the *shifita* war, and again in 1968 (at the end of the war), and then calculated the percentage change. Regarding the analysis of livestock recovery after the end of the *shifita* war (1968), the following assumptions were made: (a) we made no distinctions about the sources of the livestock – we accepted that the total livestock population comprising different species per household during the selected periods (1984-2007), irrespective of the sources, represented ‘herd recovery’¹²; (b) the extent of recovery was site specific.

We made some additional assumptions. Firstly, the term ‘recovery’ implies that the livestock economy had regenerated to the pre-*shifita* levels, or, given the magnitude of loss, that the livestock economy had stabilised at some acceptable level of animal population below that of the pre-*shifita* period. Secondly, recovery might imply herd sizes greater than the residual herds at the end of the conflict in 1968. All the statistical analyses were done using descriptive statistics by means of the statistical programme SAS (2009).

THE SHIFITA WAR

By 1964 the intensity of the conflict was heightened by the guerrillas’ improved access to ammunition. The *shifita* not only attacked government stations and towns but also preyed on the local communities. The government could not contain the insecurity and as a result the residents were terrorised by the *shifita*. The national newspapers reported a series of violent incidents in the former NFD. For example, the Daily Nation, Wednesday 18 November 1964, carried the following report:

Thirty-two *shifita* are known to be dead and about 40 wounded following a five hour battle with Kenya security forces at the weekend. The battle took place in Merti...the army and police intercepted a *shifita* gang of 250 deep in the gully...

There were also reports on the intensified offensive by the *shifita* against the local residents at Waso e.g. in the Daily Nation, Monday 24 December 1964:

¹² It was clearly not practical to try and find the exact source of livestock acquisition over such a long period. It was possible that some of the stock reported could have been raided from other communities and therefore the new owners were unlikely to reveal their sources. Because of the uncertainty, our data is not ideal for modelling herd growth with assumed rates of births, deaths and offtake (see Dahl & Hjort, 1978; Oba, 2001 for the assumptions made in such models).

A gang of 12 to 20 *shifita* is believed to have attacked a shop owned by Mr. Guyo Shano and stole goods valued at £52-105.

The newspapers also communicated government propaganda against the *shifita*. In some cases the so-called *shifita* reported as killed were in fact members of the local communities, alleged to have supported the *shifita*. The Daily Nation of Thursday of 20th April 1965 observes:

Kenya's security forces in the north-eastern region have been given orders to shoot anyone in the area suspected to be a *shifita*.

A telegram sent by the administration from Garba Tula states:

It has been found out that some disloyal citizens still communicate with *shifita* and they have been buying food stuff and take to *shifita* in the bush (*sic*). In view of this the sub-district security committee is of the opinion that an order from Province be sought so as to give power to security forces to convict anybody found with the food stuff...outside trading centres.¹³

Under the circumstances, the distinction between *shifita* combatants and the local citizens was blurred. Local people were targeted by the army on any flimsy grounds. It was common for the government security forces to demand more powers, including arbitrary arrests and the confiscation of property, all under the guise of security. In one such incident, the sub-district security staff of Garba Tula requested permission to seize some livestock of the pastoralists which was granted through a legal notice. The notice, communicated telegraphically to the Regional Government Agent in Isiolo, states "The sub-district Security Committee is of the opinion that the District Officer Garba Tula be empowered to subordinate Course [a code for extra-judicial action] to enable the government to recover time and money already wasted"¹⁴. Indeed, what the order was calling for was for the government agents to use the excuse of anti-*shifita* activities in order to loot stock from the people. The normal movement of livestock and people was restricted by the government imposing the Public Order Act. The Order includes details of the curfew imposed:

In exercise of the powers conferred by section 8(1) of the Public Order Act, the Provincial Police Officer for the Eastern Province by this order directs that within the areas described by the schedule to this order and during the hours between 6.30 p.m. and in the afternoon and 6.30 a.m. of the

¹³ Telegram, G/Tula EN 24/13 of 1966.

¹⁴ Telegram EN 24/12 S. 225/66, Ref. Legal Notice No. 263 (Para 13 2 B) on stock seizer.

following morning, every person shall except under and in accordance with the terms and conditions of a written permit granted by a police officer...remain indoors.¹⁵

There were three main objectives of this draconian order by the police. The first was to reduce any potential contact between the civilians and the *shifta*. The second was perhaps to break the morale of the hard-core *shifta* members so that they surrendered to the security forces. The third was to completely transform the lifestyle of the nomads from one of mobility to complete sedentarisation. The government was aware that the changes would have an adverse impact on the pastoral economy. In one of the government reports on the *shifta* activities, the following observations were made in relation to these aims:

The year has seen an intensive effort by the Provincial Administration to complete the *manyatazation* [villagisation] plans throughout the Province, and by October 1966, the majority of the people were accommodated in villages. This concentration of the people and consequential tighter control of grazing areas no doubt had its effect on the morale of the *shifta*, as they were further removed from contact with their friends and relatives in the villages.¹⁶

By 1966 three major concentration camps namely Garbatulla, Merti and Madogashe had been established¹⁷. The pastoralists were forcefully moved to the camps closer to their grazing areas. Livestock grazing was allowed only within a 5 kilometre radius of the respective camps. Any livestock or people found beyond the allowable areas were targeted by the police and the military. The District Annual Report of 1967 added that “many animals died as a result of concentration in and around the [concentration villages], and as was expected, famine came through the backdoor”¹⁸. It is clear that the famine was not the result of natural causes, but was induced by the deliberate policy of exclusion and stoppage of food reaching the region. As for the pastoralists, the death of their livestock implied lack of access to food. The report further added: “[a]s a result of the intensified anti-*shifta* campaign, many Somalis, Borana and others in Isiolo District...ran away from the area...The population of the district dropped considerably and trade was very much affected”¹⁹.

¹⁵ Public Order Act Cap. 56 Laws of Kenya 1962 (Revised). Curfew orders signed by H.M. Ochieng, Provincial Police Officer, Eastern Province.

¹⁶ Operations against *shifta*: An appreciation of statistics the fourth year, BB/12/26, Vol. 1 1.11.66 to 31.10.67.

¹⁷ The details are carried in the report entitled: An appreciation of statistics the fourth year, BB/12/26: Operations against *shifta* general, Vol. 1 1/11/67 to 31/10.

¹⁸ Isiolo District Annual Report 1967, RU P/P/1.

¹⁹ Ibid.

In response to the *shifita* activities, the government established a Special Operations Committee stationed in Isiolo to coordinate all operations in *shifita* areas²⁰. Unofficial sources we interviewed confirmed that the operation provided the army with a free hand to deal with not only the *shifita*, but also the civilians.²¹ The impact of these actions on the livestock economy was dire. According to the Annual Report of the Garrissa District of 1968:

During the *shifita* activities a considerable number of livestock were smuggled into Somalia where most them died [due to the bites of tsetse flies]. A good many of those that remained behind also died because of *shifita* warfare...People who were known to have involved themselves in *shifita* activities had their property including cattle and all seized...and was confiscated and sold by public action...So, in 1968 the cattle population, and particularly shoats [sheep and goats] had decreased considerably.²²

The government statistics minimised the number of civilian casualties caused by the army and were completely silent on the number of livestock destroyed by the military. Instead, the government statistics of 1963/1965 to 1967 reported that a total of 28,500 head of livestock had been stolen by the *shifita*, with less than 12% recovered. A report in the daily newspaper, The Standard, on the main impact of the *shifita* and the army during the 1960s and 1970s summarises the situation at the time: "...survivors of the drought and the war were left very poor. Many women widowed, children orphaned and whole families separated"²³. The overall picture is that the livestock economy was severely affected by the war.

THE COMMUNITIES' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF THE *SHIFITA* WAR ON THE PASTORAL ECONOMY

The *shifita* war had wide ramifications for lives and livelihoods. In the pre-*shifita* period, the Waso Borana were among the most wealthy pastoral groups in Northern Kenya (Baxter, 1954). The Waso ecosystem and its pastoral economy were described as follows by a local elder:

Before *shifita* came to our land, Waso was a land of plenty (*lafa quufa*)...we had lots of cattle and goats... we were wealthy (*nuu dureyii*). We also had plenty of meat and milk and people loved

²⁰ Annual confidential Report 1967: Isiolo district.

²¹ Interview with an ex-army official who participated in the operations against the *shifita*

²² Garrissa District Annual Report 1968, RE/8/22.

²³ The Standard, Wednesday 27th July 1977.

each other [too]²⁴.

The term '*quufa*' describes the state of pastoral wealth and the sense of pride. This evaluation was supported by another elder:

In the pre-*shifta* period... a person with 200 goats or 100 cattle was considered poor and we had no problems. We were self-sufficient like the colonialists (the British).and we used our land freely...²⁵

The two observations above depict the pre-*shifta* Waso Borana as an ideal pastoral society in various ways. Firstly, the community kept a large collection of livestock and had plenty of livestock products, demonstrating the productivity of the pastoral economy. Secondly, the Waso Borana could migrate with their herds freely within a large expanse of the productive rangeland. The vast grazing areas that were available to them were characterised by important ecological variations, making some grazing areas more suitable for particular types of livestock. This provided the opportunity for the community to manage diverse types of livestock species (sheep, goats, camels and cattle).

An analysis of the selected households confirms this image, namely that in the pre-*shifta* period the Waso Borana were wealthy pastoralists. The estimates of the pre-*shifta* livestock population indicate that households from all three sites had sufficient livestock holdings (see Table 1). Comparing the livestock species, it is notable that the flocks of small stock were the largest in terms of numbers, with a mean population of 301 animals per household in Merti, 239 in Kulamawe, and 198 per household in Kinna. The cattle holdings were also substantial, with Merti leading with a mean of 174 per household, and the smallest herds being found in Kinna with 126 head per household. In the pre-*shifta* period it seems that the camel population was relatively low, even though it should be recognised that each individual camel is more productive than a cow. The households with the largest camel herds were from Kulamawe, with a mean of 40 animals, and the poorest were from Kinna with a mean of 11.4 animals per household. We can thus deduce from the livestock holdings in the pre-*shifta* period, that all three sites enjoyed a strong pastoral economy.

Baxter (1954) reports that the Waso pastoralists recall moments of prosperity when a few

²⁴ Interview with Huqa Wario in Kulamawe, 30th September 2007.

²⁵ Interview with Mohamed Koricha, in Merti, 2nd November 2007.

individuals “even became too foolish” to remember that living in a risky environment requires personal moderation²⁶. Similar to other pastoralists in the NFD, the Waso Borana experienced a highly variable environment, characterised by a ‘boom’ of production during wet years with surpluses of pastoral products, and ‘bursts’ during the drought years when production declined. The pastoral economy and human values were hugely influenced by the risky environment. The society’s knowledge of past environmental stress and periodic outbreaks of disease helped them to develop appropriate coping strategies. A common view among the herd owners we interviewed was that in the pre-*shifita* period, the gap between the rich and the poor was minimal due to the stronger indigenous institutions of resource sharing. The traditional systems of resource redistribution (*buusaa-gonofaa*) enabled poor individuals to access resources from their kin and other clan members. According to Borana traditions, individuals have the right to request help from their lineage and any person who refuses to assist them risks being excluded from the social networks (Tache, 2008).

However, the general image of pastoral welfare changed during and after the *shifita* war. Indeed, the support of the Waso Borana for the *shifita* war caused them a lot of suffering. The result was pauperisation of a formerly prosperous pastoral group (Hogg, 1985). During the war it was the Waso Borana, rather than the Somalis, who suffered the brunt of the Kenyan army and police reprisals against the *shifita* insurgents (Hogg, 1980). As soon as the war intensified, the Somali

²⁶ Paul Baxter (1954: 136) cites such an illuminating moment, which has remained a popular story, about one foolish pastoralist. A wealthy young Moslem Borana named Hapi Bonaya made unacceptable “jibes against nature”. In 1949 during a brief dry season, he and others experienced milk shortages from the herds. This was followed by another period of deluge; hence his curious ‘jibes’ to the surplus milk for which they had no immediate use. Hapi, who fancied himself as a comic as Baxter explains, took a full container of milk and staged the following scene, with Hapi playing both parts of the drama:

Hapi: “Where have you been to all this long time? Hunger has been killing us”

Milk: “In the stomach of God”

Hapi: “Return to God then”, with which remark Hapi kicked over [the milk container] and beat the milk with a stick, “as if it had been a man”, while it drained into the sand.

Baxter reports that during the next dry season, Hapi Bonaya lost all his stock to disease and became destitute, wandering from one settlement to another, a dejected poor person. There are two lessons to learn from this story. Firstly, to the Borana, the risks to the pastoral economy and the livelihoods of the herders are an ever-present phenomenon. Periods of ‘boom’ should serve as a lesson during times of scarcity. Secondly, herders are very concerned about the causes of misfortune, interpreting them both in rational and moral terms, and making the turn-around of individual fortunes the topic of educational anecdotes.

clansmen were able to take their herds and flocks back to Somalia, while the majority of the Waso Borana did not have such opportunities (Dahl, 1979; Hjort, 1979). People were arrested and many died as a result of the extra-judicial killings by the Kenyan security forces under the guise of fighting the *shifita*. This is one of the narratives by a survivor who lives in Kulamawe²⁷:

The military selected around 70 men from the concentration camps in Garbatulla. We were told we were being taken to Isiolo town to be interrogated on the *shifita* activities in the area. While we were half way in our journey, in a place called Toiboto, the vehicle was stopped and the military personnel started shooting at us indiscriminately. Some of us who survived jumped out of the vehicle and ran into the nearby bush. Many were not as lucky and at least 47 men were killed that day. The following day there was broadcast on the national radio that *shifita* were killed by the military....and yet we were innocent civilians.

In Merti key informants also reported how some people lost all their family members:

Jirimo Katelo fled to Somalia during the *shifita* period. While he was away, all members of his family were killed by the military in a day. The total numbers of family members killed were 18; including his wife, children, brothers and his elderly parents. He became the only survivor...

The security forces used the excessive powers conferred on them to deal with the *shifita* combatants, against innocent civilians. The deaths of many people and the systematic arrest of others had direct implications for the pastoral labour force. A key informant from Merti summarised the community's perception of the *shifita* war: "we perished and so did our livestock"²⁸. The livestock losses were caused by a combination of factors: raids by guerrillas, confiscation by government officials, and animal deaths by starvation (Dahl, 1979). For example, the *shifita* raided and took 600 cattle and 130 camels belonging to Boru Bonsaa's family²⁹. Moreover, a large number of livestock and people were said to have died due to indiscriminate bombardment by the military, for example:

Kanchoro Kormayu's family owned 175 cattle and 75 camels when they were put in the concentration camp in Garbatulla. The military bombed the herd and killed his younger brother. They came out of *dhaaba* [concentration camp] without a single livestock head.

Further similar cases were described:

The family of Sora Galma Roba had 600 cattle and 400 goats when they were put in the concentration camp. During the *shifita* war their livestock was bombed by the military and as result his two uncles and a cousin died. By the end of *shifita* war the family remained with only 5 cattle and 30 goats.

²⁷ Interview with Godana Waqo in Kulamawe

²⁸ Interview with Jattani Duba in Merti

²⁹ Interview with Mohamed Koricha Merti

Moreover:

The family of Jillo Hassano had 60 camels and on one fateful day, the military machine gunned the herd and killed all the animals together with the two herders.

Further, the government report³⁰ indicates:

Seven armed *Shifita* with rifles have attacked Borana and stole 20 head of cattle at Siricho area and one Boran was injured.³¹

One elder said: “the numbers of livestock confiscated by government and those that died out of starvation are almost equal”. Another elder stated:

...I bear witness that for sure our livestock were taken away from the camps and taken to Isiolo and other towns in Kenya by the military and the police...I have been part of the government security committee and I have witnessed it ...our livestock were finished by the government. On one occasion 37 *karra*³² of mainly cattle and small stock were taken away by the military.

The confiscation of livestock was a deliberate move by the government to punish the community. For example, the District Commissioner (R.K. Musyoki) Isiolo, ordered as follows:

That 10% of the stock seized from the Kubi Turkana Manyatta be confiscated. All seized stock belonging to persons who assisted *shifita* personally during the period of 18th to 20th March 1965 to be confiscated. All seized stock belonging to the *shifita* leader Mohamed Awl and any other *shifita* to be confiscated. All the proceeds of the sale of such confiscated stock to be paid into the SD. (A) Act Fund.³³

The archival reports show how the government officials implemented the order:

The month saw increased *shifita* activities and introduction of landmines, which resulted in over 490 head of cattle being confiscated and more destroyed by security forces, as a punishment to the hostile tribesmen.³⁴

Apart from the official government confiscation, the security personnel were also accused of extorting livestock for personal benefit. A former member of the security committee said:

...we were expected to bribe them so that they would tell us when the military would come and do bombing...so each day we were told to provide them with one bull...we lost many livestock

³⁰Government Report reference EN 24/9 of 17/7/68

³¹ Archival report

³² A *karra* is a livestock enclosure. One *karra* can accommodate 100 livestock and therefore 37 *karra* is equivalent to 37x100=3700 animals.

³³ Extract of the order dated 24/3/65.

³⁴ Details shown in the letter from DC Isiolo, 10th March 1967 to PC Eastern referenced ADM 15/18/20.

also because of these daily bribes.³⁵

Local pastoralists, the majority of whom were Somalis, claimed compensation for the livestock destroyed or stolen by the army. The Borana herd owner Boru Soraa was one of those who presented such claims³⁶ to the District Commissioner Isiolo ‘this is to inform you that in 1965 my 110 head of cattle were taken away by government due to the problem of *shifita*, I am asking for compensation’. Mr. Halake Guyo reported that on 9/11/1966, the security forces confiscated 400 cattle at Moluti (Kulamawe). Some claims were submitted by women. For example, Asha Warsame Farah claimed that 200 sheep and goats, 1100 cattle and 30 donkeys had been taken by government security staff in 1967. Other reports further shows the magnitude of the *shifita* war on people and property. A group of 205 families sent their claims to the District Commissioner, reporting the loss of a total of 17436 cattle, while eight families reported the loss of 2474 sheep and goats, 30 camels and 197 donkeys, and 21 business premises were destroyed³⁷.

By the end of the *shifita* war, two species of livestock were almost extinct: the small stock and the camels (Dahl, 1979). Hogg (1985) estimates that between 1963 and 1970 the camel population declined by 95% and the small stock population by 90%. The camel population declined severely partly because the Sakuye camel keepers fled to Somalia with their herds. Due to the herdsmen’s lack of knowledge of the new area, their herds perished as a result of tsetse fly infestation. The small stock were decimated because they were frequently slaughtered to provide food for starving families. One elder summarised the status of the small stock and camel population by the end of the *shifita* war:

At the end of *dhaabaa* [concentration camp] the sight of small stock became some sort of amusement and attracted a lot of attention. People would shout across the villages and tell each other ‘come out and see some goats’ as if they had never seen it before or as if it were some kind of a new creature that had come into existence. For sure, these species [camels and small stock] almost disappeared.

The elders interviewed reported that the richest families after *shifita* war had 20 to 30 head of cattle, but that was a minority of the population. The vast majority of the Waso Borana families had been rendered stockless within a very short period of time. Our household data confirm the collapse of the livestock population and pastoral economy in the aftermath of the *shifita*

³⁵ Interview with Halakhe Molu in Merti.

³⁶ Compensation claims for properties lost during the *shifita* menace DC/ISO/4/7/4.

³⁷ Isiolo District Annual Report of 1967

insurgency (1968) across all three sites. The species most affected by the conflict were camels at all the sites. The mean camel holding of Kulamawe households was 7.2 animals per household, registering the highest loss of 97.5% (Table 1). The mean camel holding in Merti was 11.5 animals, showing a decline of 93%. Kinna had a mean of 25 camels per household, registering a decline of 80.2%. Cattle and small stock holdings also showed a drastic decline. The percentage decline in the small stock population across the three sites was 92.3%, while the average cattle population decline was 89.6%.

ASSESSING THE RECOVERY OF THE PASTORAL ECONOMY

According to the analysis of the household data, the livestock population during selected years since 1968 never reached the levels of the pre-*shifita* period. For this reason, the households' herd holdings during the collapse period (1968) can be used as a benchmark to assess growth in herd sizes thereafter. Comparing the recent livestock holdings to that of the collapse period (1968), it is notable that Kulamawe had a better growth in herd sizes, followed by Kinna, with Merti being the least successful (see Figure 2 a, b, c). In the years 1995 and 2004 Kulamawe registered a substantial increase in cattle herd sizes with a mean of 45.6 and 46.6 animals per household respectively, in contrast to the mean of 7.2 registered in 1968. Other relatively good years were 1990 and 2000, with mean cattle herd sizes of 42.3 and 38.5 respectively. The lowest cattle herds in Kulamawe were registered in the year 2006 with a mean holding of 24.1 animals per household.

In Kinna there was a significant growth in cattle herd size in 1990 and 2004 when the mean cattle holding per household was 46 and 44.3 respectively. Other fairly good years were 1993 and 2000 when the mean holding per household was 43. The lowest cattle herd sizes were registered in 2006 with a mean holding of 27 animals per household. Compared to other sites, the yearly growth rate of cattle was generally low in Merti. Since the collapse period when the mean animal holding per household was 11.5, the years 2000 and 2004 seem to be better than the rest with a mean holding of 27.2 and 35 animals per household respectively. Other fairly good years were 1995 and 1998 with a mean holding of 21 and 20.3 cattle per household respectively. There

was no growth in the year 1984 and a decline of 0.5 below the benchmark was registered in 1993.

In terms of small stock, the analysis shows that the numbers of small stock have grown remarkably in Kulamawe in contrast to Merti, which remained at below the collapse period in most of the selected years (Figure 2b). In Kulamawe significant growth in small stock herd sizes was registered in 1990 and 1995 when the mean holding of small stock per household was 114 and 116 respectively. This is a major increase compared to the mean of 8.3 small stock per household registered in 1968. Other relatively good years include 1993 and 2004 with herd sizes of 87.2 and 90.4 animals per household respectively. In 1998 there was a major decline in the small stock population in Kulamawe. On the other hand, in Kinna the years 1984 and 1990 seem better than others as the sizes of small stock herds grew to 55 and 53.6 per household respectively, reflecting a better herd size compared to the mean holding of 20.2 in 1968. Other better years include 1993 and 2000 with mean holdings of 47.3 and 40.6 per household respectively. In Merti, the households registered an improvement in small stock holdings in 2004 with a mean of 46.6 animals per household, followed by 1990 with a mean holding of 41.3, in contrast to the mean of 28.2 in 1968. With the exception of the years 1995 and 2000, the remaining years registered a decline to below the benchmark (1968).

With regard to the camel herds, the Kulamawe households registered higher herd growth above the benchmark in all the selected periods (Figure 2c). The best years were 2000 and 2004 when the average holdings grew from a mean of 1 in 1968 to a mean of 4.2 and 5 camels per household respectively. Kinna households registered mean holdings per household ranging from 1.3 to 3.7 in all the selected years, except in 1995 when the mean holding declined to 0.5 below the 0.75 registered in the collapse period (1968). On the other hand, Merti's camel population remained below the benchmark in all the selected years (i.e. less than 1.3 animals per household).

The household heads and key informants were unanimous about why the community had failed to achieve any recovery of their livestock holdings to the levels of the pre-*shifita* period. The failure was attributed to the persistent insecurity that continued to affect indigenous coping strategies.

Transformation of conflict: from regional to local

The end of the *shifita* war and the proliferation of small arms transformed the conflict from the regional to the local arena. This change confirms Mwanasali's (2001) argument that civil wars tend to generate multiple agendas as well as a continuous shift in the identity of the key actors. Similarly, Keen (2001) observes that a growing proportion of civil wars mutate into wars in which immediate agendas assume an important role. For the Waso Borana, the immediate outcome of the war was that the common agenda of secession that had cemented the Somali–Waso Borana relationship disappeared, and as a result the communities relapsed into historical feuds characterised by ethnic animosity and conflict over resources.

