

Bulletin of the drylands

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# Tropen Journal 53



53

# In this issue

## May 2008

### 4 News

#### 10 Debate

Gender is not the problem:  
the problem is patriarchy

*Elizabeth Kharono*

Is education a licence to exploit  
the people?

*Michael Ochieng Odhiambo*

#### 14 Focus on ... Climate change

Climate change – how will it  
affect drylands?

*Simon Anderson*

Drought or deluge –  
or a bit of both?

*Julian Quan*

An umbrella just in case,  
or risk a double jeopardy

*Victor Orindi & Tony Nyong*

Living with climate change in  
Limpopo Province – impacts  
and implications

*Coleen Vogel & Gina Ziervogel*

Climate change – what will it  
mean for men and women in  
rural drylands?

*Katharine Vincent*

#### 24 Reports – Conflict over carbon offsets in Uganda

Tree planting and land rights  
at Mount Elgon

*Chris Lang*

‘The main problems are  
politicians and false accusers’

*Denis Slieker and Martijn Snoep*

#### 28 Innovations

WorldSpace technology:  
the information alternative

*Noah Lusaka*

Mirrors: a clean way to  
light up the world

#### 32 Books and resources

#### 35 Obituary

#### 36 The Haramata Takeaway

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Cover photo: Flooded village, Rhoka, Tana River Valley, Kenya  
*C. Griffiths/Christian Aid/Still Pictures*

# Oil to the rescue?

*WHAT DOES THE FUTURE hold for the world's drylands? It is an oft-repeated question with very few certain answers – and not many of them very encouraging. In this issue, for Africa at least, there are two signposts which could indicate a chance of real progress if they are taken together and if the people who decide public policies can make the link between them.*

*One signpost is the report in our news columns (see page 5) that many countries of the Sahelian zone, from Mauritania to Ethiopia, are now looking forward to a huge bonanza of new income from oil exploration. Over the next 3-4 years, one expert calculates, the oil industry will be investing as much as 50 billion dollars in Africa – more than double its level of investment over the past seven years.*

*Signpost No. 2, on the other hand, is provided by our 'Focus on Climate Change', pinpointing some of the many ways in which*

*global warming is expected to make the lives of dryland peoples even more difficult over the next generation. From all the evidence now assembled, there is one obvious conclusion to be drawn: that very large efforts will be needed to offset the potentially disastrous effects of climate change on millions of the most vulnerable people.*

*The question is, with aid budgets shrinking, where is the money for such efforts to be found? For a number of countries, one answer should be, from their new or recently-acquired oil income, which was undreamt-of only a few years ago. But, as our news report makes clear, many countries do not have the political and other structures needed to ensure that the oil money will benefit their people as a whole and not just an elite few. The case of Angola is an object-lesson that should be drawn to the attention of policy-makers elsewhere before it is too late.*

## Issue Papers

We are pleased to include with this edition of *Haramata* three Issue Papers:

**149** Land and decentralisation in Senegal. *Jacques Faye*

**148** Browsing on fences. Pastoral land rights, livelihoods and adaptation to climate change. *Michele Nori, Michael Taylor and Alessandra Sensi*

**147** Information on land: a common asset and strategic resource. The case of Benin. *Pierre-Yves Le Meur*

Please continue to send us your contributions!

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## Will Tam be the new Tim?

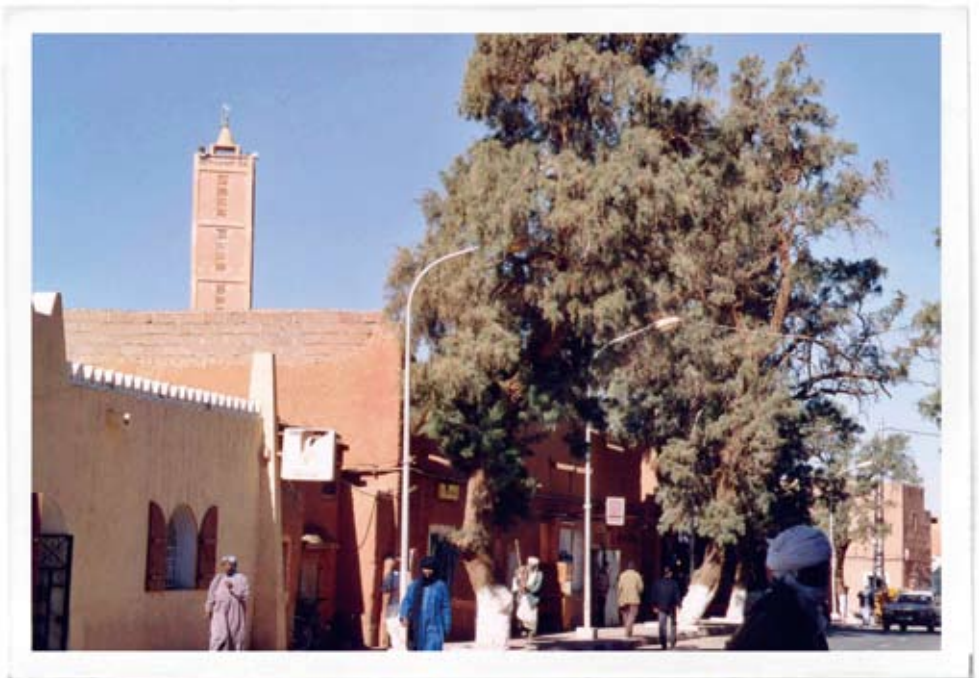
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A NEW CROSSROADS for the Sahara-Sahel and a prosperous economic and cultural centre spreading its influence throughout the zone – this is Algeria’s future vision for its southern city of Tamanrasset. And the government is promising huge investments in water, housing, education and public services to make it happen.

Algeria’s president Abdelaziz Bouteflika began the year with a visit to Tamanrasset, the centrepiece of his Special Complementary Development Programme for the south of the country, which will have a massive budget of 377 billion dinars (approx. 3.8 billion euros). It is a grand plan made possible by the country’s oil income, which saw its foreign exchange reserves rocketing to over US\$110 billion in 2007.

Being the administrative capital of the *wilaya* (region) of the same name, which occupies half of Algeria’s land area, the city of Tamanrasset is already comparable in size with some of the Sahel’s other main centres such as Agadez, Mopti and Gao. It will be likely to overtake them if this programme achieves its targets over the coming decade.

Already Tam, as the city is known, has benefited from large-scale investments in recent years, including a university campus built in record time with room for 2,000 students and 1,000 dormitory places. Under



The city of Tamanrasset

the new programme one of the first priorities is a piped water supply, to be brought 750 kilometres across the desert. Once this is installed, the plan is to enlarge the university to take an additional 2,000 students.

If Algeria's investment does indeed succeed in making Tamanrasset the brightest star in the Sahelian sky, with a university attracting students from far and wide, it may be only a matter of time before someone gives it the nickname, 'The new Timbuktu'. In its 16th century heyday, Timbuktu was a great religious and educational centre, its university made up of over 150 schools with anything up to 20,000 students.

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**i** *Jeune Afrique*, 13 January 08; *La Tribune*, Algiers ([www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com)).

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## The oil jackpot: wins for one in a million

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WITH GOVERNMENTS across the continent announcing new deals almost every month, the scramble for Africa's oil – already bringing in millions or billions of dollars – looks set to transform the economy of the region and of its dryland countries in particular. Right across the Sahel – from Mauritania to Mali, Niger, Kenya and Ethiopia – governments are now selling exploration rights or waiting for the oil to start flowing.

However, as the oil fever hots up some international analysts are questioning whether new producing nations have the political and administrative structures to ensure that their new wealth will benefit all levels of society and not just the rich. They cite Angola as the most glaring case in point: population, 15 million, the highest economic growth in the world (31% forecast for 2007), producing over 1m barrels of oil a day, yet the country has one of the worst records for relieving the poverty of its people. Only one country has a worse record of infant mortality, and the lack of clean water supplies was largely blamed for a recent cholera epidemic which affected 80,000 people and killed 3,000.