According to Homer-Dixon (1999), conflicts over resources such as grazing lands and water can be induced by scarcity. Thus, one obvious legacy of the *shifita* war was accelerated conflicts over scarce resources. The Somali pastoralists exploited the military balance of power in their favour by pursuing access to resources in the Waso region. The timing coincided with two key factors. Firstly, the Waso Borana had suffered the brunt of the army operations and *shifita* activities more than the Somali pastoralists. Secondly, the traditional grazing laws of the pastoral areas were changed by the newly independent Kenya government. The laws had been formulated in order to control cattle rustling and inter-ethnic conflicts between the pastoralists, but were relaxed after the end of the *shifita* conflict (Hogg, 1985). Determined to build the nation through the integration of all ethnic groups, the government of Kenya removed such restrictions in the pastoral areas. For example, the Annual District Report of Garissa for 1977 made the following statement related to the return of conflicts over grazing borders: “Tribal boundaries have long gone since the inception of villages [security camps], and the emergency operations made it impossible for enforcement of such requirements...”³⁸. The consequence was that pastoral conflicts over grazing lands took a more serious turn after the end of the secessionist war.

The situation was further aggravated by the emergence of Somali poachers who targeted wildlife trophies, mainly elephants for ivory, which caused local insecurity in the Waso region. The poachers were of two types. Some were more closely linked to the Somali pastoral migrants into the Waso Borana rangelands, while others had direct connections with Somalia. A number

³⁸ Garissa District Annual Report 1970.

of former Somali *shifto* combatants were transformed into the latter category of poachers³⁹. According to Collier and Hoeffler (2004), economic agendas are central to the continuation of conflicts. Their model stipulates that the presence of primary commodities, geographical terrain, a dispersed population, and high proportions of young men with low education provide important ingredients for continued conflicts. Control over the lucrative trade in ivory, rhino horns, and leopard and cheetah skins became the target of the armed groups in the Waso Borana rangelands.

The hunt for wildlife trophies was brought to a halt by the government's ban on poaching in 1977 followed by stern actions against the poachers. The ivory trade also had other impacts – it increased migration of the Somalis into the Waso Borana area to engage in other economic activities including trade and livestock herding. The trophy hunting had also increased the availability of firearms in the region. The increase in ammunition is reported as being the main contributor to the protracted banditry in the former NFD region (Pettersson, 1993). Banditry included ambushes on the highway, night attacks on households or their businesses, attacks on ordinary travellers and above all, attacks on businessmen. One resident of Kulamawe reported the following event that happened after the end of *shifto* war:

...If they spot businessmen they kill them and loot the goods they are transporting. This is how the Waso Borana lost all their prominent businessmen. I can count up to 20 businessmen killed by bandits.

The bandits not only stole goods but were also brutal to the community. A man narrated some incidents⁴⁰:

... *shifto* tied together 15-20 men and beat them to death. Some of my friends were tied together and burnt to death.

A resident of Rapsu village in Kinna narrated a similar experience⁴¹:

One day we were walking from Rapsu irrigation scheme to Kinna. Half way through the journey some armed Somali men stopped us. We were five men, two women and a girl of 12 years. They pointed guns at our heads and tied all the men together. They told us to watch as they raped the women and the little girl. We felt very helpless, we wanted to die...

³⁹ Interview with Hassan Duba Galma in Kinna on 3rd September 2007.

⁴⁰ Interview with Sama Halakhe in Kinna on 1st August 2007.

⁴¹ Interview with Abduba Dabasso in Rapsu

The insecurity resulting from banditry activities posed significant challenges for transport and communication in that the movement of goods and services was hindered. The situation was exacerbated by corruption and lack of impartiality of the government administrators, who were accused of favouring some Somali clans who had paid them large amounts of money⁴². Buchanan-Smith and Lind (2005) argue that the weakness of government security institutions in pastoral areas meant that criminal activities such as commercial livestock raiding flourished. The failure of state security resulted in intensified violence which affected people and the pastoral economy. An elder from Kinna reported:

Our problem is rooted in insecurity. I can confidently say that our current poverty is caused by insecurity. If you ask all the households in Kinna today, you will not get a single family that has not lost their livestock or a member of their family to cattle raiders and highway bandits.

The war continued into the early 1990s as narrated by an elder from Kulamawe:

On 19th May 1992 the Somali bandits attacked our village in Kulamawe and made away with a total of 400 cattle. My family lost 80 cattle and my brother's leg was amputated due to the bullet wounds received during the attack.

An elder from Merti said:

Since the end of *shifita* war it is over 40 years and the killings continue. Recently, they raided our family's herd and injured my brother. Even this elder sitting next to you lost all his livestock to Somali. The few animals he owns now were given to him through clan redistribution (*buusa-gonofaa*).

Another elder also said:

Three things have refused to leave us: hunger, poverty and war. It is impossible for us to recover from poverty because for example, a person who was rich yesterday becomes stockless overnight due to the cattle raid. Before such a person donated livestock to the poor to help them grow their herd, but today he is in need of help... If this is our everyday life, how do you expect us to come out of poverty?

The above narrative reflects the desperation and vulnerability of the community. Continued cattle raids have affected the regeneration of herds for many Waso Borana. The livestock losses have exacerbated poverty in many ways and made it difficult to rebuild herds. Conflicts are known to generate vulnerability by eroding human and social capital (Barnett, 2006). For example, the indigenous institution of resource sharing (*buusa-gonofaa*), which depends on livestock, was severely constrained. While the community's livestock holdings continue to shrink, the numbers

⁴² Interview with Jillo Tacho in Kulamwe on 18th September 2007.

of destitute people are increasing. In a situation of resource scarcity, it is almost impossible for *buusa-gonofaa* to function (Tache, 2008). Eriksen and Lind (2009) similarly report how the entire social network of Turkana failed to provide a safety-net for its members because of impoverishment. The perception of the Waso Borana is that restocking programs by government and development agencies have failed to reinvigorate pastoral production, mainly because most of the livestock was stolen by raiders. An elder said: “had it not been for persistent insecurity, the Waso Borana pastoral production would have been able to recover”⁴³.

Impacts of sustained insecurity and droughts on the cattle economy

In addition to the losses of human lives and livestock, the Waso Borana pastoral production system was undermined because the lack of security caused a constriction of available grazing areas and curtailed the seasonal movement of livestock in search of better pasture and water. In the past, the Waso Borana had traditional ways of utilising the grazing areas. Some areas were reserved for dry season grazing and others for wet season grazing. The vital grazing areas became inaccessible to the Waso Borana, forcing them to graze their animals within a more limited zone (Dahl, 1979; Hogg, 1990; Baxter, 2001). The few safe areas were prone to overstocking, increasing the vulnerability of the livestock in the face of drought. According to one informant:

The Somalis have made 100 km stretch of land that borders their territories unsafe for us and our livestock. Our livestock cannot graze more than 5 kilometres from the town. If we attempt to graze further than this our livestock will not return and that is also the end of the herder’s life... So, all our livestock are now around towns. This is the reason why the droughts are becoming more severe.

The major concern mentioned by Borana pastoralists was that their dry season pastures were utilised by Somali camels during the wet seasons. Having exhausted the remote pastures, the camels would be taken to the interior, encroaching on the grazing areas near the towns. Previously, when it was Oromo-speaking Sakuye who had camels in the area, they did not violate the grazing patterns of the Borana. One Borana elder described the situation thus:

In the past it was Sakuye people that had camels in Waso. They utilized the grazing areas in Yamicha and travelled for several days to drink at the galana [Ewaso Nyiro River]. The rest of the

⁴³ Interview with Alkano Fugicha in Kulamawe.

grazing areas were utilized by cattle and small stock. The camels of the Sakuye were few but the Somali herds are in thousands. But Sakuye never violated the grazing rules. Their camels grazed in the *bulee* [arid parts] and came for watering once in 15 days, trekking a long distance. There was no direct competition between their camels and our cattle.

Two major challenges arose from unchecked pasture utilisation. Firstly, accessible pastures were exhausted because of the pressure of the increased livestock population. Secondly, the regeneration of new grass was impeded because the roots were killed. Consequently, droughts became more severe and the Borana lost the ability to withstand droughts. Drought years were 1973, 1975-76, 1980, 1984, and 1996, with the most recent being in 2005/6. During the 1984 drought, locally referred to as *olaa Katitinii* or *olaa mashiina*, there were massive losses of livestock and the few surviving animals were moved to *Katitinii* in the neighbouring Mwingi District. Other severe period was 1996, called *olaa moyale*, when the livestock were moved from Waso to the Moyale District. Some crossed the national border into southern Ethiopia.

The *el Niño* rains in 1997 also had a severe impact on all the livestock because the floods killed thousands of small stock. This loss of livestock was exacerbated by an outbreak of Rift Valley fever that killed cattle, and foot rot that killed small stock. Moreover, the residents of Waso reported that the end of the *el Niño* rains brought about changes in vegetation cover. By 1998 the grass species had been replaced by shrubs (*gurbii*), which had no nutritional value for the livestock. The most recent drought was that of late 2005 to 2006, locally referred to as *olaa hammenna* (the drought that brought diseases). The drought situation was aggravated by the spread of contagious pleuro-pneumonia, a respiratory disease that killed many livestock and left many very weak and emaciated. The key informants reported several cases where households lost all their livestock. A resident of Kulamawe, Mr. Wario Jaldessa, reported the following about the 2006 drought (*oolaa hammenna*):

At the onset of the drought period, I moved my livestock from Kulamawe to Galana (Merti). I had 500 head of cattle and most of them perished there. After the drought, I remained with 80 cattle and they were also very weak. The main cause of the death was the spread of *sombeesa* [pleuro-pneumonia]. The disease wiped my herd out as I watched helplessly. I am not the only one who suffered, many people in Waso suffered like me.

The influx of livestock from other areas is blamed for frequent disease outbreaks in the region. Livestock from Somalia are said not to have been vaccinated and therefore carry ticks and other diseases, which spread to all the livestock in the vicinity. The outbreaks of diseases, especially in

drought years, have increased livestock mortality and livestock vulnerability to drought (Oba, 2001). The disease-prone areas include swampy areas along the Ewaso River, the Bisan Adi River at Kinna, and some parts of Kulamawe that border Kinna, which are prone to tsetse fly infestation. In the past the pastoralists used to avoid grazing their livestock in these areas during the wet seasons. Kinna residents reported that they need to provide veterinary drugs at least three times in a month in order to boost livestock immunity. Homewood et al. (2006) argue that reduced government spending on veterinary services have forced pastoralists to sell some livestock to raise money to buy drugs. In most cases, this solution is not within the reach of poor households. Other disease control measures, such as the burning of grass to deter the breeding of ticks, are no longer practised by pastoralists due to the fear of drought (Homewood & Rodgers, 1991).

The problems of insecurity, coupled with droughts, have also disrupted livestock markets. This was particularly true for the Kinna market in the 1990s when highway bandits became a major obstacle to livestock trade. Bandits would station themselves by the roads leading to the market, robbing livestock buyers of their money. They also raided livestock that were trekked to the market. Due to the persistent attacks on both buyers and sellers, the Kinna market remained unoperational for many years.

LONG TERM IMPACTS OF INSECURITY ON THE PASTORAL ECONOMY

The sustained insecurity and impacts of drought have resulted in poverty for many households, forcing them to pursue sedentary lifestyles. In the past, if people lost their livestock, they benefitted from assistance by clan members in reconstituting their herds. Poor people could also herd livestock for wealthy families, receiving calves as remuneration, and through such arrangements they were able to accumulate enough stock to live a pastoral life. The contemporary dysfunctionality of the collective safety net offered by the descent groups, brought about by massive poverty, has deprived households of much needed support and caused a 'fall out' from pastoral production. Many people have had to settle around towns. Some Merti families have migrated to the Tana River District to seek support from the Orma pastoralists with

whom they have close cultural affinities. Many of these migrants have been able to return with a substantial number of livestock, providing them with a regenerative herd. A large number of men have been forced to migrate to urban centres to seek informal wage labour (Hogg, 1986). A similar trend of pastoralists turning to wage labour due to a decline in livestock holdings has been reported among the Maasai (May & Ilkayo, 2008; McCabe, 2003) and the Rendille (Fratkin and Roth, 1990; Fratkin & Smith, 2000). The majority of the people, however, remain destitute and are becoming permanently dependent on the distribution of relief food by government and development agencies.

Some key informants from Merti are of opinion that the regular supplies of relief food by missionaries and development agencies have undermined livestock production. Based on the experiences of Turkana pastoralists, McCabe (1990) deduces that, although the aim of relief food is to alleviate the suffering of pastoral groups, it has created dependency. An elder from Merti said: “relief food is becoming an important part of family budgets and many families consider it as their right”⁴⁴. Some elders complained that such relief has undermined the motivation of pastoral dropouts to garner resources in order to reconstitute a herd. Families with few animals, and some of the beneficiaries of restocking programmes, are said to avoid moving far away from town centres with their livestock in search of good pastures because of their anticipation of relief food supplies. As a result, the livestock do not access adequate pastures and remain vulnerable to diseases. Such peri-urban animals die in large numbers, especially during droughts.

Another factor that undermines herd growth is that pastoralists are increasingly ‘settling down’ as a result of the need to access social amenities such as schools. Such facilities have attracted not only the destitute, but also families wealthy in livestock, to the towns. Some of the settled groups keep livestock near their homesteads, with the livestock grazing only a few kilometres from the settlement. The withdrawal of child labour from pastoral production to formal education has resulted in a loss of labour for herding. The elders argued that hired labourers do not have the same commitment to the livestock as the owners have, and therefore do not give the animals the necessary care. The loss of committed and adequate pastoral labour is considered by the community to be one cause of the lack of recovery. Herd mobility has also

⁴⁴ Interview with Duba Wario in Merti.

been reduced by the fact that the labour is insufficient to move the herds into distant grazing lands.

CONCLUSION

In Northern Kenya pastoral conflicts have grown in scale and intensity and defy a single causal explanation. This paper presents a case study of conflicts affecting the Waso Borana of Northern Kenya, and demonstrates the complexity of pastoral conflicts in terms of issues and actors that fuel them. The contemporary conflicts in Waso are a continuation of past conflicts, albeit with new actors and issues that have changed over time. The conflicts are driven by local factors that have become interwoven with geopolitical dynamics and are part of the larger conflict phenomenon in the Horn of Africa. This situation is illustrated by two features of the conflicts. Firstly, although the *shifita* activities contained elements of local grievances, they also reflected the unsettled borders and frontiers in the Horn of Africa, which are apt to result in multiple conflicts and instability. Secondly, the ramification of the conflicts, and the collapse of governments and states in the Horn of Africa have caused a proliferation of small arms, and resulted in population displacement. The accessibility of small arms has increased the impacts and durability of pastoral conflicts, thus magnifying the casual factors.

After the *shifita* war which ended in 1968, subsequent conflicts were fuelled by problems of governance at both local and national levels. Corrupt administrative officers and politicians exacerbated the conflict. The uncontrolled infiltration of Somali pastoralists into the Waso rangelands, armed with superior weapons, increased the intensity of cattle raids and highway banditry. Many Waso Borana herders and businessmen were killed by Somali bandits and many families were impoverished by the raiders. Moreover, fear of attacks has affected the grazing patterns, since people were forced to reduce their radius of grazing. This reduced mobility has contributed to overgrazing in pockets of safer areas, which makes livestock more vulnerable to drought and diseases.

The consequence was a lack of livestock economic recovery after 43 years, leaving most families to either remain economically unviable and therefore unable to resume pastoralism, or to drop out to a life in towns based on diversified, scarce and unreliable means of survival. The *shifita* war has left a legacy of different types of local conflicts that have locked the Waso region

into a state of instability. In a land use system changed by persistent insecurity, the impacts of even a normal drought can become severe. This is the major reason why the Waso Borana pastoral economy has not recovered to the pre-*shifita* level, which has forced many pastoralists to diversify their economy by engaging in supplementary means of livelihood.

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Figure 1: Map of Isiolo District (study site)

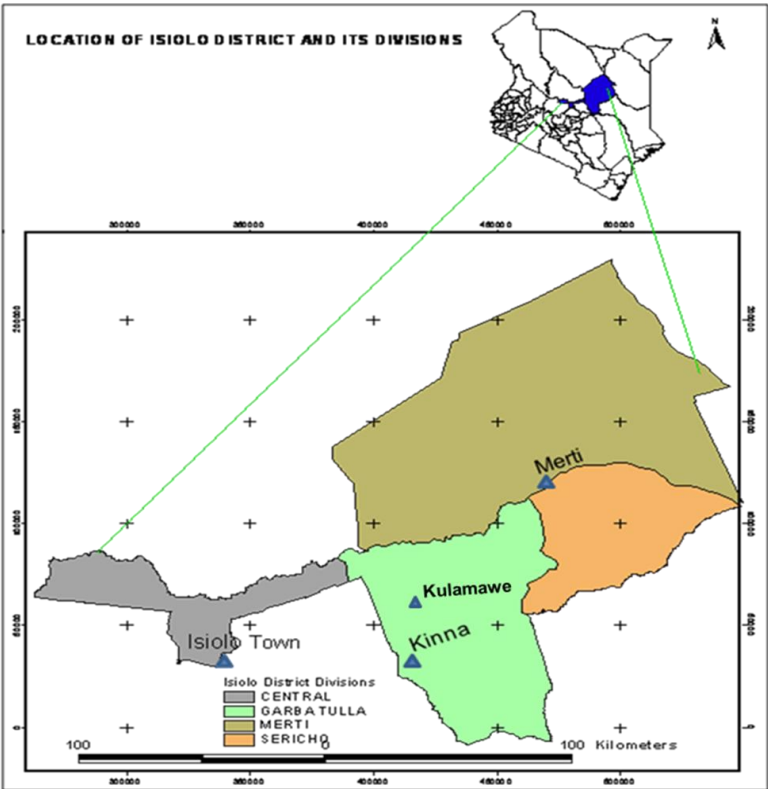


Table 1: Livestock holdings before and after the *shifita* war

Site	Cattle			Small stock			Camels		
	1966	1968	change	1966	1968	change	1966	1968	change
Merti (n=32)	174	11.5	-93%	301	28.2	-90.6%	17.6	1.3	-92.6%
Kulamawe (n=58)	164	7.2	-95.6%	239	8.3	-96.5%	40	1	-97.5%
Kinna (n=40)	126.1	25	-80.2%	198.3	20.2	-89.8%	11.4	0.75	-93.4%

Figure 2: Assessment of herds' recovery after the *shifita* war

Figure 2 a) Pre-*shifita* and post-*shifita* cattle holdings



Figure 2 (b) Pre-*shifita* and post-*shifita* small stock holdings

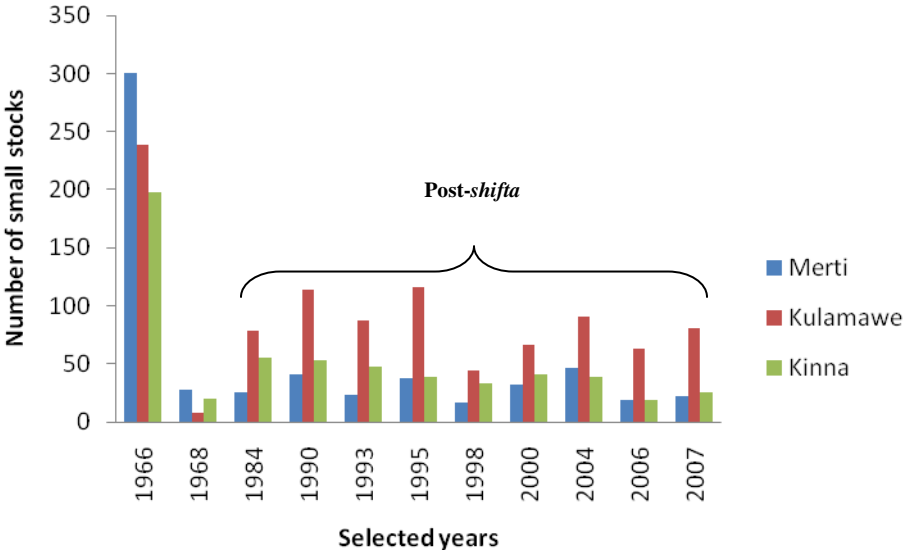


Figure 2 (c) Pre-*shifita* and post-*shifita* camel holdings



PAPER II

STRATEGIES FOR LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION BY THE WASO BORANA OF NORTHERN KENYA

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Abstract:

Most pastoral societies today have diversified their economies by involving themselves in non-pastoral livelihoods. When pastoral groups enter into new economic activities, this is often interpreted as an effort to replace the pastoral mode of production. To show that this is not necessarily the case, this paper provides comprehensive insights into the dynamics of economic diversification using the case of the Waso Borana of Northern Kenya. The study shows that the diversification of household economy varies due to site-specific conditions and economic opportunities, in addition to the characteristics of households. Further, diversification strategies vary according to the wealth status of households, as well as age and gender of household heads. The paper argues that despite economic diversification by pastoral households, pastoral production continues to be their major economic base. Hence, diversification to non-pastoral economic activities should not be considered as the end of pastoral production, but rather as an added opportunity for pastoralists to spread risks and maximise benefits.

Key words: Pastoralism, livelihoods, diversification, Northern Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Similar to other rural communities, pastoralists are driven by economic and other social factors to diversify their livelihoods. This enables them to better cope with both external and internal drivers that alter their traditional production systems. Livelihood comprises the capability, assets and activities that define the provision of a living for an individual or household (Chambers & Conway 1992; Ellis, 2000). Studies among the pastoralists in Kenya, over the last four decades, indicate that many households are engaged in diverse economic activities. These include subsistence agriculture, trading in both pastoral products (milk, ghee and livestock) and non-pastoral products (petty, retail and forest products), as well as wage labour (Hjort, 1979; Merryman, 1984; Hogg, 1986; Coppock, 1994; Smith, 1998; May & Ole Ikayo, 2007). Species diversification is an integral part of pastoralism itself, but livelihood diversification by the pastoralists is thought to be as a result of push and pull factors (Little *et al.* 2001). For most East African pastoral groups, increased diversification into non-pastoral economies is said to be as a result of declining assets (livestock) and weakened social security institutions (McCabe, 2003). It is not necessarily long-term planning that is the basis for strategies of diversification. In risky environments, responses to economic and livelihood alternatives are more often opportunistic (Berzborn, 2007). A household's short-term coping strategy to alleviate food insecurity may become a long-term livelihood strategy (Mace, 1993). In some cases, pastoral households oscillate between pastoral and non-pastoral economic production with various consequences on their food security. The question is whether engagement in non-pastoral livelihoods has weakened pastoral production, or has it in fact strengthened the pastoral economy.

The vast research studies reported in the literature often do not analyse the viability of pastoral livelihoods in the current socio-economic situation, despite calls for doing so in the 1980s. In 1980 a major conference on 'The Future of Nomadic Peoples' held in Nairobi, brought together scientists involved in pastoral studies. They discussed the future of pastoralist communities and the viability of pastoral production in the face of environmental perturbations that create a crisis in pastoral production (see Galaty, 1981). The debate has recently been raised again by one of the leading scholars among them, Stephen Sandford, who has for decades produced innovative thinking about the problems of pastoral development (see Sandford, 1983). In Sandford's (2006) thesis, 'Too many people, too few livestock', he re-opens the debate on the viability of pastoral

production. His Malthusian approach to pastoral production questions the viability of pastoral production in the current socio-economic setting. Among other things, he prescribes emigration out of pastoral production as a solution. His thesis attracted various responses, among them that by Devereux and Scoones (2006), who argue that the emigration of pastoralists is no solution for the pastoralists, because most households have diversified their economy to counter economic challenges. The debate has missed one aspect of the drivers of livelihood diversification, which is that of external shocks, such as conflicts, which hugely affect the viability of pastoral production, particularly in the Horn of Africa region. For example, the effects of insurgency wars fought against the governments of the Horn, that targeted pastoral production with such devastating impact, are excluded from this debate. In this paper, the aim is to introduce to this debate the issue of economic shocks caused by insecurity that results in mass destitution, and how such shocks have stimulated economic diversification.

The debate on Sandford's thesis offers an important platform to revisit once again the question of the viability of pastoral production in the current social economic situation of communities, whose pastoral economy has collapsed due to war and local conflicts, with or without a subsequent period of recovery. Arising from such debate, there is a need to critically analyse the types of diversification strategies employed by the pastoralists. Pastoral livelihood diversification strategies and the viability of pastoral production as a livelihood system require investigation, as well as the factors that affect such strategies. In order to locate my analysis within the current debate and the literature, I briefly discuss some of the theoretical framework that has guided me and others to analyse relevant empirical data.

PASTORAL LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION

Livelihood diversification is often linked to risk aversion and coping strategies adopted by households (Ellis, 1998). Although a coping strategy is often a short-term measure undertaken by households to meet food insecurity, it can become their main livelihood strategy as a result of other factors (Mace, 1993). Moreover, a risk aversion strategy may not always be the best alternative for pastoralists, because in some cases it leaves the household more vulnerable to poverty (Hogg, 1987). Cutting risks within a short time perspective might endanger households

in the long run. For example, migration by the poor Turkana households to towns, in search of alternative livelihoods, strains their social networks in pastoral areas and excludes them in the long run from social insurance such as stock exchange networks (McCabe, 1990). The capacity of households to diversify their livelihood may also be dependent on age factors and their place in the domestic cycle (Goody, 1994). Quinn *et al.* (2003) report that in many agricultural communities, age severely limits the ability to engage in some livelihood activities. Smith (1999) notes that among the Rendille of Songa, it is women and young men who are engaged in farming rather than elderly men. Wage labour was also considered more common among the younger men than among elderly Samburu pastoralists (Holtzman, 1997).

The diversification of pastoral livelihoods has generated diverse views among scholars. Recently, pastoral production is increasingly being perceived as a means of livelihood that is unable to survive without the support of alternative economic activities (Sandford, 2006). The survival of pastoralists is seen as being dependent on the ability to create new sustainable livelihoods that are relevant to the contemporary market economy (McCabe, 2003). Thus, the transformation of the pastoral economy from subsistence oriented to commercialisation is seen as a viable option for pastoralists to adopt (Ginat & Khazanov, 1998; Adriansen, 2006). The contrasting view is that the integration of pastoralists into the market economy has had a negative impact on the traditional social security system. The major challenge faced by pastoral groups is not only the loss of economic means, but also the concomitant social disorganisation, where traditional safety nets and mutual sharing within families disintegrate (Azarya, 1999).

Using the example of the Orma pastoralists of Kenya, Ensminger (1992) notes that the integration of Orma pastoralists into the market economy undermined their social institutions. The Orma society is said to be disintegrating in the wake of increasing market relations because common resources such as pastures are being increasingly privatised. Ensminger (1992) also notes that the sale of livestock products such as milk, which was traditionally available as loans to needy people in the society, is diminished and the social networks for resource distribution eroded. On the other hand, Lesorogol (2005) reports that privatisation of land in Siambu promoted the cultivation of crops which provided food and cash for the families and thereby preserved livestock wealth. McCabe (2003) also reports that some Maasai in the Ngorongoro

conservation area are of the opinion that adoption of agriculture has helped them to maintain their identity as pastoralists. This is because the cultivation of crops reduced the number of animals that had to be sold to buy food. These contrasting pictures on pastoral diversification make it difficult to generalise the pros and cons of pastoral diversification.

A model of pastoral livelihood diversification by Little *et al.* (2001) can be used as a tool for analysing pastoral diversification strategies. This model stipulates that the herder's decision to diversify is influenced by a) conditional variables, which include per capita livestock holding, food aid, population density and availability of rangeland; b) opportunity variables, which include climate conditions (rainfall), distance to market, proximity to towns and education; and c) local response variables, which facilitate or constrain diversification such as wealth differentiation, gender, age and other social factors. This paper applies Little's model of pastoral livelihood diversification (Little *et al.*, 2001) to understand the diversification strategies of the Waso Borana. I have chosen to use the concept 'strategy' for the actually observed economic practice, but do not consider whether this strategy implies a conscious scheming by the responsible head of household or not. The Waso Borana offer a unique example of how a pastoral group embroiled in protracted conflicts at regional level (insurgency war) and conflicts at the local level, since the 1960s, have diversified their livelihood.

The paper is divided into several parts. The first part briefly introduces the background to livelihood diversification. The historical processes leading to the pastoral economic collapse, such as the insurgency war and protracted local conflicts since the 1960s, are discussed. After the description of methods of data collection, the paper proceeds with the presentation of research findings. Before concluding, I revisit Sandford's thesis to evaluate its relevance in the context of the Waso Borana pastoralists.

BACKGROUND

Soon after Kenya's independence in 1963, the Waso Borana, as in the case of other pastoralists in the Northern Frontier District (NFD), were drawn in as victims of, and also sometimes acted as agents, in an insurgency waged by pastoral populations who wished to join Greater Somalia

rather than remaining within the independent Kenya. The pastoral economy suffered the full brunt of the activities by government security forces and the guerrillas (called *shifta*). The pastoral economy collapsed due to two main causes related to the insurgency. Firstly, the government forced the population into security villages and imposed a curfew that restricted the movement of people and the grazing migration of livestock to short distances, resulting in livestock starvation and mass mortality. Secondly, the government shot people and livestock found outside the security camps and grazing radius. The pastoralists estimate that all households lost over 90% of their livestock during the war. After the war, the impoverished population were settled in Kinna and Merti among other areas, to be rehabilitated on irrigation schemes. By the 1980s most of these irrigation schemes had failed due to withdrawal of donor support, salination of the soil, and lack of water. Kulamawe remained an important grazing area, utilised by the households that were left with few animals after the war. Due to protracted pastoral conflicts in the area, coupled with recurrent drought, the settled population continued to grow. The communities of these sites were selected for this research study.

The following are the key questions the study aimed to answer:

- 1) What were the relationships between the types of economic activities (livestock, retail trade, formal and informal labour) reported by households and a) location b) gender of household-heads c) age of the household-head and d) wealth status of the households?
- 2) What were the perceptions of the households on the viability of pastoral production in relation to livelihood diversification?
- 3) How what extent is the Sandford's thesis 'Too many people, too few livestock' relevant to livelihood diversification by the Waso Borana.

METHODS

This study was conducted from July 2007 to January 2008. The sample was a total of 300 households randomly selected across three sites: 60 households in Merti¹, 120 in Kulamawe and

¹ Merti has fewer households due to logistical challenges

120 in Kinna. The method of data collection was both structured questionnaires and unstructured interviews. The structured questionnaires were used to collect data on household composition, registering such factors as the gender and age of the household heads; the number of family members; the main economic activities; and the number and species of livestock owned by the families. The questionnaire also included whether they receive remittances from people engaged in formal and informal employment.

The households were grouped by sites in order to understand their diversification strategies and to gauge site variations. The households were further grouped into female and male headed households. The age categories grouped all the households into four sections: below 35 years², 36 to 51 years, 52 to 67 years and over 68 years. The wealth status of the sampled households was determined by converting the household's livestock holding to Tropical Livestock Unit (TLU) representing 250 kg of weight. All the livestock owned by the family (cattle, camel, goats and sheep), were converted to TLU using the standard formulae: TLU = 1 cattle, 0.7 camel and 0.1 small stock (Little *et al.* 2008). The per capita livestock holding was calculated by dividing the TLU by the number of persons per household. The per capita livestock holding was further harmonised with traditional Waso Borana concepts of wealth ranking. The Waso Borana's method of wealth ranking is close to the per capita index used to measure wealth ranks among other pastoralists (Fratkin, 1990). Using the Waso Borana method of wealth ranking, the households that own less than 2 TLU per capita were in the category very poor (*qollee*). Households with 2.1 to 4.0 TLU per capita were in the category of poor (*arka diqaa*), those with 4.1 to 9.0 TLU per capita were considered to be of medium wealth (*bultii qaba*), and those with above 9.0 TLU per capita were categorised as rich (*dureesa*). The herd-based wealth ranks were used mainly because the Waso Borana are most familiar with this visible form of property ownership.

There were various steps in the analysis. Firstly, the households were grouped into three categories based on their economic activities: a) pastoral only – which represents pure pastoral production b) non-pastoral – economic activities that have no links with pastoral production, e.g. farming c) pastoral and non-pastoral – households that are involved in both pastoral production

² The majority of Borana men and women are married before the age of 35 years.

and non-pastoral economic activities, such as farming or trade in non-pastoral products. A chi-square test was used to analyse variations in the different forms of livelihood across the selected categorical variables (site, gender, age, wealth, remittances – i.e. formal and informal employment). In the second step, the non-pastoral economic activities were tallied according to the frequency by which it was reported by the households. These analyses were done using the descriptive statistics in SPSS (2008). Finally, to understand how the community members perceived pastoral production, follow up discussions were undertaken with individuals, based on the main source of income of their households. For example, for households whose main economic activities were retail trade, the discussion included their source(s) of capital, their benefits and constraints and their perceptions about livestock production. Those engaged in farming, were asked why they were involved in farming and about their perception of pastoral production. Interviews were undertaken with those involved in other activities. The discussions were recorded on tape and later transcribed and analysed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Livelihood diversification strategies

The households in the three sites have a wide range of diversification strategies, varying from pure pastoral production to a setup of non-pastoral livelihoods including participation in livestock trade, petty trade and wage labour in other parts of Kenya (Table 1). The households from the three sites differ in their participation in pure pastoral production with the households in Merti leading (76.7% of the households), followed by Kulamawe (58.3%) and with the smallest proportion of households in Kinna (20%) (Table 1). It should be understood that the Waso Borana, until the *shifita* period had practised pure pastoralism. The community have always had opportunities of being involved in small and large stock trade but farming was rare until after the crisis. Yet, despite the economic collapse during that period of political perturbations, one can observe from the present data that the society gradually returned to pastoralism, while ‘putting their legs in other activities’ as they would refer to the diversification. There is a need to explain what is implied when households are said to engage in pure pastoralism. Pure pastoralism refers to households whose main source of livelihood is traditional livestock production, while to a

lesser extent the same households are also involved in livestock trade and trade in animal products, such as milk. This strategy is common among the community of Kulamawe which combines pastoral production with non-pastoral economic activities. On the other hand, the majority of the households in Merti are engaged in pastoralism. They have fewer opportunities for diversification to non-pastoral activities, due to poor roads and their remote location from regional markets. The two sites have among the best grazing lands suited for pastoral husbandry, while the Kinna site that is infested with tsetse flies, naturally has fewer livestock (Table 1).

Participation in farming

Crop cultivation was introduced as a consequence of the pastoral economic collapse for rehabilitating the destitute pastoralists. Greater proportions of the households in Kinna (71.3%) relative to the Kulamawe (1.8%) and Merti (7.1%) are involved in crop cultivation activities (See Table 2). The study found that the households who have crop cultivation as their main source of livelihood belong to the poor and very poor household categories, while the majority of the livestock-rich households are involved mostly in livestock production and less so in crop cultivation (Table 1). A common assumption about farming in pastoral areas is that it is popular with the poor rather than with the rich because the former, with their smaller herds and flocks, have less ability to purchase food (Hogg, 1986). In the case of the Waso Borana, the site factors are perhaps most important in influencing participation in farming. For example, in Kulamawe which is not suitable for farming, there are few cases of households that attempt crop cultivation during the rainy seasons. In Merti, cultivation of crops is only possible along the Ewaso Nyiro River, but the low volume of water and salinity affects farming. The few households involved practice market gardening to grow vegetables such as *sukuma-wiki* and tomatoes for home consumption and for the local market. However, it is evident that there is greater involvement in farming at the Kinna and the Rapsu sites, where irrigation schemes were developed earlier and water for irrigation is available. However, the Rapsu residents were destitute; as they had few or no herds, and the Kinna residents had combined farming and livestock production. From the interviews with households from Kinna it is notable that the wealth factor is important in positively influencing the household's participation in crop cultivation, particularly in terms of the land they have under crops and the practice of renting fallow land for crop cultivation.

In the Kinna site the medium-wealth and rich households on average own plots of 20 acres. Some of the rich households also hire idle farms at the Rapsu Irrigation Scheme to grow onions for commercial purposes. This group of farmers has undertaken farming to supplement other economic activities. The evidence from Kinna shows that it is not the livestock-poor households but in fact to a greater extent the richer households, who are the larger scale farmers. The deduction was that the poor farmers in Rapsu because of their limited economic means lacked the capacity to expand their farms and in some cases even hired out the plots they were not able to cultivate. Contrary to other studies, in Waso it is not only the poor households who participate in crop production. Indeed, the evidence is that the medium and the rich households, who participate in crop cultivation for commercial purposes, indicated that the pastoralists of Waso are using farming as a positive strategy of economic diversification.

These findings seem to be consistent with those from the studies conducted in the Samburu area that show greater participation in crop cultivation by the medium and wealthy households (Lesorogol, 2005). In almost all the cases, the poor households cultivate crops for home consumption, while the rich households use them both for consumption and economic diversification. Through capital accumulation, the rich households are able to use the income to buy more livestock as well as to support their non-pastoral activities, such as retail and livestock trade or use the money for school fees and to build houses.

Livestock trade

Generally, livestock trade is low for all households, but was more commonly reported by households from Kulamawe (14.5%) and not at all by the Merti households (Table 2). Across all three sites, livestock trade is practised widely by the rich (with 15.4% of the households engaged in such trade) compared to the poorest households (4.8%). The livestock trade is through chains of middle-men and local and regional markets. In most cases only well-to-do traders are able to buy sufficient volumes of stock and hire vehicles to ferry them to the regional markets such as Nairobi. Small scale traders and middle-men sell their few animals in local markets. Those who sold locally earned less in terms of price per animal unit but avoided high overheads associated with transport costs (cf. McPeak & Little 2006). Whereas the Waso region is a major transit zone for livestock to the regional markets such as at Isiolo, locally marketed stock were not on the

scale reported for other parts of Northern Kenya (Mahmoud, 2008). Nevertheless, livestock trade remains an important economic activity for the pastoralists of Waso.

A unique finding is the common participation by women in livestock trade either as groups or individuals. Although the volumes of trade involved are small scale in terms of three to five goats per market day, female participation has broken into the male dominated animal markets as was practiced in the past. The extent of participation varies according to the wealth status of individuals. More often than not, the medium wealthy traders have smaller volumes (five cattle and ten small stock) than the rich livestock traders, who had capacity for purchasing over 30 head of cattle from the local market and selling them at a higher price in urban markets. The profit margins in the local markets are approximately 200–300 Kenya shillings per small stock and 500–1000 per head for cattle. The prices, however, shift seasonally, and higher profits are achieved during the wet season compared to the dry season. Often it is the wealthy livestock traders who gain more in livestock trade. They use the profits to invest in retail trade or to acquire more assets such as commercial houses and retail trade.

Retail trade

Retail traders are individuals who purchase consumer goods, clothes and other daily requirements from wholesale shops and sell their items to consumers at retail rates. The profit margins are small but the trade serves as an important diversification of livelihood. Retail trade is practised only in peri-urban centres, while for minor items (see below) individuals hawk their produce in local markets. The study sites show varied capacities for retail trade business, which is prominent in Kinna and Kulamawe but less so at the Merti site (Table 2). I also found variations in participation in retail trade according to the wealth of individual households. Retail trade is prominent among the medium wealthy and rich households rather than among the poorer households. According to local informants, the main constraint is the access to starting capital. Often those from households of medium wealth and the rich are able to raise the capital needed for retail trade through their participation in livestock markets or by selling some of their stock. Poor households have limited means and often lack in retail trade but they dominate the petty trade.

Petty trade

Petty trade is an economic activity that is common to all the sites. Petty trade is most popular among the Kulamawe households, with 61.8% of households engaged in it (Table 2). The households in Merti (21.5%) and Kinna (12%) are relatively less involved. The poor and middle wealth households' participation in petty trade accounts for up to 40% and 41% respectively. Among the Waso Borana petty trade includes milk sales, *miraa* (khat), cigarettes, sweets, vegetables and fruits sold at the markets. The hawking of items such as clothing and perfumes takes place at people's homes premises and also in the open market places. The latter trade is most preferred by women because they are able to undertake the business together with their household chores. The pattern is similar to that reported elsewhere in east Africa where pastoral women have increased their participation in petty trade (Fratkin, 1990; Brockington, 2001; Mitchell, 1999).

The types and amount of goods sold depend on the wealth status of the households. Each site has its own unique form of successful petty trade. An example is in Kulamawe, where milk and *miraa* sales are the most prominent forms of petty trade. At the Rapsu Irrigation Scheme and in other villages far from Kinna town, which lack retail shops, people depend on petty traders for grain and other food items. The petty trade are often called 'ten-cent trade' because of the miniscule items sold which do not have any economy of scale. The petty traders purchase goods from retail shops and subdivide the items into small quantities, sufficient for one cooked meal (Hjort, 1979). The division of food items into smaller quantities, which the poorer rural households could afford, include, sugar for one meal or spoonfuls of tea leaves. Such trade seems to be a case of poverty induced economic diversification that has also been reported among other pastoral communities (Hogg, 1987; Tache, 2008). It was evident that this aspect of non-pastoral economic diversification mostly involved women. Indeed, the study supported the evidence that in household livelihood diversifications, there are clear divisions of economic activities according to gender.

The role of gender in livelihood diversification

The strategies for livelihood diversification are significantly influenced by the gender of the household heads ($\chi^2 = 29.849$, $df = 2$, $P < 0.0001$). More than half of the male-headed households

are involved in pure pastoral production compared to less than a fifth of women headed households (Table 1). Over half of the female-headed households are involved in non-pastoral livelihood activities compared to only a quarter of the male headed-households. In terms of specific economic activities, it is evident that 56.4% of female-headed households are involved in farming compared to 39.3% for the male-headed households (Table 2). The main reason why more male-headed households are engaged in a predominantly pastoral livelihood arrangement, compared to the proportion among female-headed households, could be attributed to the livestock inheritance by the sons among the pastoralists.

In this study community, women's ownership of livestock property was in some households influenced by Islamic sharia law, which stipulates that girls inherit property equivalent to half of their brothers' shares. The practice is yet to be adopted by the majority of the Waso Borana families, where transfer of property between generations is by provisional gifts and the remaining herd at the father's death, goes to the eldest son. Many female divorcees claim that their husbands have denied them their dowries (*meher*)³, which forces them from pastoral areas to migrate to the towns in search of opportunities to support their children, often in the form of petty trade (see also Merryman, 1996). There is a possibility that such divorcees, with age, become poorer, except in cases where they receive support from their children.

Retail trade which is also considered more stable than petty trade, is more common among the male-headed households (10.7%), compared to (1.8%) of the female-headed households (Table 2). However, petty trade seems more common in female-headed households (31%) compared to (27%) of the male-headed households. On the other hand, livestock trade and formal employment are reported more by the male-headed households compared to the female-headed households. None of the female headed-households have income from wage labour. It is also evident that participation varies according to age, particularly for the household-heads across the study sites.

³ According to Islamic law it is compulsory for a husband to give his wife a gift (*meher*). The gift can be in the form of cash, gold, cattle or any property agreed upon during the marriage transactions. The gift can be given upfront or can be delayed, depending on the agreement reached by the bride and groom's family.

Livelihood variations by age of household head

The trend was that pure pastoral production was more favoured by the elderly heads of households compared to the younger ones (Table 1). The analysis also shows that over 55% of the heads of households over 52 years of age, are involved in pure pastoral production, compared to 6.3% that were below 35 years of age. Also evident is that pure pastoral production is common among the elderly households compared to the younger households. This could be linked to various factors such as young household heads having access to fewer animals. Fewer livestock, results in the young men having to seek alternative economic activities, so as to support their families. For example, May and Ole-Ikayo (2007) argue that the young Maasai men engage in wage labour because of their reduced livestock holdings.

Comparing participation in non-pastoral livelihood activities, it is evident that farming is most common among those below 35 years of age, with 71.9% of households involved therein, while other age categories have less than 44% (Table 2). On the other hand, retail trade is dominated by the households with older heads, compared to those below 35 years of age. Considering that retail shops require higher capital, we can deduce that the older household heads may have accumulated wealth, which they use to start retail businesses. Some of the households reported that their businesses were funded by their working children.

Petty trade is most common among those aged 36 to 51 years, with 36.7% of household-heads involved in the business. It is also common among the household heads over 52 years old with more than a quarter of them involved in the trade. Livestock trade is generally low across all ages, but seems more common among the younger than the older age groups. This could imply that the younger household heads, being more thrifty and less conservative, are able to take greater risks than the elderly members may have done. While this analysis may imply that activities are individual and isolated, in actual pastoral economy, however, what we have is a sum total of activities where the family resources and labour are pooled. This is evident because of the fact that 26.7% of those over 68 years of age, have incomes from formal employment, compared to other household heads with less than 6.4% having no formal employment. All the household heads over 68 years of age are illiterate, and their household incomes from formal employment are remittances from their children. The older household heads from Merti are the

ones who most commonly receive income from their children, who have formal employment in urban areas or in some institution or organisation within the region.

The effects of household wealth on livelihood diversification

Wealth is an important factor that influences the diversification strategies of the households (Table 1). The study shows that the wealthier households are associated more with pastoral production systems than with other economic activities (Table 1). About 64% of the rich households are involved in pure pastoral production compared to only 35.9% of the very-poor households. The poor and medium-wealthy households combine pastoral production with non-pastoral livelihoods more so than the very-poor and rich households. The poor and very-poor households, in general, are more involved in non-pastoral activities compared to the rich and medium rich households (Table 2), although the amount of income may be minimal. A greater number of the poorest households are involved in farming (58.3%) compared to the rich (38.5%) or the medium-wealthy households (22.3%) (Table 2). These figures merely indicate where most households are involved but do not show the relative importance of the sources in terms of volume of income, absolutely or proportionally. In the majority of the cases, the livestock wealthy households have greater overall income per capita than the poor households who participated more in the non-pastoral activities.

Role of Remittances

Remittances are an important source of livelihood for the households in this study. The households in the Merti sample reported receiving regular remittances from their employed members (64.3%) compared to Kulamawe (7.3%) and Kinna (3.7%). This is partly due to the presence of many more institutions such as schools, hospitals and the local NGOs that are the sources of employment. However, the remittances received have no significant impact on the livelihood diversification strategies as reported by the households (Table 1). In most cases, it is the poor households (14.3%) that receive more remittances from formal employment compared to the rest. It might, however, suggest that the households that periodically receive remittances are better off in securing improved livelihoods than the households with none. Research among the Obbu Borana, shows that remittances are critically important in enabling households to establish credit facilities at the retail shops (Oba, unpubl.). Many Waso Borana households

consider investing in children's education as 'banking' for old-age. The introduction of free primary education by the government in 2003, as well as mobile schools that were initiated in the remote areas of Merti, will enable many pastoral children to benefit from formal education. Increasingly, education of children is seen as an important investment for the pastoralists because it contributes to the development of human capital (Homewood, 2008). Regular remittances from children in formal employment could reduce dependence on relief food and increase self-sustenance for pastoral communities.