According to one writer, John Ghazvinian, who visited all the major sub-Saharan oil producers while researching a recent book, the disparity between rich and poor in Angola's capital, Luanda, "is like nowhere else in the world". Despite the country's extreme poverty, luxury apartment blocks are being built there, which oil companies are renting for their staff at up to \$15,000 a month.

Oil companies have invested US\$20 billion in exploration and production in Africa since 1990, Ghazvinian estimates, but this will be dwarfed by the \$50 billion they are expected to spend in the next 3-4 years. A huge bonanza, but he adds that most Africans are seeing little benefit from it – and many are made worse off by the rising value of their country's currency, which can make other exports uncompetitive. The result is that oil-exporting countries often become dependent on imports, ruining their agriculture and traditional industries.

In addition, he says, oil money tends to breed corruption, rather than encouraging politicians to look for ways to invest in their country's long-term prosperity. Western governments and oil companies generally take the view that once they've paid for the oil, what happens to the money is not

their business, so “there are no incentives for the resource-rich governments to do the right thing”.

Such evaluations offer a salutary warning to policy-makers and development planners as Africa’s oil rush gains momentum. Like a lottery jackpot, it holds out the hope of sudden wealth – but in most cases only one in a million will win.

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① “Angola: le bugie del petrolio,” in *Volontari per lo Sviluppo*, December 2007; John Ghazvinian, *Untapped: The scramble for Africa’s oil*, Harcourt Books, 336 pages, US\$25.

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## While millions suffer, a first gleam of hope

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AS THE PEOPLE OF SOMALIA sank into an ever more acute humanitarian disaster at the start of 2008, the first signs emerged of a move towards peace talks between the Transitional Federal Government and the Islamic opposition.

In February, the new Somali Prime Minister, Nur Adde Hassan Hussein, returning from a visit to Addis Ababa, Paris and Brussels, reaffirmed his commitment to peace talks. At the same time, the Arab League was trying to organise contact between the two sides, taking advantage of the presence in Cairo of Somali government representatives and leaders of the Islamic Courts.

These new efforts for peace appear to reflect a change of policy in Washington, with the US tacitly admitting failure in its bid to eliminate the Islamic Courts with military help from Ethiopia. Instead, the Bush administration and the TFG are now seeking to split the so-called moderate Islamic forces of the ARS from the more hardline Islamist militia, al Shabaab, which is said to have links to Al Qaeda.

Towards the end of 2007, the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer, seemed to signal the policy change by stating in an interview that the surge of violence in Mogadishu was the responsibility of the TFG and Ethiopian troops as well as political extremists. “It is time for Somali moderates to come forward and work to end chronic violence,” she told Voice of America radio.

Amid a worsening security situation, the United Nations temporarily suspended its operations in February and several international NGOs halted their programmes outside the capital. This only accentuated the plight of the almost two million people estimated by the UN to be in need of emergency assistance. One million of these are people forced by the fighting to flee their homes in Mogadishu or other areas.

Rocketing food prices have made it impossible for many city-dwellers to feed their families. Meanwhile, farmers and pastoralists in the central and southern provinces have lost most of their livestock and are suffering water shortages.

More than a year after their arrival, the presence of Ethiopian troops – resented by many Somalis – remains the most contentious issue for any peace negotiation. The fact that the TFG has started ordering their withdrawal from certain areas may be intended as a conciliatory move.

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① [www.allafrica.com/somalia](http://www.allafrica.com/somalia)  
[www.garoweonline.com](http://www.garoweonline.com)

# Western Sahara: the dangers of deadlock

At the end of 2007, the Pentagon announced that it was selling Morocco twenty-four F-16 combat aircraft for US\$2.4 billion – and justified this by declaring that the Moroccan government was “an important force for political stability in North Africa”. The Saharawi people see it rather differently.

In the meantime, Western Sahara has been hailed by the American NGO, Freedom House, as among the most repressed societies in the world.

[www.africa.reuters.com](http://www.africa.reuters.com)  
[www.vest-sahara.no](http://www.vest-sahara.no)

MOROCCO AND THE POLISARIO Front remained deadlocked in January at their third meeting under UN auspices to try to reach “a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution” to the future of Western Sahara. Although there was no sign of movement by either side, a fourth round of talks was scheduled for mid-March.

At a three-day meeting in Tifariti, Western Sahara, in December, Polisario decided to wait until its next congress in June-July – by when the outcome of the UN talks should be clear – before deciding whether to resume its war with Morocco. That 15-year guerrilla war was suspended in 1991 when a ceasefire brought a UN mission (MINURSO), which was designed to supervise the referendum on the territory’s future status which Polisario had demanded.

However, Morocco has remained in de facto control of Western Sahara in defiance of repeated UN resolutions, and its nationals have been encouraged to move there. The two sides have disagreed fundamentally on who should be eligible to vote in the referendum, so it hasn’t happened, and Morocco maintains its claim to sovereignty.

If the war flares up again, Morocco will have the big advantage of military backing from the United States.

## MOROCCO AND THE POLISARIO?



Xinhua

No, these are two much more ancient Saharan combatants. Let us introduce, on the left, *Eocarcharia Dinops*, and on the right, *Kryptops Palaios* – their portraits taken from the fossils of two recently discovered meat-eating dinosaurs which lived in the Sahara more than 100 million years ago. The fossils were found by US palaeontologist Paul Sereno during an expedition in 2000, but the pictures have recently been released. *Kryptops*, they say, was about the size of a hyena.

## New sparkle for many cities – but will villages be left behind?

WITH MUCH FRENZIED activity of bulldozers and cranes, several African capitals are currently being given their biggest transformation since colonial times. New airports, whole business districts, new roads and dozens of luxury hotels are springing up across the continent, financed by oil revenues, government loans and increasing private investment.

The most dramatic example of Africa's rapid urban growth is probably the Sudanese capital of **Khartoum**.

Here, massive building projects are in the process of changing what was a fairly sleepy town into a shiny, round-the-clock metropolis. Two new hotels have recently been completed – one of them a 19-storey tower financed by the Libyan government – and a suspension bridge across the River Nile has been built by Chinese engineers. China has invested heavily in road-building, as well as oil refineries, pipelines and dams.

On one huge building site, a whole new economic district for Khartoum is being created from bare ground, with office buildings, villas and more hotels. A US\$500 million airport is due to open in three years, and as a little extra China has provided Sudan's President al-Bashir with an interest-free loan of \$13 million to build himself a new presidential palace. Other plans for the city include a golf course and at least two marinas for yachts.

At the western tip of the continent, meanwhile, another building boom has engulfed **Dakar** as President Abdoulaye Wade seeks to realise his dream of making it one of Africa's most attractive cities. Foreign government and private capital is being mobilised to build a new international airport and highways, a conference centre, an industrial estate and more first-class hotels – the total cost estimated at US\$3 billion or more.

At independence, the population of Dakar was about 200,000, but in the 50 years since then it has multiplied 15 times to an estimated 3,000,000 today. The government recognises



Al Fatih Tower, Khartoum



that new, updated infrastructure is badly needed, and private investors are also getting on the bandwagon as land prices soar.

Even in smaller capitals such as **Bamako**, the building boom has taken hold. Apart from five-star hotels (a new one this year in the



Joint Ministries Complex in Bamako under construction

Hamdallaye district), a whole Administrative City with public offices and government ministries is at an advanced stage of construction not far from the busy centre of town.

Like Senegal's President Wade, many Africans will regard the fast-growing cities, their tall buildings, smooth roads, smart restaurants and improved services as a source of pride. Others, however, worry that these things are bringing an ever deeper divide between the small prosperous minority and the rest of the people.

Forty per cent of Senegal's urban population live in slums and the increase in land prices makes it more and more difficult for them to acquire a proper home of their own. The urban poor are pushed onto unhealthy or risky areas, where they may be subject to flooding or water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera.

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**i** For a more detailed analysis of Dakar's construction fever, see the forthcoming article by Mansour Tall in our next issue.