Perceptions on livelihood transformation

In relation to the preceding analysis it may be relevant to consider how the Waso Borana households look at pastoralism and the livelihood activities alternative to pastoral production. These perceptions vary according to the livelihood in which they are engaged. Households involved in pure pastoral production offer both social and economic reasons for their involvement therein. For example, an elder described why he preferred to continue with pure pastoral production rather than diversify:

Pastoral production is our life. This is what we saw our forefathers practising. For many generations it has been our source of food. This is also where we have skills...

Many elderly people argue that pastoral production is more than a livelihood; it is something connected to the identity of the people. In pastoral communities, livestock is also a means through which people achieve their individual social identity and, in fact, social functions. This is because animals are used for rituals during birth, circumcisions, marriage and death. The elders also suggested that to become a clan leader (*jaalaba*) a man is expected to own large herds that can enable him feed guests and support the poor clan members. From an economic perspective, there is a general consensus that livestock owners are considered, 'credit worthy'. Livestock acts as collateral to borrow money from others or to get goods on credit from retail traders. Those involved in pastoral production argue that livestock trade is more lucrative than small retail business. A middle-aged man from Kinna said: "If I sold only one bull, I make more money than a person who spends one or two months selling small items in the market (petty traders)"

But there were also others who wanted to put their ‘legs in two places’. The shift in pastoralism is towards increased species diversification which is preferred rather than the traditional cattle dominated pastoral economy. According to a herder from Kulamawe:

We know that livestock keeping has its ups and downs. We have learnt to live with these challenges. Before we kept only cattle, goats and sheep, now we have added camels to our herds. This is because we have seen camels provide milk for longer periods compared to cattle. The camels can also survive the droughts better than our cattle...

In the past, a majority of the Waso Borana were cattle-keepers, it was the Sakuye section that specialised in camel herding. However, almost all their camels perished (were systematically killed) during the *shifita* war. The current camel owners are mainly the Borana who were formerly cattle-keepers. The camels owned by the Borana were either acquired through exchange for cattle or purchased from Somali pastoralists. The growth of the milk trade in Kulamawe, in particular, was reported to be the main contributing factor for the increased diversification of livestock species. It also directly contributes to investment in pastoral production. Camel herding is increasingly considered to be an important source of income, as the demand for camel milk continues to grow in the urban centres. Women are specifically positive about this trend because they are the main controllers of the milk business. The milk trade is, however, not possible in Merti because of the distance and poor roads. In Kinna, the ecological conditions are not favourable for camel herding because of the tsetse fly infestation.

The households in Kinna and Merti that are engaged in pastoral production adopt various strategies to survive both economic and ecological challenges. This is what one interviewee from Merti said:

Last month I sold my only bull and purchased 6 female goats. I did this because during non-drought years, the goats reproduce faster... soon my herd will grow. After few years, I plan to sell some of the goats and buy some cattle...

Another herder from Kinna also argued:

If you have few cows it is not advisable to sell them directly, otherwise you will soon be stockless. Instead, we prefer to sell a cow or two to purchase more small stocks. The small stock will multiply and increase wealth. If a need arises, we can sell one of the goats and still remain with some to sell in future...

Not everyone shows such great optimism with pastoral production. Some herders perceived that their aim was to increase other income generating activities. This is what a herd owner from Kinna said:

...the droughts keep coming back after a few years and wipe out our livestock. The livestock diseases are becoming increasingly more challenging than the drought. I don't see any future for myself in this...

Similarly, the livestock traders also complained of numerous challenges. One livestock trader said:

Prolonged dry seasons and droughts pose numerous risks to livestock trade. Firstly, livestock become emaciated and fetch very low price. Secondly, the animals may die before you get a chance to sell. If one is totally dependent on the livestock trade, it is easy to become poor...

Another one complained:

Our problem is that there are no people from other areas that come to purchase our livestock. There is no guarantee you can make any sale but we take risks. We need a market that can guarantee that we get buyers and a good price for our livestock

One common strategy suggested by the individuals we interviewed was for them to increasingly participate in non-pastoral livelihoods.

The role played by non-pastoral sources of income

Interviews with the households that have diversified to non-pastoral livelihoods also revealed diverse opinions. From a total of 119 households living in Rapsu Irrigation Scheme, 30 household-heads were asked whether they ever considered returning to pastoral production. The percentage of household heads that preferred to continue farming was 47.1%; those that preferred combining farming with livestock production was 36.3%, and 16.3% preferred pure pastoral production. Those who preferred farming argued that they did not have the economic capacity to purchase livestock and restart pastoral production all over again. Thus they considered farming as their only possible option. Those who wished to practise both farming and pastoral production argued that participating in both farming and livestock rearing, would provide them with better food security than if they depended on farming alone. The reasons given were that farming often failed and under such circumstances livestock would provide them with an alternative source of subsistence. However, should livestock be lost to disease or

drought, this would allow the household to fall back on farming. The perception of the households in the Rapsu Irrigation Scheme is that farming provides for 50 to 70% of household's subsistence needs. The remaining gap is filled by relief food or support from relatives and other well-wishers.

Interviews with traders showed both direct and indirect links with pastoral production. A greater majority of the petty and retail traders emphasised the important link between the retail trade and livestock trade. In nearly all the cases, the sales of livestock provided the capital for starting a business. Recently, some young men from Kinna that were involved in commercial farming of onions were able to raise enough cash to start retail trade. When the retail and petty traders were asked about their opinion on pastoral production, the majority suggested that their involvement in the other businesses supported livestock production. They argued that income from their businesses has helped them to lessen the frequency of selling livestock for purposes of the family's subsistence needs. In most cases these individuals were able to maintain both pastoral production and trade. Both sources cushion each other. The livestock provided the capital for the retail business which in turn reduced reliance on the herds and allowed them to grow in numbers. A trader from Merti had this to say: 'If you depend on livestock alone, with time all the livestock will be gone...' This is supported by what another retail trader in Kinna also said:

I invested in my retail shop because livestock can be taken away by bandits or the whole herd can perish during drought... but I find investing in retail trade safer.'

When they talk about safety, in most cases it refers to the ability to meet subsistence needs. The business owners, however, suggested that their businesses are directly affected by the conditions of the livestock during different seasons. The retail business contributed to improved livestock production by making veterinary drugs available. The traders reported that generally their businesses improved during the wet seasons when livestock production was at its peak. They lamented that pro-longed dry seasons or droughts 'kill their business'. This is because in the long-run, the purchasing power of their customers is eroded especially if many livestock die. Both retail and petty traders are vulnerable to collapses in the livestock economy, such as the ones that occur during prolonged droughts, largely because their customers would not be able to pay back credit. Since the society has no mechanisms of debt collection other than good will, the traders become losers, as most debt would have to be written off, in the end.

Interviews with those in formal employment also revealed households with more herds are able to educate their children compared to the poorer households. Apart from in Merti, where many of the households benefit from educational sponsorship by religious organisations, households reported that large numbers of their livestock are sold to pay schools fees and to purchase necessary materials such as school uniforms and stationery for their children. Several of the families invested in the education of their children, with a hope of benefitting from their children in the future, through remittances or direct re-stocking. Some individuals in formal employment that were interviewed said that they had purchased a few livestock for their parents to help their herds grow. Others said that they invested in livestock production for their own benefit. Some teachers were known to have used their loans to start commercial livestock production. The income from livestock sales is aimed at increasing their savings. For those involved in low income-generating activities, such as wage labour, investing in livestock may become an important strategy that cushions their family during hard times. This is what a former wage labourer, Mr Sama said:

...Due to poverty, I migrated from Kinna to Olpajeta farm in Laikipia District and worked as a hired labourer. Initially I moved with my family but returned to Kinna after our fourth child was born. During that period, I had managed to make some savings, which I used to purchase some livestock. Now I am retired from my work due to medical problems. We now depend on our herd to cater for all our needs.

The wage labourers working in the urban centres also prefer to invest in pastoral production because it enables their families to have alternative sources of income. Buying livestock is considered a vital investment that can enable the family to survive; and also when the household head retires. The majority of the wage labourers move back to Waso upon retirement, because the urban centres do not provide any social security net for them. Moreover, the socially acceptable living standards in the rural areas compared to urban areas, is too expensive for a retired wage labourer. Thus investing in livestock can act as old-age savings for the wage labourer. It might, therefore, be worth reflecting on Stephen Sanford's hypothesis of 'Too many people, too few livestock'. How relevant is the hypothesis to the findings of the present study?

Reflection on Sandford's thesis: 'Too many people, too few livestock'

To evaluate whether Sandford's thesis applies to the Waso Borana, diversification strategies and the perception of people regarding the viability of pastoral production, have been discussed in detail. The present study has shown that the crisis of pastoral production as postulated by Sandford, is evident among the Waso Borana. The current livestock holding among the majority of the sampled households is below the 3 TLU/capita, which is deemed as a viable minimum that can meet the household's subsistence needs. Other aspects of crisis mentioned by Sandford, such as a low price for livestock, are part of the problems reported by our informants. Although Sandford's symptoms of pastoral crisis are present among the Waso Borana, his prescriptions to remedy the pastoral crisis, however, do not seem viable. To make my point clear, I refer to the first two strategies postulated by Sandford: a) the emigration of a substantial proportion of pastoralists away from both substantial dependence on livestock and from pastoral areas; and b) the development within or near pastoral areas of more productive and more sustainable rain-fed irrigated crop-agriculture, to which previous pastoralists can switch their livelihoods.

In response to the suggestion of emigration to other livelihoods and to other areas, the Waso Borana case study shows that the majority of the households have already diversified their economy and thus reduced their dependence on pastoral production. The current study shows that households that are wealthy in livestock holdings have diversified to a more secure alternative livelihood to pastoral production. The poor on the other hand have diversified by engaging in economic activities such as wage labour and petty trade, but the income from these sources is minimal. They, therefore, continue to be vulnerable as their businesses are prone to fluctuations and collapse. Alternative livelihoods do not necessarily replace pastoral production. In most cases the two livelihoods are complementary. From this study it is notable that households with retail trade and formal employment also invest in pastoral production. The reproductive capacity of the livestock is considered essential for the creation of wealth. In most cases the return from selling one animal is higher than the profit made by petty traders.

The findings of this study do not support Sandford's argument that emigration out of pastoral areas to other areas is a solution to pastoral crisis. The experiences of the Waso Borana and other

pastoral communities show that destitute pastoralists do migrate to towns to seek alternative livelihoods. However, there are two challenges which face such groups.

Firstly, pastoralists are skilled mainly in herding with its concomitant tasks of armed guarding which limits their employment opportunities. A majority of them qualify only as security guards in the urban centres earning minimal wages. The high cost of living in the cities eats into the size of the remittances they could send their families. The poor income also forces them to live in shanties and slums with substandard living conditions. Thus, Sandford's prescription for emigration promotes overcrowding and undesirable living conditions for the migrant pastoralists. That emigration does not provide a solution, is shown by the fact that until now, the wage labourers seldom settle in the urban areas. Many of them return to the pastoral homeland after working for many years in the urban centres. This is because the urban centres do not provide social security for the migrants. Emigration also often causes family breakdown as the husbands spend many years in the urban areas, leaving women with the extra responsibilities. Sandford's prescription of emigration fails to take into consideration the social wellbeing of pastoral households.

The second prescription for pastoral crisis is the promotion of agriculture in pastoral areas. As I have shown, there are few sites with the potential for cultivation. Indeed, the post-*shifita* development programs have focused on the rehabilitation of destitute families by placing them in irrigation schemes, most of which have failed (Hogg, 1980; 1986; 1987). The evidence shows that the type of farming practised in these schemes would not support increased populations and is in most cases has been used as transit strategy for the families to return to pastoralism.

Finally, although pastoral production faces a crisis, it remains the most viable option for the majority of the pastoral households. Given that pastoral rangelands are most suitable for livestock production, livestock commercialisation could be a viable solution. This, however, requires a committed government that can invest in infrastructure and the development of better markets, as well as security of land tenure in the pastoral areas, such as those of the Waso Borana.

Is pastoral production a viable livelihood?

The results of this study so far indicate two major developments in response to livelihood diversification. Firstly, there is evidence of a preference for continued engagement in livestock production, while at the same time investing their activities in non-pastoral economic activities. Secondly, the inference can be drawn that diversification does not necessarily imply a shifting from one form of economic engagement to a wholesome participation in another. However, it is society's attempt to engage in different economic activities, which in most cases, are still buffered by the pastoral economy. Therefore, there are various reasons as to why the households continue to invest in pastoral production. Most households continue to pursue their pastoral production because livestock do not only have a commercial value but also a social value. The social value of livestock is emphasised especially by the elderly household heads. The younger pastoralists consider pastoral production mainly in terms of its economic value. This means that the future evaluation of livestock is likely to change, as the future generation will probably see pastoralism as a form of economic investment. However, because of the greater returns from such investments, the importance of livestock is not likely to diminish. Little *et al.* (2001) note that most pastoral households prefer pastoral production because the alternatives to pastoralism generate low income and increase risk during stress periods.

The preference for pastoral production is also linked to the fact that large tracts of pastoral land are suitable for pastoral production but not for cultivation of crops. Pastoral production is preferred because the community has a long history of involvement in this type of livelihood and they have accumulated cultural and practically relevant skills for it. The transformation of pastoral economy from subsistence to commercialisation is, however, an important step that makes pastoral production relevant to the market economy (Ginat & Khazanov, 1998; Adriansen, 2006). For the Waso Borana, the commercialisation of livestock production enables the households to pay for large expenses such as school fees, medical expenses, court fines, building houses and to use as capital for large businesses. Sale of small stock enables them to meet their everyday needs such as food, clothing, water fees, veterinary drugs and paying hired herders. The wealthy households among the Waso Borana, who own large herds, often sell part of their livestock. The purpose of this is to purchase plots in town and to build permanent houses and

commercial premises. These, they either rent to others or use to undertake businesses. I, therefore, argue that pastoralism offers the means of investment that can be transferred between different economic ventures. In each case it provides the necessary capital that allows the owners to engage in various forms of diversification. It is livestock wealth that enables the pastoralists to become property owners and part of local 'elites' (Salzman, 1980). For the majority of the Waso Borana, livestock is their 'bank account' from which they can withdraw resources whenever they have a need. Moreover, many people use the profits from their businesses to purchase more livestock. By converting cash from the business to livestock, a person hopes that the livestock will reproduce and increase his wealth. This is a popular trend especially for all the business owners in the study area. A petty trader with minimal profit may invest in small stock, which are not only cheaper but also reproduce faster than cattle. In the future the petty trader may also sell his small stock to expand his business. Thus, one economic activity acts as a buffer for the other (Merryman, 1984).

The continued relevance of pastoral production among Waso Borana could also be inferred from the fact that some households, who are engaged in formal employment, have also invested in livestock production. The livestock ownership for this group is for commercial purposes. The wage labourers also prefer to invest in pastoral production. As Doti (2005) reports, few of the Borana involved in wage labour in towns have settled permanently, because they regard urban areas as '*lafa nyaapha*' (land of enemies). Migrant labourers, who are in most cases heads of families, have often left their wives and children in the pastoral areas and support them by sending remittances home. Their wives may use the remittance to purchase a few goats or engage in petty trade, which provides extra sources of income for the family.

The economic viability of pastoral production is, however, affected by an unfavourable market economy (Galaty & Bonte, 1991; Little, 1992). The pastoral economy is vulnerable to insecurity and ecological challenges such as drought and disease. Yet, the marginal nature of pastoral areas and limited opportunities, make pastoral production the most viable alternatives for the majority of the Waso Borana households. Although specialisation was found essential for the Malian pastoralists (Perdesen & Benjaminsen, 2008), for the majority of the Waso Borana it is having

‘one leg’ in pastoral production and another in alternative economic activities, that makes possible the survival of the households and the continuity of pastoral livelihood.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that pure pastoral production, as it was known in past centuries, is no longer applicable to the majority of the East African pastoralists. The recent trend is that pastoralists are diversifying to other livelihoods. Pastoralists are now engaged in diverse economic activities which include commercialisation of livestock and livestock products, trade in non-pastoral products, farming and employment in both formal and informal sectors. The main reason for diversification is the looming food insecurity faced by the majority of pastoralists due to conflicts, recurrent drought and livestock diseases which undermine livestock growth. Moreover, the increasing demand created by the market economy and modern lifestyles contributes to pressure on the pastoralists to adapt their production to suit the demand.

The strategies for diversification differ from one place to another. This study has shown that livelihood diversification among the Waso Borana is linked to site conditions and opportunities, as well as to the characteristics of individual households. Ecological conditions and the proximity to other trading centres impact on the diversification strategies of households. The study has also shown that despite sharing common location, the diversification strategies are highly dependent on the characteristics of the households, in terms of the age and gender of the household heads, in addition to their wealth status. Thus, certain livelihoods are dominated by households with particular characteristics. For example, while male-headed households are engaged mainly in pastoral livelihoods, the female-headed households are mainly in non-pastoral livelihoods, such as farming. Similarly, the young household-heads are more flexible to embrace non-pastoral livelihoods than older ones.

Diversification has not replaced pastoralism but rather plays a complementary role. Pastoralism remains a viable option for many Waso Borana households. The households engage in both pastoral and non-pastoral economic activities in order to ensure that their households are food secure. While most households sell some livestock to start businesses, they also use the profits

from the business to invest in pastoral production. By diversifying into various economic activities they aim to spread the risks. Incomes from other economic activities, such as trade, are used to cater for the everyday needs such as food, while livestock are sold when large amounts of money are required. Examples of larger financial commitments are the payment of school fees, court cases and medical expenses. Pastoralists feel safer with more than one source of income because if one fails they have another on which to rely. There is strong evidence that pastoral production continues to be an important economic base for most pastoral households. This study shows that although pastoral production is a risky investment, many people continue to pursue it, while those who moved out of it or have diversified into non-pastoral livelihoods, tend to re-invest in pastoralism.

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Table 1: Proportion of households in various livelihoods

Factors	HH in economic activities (%)			Chi-square test		
	Pastoral only	Non-pastoral	Pastoral +non pastoral	(χ^2)	df	p-value
Site				134.447	3	0.0001
Kinna (n=120)	20	70.8	9.1			
Kulamawe(n=120)	58.3	3.3	38.3			
Merti (n=60)	76.7	8.3	15			
Gender				29.849	2	0.0001
Male (n=233)	54.5	24	21.4			
Female (n=67)	19.4	56.7	23.9			
Age				43.966	6	0.0001
Below 35 yrs (n=32)	6.3	78.1	15.6			
36-51 yrs (n=69)	39.1	31.9	29			
52-67 yrs (n=132)	56.1	25.8	18.2			
Above 68 (n=67)	55.2	19.4	25.4			
Wealth				35.236	6	0.0001
Very poor (n=156)	35.9	44.9	19.2			
Poor (n=52)	50	23.1	26.9			
Medium (n=56)	62.5	12.5	25			
Rich (n=36)	63.9	13.9	22.2			
Remittances: Formal				4.025	2	0.134
No Formal (n=224)	45.5	33.9	20.5			
Yes Formal (n=76)	50	23.7	26.3			
Remittances: Informal				4.188	2	0.123
No Wage (n=260)	43.7	31.9	20.8			
Yes Wage (n=40)	42.5	27.5	30			

Table 2: Percentage of households engaged in non-pastoral economic activities

Variables	HH in non-pastoral economies (%)					
	Farming	Retail shop	Petty trade	Livestock trade	Formal job	Wage labour
Site						
Merti (n=14)	7.1	0	21.5	0	64.3	7.1
Kulamawe (n=55)	1.8	9.1	61.8	14.5	7.3	5.5
Kinna (n=108)	71.3	8.3	12	4.6	3.7	0
Gender						
Male (n=122)	39.3	10.7	27	8.1	11.5	33.3
Female (n=55)	56.4	1.8	31	5.4	5.4	0
Age						
Below 35 years (n=32)	71.9	0	12.5	9.4	6.2	0
36-51 years (n=49)	36.7	8.2	36.7	8.2	6.1	4.1
52-67 years (n=64)	43.8	12.5	28	7.8	6.3	1.6
Above 68 (n=30)	36.7	3.3	26.7	3.3	26.7	3.3
Wealth						
Very poor (n=103)	58.3	3.9	22.3	4.8	7.8	2.9
Poor (n=35)	25.7	11.4	40	8.6	14.3	0
Medium (n=22)	22.3	18.2	41	9	4.5	0
Rich (n=13)	38.5	15.4	23	15.4	7.7	0

PAPER III

TRANSFORMATION OF INDIGENOUS SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS AMONG THE PASTORAL WOMEN OF NORTHERN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses continuity and change in women's indigenous social support networks (*marro*) among the Waso Borana women of the Isiolo District in Northern Kenya. Using structured interviews with 282 women, I analysed how the traditions of *marro* is being transformed using four key variables, namely: the main means of livelihood of the households, their wealth ranks, the women's age, and their level of education. The purpose was to assess a) the frequency of participation in *marro* today; b) women's perceptions of change and the effectiveness of *marro* today compared to the past; and c) the impact of food aid on the *marro* networks. The study shows that although all women participated in *marro* regardless of means of livelihood, wealth rank, age, or education, the degree of participation differed. Compared to the past, women were more involved in sharing labour than food items. The major change in *marro* is the introduction of cash loans among the poorest households. Although cash loans may shift the moral values of *marro* from being altruistic to rational, the practice may be considered as an adaptive mechanism to the socio-economic changes experienced by the community. With regard to the impact of food aid on the *marro*, the majority of agro-pastoral women perceived it as positive, while some pastoral households considered it to be negative.

Key words: pastoralist women, social support, transformation, reciprocity

INTRODUCTION

The importance of reciprocity, as a basic and universal principle for human interaction, was elaborated on in the classical treatise by Marcell Mauss (1990). In communities that are vulnerable to social or economic uncertainties, informal social networks based on reciprocity such as redistributing resources between neighbours, friends and relatives on a daily basis, play an important role in building social cohesion, even when the exchanges involve miniscule amounts (Fafchamps, 1992; Evan-Prichard, 1940). In rural Africa, in general, individuals share resources not because they have surpluses, but because such sharing provides a means of future investment in friends from whom they might require support in their own time of need (Brooke & Johnson, 1999). Such systems of reciprocity vary from one community to another and tend to be gender specific. As Gulliver (1955: 51) stated, social sharing by women “is a result of good relations rather than compulsion”. Border lines are drawn between the social networks which wives have built over time, but to which their husbands lack access, and vice versa. Husbands who operate outside the domestic sphere of women may, through their wives, benefit from material exchanges, but are technically and socially excluded from participating in their wives’ networks. This is what Watson (1994: 35) considered, in the context of the urban poor in Cairo, to be the marginalisation of men from domestic sphere.

In African pastoral systems, culturally institutionalised social reciprocity networks (known by various local names) are important for the transfer of everyday consumable and non-consumable items. The social and economic security of pastoral life is strongly linked to the structure of obligations sustained through systems of gifts and loans (Dahl & Hjort, 1976). Some pastoral systems provide a network for sharing labour or seeking short-term loans. The chains of networks are often created by women and include immediate neighbours, distant friends and relatives. However, widespread shortages of resources can be a threat to the functioning of such systems of reciprocity. For example, poverty can be the cause of inactivity or permanent failure of the social networks (Oba, 1994; 2001).

In this paper I investigate one such exchange system maintained by the Borana women of Northern Kenya, which is simply called *marro* i.e. ‘giving in turn’. Because sharing takes place within the constraints of the means of individual households, the exchanges vary both in terms of

quantity and quality. Social networks such as the *marro* system serve as insurance against shortfalls in the daily needs of women and the households they manage. The systems of social insurance, in principle, provide the sharing partners with the right to benefit from each other, although such rights are not necessarily verbally agreed upon (see also Scott, 1976). Such rights are upheld by declining to give to those who have failed to oblige, or by making it apparent that the other party is not performing as is required. The system differs from occasional gifts, such as being invited to a meal. The sharing of food shows generosity and in some instances can be the basis of a social network, but it is not a pre-requisite for *marro*.

The *marro* system of social reciprocity has comparisons with similar gendered systems of social sharing such as *ganta* among the Afar people of Ethiopia (Getachew, 2001: 148). The next section presents the framework within which the *marro* system of the Borana women was investigated in this study.

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

The premise for this analysis is that there are both social and moral undertones in the sharing practised by women, to give their lives ‘cultural meaning’. Gifts take the form of transfer of resources between friends and neighbours. Both the givers and receivers are beneficiaries in the long term and their mutual relationships are reinforced. Among the chains of the networks, there are those who are more or less reliable. Reliability is measured in terms of the capacity of individuals to return the obligations with similar favours (Mauss, 1990). Those with available resources are able to share more frequently and can build reliable networks, while others with limited means tend to be restricted to occasional and less reliable networks. Giving and reciprocal counter-giving create a link between the parties involved. Not maintaining the links due to personal wanting is often considered to be a handicap and a source of personal ‘humiliation’ (Mauss, 1990).

Gifts can be of different kinds and can have different weightings attached to them. The value of a gift is not necessarily tagged to amounts previously exchanged, although occasions might arise when something of equal quality may be requested, depending on the circumstances of the exchange. For example, the gift might simply be labour in the form of baby sitting, or small quantities of tea leaves and sugar, or valuable items that are required in marriage

ceremonies. Sharing among network members implies unwritten rules, to which the members are expected to subscribe. The type of reciprocity as practised by the Waso Borana is close to Sahlins' (1972) generalised reciprocity model where exchanges occur frequently and the values of exchanges are not measured. In this model of reciprocity, being 'selfish' and 'stingy' is reviled while 'generosity' is a behavioural asset by which individuals want to be characterised. Among the Waso Borana, a generous woman is often referred to as *toltuu* and a miser is called *arka jabdu* (hard-handed).

Whereas women's social networks have been extensively studied by social scientists and anthropologists, understanding how they vary in relation to the resources of a household, its wealth, and the age and literacy levels of the women is rarely considered. How do these factors influence the relative levels of exchange of food items, labour and credit facilities? Pastoral societies in rural Africa remain vulnerable to economic shocks that may shift household wealth within the short term. The impact of such shocks in the long term, in terms of transforming the social networks between women, is less understood.

The drivers of external shocks may also create internal shocks to this indigenous institution. Former network members may disperse due to loss of economic viability or settle in urban environments where the spatial patterns of neighbourhoods change. Such changes create new social and economic spaces for individuals to exploit, with both new opportunities and new hazards transforming traditional practices and restructuring the networks of friends and relatives. Thus, in this study the main interest is in how changed patterns of residence, strategies for seeking livelihood, and new economic pursuits influence the social networks in which women are the main actors. Moving to a new environment, suffering economic decline, or switching from a pastoral economy to a farming or urban-based one, redefines the locus of the social network. In this paper, the case study of the *marro* institution is used to understand how past perturbations of the pastoral economy have transformed the systems of resource exchanges across different livelihood, wealth, age and literacy categories.

UNDERSTANDING THE *MARRO* SOCIAL NETWORKS

Extreme socio-economic shocks caused by past major disasters, such as conflicts and sustained impoverishment due to persistent environmental perturbations, create uncertainty within the social networks by creating scarcity, where in the past there was plenty. Following economic disintegration caused by the *shifita* insurgency and other conflicts, many Waso Borana households have now diversified their means of livelihood by adopting non-pastoral economic activities such as farming and trade (e.g. retail, petty and livestock trade). Sedentary life in peri-urban areas more women involve in non-pastoral production, or in working for institutions such as schools, hospitals or administration offices. Given that the *marro* system now operates within different economic settings such as pastoral, agro-pastoral, cultivation-based and peri-urban systems, the aim of this study was to understand how the social network of *marro* is being transformed under such circumstances. For example, have new economic opportunities, such as trade, brought about changes in items of exchange? In the current socio-economic conditions, who are the frequent participants in social networks and who are the losers? It is also notable that the economic fluctuations have caused the majority of households to be dependent on food aid at some point. If so, how do such external interventions affect reciprocity between the women?

Some studies among similar pastoral groups claim that the adoption of a sedentary lifestyle has improved the lives of women (e.g. Fratkin & Smith, 1995: 433-434). If so, does it mean that the Waso Borana women in a non-pastoral setting have a more reliable system of *marro* than those who have maintained a pastoral lifestyle? There are, however, other studies that found that the change from a pastoral to a settled life had a negative impact on women's social wellbeing. For example, studies among sedentary pastoralists in Omdurman show that women living in urban environments have lost the resources traditionally used for exchange in social networks, such as milk, and now rely on alternative resources e.g. eggs (El-Nagar, 2001). Talle (1987; 1988; 1990) reports that settled life has overburdened the Maasai women and also reduced resources that were accessible to them in the pastoral environment. It is therefore important to understand which of the two scenarios is applicable in the case of the Waso Borana.

This paper has three main objectives: Firstly, a) to understand whether all women participate in *marro* networks, and b) to assess the frequency of participation, taking into consideration

diversity in terms of household livelihoods, wealth status, age, and educational level. The second objective is to analyse whether *marro* has changed in form, content or function. This question was addressed by examining the types of support mobilised within the social networks and also the responses of women to the question of whether *marro* has changed in terms of its functions and effectiveness. Thirdly, the paper aims to understand how women perceive the impact of external interventions such as food aid on the *marro* network.

STUDY COMMUNITIES AND METHODS

The study was conducted in four communities in the Isiolo District in Northern Kenya from July 2007 to January 2008. The goal was to map how changes in the basis of livelihood have influenced which resources are shared within the *marro* networks. The livelihood systems under review included: farming, agro-pastoralism, pastoralism and peri-urban economy. For the farming category, the Rapsu Irrigation Scheme was selected in which formerly destitute families were settled for economic rehabilitation. For agro-pastoral households, the settlement of Kinna was selected. The pastoral households include those in Kulamawe and Merti. The Kinna, Kulamawe and Merti settlements have a peri-urban population, comprising household members that are engaged in diversified livelihoods including informal wage labour, retail trade, trade in livestock and milk, petty trade in the stimulant drug *miraa* (*Catha edulis*), and trade in forest products (charcoal, firewood and building materials). Except in Rapsu, some of the selected families keep their livestock in pastoral areas even though they may engage in non-pastoral economic activities. In the main peri-urban settlements modern facilities such as schools and hospitals are available. The selected settlements, with the exception of the pastoral villages, are today spatially differentiated from what traditionally characterised Waso society. Almost all the houses for the sedentary population are built on privately owned plots that are fenced. The selected settlements disclosed both similarities and differences in their livelihood options that might influence the operations of the *marro* system.

I selected a random sample of 300 households across the three sites of Kinna, Kulamawe and Merti. However, only 282 households were used in the analysis, since the data from the other affected households was incomplete. Twenty-nine households were selected from the irrigation scheme, 89 households from agro-pastoral settings, 66 households in the category of

active pastoralists, and 98 households who derive their living from peri-urban economic activities. Both structured questionnaires and unstructured interviews were used to collect social network data from the households.

I used livestock ownership as the measure of wealth. Thus, for the sampled households, the livestock (cattle, camels, sheep and goats) holdings that my informants reported were converted into Tropical Livestock Units (1 TLU = 250 kg bovine) using the conversion 1 TLU = 1 cattle, 0.7 camel and 0.1 small stock (Little et al., 2008). With the help of key informants (men and women), I then developed wealth rank categories for the sampled households where a person without a single livestock unit was considered destitute¹ and those owning less than 2.0 TLU per capita were considered very poor. Households with 2.1–4.0 TLU per capita were considered poor, while those with 4.1–9.0 TLU per capita belong to the medium wealth rank. The households with > 9.0 TLU per capita were categorised as rich. These wealth rank categorisations for the Waso Borana are similar to those reported for other pastoralists (e.g. Fratkin, 1990; Boku, 2008). Using these wealth ranks, the percentage of households falling into each wealth category was calculated for the different communities. All the women interviewed were categorised into four age groups (20–30, 31–40, 41–50 and > 50 years) and three literacy levels (illiterate, primary, and secondary or higher education levels).

The first objective was to understand whether all women participate in *marro* and the degree of their participation (according to the scale: none, rarely, occasionally and daily. For this purpose women's responses were compared to each of the variables; livelihood basis, wealth, age, and literacy level. The main reason for this comparison was to understand whether pursuing different economic activities induced varied needs which may affect the degree of participation in *marro*. The same questions were repeated in relation to the wealth rank of the participating households. Given that *marro* is a social network without wealth restrictions, it was important to ask whether access to a surplus would influence sharing and exchange, regardless of the type of livelihood. For example, would a poor family with less surplus, have less capacity to participate, compared to a wealthy family with more surpluses? Similar comparisons in reciprocal exchange were made in relation to the age and educational level of the women.

¹ Such a person may have lost their pastoral identity but ideologically might still consider himself/herself a pastoralist.

In order to meet the second objective, i.e. to understand if *marro* has been transformed, I analysed how each of the variables (i.e. livelihood basis, wealth, age, and literacy level) influenced the items which were exchanged. Did the exchanges of food items, labour or credit facilities (*deni* a word derived from the Kiswahili word for ‘cash loan’) vary? The assumption was that households practising different types of livelihoods might have varied responses in terms of the materials exchanged and in the frequencies with which such exchanges are made. I was interested in understanding what the women think of the continued effectiveness of the traditional system of female resource exchange. Do they still consider the system to be effective in meeting social and material needs, or has it been transformed due to changing values and the possibilities now available to individual participants? Another main aim was to understand the impact of food aid on the *marro* network. The women’s responses (on the scale none, positive or negative) were compared for each of the variables (i.e. livelihood basis, wealth, age, and literacy level). This question was relevant given that all the sampled households at one time or another had received food aid, the query was whether food aid supplied by relief agencies had affected the functioning of *marro* positively or negatively. It was particularly interesting to investigate whether the practice of different livelihood strategies had induced new coping responses different from the traditional *marro* system, which had been built mainly on the pastoral production system.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 (2008) was used to analyse the data. The four key variables (livelihood basis, wealth, age, and literacy level) were used to understand how *marro* networks function in the current socio-economic situation. Cross-tabulation and Chi-square (χ^2) tests were used to determine the relationship between the categorical and response variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Participation in marro and frequency of participation

This study of the sharing and exchange networks (*marro*) among the Waso Borana pastoralists shows that indigenous institutions can continue to play an important role, despite socio-economic transformation. Regardless of livelihood basis, wealth status, age or educational level, all women in the study were in one way or another involved in *marro* (Table 1). The continued participation

in *marro* by the Waso women may be linked to various factors. For example, the principles of *marro* complement Islamic teachings which make it obligatory for neighbours to assist each other in times of need². Traditional practices are thus reinforced by religious principles, enabling the institution of *marro* to continue under changing circumstances. Participation in social networks is beneficial to both the givers and the receivers. The sharing of resources creates a buffer of expected reciprocities when there is a fluctuation in a family's resources which might otherwise push them to below the subsistence level (Scott, 1976).

Reciprocal exchanges are open-ended and often depend on the circumstances and the situation of those asking for help (Fafchamps, 1992). The *marro* networking is a form of safety net that individuals can draw on when there is a need, rather than as a replacement for their individual responsibilities. *Marro* networking complements individual efforts by enabling individuals to meet shortfalls in terms of supply of food items or labour. The finding of the present study is that the majority of Waso Borana women interviewed are involved in *marro* occasionally, especially when needs arise; however there were situations where some individuals required support more frequently than others (see Table 1). Comparing women in different livelihood categories, 96.6% of agro-pastoral, 82.8% of farming, 68.2% of pastoral and 72.4% of peri-urban households were involved in occasional exchanges. A few households from the pastoral (22.7%) and peri-urban (19.4%) categories were, however, involved in daily exchanges.

The slight variations in participation in such network exchanges across the livelihood categories may be linked to the kinds of demands or needs of those involved in these various forms of livelihood. We would expect more daily exchanges between women in the pastoral environment because these households are more dependent on each other due to the communal nature of pastoral production. Wilk and Cliggett (2007: 156) note that “when people depend on shared resources they must forge social ties that allow them to continue co-existing or reproducing their social order”. Thus, women in the pastoral setting are better able to create intimate social relations and cement their social ties than are women making a living in non-pastoral settings. Another reason for daily exchanges in pastoral areas is that these women carry out various forms of labour linked to livestock production, in addition to domestic duties and

² The Waso Borana converted to Islam in the 1920s and their lifestyle is influenced by Islamic teachings. This is contrary to the Borana of southern Ethiopia, where the traditional *gada* system still exists.

caring for children. For example, a pastoral woman is also responsible for fetching water and firewood, building her hut, and weaving household items such as gourds and mats. Pastoral women require extra help to meet most of their responsibilities, and thus form mutually assistive networks with their neighbours. Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson (1999: 80) argue that among the Turkana important social relations occur between women of the neighbourhood because the tasks are done in company as a way of combining leisure, friendship, and to lighten the labour. Moreover, pastoralists live in a precarious situation where a household's fortunes can suddenly change drastically. The social network creates some stability to mitigate the effects of environmental stress. As Brooke and Johnson (1999) report, it is the people with whom one has established close relations that one can draw upon in time of need.

As with women in pastoral settings, some town women are also dependent on social networks on a daily basis. A further analysis of this group of women disclosed that they are those who engage in petty trade, such as selling milk. The female milk traders, particularly in Kulamawe, depend on each other to deliver milk to the market. The women who deliver milk to the market for their neighbours may in return receive help with babysitting and child care. The milk trade increases interdependence between the women.

The fact that none of the agro-pastoral and farming women participate in daily exchanges may be attributed to various factors, such as a lack of resources to share on a daily basis. Among the farming households, the lack of animals may prohibit exchanges of milk as practised in the pastoral setting. Brooke and Johnson (1999) argue that the practice of food sharing may be less beneficial to the agricultural communities than it is to pastoralists. The fact that food can today be stored for longer periods than in the past, may influence people to emphasise accumulation rather than sharing. In the case of the Rapsu irrigation scheme however, the households are impoverished and often lack food for either sharing or storing. Another reason for non participation in daily exchanges relates to the labour needs of the farming households. Due to the lack of alternative sources of income, the poorest households are more dependent on the sale of their labour. In the Rapsu irrigation scheme, women work on their own farms but also as hired labour on others' farms in order to earn income to support their families. Thus labour is more

commoditised among the poorest farming households, compared to other households. Perhaps there is also less free time to invest in building reciprocal relations.

The two variables wealth rank and level of education seem to have no significant effect on the frequency of participation in *marro*. Regardless of the wealth and educational level, the majority of the households in the sample participate in *marro* occasionally when the need arises. The variable of age seems to be an influencing factor in some cases. A larger number of elderly women (25%) are involved in *marro* on a daily basis, compared to the younger women (4.4%) (Table 1). This may be an indicator that elderly people are more dependent on their social network for support compared to young women. On the other hand, elderly women may have more to provide in the social networks compared to younger women. For example, the elderly women provide services such as babysitting that are in high demand among women involved in economic activities such as trade or employment. Also a woman's capacity to engage in reciprocal relationship improves as she accumulates more animals whose products she can use to secure friendships (Dahl, 1987). The ageing process also reflects a cumulative effect of long-term participation in *marro* networks. Brooke and Johnson (1999: 105) note that "... the more one gives, the more (social) security one can accumulate for the future". Younger people need time to build up social relations. For example, young women who marry into another neighbourhood other than where they grew up may require a longer period to get to know and establish close relations with other women, compared to those who are married in a familiar neighbourhood. This need to build up friendships can limit the number of times they take part in exchanges with other women. Thus as women age, their capacity to reciprocate often grows.

Transformation of marro

The types of gifts exchanged in reciprocal networks of support are diverse and depend mainly on the customs and traditions of a particular community. To understand the transformation of social networks among the Waso Borana, it is essential to focus on the types of support shared within the network and to compare it with what was common in the past. With the diversification of livelihoods to non-pastoral economic activities, there is also increasing diversity in the items exchanged. While the focus in this study is on food, labour and cash exchanges, *marro* can also involve other household items such as cooking pots, brooms etc. which are borrowed for short-

term use. Farming and agro-pastoral households borrow from each other farming tools such as digging hoes (*jembe*) and *pangas*, while peri-urban families, especially at occasions such as weddings, borrow radios, plates, glasses, spoons, chairs and tables to be able to entertain their guests.

Generally, the use of the three types of support that were analysed in this study (food, cash and labour) show some variation (Table 2). Exchanges of labour seem to be most popular, followed by combinations of food and labour exchange. The least common form of assistance is the cash-only type of support. The types of support shared by women seem to vary according to their means of livelihood. Helping with labour alone is more important among farming households (69%), compared to pastoral households (27.3%). Combined exchanges of food and labour are second in importance, but the rates differ between farming and pastoral households. While 42.4% of pastoral households are involved in combined exchanges of food and labour, only 3.5% of farming households reported the same. Comparing peri-urban and agro-pastoral livelihoods, it seems that combined exchanges of food and labour are more popular with the agro-pastoral households (38.8%) than with the peri-urban ones (23.5%). The combined exchange of food, cash and labour seem to be more popular among the pastoral and peri-urban families, compared to farming and agro-pastoral families. Pure cash support seems more common among the farming households, where 17.2% reported to be involved in such exchanges. Less than 5% of the peri-urban and agro-pastoral households, and none of the pastoral households reported making use of cash exchanges.

Examining how the type of support varies with the wealth status of the households, it is notable that an exchange of labour-only is the most popular type of support (Table 2). Almost a third of the households in all wealth ranks engaged in labour support. Help in the form of labour only is most common among the rich and poorest households, with 41.7% and 43.1% respectively reporting this practice. In most cases the poor are the suppliers of labour, while the rich are the receivers. The combination of food and labour is the second most popular type of support, being higher among the medium (41.2%) and rich (33.2%) households, compared to the poorest (26.7%) and poor (22.4%) ones. The combination of food, cash and labour is ranked

third, but it does not show significant variation within wealth ranks, as the percentage of those involved in this combined form of support ranges from 13.7% to 19.6%.

Assessment of the types of support exchanged across the age categories shows slight variations (Table 2). Considering the labour-only type of support, it seems that women younger than 40 years (44.9% and 43%) are more involved, compared to those over 40 years (32.9% and 37.5%). Again, the second most important type of support is the combination of food and labour, which also varies according to age. About 39% of women aged between 41 and 50 years are involved in this type of support, compared to 18.8% of those below 30 years of age. Help in the form of combined food, cash and labour, seems to be more popular among the older women (over 51 years of age) (27%) while reported less than 15% of other age groups were involved. The combination of cash and labour, and the cash-only type of support are least popular among all the age groups.

The level of education does not seem to significantly influence the types of support that women share within their networks. However, half of women with higher education qualifications are involved in the labour-only type of support, compared to 38.9% of the illiterates, and 37.5% of the primary school leavers. The combination of food, cash and labour was reported by 16.8% of illiterate women, compared to 11.5% of those with higher levels of education. Illiterates scored higher in the sharing of food and labour, than did those with higher education, by a margin of 8.3%. In the cash-only, and cash and labour types of support, there are no significant variations between women of different educational levels.

Although the type of support offered or received varies within livelihood, wealth, age and literacy levels, it is evident that food and labour are the most dominant types of support shared by women. This is an indicator of the continuity of the *marro* tradition in the communities included in this study. Berge (2000) notes that among the Tuareg, hospitality is centred on factors that sustain life, such as food and water, which are considered to be in short supply, as opposed to spending time together for leisure. In most communities, food sharing represents a form of risk reduction (Hill et al, 1987).

The exchange of labour, which was an important type of support in the past, has increased in demand, as the community diversifies their livelihood strategies from pastoral to

multiple sources of income. The Waso Borana women who are employed, and women traders, have the double responsibility of earning income for their families as well as attending to their domestic duties. Casciarri (1995) reports the same double burden for Fulbe women traders. Many of these women have become more reliant on other people's labour to enable them to meet domestic responsibilities such as cooking, washing, and caring for children (ibid). Pastoralist women are not spared dual responsibilities. As the socio-economic situation changes, young men and heads of households who were previously involved in livestock management, migrate to the cities to seek wage labour. Women in pastoral camps then step into men's traditional roles of rangeland herding and watering responsibilities, in addition to their own domestic work and livestock care (Getachew, 2001).

The relative dependence on labour exchanges compared to food sharing may indicate some changes in the functioning of social networks, especially in their role of ensuring that households meet shortfalls in terms of food supply. The increase in the exchange of labour rather than food could be an indicator of food insecurity among pastoralists. Scarcity of food means that there is less surplus for the women to share within their social networks, yet there is a bigger demand. None of the farming households in this study, which are also the poorest of all families, reported exchanges of food. Some of the farming households are destitute people, who have lost their former social identity as pastoralists (*qolle guutu hikannaa*). The lack of food exchanges among these households is a strong indicator of chronic poverty. Prolonged poverty erodes the capacity for people to participate in reciprocal sharing, thus directly affecting resource redistribution (Oba, 1994; 2001). As the resource base of the pastoralists continues to shrink, people become more vulnerable, due to the added loss of social support networks. The spirit of cooperation and sharing is replaced by individualism as households struggle to keep themselves food-secure.

The transformation of the *marro* social network could also be linked to the integration of the Waso Borana into the market economy. However, there are contradictory views among researchers about the effect of the market economy on pastoral food security and women's welfare (Joeke & Pointings, 1991). While some studies show that pastoral women benefit from socio-economic changes by earning income through the sale of farm produce (Smith, 1999), milk

trade (Shehu & Hassan, 1995), or petty and retail trade (Merryman, 1984) – income which they could use to build social relations – other studies addressing gender and pastoral production systems in Africa suggest that women are the losers in the transformation. They have progressively lost control over productive capital and have suffered due to increased workloads (Ensminger, 1987; Kelly, 1990; Broch-Due, 1983). The increased monetarisation of the pastoral economy has also been blamed for the breakdown of traditional entitlements and obligations which formerly cemented social relations (Joekes & Pointing, 1991; Ensminger, 1992).

Although the views of various researchers differ, what is evident is that food items are being shared less frequently within informal social networks due to poverty as well as the impact of the market economy. The market economy may be beneficial for richer women, because it opens more avenues for wealth accumulation, but it has made poor women more vulnerable. Whereas in the past, pastoral people slaughtered animals and shared with their neighbours, today the animals are sold to obtain cash to buy grain and other consumables from the markets. The sale of livestock in order to buy grain has become an essential coping strategy for pastoralists, especially during times of drought. Grain consumption is preferred to the consumption of home slaughtered meat because it provides more calories (McCabe, 1990). The opportunity to sell animals therefore hinders women's levels of generosity. Meat sharing used to be one way that women could build and maintain relationships. Among the Borana, meat used to be shared among close relatives and within neighbourhoods giving priority to young women in order to cater for possible pregnancy-induced cravings (Tache, 2008). A similar practice of meat sharing was also reported by Gulliver (1955) among the Jie community.

In the past, pastoralist women used their role as dairy managers to build social networks, either by sharing milk or by allowing other women to use some of their milk animals, thus helping each other to overcome periods of stress (Joekes & Pointing, 1991). Milk sharing enabled women to build friendships and support for each other (Kettel, 1992). However, milk and butter, the products which were most commonly shared by women, have now become commoditised. They have become a source of income for women, rather than a means to build social relationships. The recent trend is that surplus milk is either sold for instant cash or on credit, to be repaid within an agreed period. Unfortunately, the people who suffer most from

commoditisation of pastoral products are poor women, whose survival is dependent upon the generosity of neighbours through local redistribution of animal products (Talle, 1987). Commenting on the role of milk among the Tuareg pastoralists, De Bruijn (1995) argues that milk is a sign of a woman's social status and symbolises social relations and hospitality. Thus the withdrawal of milk as a product for reciprocal sharing affects the practice of social networks among pastoralist women. In some cases the sale of livestock products still provides a buffer for pastoralist families during critical situations (Brockington, 2001). Getachew (2001: 148) reports how Afar women used their income to help needy relatives and to build networks of relations with other women.