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## US halts search for new African military HQ

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"Thanks but no thanks" has been the general reply of African governments to the United States' search for a headquarters base for its new Africa Command (Africom). Faced with widespread opposition from most of the countries it approached, the US has backed off and decided to keep its Africom HQ for the time being in Stuttgart, Germany, alongside its European Command.

In its current preparatory phase, Africom is expected to grow from 300 staff at the beginning of the year to 1,300 when it becomes fully operational in October. Officials say about 40 per cent of its personnel will be civilians representing a range of US government departments.

Earlier, the State Department was said to favour making Africom's base in Liberia, while the Pentagon preferred Kenya until the aftermath of the recent Presidential elections ruled that out. Reports then suggested the final choice was Tan Tan in southern Morocco, near the frontier with Western Sahara, but the political risks of such a location seem to have prompted the US to temporarily withdraw all options.

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**i** [www.africa.reuters.com](http://www.africa.reuters.com) (28/1/08); [www.alterinfo.net](http://www.alterinfo.net)

*Both of the following contributions to our Debate columns are part of the ongoing tug-of-war between traditionalists and modernisers in the development arena. Elizabeth Kharono believes that gender values are universal and that trying to adjust them to 'African realities' makes no sense. For Michael Ochieng Odhiambo, civil society organisations are important for pastoral communities – but if they are controlled by traditional elite groups the people as a whole may be denied a voice.*

## Gender is not the problem: the problem is patriarchy

*by Elizabeth Kharono*

IN HER ARTICLE “Anchoring gender issues in African realities” (*Haramata* 52), Senorina Wendoh argues that the concept of gender is ‘alien’ to African realities. Drawing entirely on a research by Transform Network, which happens to be a network of European organisations, Wendoh argues that gender ideas are fashioned elsewhere and then ‘regurgitated’ in Africa. She believes that a home-grown definition of gender, unique to Africa and about which there is ‘across-the-board’ consensus, is a feasible proposition. She is largely unimpressed by the ‘success record’ of women’s advancement in Africa, highlighting the plight of grassroots women whom she describes as poor and dependent.

Senorina Wendoh’s article exhibits a considerable amount of confusion on what gender is. If gender is a concept and analytical tool which enables us to examine and understand the reality of women in relation to men in the same category, then the idea that

it requires a definition based on local realities and as such can be ‘unique, and owned’ by a particular community or continent is absurd. Using gender as an analytical tool enables us to see the gender division of rights, responsibilities and roles. It permits an assessment of how production relations in particular societies are arranged by gender and to what extent women and men’s access to and control over factors of production, including land, are commensurate with their labour input and decision-making.

Gender analysis exposes how male privilege pervades social relations and how patriarchy determines the distribution of roles, rights and responsibilities. Patriarchy as an ideology, and patriarchal social arrangements are not unique to Africa, nor are they restricted to the rural, grassroots communities of Africa. Indeed patriarchy and capitalism are known to be good bed-fellows and are a challenge to the advancement of women even in societies



Kamryn Loepner/SMI Pictures

Discussions at a micro-credit meeting in Uganda

which might consider themselves developed!

The problem with slow and insufficient social transformation in Africa is because patriarchal institutions and policy interventions perpetuate rather than address the structural causes of women's subordination and marginalisation. Using gender as an analytical tool exposes the systemic nature of this marginalisation.

I am writing this response after attending a very successful first-ever Feminist Forum<sup>1</sup> in Uganda. The Forum was attended and facilitated by Ugandan feminists. It provided much-needed space for feminists and gender activists in Uganda to reflect together following what we see as a waning of political will and narrowing of space for women's civil society groups to operate effectively; the honeymoon they enjoyed with the current government appears to have ended.

The purpose of the Forum was to address key challenges facing women's organisations and the NGO sector in general, including: leadership and accountability within women's organisations, consolidating the gains in the face of the failures of the gender mainstreaming strategy (which has not resulted

in women's concerns being addressed through mainstream development policies and strategies), dwindling resources for gender work, waning political will, bureaucratic resistance to gender, etc.

We debated serious conceptual issues including the difference between gender activism and feminist activism. We challenged ourselves regarding the myth that rural women are more disempowered than their elite, globe-trotting sisters. We discussed the need to move away from the maternalistic approaches to engaging with rural women – and the challenges facing elite women including domestic violence, how to deal with our diversity (really challenging discussions around sex work, homosexuality!) and so on. We helped each other to confront the real challenge of making the personal political.

As we shared stories about our personal struggles, and celebrated our collective accomplishments, cried together, laughed and danced, it occurred to me that there was a considerable amount to celebrate. In an imperceptible way the women's movement in Uganda has grown and matured into a credible feminist movement. It is impossible for me to see what happened during the Forum as an importation from Europe or North America. To say this is to insult the intelligence of very strong, clear-thinking and committed African women.

1. The Feminist Forum was convened by *Akina Mama wa Africa* (AMWA). For more information visit [www.akinamamawafrika.org](http://www.akinamamawafrika.org)



**Elizabeth Kharono** currently works as a director of the Centre for Land Economy and Rights of Women (CLEAR) in Uganda. She has worked with national, regional and international NGOs and commands wide experience on civil society and governance issues in Eastern and Southern Africa. Her area of specialisation is gender and women's rights.

*A question for pastoralists*

# Is education a licence to exploit the people?

*by Michael Ochieng Odhiambo*

WHILE EVALUATING RECENTLY a project to improve the livelihoods of local pastoralists in northern Tanzania, I met several district-level government officials who asserted that the educated elite of the Maa community hold back the development of their people. This elite, the officials said, are enemies of development in that they actively influence the local communities to reject development activities that would integrate them into national social, political and economic life. The officials I met contended that the elite want to keep the communities tied to traditions and to a way of life that they themselves no longer follow, because the existing situation gives them power and money.

Issues of this kind are not new. In East Africa, they have been debated at least since the advent of political independence. They are part of the discourse accompanying ongoing change and have arisen particularly with respect to those communities that have somehow managed to retain their cultures and livelihood practices in the face of these changes.

Recently, however, they have acquired a new urgency in the sub-region with the resurgence of aggressive, state-led transformation programmes aimed at modernising national economies and integrating them into the global economic framework. Whether it is Kenya's Vision 2030, or Uganda's Programme for Modernisation

of Agriculture (PMA) or Tanzania's MKURABITA,<sup>1</sup> the quest is to transform rural smallholder production systems to service an export-oriented economic agenda. In the government's eyes, medium and large-scale investors are seen to be essential for this transformation and policy interventions are being implemented, particularly in the land sector to make it attractive to foreign investors. In Tanzania, for example, a Land Bank has been established within the Tanzania Investment Centre to facilitate the allocation of supposed "empty" or "under-used" land to investors. Part of the process also involves the formalisation of land tenure arrangements, especially registration and individual titling.

Pastoralists and other small-holders find themselves in the centre of this drive for modernisation largely because it is based on the exploitation of the vast natural resources of the sub-region, most of which are found in areas occupied by these groups. In practice, despite government policies and rhetoric in favour of poverty reduction, the drive for modernisation is resulting in the alienation of citizens from their land. And it is largely in response to such processes of impoverishment that many pastoral leaders are rejecting the government's vision of "modernisation".

Governments, however, consider any opposition to these moves subversive of development, and, not surprisingly, perceive



Martha Enghoff

Building a grassroots civil society should be a bottom up process

individuals and groups resisting their policies to be anti-development. So the answer of many government officials to the question in the headline is 'yes'. And this in part explains the re-emergence of questions about the role of the educated elite of these communities in the development process.

But even outside of this debate, questions are being raised by certain donors, researchers and NGOs about the influence and impact of the educated elite in pastoral communities concerning development interventions.

The core problem is that the local people cannot easily hold to account the many civil society organisations created by this elite since the 1990s. There also appears to be little interaction between these recently established, often urban-based groups and rural-based customary authorities, which, though less powerful than they used to be, still exercise considerable control over local people in pastoral areas. The situation is further complicated by the fact that pastoralists and

their interests are highly diverse and as such there is no common voice.