The use of cash loans within social networks is an indication of changes affecting the *marro* institution. Although it is becoming common to borrow cash within social networks, this seems to be practised more often among farming households compared to other households. This may be due to the fact that if there is less food surplus, people are less able to share. The use of cash loans could be indicator of how the indigenous social system is adapting to modern needs. For the peri-urban women involved in petty trade, the opportunity to borrow cash from others can help them boost their businesses. Cash can strengthen relations when the receiver has the capacity to repay the loan. However, the use of cash loans may undermine the moral values that underpin the network of friendship. In general, reciprocal systems are organised around delayed reciprocity, with debts being repaid depending on need and affordability (Fafchamps, 1992). While other forms of support shared within *marro* networks are aimed at easing the shortfalls without putting pressure on the recipient, cash loans that need to be paid within a stipulated period of time may put the receiver under pressure. A further complication is that in usual informal exchanges, a person who receives support from others is not expected to repay something equivalent for what was received, but simply to reciprocate within her own capacity. However, support in the form of cash loans among the Waso Borana women is referred to as a 'direct balanced reciprocity' (Sahlins, 1972), where the value of what is given and what is received are expected to be equivalent. If the receiver defaults in payment or amount, then cash loans may not necessarily build social relations. Instead, financial disputes strain relationships, and breed hostility and mistrust between women. In some societies, reciprocal relations are kept

alive by delaying counter gifts, which is considered to be a way of seeking closure to the relationship, thereby remaining morally indebted to each other (White, 2000: 127).

Women's perceptions of the effectiveness of marro

Women's responses to the specific question of whether *marro* has changed compared to the past, varied significantly across the categories of livelihood, wealth and literacy level (Table 3). There were contrasting opinions, especially between women in farming and pastoral settings. While 100% of the farming women argued that *marro* has changed, only 38% of the pastoral households considered that it has changed. Across the wealth ranks, 70% of women in the very poor households considered *marro* changed, compared to 41.2% of those in the medium wealth rank. While 66.3% of the illiterates considered that *marro* has changed, only 42.3% of women with higher levels of education reported the same opinion.

In most cases, when women talked about change in *marro* networks, they considered change from the perspective of its effectiveness in helping women to meet household food shortfalls. All the women in the farming category reported that *marro* is no longer effective, an opinion shared by over 60% of women in the other livelihood settings (see Table 3). More than three-quarters of the women across all wealth ranks reported that *marro* is not effective in the sense of meeting food shortages. There were, however, some variations in opinions across age brackets. The majority (92%) of the women over 51 years of age considered *marro* to be ineffective, compared to 70% of the women aged 20 to 30 years. The trend is that the older the women are, the more they consider *marro* to be ineffective. In respect of the effect of education, 61.5% of the women with higher levels of education and 37.5% of the primary school leavers reported that *marro* is effective in meeting food shortfalls, but only 5.8% of the illiterates shared this opinion.

Generally, *marro* is said to be weak compared to the situation in the past, and nowadays the system is unable to meet shortfalls in a family's needs, be it food or labour. One of the key issues that affects *marro* is the change in neighbourhood patterns, which negatively affects women's social interactions. In the pastoral setting, 'neighbourhood' implies links in terms of agnates and affinity. Sedentary women often lack such important linkages with their neighbours (Dahl, 1979), and their relationships depend on the idiosyncratic willingness of women to

participate, rather than on any sense of obligation. Peri-urban residential patterns, where families live in individual plots, separate women spatially from others. A similar disintegration of the traditional residence patterns and its effect on pastoralist women is also reported by Talle (1987). She notes that sedentarised Maasai women complained of isolation due to the loss of company they had enjoyed in pastoral lifestyles where they shared daily chores and leisure. Such isolation is said to have increased the work burden for individual women (ibid).

Another major factor that impedes women's social networking is political interference. The local political scene, which involves the election of local ward representatives (known as councillors), and one representative in the national assembly (Member of Parliament), often generates hostility between the supporters of various candidates. Such political rivalry is transferred to neighbourhood relationships so that in some cases, women in the same neighbourhood who were formerly involved in the same social networks, may even sever their ties. For women with political differences, their *marro* network may shift from the immediate neighbourhood where they have political differences, to another neighbourhood where it is possible to link with women belonging to a similar political group. Although such rivalries were reported by only a few women, we can infer that modern governance structures indirectly interfere with the society's indigenous social networks.

Impact of external intervention (food aid) on marro

Recently, conflicts and drought have contributed to a decline in livestock production. As a result, many households have become dependent on external interventions such as food aid. The opinions of women concerning the impact of food aid on *marro* varied across households (Table 4). Although over 80% the farming households, two thirds of the peri-urban households and half of the pastoralists reported that food aid had no impact, 78% of the agro-pastoralist households reported a positive impact. A third of the pastoral households (33.3%) argued that such aid had a negative impact. There are plausible explanations for this contradictory response among women. One hypothesis for the positive response from agro-pastoralists is that unlike farming and pastoral households, they have a more diverse economic base, on which they can draw in times of need. Swinton (1988) argues that women in agro-pastoral systems distribute grains in addition to livestock products, thereby displaying more robust food sharing than their pastoral

counterparts. Thus, for the agro-pastoralists, food aid is a source of extra help. Women who receive such aid can afford to share with those who do not receive any food aid.

A possible explanation as to why some pastoral households have a negative view of food aid is that since pastoralist women operate to a large extent within traditional institutions, any external intervention may be considered to be a threat. Most pastoral households consider relief supply as one of the factors that undermines pastoral recovery and restocking. Relief is given in centres and towns but not in the pastoral areas directly, which in most cases are inaccessible due to poor roads. Therefore, most households that are in need of relief are forced to graze their animals around the towns. The anticipation of more relief food curtails the movement of the livestock and thus the animals become more vulnerable to drought.

The analysis also shows that although 37% of the poor households, 38.8% of poor and 43.1% of medium wealth households reported that food aid had a positive impact, only 14% of the rich shared the same opinion (Table 4). A third of the rich households reported that food aid had a negative impact, indicating that their opportunities to create or sustain friendship through food supply are curtailed by food aid. The former common practice of *marro* implied that while the rich households provided food support to the poor, the poor reciprocated by supplying labour. Therefore, although the regular supply of food aid gives advantages to the poor in terms of enabling them to build relations, for the rich it implies a loss of available labour from poor households. Even though the type of support offered by the poor to the rich is dissimilar, the relationships between poor and rich pastoralists are fairly balanced in term of social networks. This is contrary to some agrarian societies where such relationships create a situation of clientship. Scott (1976) observes that when peasants depend on their kin or patron as a form of social insurance rather than on their own resources, the patrons are enabled to make more claims on their labour.

The impact of food aid on the *marro* system is perceived differently by women of different ages and educational levels. Younger women, with a higher level of education, were more optimistic about the positive impact of food aid compared to the elderly and illiterate women. This difference in women's opinions could be explained in diverse ways. Perhaps the young women have rather limited experience in *marro* compared to the elderly women. Thus, the

elderly women are more aware about how *marro* functioned in the past without external intervention, and were thus able to make a more accurate judgement on the impact of food aid on the *marro* system. Born while the community was in transition from a pastoral to a diversified economy, the younger women may not have experienced how effectively *marro* worked in the past. They may be satisfied insofar as it is an extra resource which women can use to help each other. On the other hand, elderly people are not always positive about the advent of change. Town life does not necessarily benefit elderly pastoral women, whose opportunities are limited compared to those of young women who adapt their lifestyles (Fratkin & Smith, 1995).

Although food aid supports pastoralists during stressful periods such as drought, it has generated some unanticipated effects. Generally, food aid has been criticised for causing disincentives in terms of local agricultural production and for affecting the price of food in local markets (Fleuret, 1988). Among the Turkana pastoral community, McCabe (1990) reports some adverse effects of food aid programmes, such as weakening the social fabric. Poor Turkana households are said to have become more reliant on outside intervention rather than on indigenous social networks. The supply of food aid is also considered to have contributed to the growth of relief camps which disconnect the recipients from fellow pastoralists who could provide economic safety nets. Instead, the recipients of aid become even more dependent on government and donor agencies. Although such relief camps do not exist among the Waso Borana, relief supplies are regularly distributed in Merti and at the Rapsu Irrigation Scheme in Kinna. Almost all the households in Rapsu are regular recipients of famine relief food. This could be the main reason why food sharing within social networks is low in this area.

CONCLUSIONS

In the past, indigenous social networks played an important role in pastoral communities as they provided the necessary safety net for survival in a turbulent environment where the fortunes of households could change overnight due to raids or other misfortunes such as disease and drought. This paper has discussed the indigenous institution of women's social support networks (*marro*) among the Waso Borana. Using the four key variables of livelihood basis, wealth, age, and literacy level of the women, this paper discussed women's participation in *marro* exchanges, the transformation of the types of support shared by women in their networks, and the impact of

external interventions such as food aid on the functions of *marro*. The overall impression is that all women in the study area still participate in such exchanges, regardless of their social status. However the frequency of participation varies with the needs and opportunities of the women, with some women participating more actively than others. The wealth status of the household and the educational level of the woman had little impact on the frequency of participation, but elderly women participated more in daily exchanges compared to the young women. Farming households participated more rarely in exchanges compared to groups with other livelihoods.

The type of support shared within the networks has been subjected to various changes compared to the past. Although *marro* is aimed at meeting household food shortfalls, it seems that the sharing of food has been reduced due to increased food insecurity among the pastoralists, the impact of the market economy, and modern lifestyles in terms of neighbourhood patterns and political rivalry. The introduction of cash loans in the networks is both a challenge and a strength to the indigenous institution. While formalised debts may cause tension between the givers and receivers, especially if repayment is not forthcoming, for the women in income generating activities, cash loans provide a source of capital which can be used to strengthen their business. Cash loans are in most cases inaccessible to pastoral women, due to their lack of collateral.

Food aid is an important intervention that cushions the communities during critical periods such as prolonged drought. Although the majority of peri-urban and farming households reported that food aid had no impact on *marro*, the agro-pastoral households said it had a positive impact, while some pastoral households reported a negative impact. Based on the diversity of opinion, food aid provisions should be aimed at reducing dependency by providing food only when there is dire need. Providers should also ensure that the distribution of relief food is adapted to the pastoral lifestyle to avoid undermining livestock movements, especially during periods of drought.

In general, the study showed the pastoral women's indigenous social network continues to have relevance although the community has undergone socio-economic transformations. This kind of social network is essential because it enables pastoral women to draw support from each other and also harness external resources. The social networks can provide an entry point for development agencies that aim at empowering women.

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Table 1: Frequency of participation in *marro* networks

Livelihoods	Participation (%)		Frequency of participation (%)				Chi-square tests		
	No	Yes	None	Rarely	Occasionally	Daily	χ^2	df	P value
Agro-pastoral (n=89)	0	100	0	3.4	96.6	0	1.884 ^a	3	0.597
Farming (n=29)	0	100	0	17.2	82.8	0			
Pastoral (n=66)	0	100	0	9.1	68.2	22.7			
Peri-urban (n=98)	1	99	1	7.2	72.4	19.4			
Wealth ranks									
Very poor (<2) (n=146)	0.7	99.3	0.7	10.9	78.8	9.6	0.935 ^a	3	0.817
Poor (2.1-4.0) (n=49)	0	100	0	4.1	85.7	10.2			
Medium (4.1-9.0) (n=51)	0	100	0	0	80.4	19.6			
Rich (>9.1) (n=36)	0	100	0	8.3	77.8	13.9			
Age									
20-30 years (n= 69)	0	100	0	7.2	88.4	4.4	2.579 ^a	3	0.461
31-40 years (n=86)	0	100	0	4.7	86	9.3			
41-50 years (n=79)	1.3	93.7	1.3	11.4	74.4	13.9			
51 years and above (n=48)	0	100	0	6.3	68.7	25			
Level of Education									
Illiterate (n=208)	0.5	99.5	0.5	7.7	76.9	14.9	0.357 ^a	2	0.837
Primary level (n=48)	0	100	0	6.2	89.6	4.2			
Secondary and higher (n=26)	0	100	0	7.7	88.5	3.8			

Table 2: Types of support in *marro* networks

Factors	The types of support shared in the marro networks (percentage %)							
	No support	Food only	Food & cash	Food, cash & labour	Food and labour	Cash only	Cash and labour	Labour
a) Livelihood								
Agro-pastoral (n=89)	0	3.4	4.5	9	34.8	1.1	5.6	41.6
Farming (n= 29)	0	0	0	0	3.5	17.2	10.3	69
Pastoral (n=66)	0	1.5	1.5	22.7	42.4	0	4.6	27.3
Peri-urban (n =98)	1	1	2	20.4	23.5	4.1	10.2	37.8
b) Wealth ranks								
Very poor (n=146)	0.7	1.4	0	13.7	26.7	4.8	9.6	43.1
Poor (n=49)	0	2	8.2	16.4	22.4	2	12.3	36.7
Medium (n=51)	0	3.9	3.9	19.6	41.2	0	0	31.4
Rich (n=36)	0	0	2.8	13.9	33.2	5.6	2.8	41.7
c) Age								
20-30 yrs (n=69)	0	3	3	13	18.8	7.2	10.1	44.9
31-40yrs (n=86)	0	3.5	4.7	10.5	29	3.5	5.8	43
41-50 yrs (n=79)	1.3	0	1.3	15.2	39.2	2.5	7.6	32.9
51 yrs and above (n=48)	0	0	0	27	29.2	0	6.3	37.5
d) Education								
Illiterate (n=208)	0.5	0.5	1.4	16.8	31.4	3.8	6.7	38.9
Primary (n=48)	0	4.2	8.3	10.4	25	4.2	10.4	37.5
>Secondary (n=26)	0	7.7	0	11.5	23.1	0	7.7	50

Table 3: The transformation of the *marro* social networks

Factors	Perception on change (%)		Effectiveness of marro(%)	
	No change	Changed	Not effective	Effective
a) Livelihood				
Agro-pastoral (n=89)	41.6	58.4	64	36
Farming (n= 29)	0	100	100	0
Pastoral (n=66)	62.1	37.9	92.4	7.6
Peri-urban (n =98)	32.7	67.3	90.8	9.2
b) Wealth ranks				
Very poor (n=146)	30.1	69.9	86.3	13.7
Poor (n=49)	42.9	57.1	77.6	22.4
Medium (n=51)	58.8	41.2	74.5	25.5
Rich (n=36)	41.7	58.3	94.4	5.6
c) Age				
20-30 yrs (n=69)	33.3	66.7	71	29
31-40yrs (n=86)	47.7	52.3	80.2	19.8
41-50 yrs (n=79)	38	62	93.7	6.3
51 yrs and above (n=48)	33.3	66.7	91.7	8.3
d) Education				
Illiterate (n=208)	33.7	66.3	94.2	5.8
Primary (n=48)	52.1	47.9	62.5	37.5
>Secondary (n=26)	57.7	42.3	38.5	61.5

Table 4: Impact of food-aid to *marro* social network

Factors	Impact of food aid (%)		
	No Impact	Positive impact	Negative impacts
a) Livelihood			
Agro-pastoral (n=89)	21.3	78.7	0
Farming (n= 29)	82.8	6.9	10.3
Pastoral (n=66)	50	16.7	33.3
Peri-urban (n =98)	67.3	17.4	15.3
b) Wealth ranks			
Very poor (n=146)	49.3	37	13.7
Poor (n=49)	55.1	38.8	6.1
Medium (n=51)	45.1	43.1	11.8
Rich (n=36)	55.6	13.9	30.5
c) Age			
20-30 yrs (n=69)	36.2	53.6	10.1
31-40yrs (n=86)	47.7	43	9.3
41-50 yrs (n=79)	60.8	22.8	16.4
51 and above (n=48)	58.3	16.7	25
d) Education			
Illiterate (n=208)	55.8	26.4	17.8
Primary (n=48)	43.8	50	6.2
>Secondary (n=26)	19.2	80.8	0

PAPER IV

‘One Hand Cannot Wash the Body’: The Multiple Roles of Women’s Groups in the Waso Borana Pastoral Economy

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Running head: Multiple roles of women’s group

ABSTRACT

Women's groups are often the target of development agencies and feminists aiming to empower women politically and economically at the household and community levels. However, the extents to which these principles have been successful among African pastoral women are sparsely addressed by the literature on development work. This paper is an attempt to address the question of how the forming of women's groups have made it possible to achieve these broader goals. It is based on a study conducted among the Waso Borana women in Isiolo district, northern Kenya. It was found that the growth of the women's group movement over the years in this context was motivated by: (a) the declining pastoral economy; (b) increased funding opportunities; and (c) increased urbanisation and involvement in agro-pastoralism. The local participation in women's groups varied according to the livelihood strategies of the households, their wealth status and women's ages. Participation was high in the agro-pastoral and peri-urban population, which have a more diversified economy in terms of trade and wage labour, compared to the pastoral households. Women from poor households made up the majority of members of the groups, while rich women were the least well represented. Participation was also higher among younger women than among older women. The women's groups played multiple roles; providing economic opportunities and a space for learning, socialising and networking. Although their members reported some economic gains from membership, the political gains in the male-dominated pastoral society were limited. The study concluded that to empower pastoralist women, the focus should be on the education of girls and on more rigorous campaigns to promote adult literacy and increase awareness on women's rights.

Keywords: Pastoralist, Women groups, Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Despite valuable recent contributions (Brockington, 2001; Hodgson, 1999; Hodgson, 2000; Talle, 1988; Dahl, 1987; Oboler 1985; Broch-Due, 1983, 1993, 2000), research on pastoral women's groups remains in its infancy. In the pastoral areas of Kenya, the formation of women's groups is a recent phenomenon compared to the situation in the urban and agricultural areas of the country. The earliest women's group in Kenya, the Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation (MYWO), was started in various towns in 1954 by the wives of the colonial administrators. Their aim was to promote the 'advancement of African women' and to raise living standards. The organisation's aims corresponded with President Kenyatta's slogan *harambee* (pooling resources together) (Wipper, 1975; Tripp, 2005). The government used the slogan to encourage

people to donate money or to provide labour for development projects such as building schools, hospitals or roads.

The more recent expansion of the women's group movement among the pastoral communities of Kenya may be linked firstly to the internal processes driven by a decline in pastoral livelihood which has caused increased sedentarisation of a formerly mobile group (Oba, 2001; Fratkin & Roth, 1990, 2005), and secondly, to external stimuli. Internationally, women are being given priority on the global development agenda, which recognises that women can be agents of change and important contributors in working for human economic equity (Mahmud, 2003). Thus, governments and international development agencies have developed projects intended to target women specifically as the main beneficiaries in light of the idea of the 'feminization of poverty' (Chant, 2004). The formation of women's groups is considered an important strategy to empower women financially and to help them alleviate poverty by drawing on newly developed social capital (Mayoux, 2001). The advocates of participatory development argue that if women are involved in development they will be able to break out of the cycle of disempowerment (Kabeer, 1999; Mahmud, 2003).

The empowerment of women is necessary because they are potential agents of change through their direct influence on the wellbeing of their families (Mahmud, 2003). Feminist writers argue that if women take part in organisational efforts, this can lead to their empowerment as individuals and also as a group (Kabeer, 1994; Young, 1993). The economic empowerment of women is often seen an opportunity to provide them with bargaining power relating to household resource allocation and control (Sikod, 2007). Reporting on women's groups in Isiolo, Oba (2001) also argued that the groups remain peripheral and have not improved the situation of women beyond what was achieved by the indigenous system of social security. Oba's study identified a host of factors that undermined the functioning of women's groups, such as poor leadership, lack of finance, political marginalisation, and lack of team spirit to participate in group activities. Nonetheless, women's groups are considered an opportunity for women to receive some benefits (such as social networking) and they may enable individuals to access loans that can be used to conduct autonomous income-generating activities. Recent studies in Bangladesh and other areas have however questioned an automatic outcome of giving women economic opportunities such as providing them with micro-finance loans, as men

continue to control the income received by women (Goetz & Gupta, 1996; Rahman, 1999). The internal power structures of the households may be more resilient than hoped for.

Due to this and other reasons the concept of empowerment is seen as ambiguous and lacks an appropriate and acceptable definition (Sen, 1999; Mohanty, 1991). Dahl (2008:175) argued that use of such terms as 'empowerment' may bring about tension between 'being given tools to legally and politically combat oppressive structures, and being given strength by self-confidence gained from autonomous action and from rejection of subjugating discourse'. She suggested that due to multiple meanings of such words, there is a need to understand the meaning of the words in their particular contexts. Nevertheless, disempowerment of women is considered manifest if they fail to achieve the valued way of 'being and doing' as a result of social structures that impede their abilities to make choices (Kabeer, 1999). The suggestion is that the key to emancipation is for women to overcome their internalised oppression as well as external constraints (Rowlands, 1997; Sen, 2000). The critics of the empowerment thesis argue that the concept is based on the assumption that women are victims of oppression and need to be liberated by others. In the article titled, 'Sociology and Beyond: Agency, victimization and ethics of scientific writing', Dahl (2009) is particularly critical to this notion.

The recent increase in the number and activity levels of women's groups among the Waso Borana calls for a re-assessment of the reasons for such growth. This paper examines the growth of the women's group movement by means of a study conducted among three communities, the Kinna, Kulamawe and Merti of the Isiolo district in northern Kenya. The objectives of the study are threefold: Firstly, to examine the growth of the women's group movement in Waso by focusing on key factors such as how the groups were initiated, their growth dynamics, their criteria for recruiting members, and their sources of funds to support group activities. Secondly, the article examines participation in women's groups, taking into consideration the diverse economic activities in three study sites, by considering differences in household wealth status and the influence of age and educational level on group membership. Thirdly, the paper analyses how women's organisations operate in a patriarchal society such as the Waso Borana, where women's roles are normally confined to a domestic level.

The main queries were: (a) were the women empowered through membership of a women's group? (b) can membership of a women's group provide a platform for women to take up political positions in the community? and (c) what were the internal and external challenges

faced by the women's groups? The paper proceeds as follows. First it presents the field study, methods of data collection, and analysis. Second, it offers a discussion on the growth of the women's group movement, taking into consideration key aspects such as recruitment criteria and participation. Third, the paper discusses the multiple functions of the women's group. Finally, before conclusion, the paper discusses how the key concept of women's 'empowerment' is perceived by the Waso Borana women.

FIELD STUDY

This study was conducted in the three selected communities, Merti, Kinna, and Kulamawe over the period July 2007 to January 2008. The sites are part of the large Waso¹ pastoral production area inhabited by the Waso Borana. The majority of the communities at the three sites were sedentarised following the *shifita*² war in the 1960s and the sustained banditry and anti-insurgency measures that devastated the pastoral economy. The impact of the *shifita* war on the pastoral economy was aggravated by cycles of drought that decimated the remaining livestock, impeding the recovery of the pastoral economy. The war resulted in pauperisation of the once prosperous pastoral people, and increased sedentarisation (Hogg 1980, 1986). The villages of Kinna, Kulamawe and Merti were feeding centres for destitute pastoralists in the early 1970s but later became rural towns that serve as administrative and market centres for the residents. Government institutions such as schools, security forces, and hospitals, as well as the offices of chiefs, churches and NGOs have provided the main development structures since the end of the *shifita* war. Although many people still own some livestock, they are also engaged in other economic activities such as farming, livestock trading, retail and petty trade. A large number of the families in the area are destitute pastoralists with some family members working as paid labourers in other parts of the country. Many men have migrated to southern towns and cities in

¹ Waso Borana is the name used for the Borana of the Isiolo District. The name Waso is derived from the Ewaso Nyiro River that traverses the district and is an important part of the Waso pastoral production. Unlike other Borana in Marsabit and southern Ethiopia who depend on wells to water their livestock, the Waso Borana depend primarily on the Ewaso Nyiro River supplemented by shallow wells, for example, at Bibi.

² The *Shifita* war was a secessionist war fought by the people of the Northern Frontier Districts in the early 1960s. Details of the war are described by Dahl (1979) and Hogg (1980, 1984, 1986).

search of employment. This has split families so that there are now many homes headed by women. The number of such homes has also increased as a result of a growing divorce rate.³

Although the study sites share a common history, each site has unique characteristics that distinguish it from the others. It is this heterogeneity that informed my site selection. For example, Kinna is considered an agro-pastoral settlement and was the centre of two large irrigation schemes, Kinna and Rapsu, which were established in the 1970s to rehabilitate the destitute pastoralists after the *shifita* war. Although the two irrigation schemes collapsed in the early 1980s because of soil salination and the withdrawal of donor support, the place continued to attract destitute families who began growing crops for subsistence and trade. Kinna's close proximity to the towns of Meru and Isiolo has contributed to the growth of trade. Livestock trading is one of the major economic activities although it has suffered from sustained banditry. The residents are also engaged in petty and retail trade, with some individuals involved in the gemstone trade (yellow and blue sapphires) and the lucrative khat trade.

The Kulamawe site has two features that make it an important part of this study. Firstly, the area is suitable ecologically for the management of all local livestock species – cattle, camels, sheep and goats – even though they have very different water and fodder requirements. Its capacity to support all species makes it an important centre of pastoral production. Secondly, the town is situated on the main highway that links the Isiolo district to the North Eastern province. This provides strategic trade links between Borana and Somali pastoralists, and to other markets such as Kinna, Meru and Isiolo. The livestock traders in Kulamawe have the option of selling their livestock in any of these markets or as far away as the North Eastern province. Currently, the camel milk trade is booming and the town supplies milk for urban consumers in nearby Isiolo as well as in more distant Nairobi. This long distance camel milk trade is partly controlled by women.

Merti is more remote than the other two sites in the study, lying approximately 200 kilometres from Isiolo town. It is closer to Marsabit than the other sites and provides important links to other Borana living in Moyale and southern Ethiopia. This has facilitated close interaction between the people of Merti and the northerly Borana. Merti is considered the

³ Traditionally, marriages were permanent to the extreme, lasting even beyond death. There was no divorce. However, the majority of the Waso Borana are Muslims and in Islam the option of divorce(s) and re-marriage(s) does exist.

heartland of Waso pastoral production because the area is the most suitable for cattle breeding,⁴ which is the traditional core of Borana culture. Livestock production is the main economic activity but lack of access to markets because of poor road communications and a lack of security has been a major impediment. The livestock traders hire lorries to transport the livestock to Isiolo market or trek them on foot, a journey that takes almost four days. Small-scale farming takes place along the Ewaso Nyiro River but this has not been successful here compared to in Kinna. The soils in Merti are saline, partly because of reduced volume of water and poorly developed irrigation systems (Hogg 1980). Thus, a large number of Merti residents rely on regular food relief from the World Food Programme and religious organisations. The town has the two largest religious centres in the region, namely the Catholic Mission and the Islamic Organisation, which both support education⁵ and relief programmes. Compared to Kinna and Kulamawe, Merti has a large population of Christians. Various international NGOs have been present in the area at times, for example, Action-Aid operated during the period 1993-2002 and contributed significantly to development, including the promotion of women's organisations.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

For primary data and greater detail about women's group activities, I interviewed women at the three sites. Taking the diverse livelihoods at the three sites into consideration, a total of 300 were randomly selected. Out of this sample 286 households were used for analysis. The data from the other households were incomplete. The selected households were engaged in pastoral activities, farming and/or the diversified economy (trade and wage labour). The sample sizes varied across the sites because of time and logistical constraints. Thus, data from 118 households in Kinna, 115 in Kulamawe and 53 in Merti were analysed. The interviews were conducted in *afaan Borana*⁶ using structured questionnaires. Supplementary information was obtained through follow-up discussions. The main parts of the questionnaires focused on household livelihood, the wealth status of the household, and the age and educational levels of the women.

⁴ Cattle are important to the Borana pastoralists because they are the measure of wealth and are an important medium of reciprocal exchange, as well as being central to religious rites.

⁵ The Macci Centre, a Catholic organisation, sponsors two secondary schools and the Muslim Centre supports an orphanage and a girls' secondary school.

⁶ *Afaan Borana*, a dialect of the Greater Oromo language, is widely understood although there are regional variants in the way words are pronounced.

I was particularly interested in the names women used to register their groups. According to Borana tradition, there is an inherent relation between a person's essence and fate and his or her name (Dahl, 1998). Thus the names may be revealing when looking into the main goals and aspirations of various women's groups. Some names had religious connotations, such as *Alhamdu* (thankful) which expresses Islamic values of gratitude (see Table 1). Other names were in Kiswahili and were perhaps selected for the image they represented to the community such as *Kifunguo* (the key), which suggests the opening of new opportunities. Some groups were named after places, perhaps the home area of the members (e.g. Korbessa and Bibi), while others in *afaan Borana* are very evocative, such as *Girisa* (to scatter as for searching for livelihoods), *Kayo* (good fortune), *Waldagenna* (understanding each other) and *Dawiti* (a mirror, which might mean women wishing to re-examine their affairs).

General and more site-specific data was collected through interviews with key informants. The people selected for this were mainly officials of the women's groups and some members with extensive experience as a result of long-term involvement in women's groups. In Kinna I interviewed the officials of the Kayo, Kifunguo, Bibi, Mwangaza, and Chaffesa women's groups. In Kulamawe I talked to the officials of the Girisa and Kulamawe women's groups and the Alhamdu Self-help group. In Merti, the Korbessa, Waldagenna and Dawiti women's groups were interviewed (Table 1). The key informants provided details of the history of their groups, their activities, and the role of women's groups in household food security. They discussed the empowerment of women at household and community levels and what they themselves considered the major challenges that impeded the achievement of their goals. All the interviews with key informants were recorded on audiotape and later transcribed into English.

Background information, such as important records of the history of women's groups, was also supplied by the district Social Service office in Isiolo. In-depth interviews with the senior district Social Service officer⁷ and her deputy provided more data such as current trends. The officials also provided information on the government's role in the formation of women's groups, sources of funding and training, as well as some of the challenges impeding progress.

⁷ The District Social Service officer, Fatuma Fugicha, was responsible for social affairs in the district as early as 1975 when she was first employed with the Isiolo County Council, before her deployment to the district Social Service office in 1980.

The data was analysed as follows: Using 1980 as the starting point⁸, I clustered the groups according to the years they were initiated, using 5-year intervals. Thus, the earliest groups were started in the period 1980-1984 and the most recent groups in 2005-2008.⁹ The number of groups in each cluster was tallied and presented as a simple graph (Figure 1). The programme SPSS (2001) was used to analyse the responses of each of the groups on key issues such as: the people responsible for group formation; why the group was formed; the criteria for recruiting members; and sources of funding. The participation of women in women's groups was also analysed. The following aspects were looked at: the household's main livelihood (agro-pastoral, pastoral or peri-urban); the age and educational level of the women; the wealth status of the household (based on the traditional wealth ranks¹⁰); and the composition of the groups (women only or mixed-gender).

THE GROWTH OF WOMEN'S GROUPS

According to the senior Social Service officer, the emergence of women's group in Waso was the result of 'a deliberate government effort to alleviate poverty among the Waso Borana in the aftermath of the *shifita* war'. She added that 'the government considered women's groups as a collective way of fighting poverty'. The Kulamawe women's group (formed in 1982 with 24 members) was the earliest group registered with Social Services, followed by the Korbessa women's group (formed in 1983 with 30 members), and the Kifunguo women's group (formed in 1987 with 40 members) (see Table 1). Although only three groups were formed in the 1980s, there were an additional 11 groups formed in the 1990s. The growth in the number of women's groups was remarkable in the period 2000-2004, and the highest numbers of groups were formed in 2005-2007 (see Fig. 1). Although the early women's groups were linked to government initiatives, the government-initiated groups only constitute 6.5 per cent of a total of 62 women's groups currently active in the study sites. Over 82.2 per cent of these groups were formed on an individual initiative, while the groups initiated by development agencies and politicians make up 4.8 per cent and 6.5 per cent respectively.

⁸ The district Social Service records show that the government established the programme of women's groups in the Isiolo district in 1980. The earliest women's group in Waso was formed in 1982.

⁹ The study was concluded in January 2008.

¹⁰ Traditional wealth rankings were obtained from key informants as part of another study conducted by the author at the same sites.

The growth of women's groups can be linked to changes at the local, national and international levels. The early women's groups Korbessa and Kifunguo were initiated by local chiefs. The key informants reported that in the 1980s¹¹ government sentiment changed and it then censured the formation of any kind of group. At that time, women's groups that were initiated by individuals faced stiff opposition from local chiefs and politicians. One example is the Girisa Women's Group (Table 1) in Kulamawe, which encountered various challenges in its formative stage. In the words of the Chairlady:

I was elected chairperson of the area for the Maendeleo ya Wanawake in 1990. After successful elections the new officials from all the areas in the Isiolo district were invited to the Maendeleo ya Wanawake meeting in Nairobi. During this trip we had a chance to visit other women's groups in Nairobi to see the kind of projects they were undertaking. I was inspired by their income-generating activities and decided to start a women's group together with my friends, which we called the Girisa Women's Group. The start was not smooth for the group because we faced intense opposition from the Kulamawe Women's Group that had been registered by Social Services earlier in 1982. During this period Kenya was still a single party state and the KANU government controlled everything [including registration of women's groups]. The Kulamawe Women's Group had the support of the politicians and opposed the registration of new women's groups in Kulamawe. Some of the members of the Kulamawe Women's Group were the wives of councillors and chiefs. [In contrast] ... poor women with no political connections formed the Girisa Women's Group. Using their political connections, the Kulamawe Women's Group opposed our registration. Despite the opposition, the Social Service office registered our group as we had fulfilled all the conditions for registration.

The case of the Girisa women is an example of the challenges faced by women's groups in Waso and elsewhere in the remote of parts of Kenya during this period. During the early 1980s they were often impeded by political interference (Tripp, 2005). Indeed, even the largest women's organisations such as Maendeleo ya Wanawake (MYWO) did not escape political manipulation. MYWO was patronised by the government and subsequently became part of the government's campaign to garner grass-root support for the ruling party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the government (Sahle, 1998).

While participation in development was institutionalised from the 1980s, and there was a gradual shift from state-centred development to people-centred development (Mayoux, 1995), the growth of civil society in practice was minimal (Tripp, 2005). However, in Waso there were changes in the 1990s as more women's groups were initiated. For example in Merti, an international NGO ActionAid operated in the area from 1993-2003 and was instrumental in the formation of the Waldagenna Women's Group and the Badane Disabled Group.

¹¹ Kenya was a one party state with KANU as the ruling party after independence until 1992 when the government introduced multiparty democracy.

The 1990s were an important period because they marked the beginning of multiparty democracy and the growth of civil society organisations in Kenya. Interest in women's issues was especially heightened by the Nairobi and Beijing conferences of 1985 and 1995 (Antrobus, 2004). These conferences influenced development agencies and the result was an increase in funding for projects that directly benefitted women. Official patronage by the government declined (Tripp, 2005). The promotion of civil society movements, especially after World Bank and IMF policies of structural adjustment were formulated, energised the attempts by international development agencies' to mainstream gender in development projects, and increased the funding and promotion of projects that targeted women's empowerment (Kabeer, 2003). The newly acquired democratic space provided opportunities for political parties and other autonomous organisations such as women's groups to be formed (Tripp, 2001).

Despite the fact that national and international funds have been made available for gender mainstreaming, it appears that such funds are still not available to many groups in the Isiolo district. Judging from my interviews with group leaders, over 50 per cent of the groups depend entirely on contributions from their members, while only 12.9 per cent reported receiving funds from the government, and 11.3 per cent from development agencies. Many groups have weekly or monthly contributions of a fixed amount of money that is given to one or more members in rotation¹². The groups that are registered with Social Services are able to access an annual allocation of Ksh.160 000, which is given as a grant. For some groups formed in the 1980s and 1990s government grants and international donors are the main sources of external funding, but many women's groups have found they can access funds from multiple sources, including the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) which was established in 2004. As stakeholders in constituencies, women's groups may claim funds to support their self-help development activities. Five groups from Merti and Kulamawe formed their groups with the explicit purpose of receiving funding from the CDF¹³. Politicians are also using women's groups for political support during parliamentary elections. For example, the Chari-zone and Yooya women's groups (Table 1) were formed with the help of the current member of Parliament for Isiolo North¹⁴ to

¹² The system is called ququbi and has its roots among the Ethiopian farmers where women pooled resources and shared them among members in rotation. The system is also reported in other parts of Africa.

¹³ The five groups are: the Simpire, Dalatu, ,Yooya and Chari-zone women's groups, and the Iyesa-Iyeti Self-help Group.

¹⁴ The current member of Parliament for Isiolo North is Dr. Mohamed Kuti. He has been the area MP from 2002.

campaign for him during elections in return for funding and other tokens. At least 11.3 per cent of the groups studied had received funds from local politicians.

Recruitment Criteria

In Waso, the criteria for recruiting members varied across the groups. However, 41.9 per cent of the groups reported that they considered commitment to the group's goals or sharing a common interest as an important basis for recruiting members. They stressed that the members were expected to abide by the group's by-laws. Some by-laws were common to a number of groups:

- a) A member has to meet certain attendance requirements. A member who fails to attend 3 consecutive meetings without apology or genuine reason might lose her membership.
- b) In the case of the death of a member, she is replaced by one of her daughters or a close female relative.
- c) If a member is found guilty of misappropriation of group funds she is expelled from the group without compensation.

Some groups have additional by-laws that stipulate the rights of their members, such as the right to receive financial assistance for medical expenses or if they have an urgent need for cash. The by-laws are usually written down, especially in the case of the registered groups. If the groups are unregistered they might be based simply on verbal agreements. Certain groups have a rule that stipulates that members unable to pay weekly or monthly contributions must do extra group work¹⁵. The by-laws ensure that group members remain committed to the group's activities. Social Services usually use the group's by-laws to assist members in resolving any internal disagreements.

Another important criterion for recruiting members is geographical proximity. Of the women interviewed, 24.2 per cent reported that they preferred to have members from their own or nearby villages. The preference for a particular locality is linked to the question of how the group was started. For groups formed by individual initiatives, the idea of forming a group frequently emanated from one woman who shared the idea with friends or neighbours. The key informants explained that prior to forming women's groups, women in the same neighbourhood were involved in various different social relationships. Traditionally, women living in the same

¹⁵ This is the case in the Kifunguo and Kayo women's groups.

neighbourhood helped each other in carrying out domestic chores, and, in particular, with social activities such as childbirth ceremonies, child-naming ceremonies, weddings and funerals. The networking of women and their daily cooperation is an important aspect of social cohesion. It is a way through which women share and distribute resources, establishing debts of reciprocity that may work as insurance (Dahl, 1987; Oba, 1994). Here is a statement by a member of the Shukran Women's Group from Merti:

Before we started our group, three of my neighbours and I used to give weekly contributions of 100 shillings each. Each week one of us was given the weekly contributions. So, when my neighbour asked me if we could invite other women to form a group, I accepted (Member of Shukran women's group).

The women consider neighbourhood as an important factor, because neighbours know and trust each other, which make it easier to manage the activities of the group.

Although the women's groups were initiated to improve the situation of women, it is not unusual to have some men involved in a group as well. Of the groups studied, 38.7 per cent were mixed with one or more men as members. For example, the Alhamdu Self-help Group, formed in 2001, has a membership of 23 women and 12 men. In many of the mixed-gender groups, leadership positions are taken by men. There were diverse reasons why groups elected men to leadership positions. For example, the Dawiti Women's Group from Merti had a man as the group's secretary. A member states:

We are all elderly and illiterate women. We choose to have a man as a member so that he can assist us in writing proposals to seek funds from donors and also for proper bookkeeping.

For the Dawiti Women's Group, co-opting a man as a group member has utilitarian purposes. Good bookkeeping is part of the requirements for the groups that are registered and receive funds from Social Services. They are expected to record all financial transactions and provide quarterly reports on their activities.

A member of the Hordhofa Women's Group in Kinna expressed that group's reasons for choosing men as leaders:

In our group we have 6 men and 45 women. We chose a man as our leader because men are able to put order in the group and therefore ensure that all the members participate in the group's activity.

This group reflects the patriarchal power structure prevailing in the pastoralist society, where men are the traditional leaders in the wider community. The women in this group seem to have accepted this order and comply with the arrangement (cf. Rosander, 1997), rather than mirroring

the transformation of gender roles that is taking place in other societies. Realities are thus sometimes contrary to the empowerment agenda propagated by development agencies.

Although all groups are expected to register with Social Services, it is common for a group to register only after many years of existence. Of the groups surveyed, 60 per cent were not registered with the Social Services department. The Social Service officer explained that some groups sought registration specifically so that they could then solicit funds from donor agencies and the government. Formal registration is said to give the groups 'legitimacy', with Social Services serving as referees for the funding that comes from international donors. To be eligible for registration, the groups are expected to supply the following information:

- a) The group's name
- b) Planned or on-going activities
- c) A list of at least 20 members
- d) The formalised by-laws
- e) A list of elected officials (chairperson, deputy chairperson, treasurer, and secretary) who should not be close relatives (e.g. husband and wife, or sisters).

The inability to fulfil some of these conditions deters a number of groups from registering with Social Services. Some groups, such as Biftu and Halcha suggested that they needed time to get organised before they register. Others, such as Barwaqa, did not consider registering with Social Services because they failed to meet some of the required conditions.

An interesting characteristic of the women's groups in Waso is that once a group is formed the recruitment of new members ceases. However, statutes do allow for the replacement of deceased members. For example, Guyato Qoto aged 80, a member of the Alhamdu Self-help Group, replaced her deceased daughter; while Sadia, a member of the Waldagenna Women's Group replaced her deceased mother. The recruitment of new members is impeded by financial challenges as explained by the chairlady of the Bibi Women's Group:

The majority of the groups have weekly or monthly contributions which are collected by one or more women in rotation. If a person wishes to join a group that is already active, she may not be able to pay all the money the members have contributed over the years. It is therefore easier for such a person to start a new group together with other women.

Some women also consider the starting of new groups as an opportunity to draw maximum benefits. One example is that of Garo who is a member of both the Dawiti and Waldagenna women's groups. I asked her why she had dual membership and this is how she responded:

There is no limit to the number of groups I could join. The only possible constraint is if I do not have enough money to pay for the weekly contributions ... at first, I was a member of Dawiti Women's Group but when ActionAid formed the Waldagenna Women's Group, I joined that too.

All the groups agree that there is no limit to the number of groups a woman can join so long as she is able to adhere to the by-laws of each group. Multiple membership is a strategy whereby Waso women maximise their benefits, but it may also be detrimental to a particular group's solidarity. A member with divided loyalties might not participate effectively in all groups. Lack of participation by some members brings about the 'free-rider' problem that causes resentment among other members. The resentment is especially heightened when those who have not been active in the group are among the first to demand a share when a group receives funding from development agencies.

Who Participates?

The survey showed that 56.6 per cent of households contained one or more members of women's groups. Participation in women's groups varied, however, across the three main livelihood categories in Waso, namely the pastoral, agricultural and peri-urban communities (Table 2). Households in the farming category have the highest membership (75.9 per cent) followed by the peri-urban communities (60.5 per cent). Pastoralist households are least involved (35.5 per cent). Membership also varied between the sites, with the highest rates of membership reported among the residents of Kinna (67.8 per cent). Kulamawe and Merti had 49.5 per cent and 47.2 per cent respectively. The differences in membership between sites could be due to a number of factors. As mentioned earlier, Kinna is mainly a farming community and the households were sedentarised in the early 1970s after the establishment of the irrigation schemes. Living in close proximity to each other, households are able to organise and coordinate meetings and other development activities more easily. This is in contrast to the residents of Merti and Kulamawe who are engaged mainly in pastoral production. The mobile nature of pastoral production may have impeded the women's involvement in women's groups.

In addition to the livelihood diversity, opportunities to participate in women's groups may be determined by factors such as the consent of husbands, the wealth status of the families and the age of the women concerned. The husband's consent is crucial for married women, and this was confirmed by 95 per cent of the married women, reporting that they needed their

husband's agreement to participate in a women's group. The remaining 5 per cent of the married women do not have any support from their husbands, but are still involved in groups, as stated by one group member:

My husband perceives women's groups as an issue for women, so he does not want anything to do with it (Kubi Ardhi Women's Group member).

The Borana culture is based on a strict division of roles according to gender. A man is not expected to show any interest in the issues that fall on the female side of this division, and may not be able to do so without bringing his own maleness into question. Dahl (1998) argues that the "mute" symbolism is part of maintaining culturally privileged respect and distance.

My experience was that in Waso the degree of participation in women's groups is associated with a lack of wealth in a household. Across the three sites, the highest level of participation was found in the very poor households (Kinna, 62.5 per cent, Kulamawe, 43.9 per cent and Merti, 64 per cent), while the rich were less involved (Kinna 3.7 per cent, Kulamawe, 8.8 per cent and Merti, 12 per cent). This may imply that women from wealthy families do not join groups because they do not need the money as much as the poor women do. However, in the sedentary settlements where families must survive on non-pastoral livelihood activities, the roles played by men and women sometimes shift. Women assume more responsibilities and, as mentioned before, women's groups are seen to offer additional economic opportunities to be exploited. In the peri-urban areas women from wealthy households are involved in family businesses and therefore have little time to participate in women's groups. Habiba Wada, the wife of a Kulamawe businessman, states:

I did not join the women's group because I don't have [enough] time. I am the only one managing the retail shop and the lodge. My husband is a livestock trader and is always away.

Women from wealthy families may thus not have any spare time to engage in women's group activities because they are already involved in other economic activities. Poor women engage themselves in groups because of the economic opportunities that the women's group may offer them. However, there are also cases where women are too poor to afford the contributions and are therefore unable to join a group. The findings from this study do not therefore confirm the Kilimanjaro case study that reported that women's groups benefit only the rich and exclude the poor (Mercer, 2002). Yet, lack of participation by some of the very poorest women indicates that some exclusion does happen in the Waso community.

Participation in women's groups was also found to be influenced by the age of the women (Table 4). In Merti more elderly women seem to be more represented in the women's groups compared to the younger women. This could be linked to the role of the Action Aid in the promotion and support of women's groups in the area. The study also showed that in Kinna and Kulamawe membership rates were highest among women aged 31–40 years and lowest in women over 51 years. Participation by elderly women is smaller because they have more opportunities for economic support from their mature children. The explanation why younger women (aged 20–30 years) do not have any high membership rates may be that they are often newly married with young children, confining them to domestic chores. Since most marriages in the area of the study are arranged, the couples are still new to each other when the women are young, and the process of family bonding is still taking place. In most cases the husbands of newly-wed women were very protective, preventing their wives from having extended interaction with other women. The chairlady of the Kayo Women's Group explains:

Some men refuse to let their wives join the women's group because they do not want them to interact with other women. They believe that if they interacted with other women the latter will influence them to acquire immoral habits and as a result they will start to rebel against their husbands.

Such control eases, however, as the wife becomes older and the family is faced with more financial responsibilities such as the education of children, or because of changes to the marital status as a result of divorce or the death of the husband. The women's group then becomes attractive as an added avenue for economic benefits.