The absence of a strong and articulate grass-roots civil society movement with the skills and confidence to articulate their vision of their development leaves them vulnerable to other people's ideas of what is best for them. This is the challenge that should have been addressed many years ago, and must now be tackled if pastoralism as a livelihood system is to contribute to the social, economic and political development in East Africa.

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1. This the Kiswahili acronym for *Mpango wa Kurasimisha na Biashara ya Wanyonge Tanzania*, translated as the Property and Business Formalisation Programme.



**Michael Ochieng Odhiambo** is currently executive director of the Resource Conflict Institute (RECONCILE) based in Nakuru, Kenya (for more information visit [www.reconcile-ea.org](http://www.reconcile-ea.org)) His research interests include land and natural resource policy and environmental law and conflict.

# Climate change – how will it affect drylands?

*Climate scientists are today behaving just like the world whose behaviour they are trying to predict: most of them are blowing “hot hot hot”, a few persist in blowing “colder, wetter”, and then there are those – like the ones looking at the Sahel – who admit they don’t really know. In these pages, while not pretending to have any overall answers, we offer a series of snapshots of the climate conundrum, which will have a serious if uncertain impact on most people’s lives over the next generation.*

*by Simon Anderson*

EVERYONE IS TALKING about climate change. At the international level governments and the United Nations are investing a great deal of resources in addressing this issue. But the scientists cannot tell us yet whether this means more or less rain for the Sahel. Finding an answer to this question is crucial for people in West Africa and other dryland areas because climate change will greatly affect the lives of poor dryland dwellers.

## **Climate projections**

Although scientists predict that arid regions are expected to undergo significant changes as a result of global warming, there is considerable variability and uncertainty of what this actually means. Great uncertainties exist in the prediction of arid ecosystem responses to elevated CO<sub>2</sub> and global warming.

Besides a global pattern of warming, the IPCC<sup>1</sup> projections show that West Africa

is one of the regions of the world that presents the most uncertainty, and the most disagreement among models, as regards future trends in precipitation. An average of the major models suggests a modest increase in rainfall for the Sahel with little change on the Guinean coast, although there are models which project either strong drying or strong moistening.

## **Climate change impacts on poor farmers**

Rural people in drylands rely on rain-fed agriculture and other income generating activities that are extremely vulnerable to anticipated climate change impacts. The fact that dryland societies are already adapted to climate variability clearly also increases the likelihood they can adapt to climate change. However this does not mean that the capacity to adapt will remain constant,

## The Bali Action Plan

The most recent round of climate negotiations took place in Bali, Indonesia in December 2007. An important outcome from these negotiations is the “The Bali Roadmap” consisting of several core elements:

- The launch of a new negotiation process, designed to tackle climate change, with the aim of completing this by 2009.
- The launch of the Adaptation Fund
- A forward course on reducing emissions from deforestation and on technology transfer.

This plan contains no binding commitments rather it provides a timetable for two years of talks to shape the first formal addendum to the 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change treaty since the Kyoto Protocol 10 years ago.

For more information visit: [http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop\\_13/items/4049.php](http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_13/items/4049.php)

or that there will not be limits on this capacity.

## The case of pastoralists

Climate change is affecting drylands and pastoral livelihoods particularly, but not only, in Africa. The delicate balance on which pastoral systems depend is being undermined. The quality, quantity and spatial distribution of natural pastures are mainly shaped by rainfall. Changes in rainfall patterns will result in increasingly scarce, scattered and unpredictable pastures. The number, distribution and productivity of permanent pastures and water points, which are so critical for livestock survival during the dry season, are bound to decline. Scarcer resources, coupled with current levels of demographic growth, are likely to lead to stronger competition between pastoral communities and between these and other groups – possibly resulting in conflict and even violent clashes. As a result, access to pastures becomes more difficult, leading to loss of livestock and of livelihoods. In north-west Kenya, for instance, several years of low rainfall have recently resulted in the death of many livestock, and in a major food crisis among the Turkana pastoralists.


In the longer term, pastoralists are likely to further diversify their livelihoods, both within the pastoral system (i.e. increasing reliance on more drought-resistant species such as camels) and out of livestock production. However, efforts to diversify out of livestock production are likely to be constrained by the difficult environment characterising pastoral areas in Africa. Over time, pastoral groups will shift out of drier areas that are no longer viable, to zones that are more humid and have more predictable rainfall patterns. Existing land tenure arrangements and services in these areas will come under increased strain, exacerbating relations between communities and fuelling conflict.

The following articles highlight some of our readers’ views and experience regarding climate change. Will it be drought or floods?

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1. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

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 *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment:*  
[www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.aspx](http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.aspx)  
*Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change:*  
[www.ipcc.ch](http://www.ipcc.ch)

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# Drought or deluge – or a bit of both?

by Julian Quan

CLIMATE CHANGE will have significant impacts on systems of land and natural resource use throughout the developing world, affecting human livelihoods and provoking population movements. Africa's drylands face the prospect of increasing aridity and climate variability, undermining the sustainability of rainfed agriculture. In the Sahel, however, the implications for rainfall remain uncertain, with some climate models predicting short and medium term increases, possibly leading to a temporary greening of parts of the Sahel and the Saharan fringes.

As global warming progresses, however, rainfall is likely to decline and overall an increasing variability in weather patterns is likely. Across the Sahel, a host of longer term and more recent spontaneous and policy-led adaptations to existing climate variability point the way ahead in the face of uncertainty. First and foremost amongst these, pastoralism provides a means of exploiting the highly variable semi-arid environment, relying on livestock mobility over wider areas, and flexible, negotiated access to pasture and water. Other adaptations include reciprocal exchanges between herders and settled farmers, intensified soil and water conservation, and local agreements [*conventions locales*] to regulate access to shared natural resources amongst different groups. Progressive legislation such as Niger's *Code Rural* which

provides for tenure security and priority access to designated pastoralist home areas, and negotiated access to cattle corridors and vital dry season grazing and water sources.

A recent study for the UN Food and Agriculture Organization<sup>1</sup> emphasises the importance of understanding and building on these adaptations to existing climate variability and integrating them into broader climate change adaptation plans. If short term increases in rainfall occur in the Sahel, it would be unwise to extend agriculture into the Saharan fringes. Instead, long-term stewardship over Sahelian rangelands by pastoralist groups themselves could facilitate the necessary mobility, including across natural boundaries, with the flexibility to switch between arable crops and livestock as conditions permit, and temporary access to arable land or pasture through leasehold arrangements.

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1. Brooks, N. 2006. *Climate change, drought and pastoralism in the Sahel*. Discussion note for the World Initiative on Sustainable Pastoralism. November 2006, IUCN. Available at: [www.iucn.org/wisp/documents\\_english/climate\\_changes.pdf](http://www.iucn.org/wisp/documents_english/climate_changes.pdf)

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# An umbrella just in case, or risk a double jeopardy

by Victor Orindi and Tony Nyong

DRYLAND COMMUNITIES have developed various strategies to cope with the many challenges they face, especially during drought periods. But the more intense and frequent occurrence of extreme climatic events is rendering some of these coping strategies inadequate. As a result, agricultural institutions and development partners have invested significantly to develop drought-resistant crop and livestock varieties for these communities.

However, new climate models have shown that the Sahel and parts of the east African drylands may experience increased rainfall as opposed to increased drying. Very little is being done to prepare communities for increases in precipitation. In the face of significantly increased rainfall, our farmers will be in a quagmire, possibly not prepared to adjust to the new situation. A pressing challenge now is to get our research scientists and these dryland communities to begin to think of floods as a possible threat.

Better still, we should prepare communities for the fact that they may experience both droughts and floods, so that whichever comes, they will be in a position to minimise risk and seize any opportunities presented. For areas that may receive more intense rainfall together with accompanying floods, research scientists and agricultural institutions need to think of varieties of crops that will take advantage of the increased precipitation.