In Waso, the literacy levels of women had less direct impact on participation in women's groups (Table 5). About 74.5 per cent of the women interviewed (members and non-members) were illiterate. The low literacy level is partly due to the lack of schools providing education to girls before the 1970s. During the colonial period, there was only one school – the Garbatulla School (also known as the bush school). This served the whole of Waso. The rest of the present schools were established by the government and missionaries in the early 1970s, after the *shifita* war. In Waso there is a strong relationship between the age of women and their level of literacy. Women 50 years old and above are illiterate, while a significant proportion of younger women received some level of education. The illiteracy level among Waso women is similar to levels found among other pastoralist women in East Africa. A recent study of the pastoralists in Kenya reported that over 65.8 per cent of men and 86.8 per cent of women in North Eastern Kenya were

illiterate (Kipuri & Ridgewell, 2008). The official government estimates give a literacy level as low as 12.3 per cent for men and 4.3 per cent for women in North Eastern province (KNBS, 2007). The low levels of education among pastoral women are associated with an overall lack of educational opportunities in the pastoral areas and the cultural practice of early marriage (Nyamongo, 2000; Kipuri & Ridgewell, 2008).

THE MULTIPLE ROLES PLAYED BY WOMEN'S GROUPS

Women's groups are perceived to play multiple roles. Many women interviewed reported that their participation in women's groups has helped to contribute to household food security. This is particularly significant considering that the majority of women were from poor households. Women's groups play a significant economic and social role in the community. 96.8 per cent of the members of women groups reported that it was the economic opportunities that may be accessible through women's groups that prompted their participation. This is how members of one group responded to the question of why they formed their group:

[We have a saying] 'one hand cannot wash the body'; we formed our group because we wanted to benefit from each other and share whatever we get (Kifunguo Women's Group: Kinna).

The Waso Borana women use the traditional concept of sharing to mobilise individuals to support each other in overcoming the economic challenges that the community faces, especially after the collapse of the pastoral economy. For decades, the Borana community has been able to survive hardship because of the *buusaa-gonofaa* – the elaborate institution of resource sharing, which fosters cooperation within the community (Tache, 2008). Sharing to survive has been an important strategy used by the pastoralists to overcome food insecurity (Oba, 1994). Membership of a group is seen to provide opportunities to contribute to household food security:

Our main objective was to assist each other so that we can start income generation activities such as the sale of *miraa*¹⁶, vegetables or tailoring (Chafessa Women's Group: Kulamawe).

In many pastoral households, the adults are engaged in diverse economic activities in order to secure the food supply and meet the need for modern services and consumable goods. Contrary to the traditional situation where women were confined to domestic roles, today most women in Waso are simultaneously engaged in a variety of activities such as farming, pastoralism and

¹⁶ *Miraa* (*Catha edulis*), is a mild stimulant also known as *khat*,

trade. In the dry season, especially, trade becomes an important source of income as livestock prices drop in local markets. Women are more likely than men to be involved in petty trade such as selling milk, charcoal, firewood, ghee, incense (*qayya*) and *khat* because such businesses require little capital and can be combined with domestic chores. Poverty makes it difficult for most women to raise the capital required to engage in more lucrative businesses such as retail shops. However, petty trade enterprises are vulnerable to failure because the profit margins are small. By becoming members of a women's group, the women are able to benefit from rotational savings that they could use to protect their petty trade earnings.

Participation in women's groups is also considered an opportunity for women to contribute to community development. One woman expressed this as follows:

As Borana women, we felt that our way to *maendeleo* (development) and improving our families' income was by joining hands and forming a women's group (Chairlady, Kayo Women's Group: Kinna).

Women use the concept of *maendeleo* to position themselves as important contributors to national development.

Seeking assistance from government, development agencies or even politicians is easier as members of a group rather than as individuals. One group reported that they were able to access loans from micro-finance institutions as a group, which as individuals they would not qualify for because of lack of collateral:

Our group members save their money with the Prep-Cycle [a micro-finance institution that assists small-scale traders]. Most of the group members are petty traders and through the Prep-Cycle we have benefitted from loan facilities (Alhamdu Self-help Group).

The provision of loans by organisations such as Prep-Cycle is significant for the Waso Borana because access to credit has been considered a major impediment to the accessing loans. Unlike small-scale farmers who use land as collateral to get loans from banks, pastoralists lack title deeds as they live on communal land. I did not interview the Prep-Cycle officials to determine whether the program is successful, but a report on the micro-finance program established by the Financial Service Association (FSA) in neighbouring Marsabit district noted weak local participation, low rates of savings, and poor profits (Osterloh, 2001).

Nevertheless, through the funds received from various donors, some groups were able to undertake collective income-generating activities. For example, in Kulamawe, the Girisa Women's Group owned seven houses from which they earned a monthly rental income of 4,000

shillings. In Kinna, five women's groups¹⁷ have been allocated market stalls that were financed jointly by CDF, Kenya Wildlife Service and ActionAid. The group members own the stalls and have the right to use the facilities for conducting petty trade or to rent them out to others. In Merti, the Waldagenna Women's Group owned guest-houses, conference facilities and a bakery that supplied bread to local shops and schools. The income from the businesses has transformed the women's economic status:

ActionAid selected us to form a group because we were poor single-mothers. Today, instead of begging our neighbours for salt and sugar, we are able to provide for ourselves and also share with our neighbours (Waldagenna Women's Group member).

Funds received from development agencies have also benefitted individual women and have made it possible for them to start income-generating activities. A member of the Kinna Women's Group said:

We shared 315 000 shilling that we received from Plan International to start income-generating activities. Today, the income has enabled me to provide food for my family and to pay school fees for my children (Kinna Women's Group member).

A member of the Korbessa Women's Group had this to say:

I am a widow and do not have any other support. The money I received through the group's weekly contribution has helped me start petty trade. I sell clothes and vegetables at the market. The income from my business is helping me to feed my family.

For the Waso Borana, the sharing of economic benefits represents an important cultural tradition of sharing economic burdens. The benefits accrued by women's groups have enabled the women involved to help their needy neighbours. Generosity is an important virtue that is used to build a good reputation and status in the Borana community¹⁸. Economic wellbeing enables the women to improve their social status and avoid the stigma and bad self-esteem associated with begging.

This was confirmed by another member of the Waldagenna Women's Group:

Our work gives us dignity because we do not beg anything from other people. In fact there are many people that come to us for help. We give them 100 shillings to buy food for their families.

In Waso, like other pastoral areas, one of the most popular economic activities is livestock trading, however, the economic benefits of this have been curtailed by lack of security and drought. Cases of women's groups losing all their savings because of banditry or the impact of drought on the livestock they bought are common. For example in 2005, the Bibi Women's

¹⁷ The Walqabanna, Chafessa, Mwangaza, Bismillahi, and Kaayo women's groups.

¹⁸ A family that wishes to hold leadership positions in the community should be able to host many guests. They will only be able to do this if they have an adequate number of livestock or money to spend on social functions.

Group used the 75 000 shillings they received from Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP) to purchase 11 bulls for marketing, but before they could sell the bulls the severe drought of 2005/6 killed 6 of the bulls. Individual households that invested only in livestock trading also became vulnerable to poverty as one member of the Kinna Women's Group reported:

I used the loan we received from Plan International to purchase immature bulls to trade. Unfortunately, all that livestock died during the drought. My husband was forced to sell our few remaining animals to pay back the loan.

The women complained that recently more livestock died during droughts than in the past because of the influx of large herds of livestock from neighbouring districts to Waso. The increase in the number of animals causes decreased mobility and greater ecological wear, resulting in deteriorating animal nutrition. This leaves livestock more vulnerable to dying as a result of outbreaks of disease. Livestock losses have impoverished many households, undermining the pastoral economy (McCabe, 1987; Oba & Lusigi, 1987; Hogg, 1980). Security in the pastoral areas has deteriorated, especially with the influx of automatic rifle in the hand of bandits (Mkutu, 2001; Baxter, 2001; McCabe 2004). The long-term impacts of drought and the lack of security have lead to a decline in pastoral production and to increased sedentarisation (Fratkin & Roth, 2005).

Apart from the economic opportunities offered, the women's groups provide a social space. Many women reported to have gained morally and socially through the interaction with other women:

The group is very important for us because if we have some problems with our husbands we can share it with some of the elderly women in our group and they give us good advice (Member of the Chafessa Women's Group).

The group can also be a place where women acquire skills that are useful for managing their own lives and where they can contribute positively to the community:

We benefit a lot from the group because as a member we learn to tolerate others and work as a team. This has helped us to promote good morals (Kayo Women's Group member).

Participation in group activities is crucial for many women especially for the agro-pastoralists. At the Rapsu irrigation scheme, membership of a group enabled women to get help on their farms. The Hordofa Women's Group was specifically formed with the aim of the members assisting each other with farm work such as planting, weeding and harvesting of crops. Sharing

labour is beneficial to all members because it cuts down on the costs of hiring labour and enables women to cultivate bigger pieces of land.

However, mixed-gender groups engaged in extra-farming economic activities have had various specific challenges. The Social Service officer reported that a major problem with mixed-gender groups has been when such a group received funds from donors, the men have often misappropriated the funds and quit the group, or dissolved it altogether¹⁹. As a result, many women lose the financial benefits accrued by the group. However, misappropriation of funds was also reported by women-only groups such as the Kifunguo Women's Group, where the educated women were accused of misappropriation of group funds by their less schooled co-members.

THE QUESTION OF WOMEN'S 'EMPOWERMENT'

Waso Borana women have diverse views on what they consider "empowerment". This diversity in my opinion is rooted in the fact that most women's groups are heterogeneous in terms of age, economic status, marital status and education. Nevertheless, regardless of their status, all women agreed that economic wellbeing is an important source of women's empowerment. They argued that a woman's ability to earn extra income gives her some power at the household level and also some influence at the community level²⁰. A woman who has some income has more say in how the money is spent by her husband. The women's economic wellbeing is also considered essential in situations such as divorce. One member reported:

Today a woman who has some income-generating activities no longer agrees to give up the custody of her children in the case of divorce. She is capable of bringing up her children with or without the assistance of her husband ... If a woman has no money she leaves her child with the husband and the children are either brought up by stepmothers or grandparents. Those brought up by the stepmothers are often mistreated and do not do well at school and as a result their future becomes very difficult (Member of the Dawiti Women's Group).

The Waso Borana now consider the education of their children an important means of securing a better future for them. Any contribution to enhancing the children's education is also considered an important household strategy for future food security. In my interviews with the Social Service officer, she reported that women's groups made significant contributions to the

¹⁹ During one of my visits to the Social Services office during the field study, I encountered a group that reported to the deputy Social Service officer about their chairman's misappropriation of the grant money they had received from Social Services.

²⁰ Prominent businesswomen are called upon to contribute during fundraising.

education of children. To get the women's perspective I asked some of the members how their membership had contributed to the education of their children. This is what a member of the Korbessa Women's Group said:

Women ask each other 'Are your children at school?' Then somebody will say 'Yes, my son is at university' and another will say 'My husband has denied them to go to school and they are now herding livestock'. Having heard about the education of other children, the women would persuade their husbands to enrol their children in schools.

Another member added:

We tell our husbands that we lost our chance to get education because our parents did not know about it. Today, we know about the importance of education and we will not let our daughters be like us.

Educated children who have found formal employment have been able to help their parents to restock herds as well as to improve their social standing. For this reason, more families are settling near towns in order to enrol their children in schools. Even for the families that are involved in pastoral production, women are opting to settle in order to take care of school-going children while their husbands continue with the pastoral lifestyle²¹.

For some women in Waso, the membership in a group provides opportunities to confront the challenges posed by patriarchal power relations. A member from Merti explained:

Last month a pregnant woman miscarried because of the severe beating inflicted by her husband. When the case was brought to the elders, they did not impose any penalty on the husband. Our group confronted the elders and insisted that she should be compensated for the loss of her child and for the injuries she sustained²².

Questioning the judgement of the elders is a new phenomenon because traditionally elders commanded a lot of respect in the community. This case shows that group membership enables some women to confront issues that they could not do on their own for fear of losing face. This new tendency to bravely question the elders' judgement may be linked to two factors. Firstly, the modern civil legal system has undermined the jurisdiction of elders, and secondly, women have become more aware of their rights. It is notable that although the majority of women lacked basic education, they have benefitted from civic education conducted by the civil society organisations and the government:

When the group was started we were all *badia* (rural people). We did not know [our rights]. Action-Aid did great work because they trained us. They trained us [to understand] ... our rights

²¹ This emerged during an interview with elders from Merti.

²² This particular incident happened while I was in the field. The family of the injured woman was also not satisfied with the verdict and the elders were to meet at a later date to conclude the case.

as women and taught us our *haki* (rights). Nobody can do injustice to us [now] (Member of the Dawiti Women's Group).

A similar statement was made by the chairlady of the Waldagenna Women's Group:

We now find ourselves very different from other women because nobody can violate our rights either at home or in public. Even if we do not have any formal education, we are no longer worried because we know our rights and we can question anyone if they do any wrong to us.

Although such knowledge is essential for women to fight injustice both at domestic and at public levels, it has some negative effects: While economic benefits from the group are shared with the family, women's rights are beneficial to the women only. The Social Service officer said that the fight for intra-marital rights has caused some women to be divorced. Often it has resulted in husbands forcing their wives to resign from the women's group. Married women are often only able to join a women's group if their husbands consent. The husband's consent is essential for two main reasons: Firstly, membership requires weekly or monthly contributions which some women cannot afford to pay without the financial support of their husbands. Secondly, group activities and meetings leave women less time for family chores. If the husbands fail to support them, it would be difficult for women to participate in groups effectively.

Some members had to de-register because their husbands changed their minds about their wives' involvement in group activities. They accused their wives of engaging in immorality if they delayed in meetings or other group activities (Member of the Mwangaza Women's Group).

The lack of trust between couples forced some women to de-register. According to the Social Service officer:

Recently some women's groups were sponsored to attend one week of training in Isiolo town. The husband of one of the members was infuriated by this arrangement. He demanded that his wife de-registered as a member. She had no option but to quit the group.

This incident indicates that although the aim of the development agencies was to strengthen the position of women through the women's group, in a community, which gives a husband the right to control the activities and interactions of his wife with others, it may be easier for women to attain economic benefits than it is to break the social constraints. Although the social structures may have not changed everywhere, some women have been able to use the platform of a women's group to secure positions within male dominated committees. For example, the chairlady of a women's group in Kulamawe is the treasurer of the school committee and the chairlady of the Waldagenna women's group is a member of the district security committee. This was confirmed by 68.7 per cent of group members who reported that women are able to take

more responsibility in the community because of the skills they acquire in women's groups. When I asked if they felt empowered as a result of their membership of women's groups, a woman responded:

Yes, we feel empowered. Unlike other women we are not shy and can speak confidently in public even to people we do not know (Fatuma Jillo from Merti).

Another added:

Oh yes! Whenever I attend any meeting such as school meetings and other gatherings, I am not shy and I ask questions.

Even with those positive remarks about empowerment, many women shy away from taking up political positions. There are only two women councillors in Waso. Their nominations were linked to clan politics, and their husbands played an important role in their achieving these positions. I asked some women if they are ready to seek elected political positions now that they are aware of their rights. This is how one woman responded:

No. I don't think we have reached there yet. Our people have a low opinion of women even if they are well educated. They always think leadership is a position only for the men (Member of the Girisa Women's Group).

Such perceptions have a direct impact on the economic and political marginalisation of women. In a patriarchal society such as the Waso Borana that demarcates public life as a male domain, it might take women quite a while before they achieve political empowerment. Nevertheless, a few pastoralist women in East Africa have secured parliamentary seats. For example, in the Karamoja region in Uganda, the Barabaig constituency in Tanzania and the Marakwet East constituency in Kenya, women took up those leadership positions, which in the past were exclusively for men (Kipuri & Ridgewell, 2008). However, it is notable that the wholesome marginalisation of pastoralists by governments has masked the structural challenges that prevent pastoralist women from achieving adequate political representation (ibid).

Although a few women's groups (such as those of the Chari-zone and Yooya) were formed with the support of a politician, the majority of the groups reported that they do not share in decisions about political affairs because local politics are mainly clan-based and are therefore considered a family affair. The Waso women, like Maasai women, vote during general elections for candidates supported by their husbands (Hodgson, 1999). They reported that political differences between husband and wife may cause marital problems. For this reason, most women's groups avoid direct involvement in politics.

CONCLUSION

Because women are considered the most vulnerable to poverty, the government and development agencies support projects to empower women. The growth of the women's group movement among the Waso Borana is linked to the socio-economic opportunities that are accessed by individuals through collective action. The study showed that participation in women's groups varies with a household's livelihood strategies and a woman's, wealth, status and age. The groups were popular among very poor, sedentarised households involved in farming, and they flourished more in peri-urban towns than in pastoral villages. The living standard of a group reflects the differential level of poverty between the pastoralists and those who follow diversified livelihood strategies. The differences could also be linked to the mobility of the pastoral households and the lack of information available to those in a pastoral community, which emanates from a disconnection between government initiatives and pastoral lifestyles.

The Waso Borana women see participation in women's groups as an opportunity to contribute to household food security and community development. Membership of a group has enabled women to benefit from labour support in farming and given them a chance to start income-generating activities to the benefit of their families. The new economic opportunities are, however, undermined by drought and a lack of security in the pastoral areas, as well as by challenges within the groups such as low participation by some members and misappropriation of group funds. Members have also acquired skills through sharing their experiences and working as a team. More women are now aware of their rights at domestic and communal levels. Awareness of their rights has not, however, led to the automatic empowerment of women at household and community level. This is because participation in women's groups is determined by the support women get from their husbands. The Waso Borana women operate within patriarchal power structures that affect their everyday interactions. The social structures that relegate women to roles at a domestic level have also impeded their ability to seek political roles in the community.

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Table 1: *General Information on the Women's Groups in Waso*

Group name	Year formed	Number of members	Gender
Alhamdu Self-help	2002	30	Mixed
Badane Disabled Group	1998	14	Mixed
Barwaqa Women	2003	30	Women
Bibi Women's Group	1996	31	Women
Biftu Women's Group	2007	46	Women
Biliki Women's Group	1990	17	Women
Bilitu Women's Group	2007	40	Mixed
Biqiltu Youth Group	2006	18	Mixed
Bisan Adi Group	2007	13	Mixed
Bismillahi Women's Group	2005	40	Women
Box Group	2004	40	Mixed
Brotherhood Self-help	2003	12	Mixed
Burqa Women's Group	2006	8	Women
Chafessa Women's Group	2007	40	Mixed
Chari-zone Women's Group	2002	40	Women
Dababo Women's Group	1997	50	Women
Dalatu	2007	N/A	Women
Dalatu Women's Group	2007	N/A	Women
Damesa group	2003	30	Mixed
Darara Group	1995	30	Mixed
Darartu Women's Group	2005	20	Women
Dawiti	1990	23	Mixed
Forum	2006	40	Mixed
Girisa Women's Group	1990	24	Women
Guyasa Women	2003	34	Women
Halcha Women	2007	20	Mixed
Harkatama	1995	60	Mixed
Hordhofa Women's Group	2005	40	Women
Ibsi Group	2005	30	Mixed
Iyesa-Iyeti Self-help Group	2007	50	Mixed
Kaayo Women's Group	2007	40	Women
Kabanesitu	2006	25	Women
Kifunguo	1987	40	Women
Kinna Muslim Women	1992	50	Women
Korbesa Aids Awareness	2001	40	Women
Korbessa Women	1983	30	Women
Kubi Ardhi Women's Group	2001	13	Women
Kulamawe Camel Milk Traders	2006	N/A	Mixed
Kulamawe Women's Group	1982	22	Women
Lelo Women's Group	2004	34	Women
Machesa Women's Group	2002	45	Women
Magado Women's Group	2007	N/A	Women
Malka Cultural Self-help	2004	30	Mixed
Muwa Women's Group	2003	28	Women
Mwangaza Women's Group	2007	40	Women

Nagayo Group	2004	30	Women
Nature Group	2005	30	Mixed
Needs Group	2005	37	Mixed
Okoa Group	2000	30	Women
Ordhofa Women's Group	2007	16	Women
Qote Self-help	1997	15	Mixed
Shukran Women's Group	2006	20	Women
Simpire Women's Group	2007	N/A	Women
Siqe Women's group	2007	N/A	Women
Tawakal Farmers	2006	30	Mixed
Umul Kheir Women's Group	2007	35	Women
Unity Group	2006	N/A	Mixed
Waldagenna Women's Group	1994	30	Women
Walqabanna Group	2007	12	Women
Wiseman Self-help group	2004	25	Mixed
Yamsa Women's Group	2007	N/A	Women
Yooya Women's Group	2004	28	Women

Figure 1: *The Growth of Women's Groups in Waso*

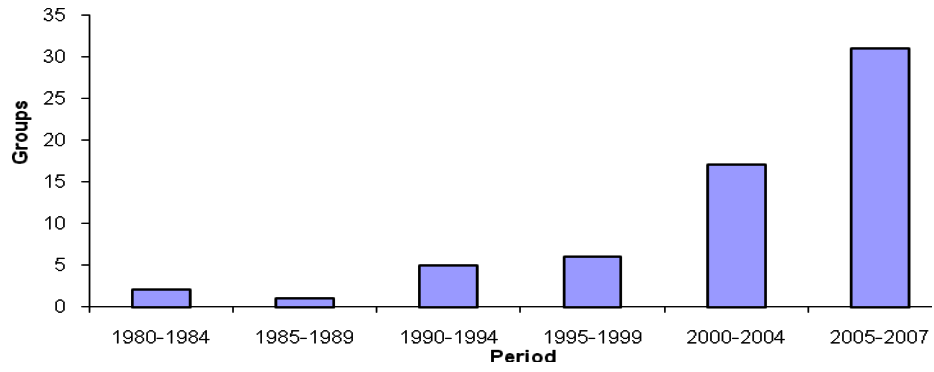


Table 2: The Link between Membership, Women's Groups and Livelihood Options

Livelihood zone	Members*		Non-Members	
	No. of HH	% of HH	No. of HH	% of HH
Pastoral	22	35.5%	40	64.5%
Agricultural	22	75.9%	7	24.1%
Diversified (peri-urban)	118	60.5%	77	39.5%

*Households containing at least one member

Table 3: Membership of Women's Groups and the Household's Wealth-rank (TLU/Capita)

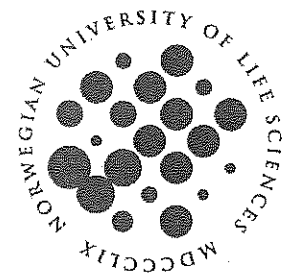
Site	Wealth status of the members			
	Very poor <2	Poor 2.1-4.0	Medium 4.1-9.0	Rich >9.1
Kinna n=80	62.5%	17.5%	16.3%	3.7%
Kulamawe n= 57	43.9%	15.8%	31.5%	8.8%
Merti n=25	64%	0%	24%	12%

Table 4: The Age of Women's Group Members

Site	Age of the members (years)			
	20-30	31-40	41-50	Over 51
Kinna n=80	35%	38.8%	15%	11.3%
Kulamawe n= 57	23%	37%	30%	10%
Merti n=25	0%	24%	28%	48%

Table 5: Educational Level of Members of Women's groups

Site	Literacy level (years)		
	Illiterates	Primary	Secondary
Kinna n=80	56.3%	28.7%	15%
Kulamawe n= 57	71.9%	24.5%	3.5%
Merti n=25	96%	4%	0%



AUTHORSHIP DECLARATION

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Candidate: First author

The contribution of the candidate:

I declare that I am the main researcher and author of this article

Co-author: Gufu Oba

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To the best of your knowledge, has this article been part of a previously evaluated doctoral degree thesis? Y/N

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