Considering the time it takes to develop a viable crop cultivar, we might already be late in addressing this problem. At the same time, local communities should be encouraged to put in place soil conservation measures to reduce run-off and erosion. It is also important that those working in the drylands adopt an integrated strategy looking at the dynamic relationships between people, environmental resources, livestock and market opportunities.

The environmental and socio-economic differences within drylands call for multiple options and not a one-size-fits-all solution. The time to act is now or Africa's drylands are headed for a double jeopardy, being hit by floods while only preparing for drought.

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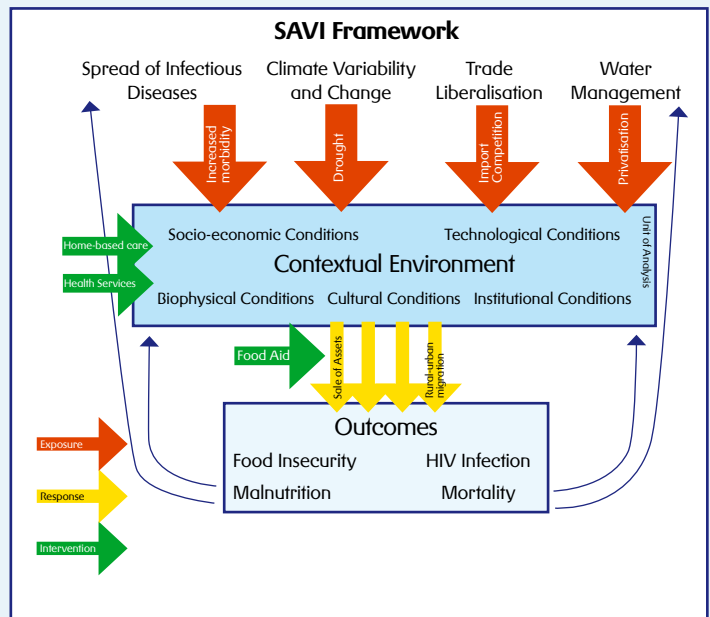
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# Living with climate change in Limpopo Province – impacts and implications

by Coleen Vogel and Gina Ziervogel

THE CHALLENGE OF adapting to climate change in a dryland region like Limpopo Province in South Africa, is not one of only responding to varying climate risks but also of trying to live better with current complex change. Research by the University of Cape Town, the Stockholm Environment Institute and the University of the Witwatersrand shows that although climate change may contribute to vulnerability of livelihoods, there are other factors causing stress – such as lack of access to water, HIV/AIDS or unemployment – that people see as more pressing.

The SAVI (Southern African Vulnerability Initiative) framework provides a lens for viewing the role of multiple factors on local adaptive capacity. Through this framework, we can see that adaptation to climate and other risks in the Limpopo Province goes



well beyond the need for short-term coping mechanisms.

The SAVI framework identifies three pathways of interaction between multiple processes of change (see figure). First, multiple processes may lead to similar outcomes for a particular region, community, household, or social group, which together can have synergistic effects. Second, one process may create changes in the social, economic,



Gina Ziervogel

A woman in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province tills the land of a communal field used by a local cooperative

biophysical, cultural, technological or institutional context, diminishing the capacity of the household, community, or group to respond to other changes. Third, one process may create feedbacks that drive other processes and increase or decrease exposure to future shocks and transformations and in some instances, historically-rooted factors.

Complex interacting factors hamper local adaptive capacity. The lack of access to drought insurance or loans, for example, often precludes the purchase of land, fertilizers, machinery, fencing or generators that could enable communities to better manage risks. Gendered access to resources is also critical factor: female-headed households have limited access to both assets and income and may not be able to produce enough grain to ensure household food security.

Our research shows that much greater effort is needed to understand the interaction

and feedbacks among multiple stresses. Limpopo Province is a dryland region that not only faces the ravages of current climate variability, but may also experience future climate stresses on top of the many other challenges of development in a changing South Africa.

*We acknowledge the invaluable inputs from Dr Sylvester Mpandeli and Gerson Nethavhani.*

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# Don't be caught napping: NAPA can prepare for change

*The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has been working with governments in least-developed countries to develop National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA), to help identify urgent needs. Following is one example of the NAPA process in action.*

*by Sumaya Ahmed Zakieldeen*

THE NAPA PROCESS in Sudan adopted a 'bottom-up' approach using workshops, questionnaires and meetings as tools for communication and consultation. Five ecological zones were selected: desert, semi-desert, woodland savannah (clay), woodland savannah (sand) and flooded areas, representing most of the vulnerabilities in Africa's biggest country.

Consultation for the Sudanese NAPA was intense. It involved three workshops in each of the five selected zones and two national workshops at the beginning and end of the process. The national workshops brought together key stakeholders from the five ecological zones to assess vulnerability and adaptation options. Stakeholder participation and consultation was an integral part of the meetings.

Hundreds of people were involved in each workshop, including farmers, herders, national and international non-government organisations, government officials, researchers, students, community-based organisations and native administration representatives (*omdahs* or *sheikhs*). This diversity ensured a comprehensive vulnerability assessment and participants were able to identify the adaptation options needed to reduce that vulnerability.

The Sudanese NAPA found that fluctuation of rainfall and the increasing frequency of

drought over recent decades have led to an increase in crop failure and soil degradation. With further variability in rainfall and with more frequent droughts, the loss of production is likely to become acute and desertification is expected to expand to wide areas. Poverty levels are expected to increase resulting in loss of lives and even more severe conflicts over scarce resources.

NAPA follow-up projects are currently being prepared to address these challenges, drawing from the wealth of information generated, particularly with regard to indigenous knowledge. Some activities will be funded by the UNFCCC's Adaptation Fund, while bilateral agencies are also expected to have a role in the implementation process.

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**i** A complete listing of National Adaptation Programmes of Action can be found on the UNFCCC website [http://unfccc.int/national\\_reports/napa/items/2719.txt.php](http://unfccc.int/national_reports/napa/items/2719.txt.php).

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# Livestock suffering heat stress liable to lose weight, breed less

by Emma Archer and Mark Tadross

IN CONSIDERING climate change impacts on agriculture, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has tended, in past years, to focus rather more on the relationship between climate change and crops, leaving rangelands and livestock under-represented.

Such a focus is, however, starting to shift, with significant implications for understanding how livestock, as a highly climate sensitive sector, may be affected by climate change. The Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) of the IPCC observes that 'Projected increased temperature, combined with reduced precipitation in some regions (e.g., southern Africa) would lead to increased loss of domestic herbivores during extreme events in drought-prone areas.' (Easterling *et al.* 2007: 287). Enabling adaptation in the livestock sector should thus be a significant focus of country response to climate change, particularly in countries where the livestock sector is a critical component of the formal and informal economy.

Livestock may be impacted by climate variability in a variety of ways. For example, above certain threshold temperatures, sheep, goats and cattle may graze poorly or not at all. Based on a study in Mongolia, it has been found that temperature stress could cause a 50 per cent decline in the weight of sheep, goat and cattle between now and the year 2050. Heat stress and reduced grazing also affect stock reproduction and, ultimately, mortality.

In the eastern Karoo, South Africa, a number of farmers practise existing adaptation measures, given their experience of severe droughts in the 1980s-1990s. These include switching to a hardier dual-purpose sheep and diversification of production systems. The switch to the dual-purpose Dohne breed allows the farmer to benefit from its increased resilience in adverse weather conditions, and from the ability to market both its wool and meat.

Such adaptation strategies must be enabled through local institutional support – but the extension services, which are ideally placed to provide such support, are often poorly resourced. For example, farmers require climate forecast and market information to make informed decisions around production diversification, grazing rotation, shifting of water points, mobility, and transferring to non-agricultural activities. Attention must be paid to strengthening the support available to farmers to meet these needs.

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**i** See forthcoming article: Archer, E.R.M., Oettlé, N.M., Louw, R, Tadross, M.A. In Press. 'Farming on the Edge' in arid western South Africa: adapting to climate change in marginal environments. *Geography*. June 2008.

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# Climate change – what will it mean for men and women in rural drylands?

*by Katharine Vincent*

WITHIN THE REALM of development studies, gender differences are well accepted. In climate change studies, this recognition is much newer, and researchers are only now beginning to study how climate change will affect women and men differently.

Projections of climate change vary, but on the whole dryland areas are projected to become even drier. This has substantial implications for natural resource-based activities, such as agriculture.

Whilst both men and women engage in agriculture, their participation is cast in gendered roles, reflecting socially constructed “acceptable” roles that vary from place to place and change over time. Men are typically responsible for productive tasks, such as agriculture for commercial purposes; whilst women tend to be involved from a subsistence perspective, reflecting their responsibility for reproductive tasks that contribute to the ongoing survival of the household (such as child rearing and healthcare). Different gender roles also often mean that women are less able to respond to climate change by employing coping strategies and adaptations, rendering them relatively more affected than men.

Coping strategies in dryland areas enable survival in the face of inter-annual climate

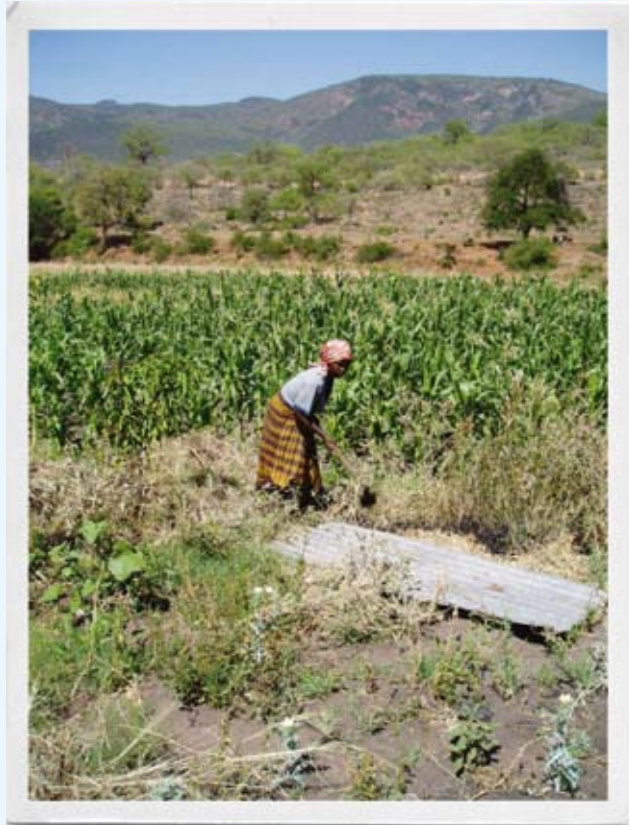
variability. Such strategies are based on flexibility in livelihoods, and will enable continuation of subsistence agriculture, such as changing planting dates, planting hardier varieties (for example sorghum rather than maize), planting in alternative locations, or using river or borehole irrigation. But men and women have different access to such options: land rights for women are often poor, and their lack of control of household financial capital may make it difficult to obtain new seed or sink boreholes for irrigation.

Much reference is already made to the “feminisation of agriculture” whereby relatively more women are engaged in agriculture than men. This is partly due to a historical legacy that means men typically had access to better education, which combined with their gendered role as the household breadwinner affords them the opportunity to seek alternative livelihoods, such as urban-based jobs, that are not dependent on natural resources, and thus are more insulated from the effects of climate change. Women, on the other hand, tend to be confined in their reproductive roles to the homestead and have neither the time nor capacity to seek such work.

There is much evidence of the gender roles constraining capacity to respond to

variations in climate. In a village in rural Limpopo province, South Africa, Florah\* is recently widowed and cares for four school-aged children. She used to grow maize, but low rainfall in recent years has forced her to stop as she cannot afford diesel to operate a borehole for irrigation. The combination of that and the loss of income from her husband is placing her family's livelihoods in a precarious situation, and they rely a lot on her mother's pension to buy food. In the same village Gary\* also used to plant rain-fed crops that he sold as part of a cooperative agreement. He has also stopped planting at the moment due to several poor seasons of rain, but he has managed to find employment in a local tomato canning factory, and thus is able to maintain a livelihood for his family. Such an option would be much more difficult for Florah, partly as she only has primary school education, and partly because she needs to be around the homestead to care for her children.

For women and men in rural dryland areas, climate change will mean different things. Gender differences in roles, responsibilities and capabilities may also lead to the danger of climate change reinforcing disparities between men and women.



Woman tending maize in Limpopo province, South Africa

Katharine Vincent

*\*names changed to adhere to the ethics under which fieldwork was conducted.*

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### What do you think?

Does climate change affect men and women differently and if so how? *Haramata* would like to hear about your experience. In your view what are the new opportunities and constraints posed by climate change for men and women and also for the younger generation? Do environmental changes and projects to enable people to adapt affect relations between genders and generations? Tell us what you think!

*The idea of carbon offsets is simple: Mr A (or Mr A's company, if he travels on business) doesn't want to be responsible for the global warming caused by emissions of greenhouse gases from the aircraft or other vehicles he travels in. So, to compensate, Mr A wants to plant enough trees to absorb an equivalent amount of those gases. And because he can't plant them himself, he buys so-called 'carbon credits' from someone who can – for example, from an organisation like Holland's Face Foundation, which plants millions of trees for this very purpose in countries that need trees. But problems can begin when the tree-planters choose a site for their new plantation. The following two articles offer contrasting views of one such project in Uganda.*

## Tree planting and land rights at Mount Elgon

*by Chris Lang*

PLANTING TREES TO REFOREST Mount Elgon National Park in Uganda seems at first glance like a project that anyone would support. Since 1994, a Dutch organisation called the FACE Foundation has been working with the Ugandan Wildlife Authority to plant trees in this park.

The project aims to reforest an area of 25,000 hectares that was deforested in part during the chaos of the 1970s and 1980s under the regimes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote. Apart from reforesting Mount Elgon, the FACE Foundation trees are intended to store carbon to “offset” greenhouse gas emissions from air travel. The National Park has been recognised under the Forest Stewardship Council certification system.

However, farmers surrounding the National

Park last year cut down an estimated half-a-million of the FACE Foundation's trees and planted crops on the land. Any carbon stored in the trees that farmers cut down has now gone up in smoke.

The farmers have been struggling to get their land back since they were evicted after Mount Elgon was declared a National Park in 1993.

None of the people living in and around Mount Elgon were consulted about the decision, which resulted in the loss of rights to their farms and homes. Neither did anyone receive compensation.

Evictions and sometimes violent conflict has continued. In 2002, the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA) evicted 550 families from Mount Elgon and destroyed their houses and crops. They were left “homeless and without





Chris Lang

At a meeting in a village near the boundary of Mount Elgon national park in July 2006, a villager showed us a handful of bullet shells. “The bullets were shot by people trying to kill us,” he said.

food” and were forced to live in caves and mosques, according to reports in the Ugandan newspaper *New Vision*. The FACE Foundation’s project aims to plant trees in a strip around the boundary of the National Park – precisely the land that is contested by the large number of farmers living around the park.

The land around Mount Elgon is green and the volcanic soil is fertile. Farmers grow bananas, maize, beans, potatoes, other vegetables and fruit trees. Some villagers grow coffee. Villagers also graze cattle in and around the park.

I was shocked to hear what villagers had to say about UWA’s management of the National Park when I visited Mount Elgon in July 2006. One villager opened up an envelope containing bullet shells. “The bullets were shot by people trying to kill us,” he said.

“Some people have died. Others have been injured.”

At a trading centre in Buwabwala Parish, villagers told us of attacks by UWA’s rangers. One of the villagers had allegedly been beaten and taken to the police. Another man showed us wounds on his chin where he said UWA rangers had hit him with a rifle.

“These are only a few of the many cases,” said a villager. “UWA has never been prosecuted for any of them.” But UWA officials deny the charges.

The first step towards addressing the land rights of the people living in and around the park must be to acknowledge that the boundary of the national park is a highly contested zone. Any top-down solution will result in further conflicts between park management and local people. One of the villagers at Buwabwala told me: “We don’t want the whole National Park, we just want our land back.” Another added: “In the old days, people and the park lived amicably. We want the forest to be there. We know the benefits of forest.”

A second step involves the recognition that the North does not have a right to continue polluting. “We can plant as many trees as we want,” Timothy Byakola of the Ugandan NGO Climate and Development Initiatives, told *Fortune* magazine, “but as long as people keep polluting as usual, keep their big vehicles, and keep consuming a lot of fossil fuels, it’s not going to solve the problem.”



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# ‘The main problems are politicians and false accusers’

*by Denis Sliker and Martijn Snoep*

WHO SAID IT would be easy? Forestry is often more about people than it is about trees – and such is the case on the fringes of Mount Elgon National Park, an old volcano crater with steep, rugged slopes and fertile but very unstable soils. Population pressure is high and people migrate here from other parts of Uganda, adding to the demand for fertile land.

Before the FACE Foundation arrived<sup>1</sup>, the status of this area on the border with Kenya was changed from a Forest/Wildlife Reserve to a National Park (NP). At the time, people had encroached on the park and they were told to leave by what is now the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA), the custodian of the national parks. Keeping the park intact hasn't been easy. But there is good reason to insist: almost a quarter of the park has been seriously degraded, endangering the long-term water supply of a large farming area. The encroachment thus threatens the livelihoods of many more people than those who have infringed the park's boundaries and chopped down trees.

FACE's primary objectives for the project are to restore the integrity of the degraded forest ecosystems and enhance biodiversity by planting indigenous tree species on a 2–3 km wide strip along the 200 km long boundary of the park. In addition to these aims, we are seeking to improve the livelihood of the local population by providing employment

opportunities and imparting forest skills and knowledge. Watershed protection and the protection of the lower lying agricultural land and homesteads against erosion are also of key importance.

But there are serious challenges. The two principal problems, surprisingly, are not the population but a) local politicians, and b) false accusations and wrong information. Some local politicians declare – contrary to government policy – that the park should be converted back to agricultural land. This is a sure vote-winner for them at election time and it encourages families to ignore the park boundary. Meanwhile, there are false accusations and wrong information coming from organisations such as the World Rainforest Movement (WRM) and the Ugandan NGO called Climate Development Initiatives (CDI).

WRM/CDI have accused UWA of violating human rights in their interaction with local people and say that the conservation policy works against local people. The allegations have been investigated and except for one case this did not lead to convictions of UWA staff. The role of the park in improving livelihoods in terms of employment, infrastructural development, training and extension, and controlled access to park resources, was appreciated by the stakeholders in the six surrounding districts. The Forestry Stewardship Council also confirmed that



Denis Slieker

Boundary UWA-FACE Project in Mt. Elgon National Park

UWA staff have followed the right channels to amicably address the encroachment.

The problems of local politics and misinformation add fuel to any unrest amongst the local people. They are harming both the people and the park more than they contribute to conservation objectives and improving livelihoods. Unfortunately, at the end of the day the local population and nature suffer most.

As local politics are a central factor in land occupations within the park perimeter, discussion with local politicians and sensitising them to the benefits of park conservation is an important means to counteract this encroachment.

Upto now, the UWA-Face project has rehabilitated 8,500 ha of natural forest, though 1,900 ha of this has subsequently been encroached. As the project moves ahead, a forest resource is being established to which the neighbouring communities have access, providing them with products like firewood and bamboo shoots.

The project is also recognized to be one of the few significant employers in the region. Employees receive free medical care and

training in nursery practices and tree-planting. Furthermore, tree planting enhances the attractiveness of the park for tourists, which benefits the communities as they receive 20 per cent of UWA's tourist revenues.

A responsible carbon project – in a situation where local people's interests are competing with the wider concerns of water supply and biodiversity – is not an easy undertaking, but it can be done. UWA-Face is doing it, slowly, gradually, but it is happening.

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1. FACE (Forests Absorbing Carbon dioxide Emission) was set up in 1990 to help restore the balance between the uptake of CO<sub>2</sub> by forests and the emission of CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere. The Foundation tries to achieve this by planting new forests and protecting existing ones. In Uganda, Face cooperates with UWA in two carbon sequestration projects, in Mt. Elgon and Kibale National Park.



**Denis Slieker** (photo) is director of the FACE Foundation, which was set up in 1990 by the Dutch electricity generating board. It has been independent since 2000. **Martijn Snoep** is project manager with the Foundation. For further information, [info@facefoundation.nl](mailto:info@facefoundation.nl) or [www.stichtingface.nl](http://www.stichtingface.nl)

# WorldSpace technology: the information alternative

*by Noah Lusaka*

MOST OF AFRICA's drylands lack basic infrastructure such as electricity and communication facilities. This makes it difficult for communities to access information to improve their livelihoods.

The digital revolution, information age, knowledge society, dot.com are buzzwords meaning little or nothing to the vast majority of people in developing countries who remain 'unconnected'. But thanks to WorldSpace digital radios this is changing. WorldSpace was pioneered by Noah Samara, an Ethiopian by origin and the chairman of WorldSpace Corporation based in the US.

The WorldSpace satellite network enables people to access information even in the remotest villages without electricity or telephones. The technology involves use of two satellites that orbit over Africa [Afristar] and Asia [AsiaStar]. The Afristar satellite has three broadcast beams, each spreading over 14 million square km, that cover the African continent. This enables a broadcaster to reach a vast audience from a single point of broadcast with no loss of sound quality, making the system highly cost effective. Each beam can broadcast more than 40 different channels. Special portable radio receivers are used to capture the WorldSpace (WS) digital signals.

There are many WS radio models on the market, priced from US \$130 to \$200, and they can be used for two main functions:

- **Digital sound** – Once you have found a good location, a suitable beam is selected

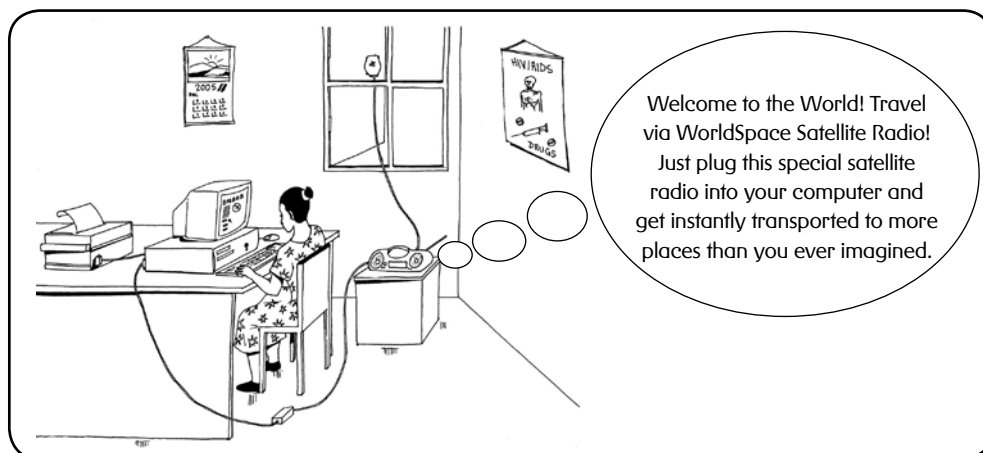
by just pressing a button and a desired channel can then be tuned for listening. The radio enables listeners to choose a wide variety of programmes that include development information, education, news, entertainment and music provided by international and regional broadcasters (e.g. African Learning Channel, the BBC, CNN).

- **Multimedia service** – This permits the downloading of text, graphics and pictures by connecting the radio to a Pentium computer using a special adapter card that comes in the package with installation software.

The WorldSpace radios have several unique features. A detachable waterproof micro-dish receives signals from the WS satellite. The antenna should be placed out doors in a safe place where there are no large obstructions like trees or walls, and then adjusted until it's in line of sight of the satellite. Each receiver is equipped with a data port to connect it to a computer, and the radios can be powered by ordinary batteries, solar or grid electricity.

## **The Africa Learning Channel**

First Voice International (FVI), a US-based non-profit organisation, operates the African Learning Channel (ALC). FVI promotes distance learning by collecting appropriate information from other NGOs and agencies working in Africa, disseminating information on development issues like health, HIV and AIDS,



environment and agriculture, micro-enterprise etc. The ALC provides an opportunity for local communities in every African country to access current social development and educational information. It also gives priority to material from grassroots groups who normally would not have access to the mass media. The ALC data channel is used for free downloading of internet-based text and images from a variety of information services that are up-linked to the WorldSpace satellite.

Since 2000, the Arid Lands Information Network-East Africa (ALIN-EA) has partnered with FVI to deliver information to its membership through the ALC. Activities include training, awareness creation, and monitoring of information use at community level through focal groups and partner organisations.

First Voice International is endowed with 5% of the capacity of each of the WorldSpace satellites, providing the developing world with accurate educational and social development programming. The partnership with FVI enables ALIN-EA to place content on community development gathered from its members and partner organisations for broadcasting through the WorldSpace satellites. The use of such information has had a big impact for community development

workers and the communities that they work with in remotest regions.

### How you can participate

If you are involved in community development work in East Africa, especially in remote drier arid zones, then you can actively participate in this programme by doing any of the following:

- Write to ALIN-EA secretariat for a membership form and join our efforts to improve the life of people living in the east African drylands.
- Call ALIN-EA office and book a demonstration at the secretariat in Nairobi.
- Organise a group of interested NGOs, government departments or community-based organisations in the locality where you work. Then, invite ALIN-EA staff to come over for a demonstration of the technology.
- Book ALIN-EA for a specialised training on the use of WS technology for your organisation or group of interested organisations.
- Send ALIN-EA appropriate information and experiences on community work for broadcasting through the WorldSpace system.

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**i** For further information, contact ALIN-EA, PO Box 10098, 00100, GPO, Nairobi, Kenya. Email: [info@alin.or.ke](mailto:info@alin.or.ke) Website: [www.alin.or.ke](http://www.alin.or.ke)

*Alternative energy*

# Mirrors: a clean way to light up the world

WHILE PRESIDENT Abdoulaye Wade dreams of nuclear power for Senegal (see *Haramata 51*), scientists in Europe are developing plans for a new kind of solar energy. It's ideal for generating in Africa's tropical deserts, which could provide a carbon-free, nuclear-free future for many countries, if not the whole world. And it's all done with mirrors.

The technology called Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) is based on a large array of giant mirrors to capture and focus the sun's rays onto a pipe or vessel containing water or gas. When this is heated to about 400°C it can then be used to power conventional steam turbines.

The idea of CSP has been around for some time, but so far it has only been used for experimental or small-scale power generation. The first plant was built in California's Mojave desert 15 years ago and others are now under construction or testing in the US, Algeria, Spain and Australia.

However, two German scientists have calculated that CSP installations, built on a tiny fraction – less than one per cent – of the world's hot deserts, would provide for the world's entire electricity needs. In other words, it could be the answer to all of humanity's problems of heat and light, subject to one



Concentrated Solar Power from mirrors in Barstow, California

US Dept of Energy

rather large 'if' – namely, if it wasn't so hugely expensive.

The scientists, Dr Gerhard Knies and Dr Franz Trieb, have joined with others, including supporters in Morocco, Algeria and Libya, to propose a scheme – the Desertec Project – that would build as many as a thousand CSP stations in a ring around West and North Africa, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. In this way, Desertec says 100 billion watts of power could be generated. The proposal is that two-thirds of this would be kept in the countries of origin for local use and the rest exported to Europe, which they hope will finance the project.

CSP plants in the south, west and east of the Sahara "could meet all the electricity needs"

of 25 countries across East and West Africa, Desertec states. A number of side benefits are also claimed for the scheme. A CSP plant can be used for desalination, which would be valuable in many parts of Africa to provide a steady supply of drinking water; it can supply air-conditioning to nearby cities, and the shade provided by the mirrors over one square kilometre can be used for growing crops.

The European Parliament recently heard a presentation of the project by Jordan's Prince Hassan bin Talal, a former president of the Club of Rome, and it has asked Desertec to propose some short-term demonstration projects.

One consideration favouring the project is that Europe has committed itself to converting 20 per cent of its energy supply to renewables by 2020 – and there aren't too many options for achieving this target. On the other hand, Desertec would need €10 billion in start-up costs alone over its first seven years and possibly upto €400 billion over 30 years to make it fully operational.

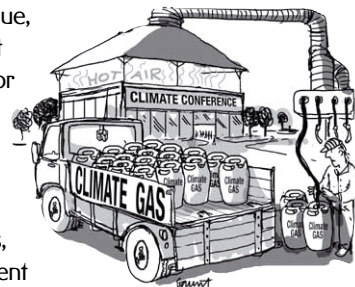
However imaginative the scheme and however wonderful its potential benefits, some experts doubt that the European Union will be prepared to underwrite the costs on such a scale, especially when the price of electricity generated by this technology is not yet competitive with traditional methods. Critics also point out that the proposed network to supply Europe would depend on CSP stations in several politically unstable countries, adding an uncertain risk factor to any such investment.

 [www.desertec.org](http://www.desertec.org)  
*The Observer, London 2/12/07.*



TIEMPO – a bulletin on climate and development is published each quarter by IIED and the Stockholm Environment Institute and covers issues related to climate change in the developing world. A French version of TIEMPO will be available at the end of the year through ENDA Tiers Monde in Dakar, Senegal ([www.enda.sn](http://www.enda.sn)).

The latest issue, no 67, looks at technologies for adaptation and the need for emphasis on processes and institutions, and engagement



Cartoon © Lawrence Moore

with the local context, with a closer look at urban adaptation planning. It also outlines the key climate agreement components and gives an update on the climate negotiating process.

To download copies and for more information visit [www.iied.org/CC/projects/tiempo.html](http://www.iied.org/CC/projects/tiempo.html)

If you are living in a developing country or working on climate and development issues, you can request a free subscription. Please send your request, with your mailing address, to Sarah Granich at Tiempo Editorial, PO Box 4260, Kamo, Whangarei 0141, New Zealand, email: [tiempo.editorial@gmail.com](mailto:tiempo.editorial@gmail.com).

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## A critique of African NGOs that is essential reading

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The role of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Africa's development generally and democratisation in particular has come into sharp focus in recent years. Questions have been raised about the driving forces behind NGO activism, their linkages with Western donors, the class character of NGO leaders and activists and the transparency and accountability of NGO operations, especially downwards to the citizenry. However, as Firoze Manjit observes in the Preface to this publication, not much critical analysis has been undertaken regarding the objective impact of the work of NGOs. Instead, a lot of the discussions about NGOs have focused on the subjective motives behind their work.

This publication presents two essays by Prof. Issa Shivji in which he analyses the historical, political and philosophical contexts that have defined the evolution and place of NGOs in Africa. A renowned African legal thinker, Prof. Shivji is well-placed to undertake the analysis. Not only has he been at the forefront in the quest for a development agenda for Africa defined by Africans themselves, but he has been actively engaged in civil society activism for well over 15 years, and co-founded HAKI-ARDHI, a land policy advocacy NGO based in Dar es Salaam.

The essays are written in Shivji's characteristic way – critical, even ruthless – but, as he asserts, not cynical. In the first essay,

which gives the book its title, he undertakes a critical examination of the role and future of NGOs in Africa. The second essay, entitled 'Reflections on NGOs in Tanzania: What we are, what we are not and what we ought to be' applies the analysis in the first essay to the context of Tanzania.

Shivji takes issue with the self-characterisation of an NGO as a "non-governmental, non-political, non-partisan, non-ideological, non-theoretical, non-profit association of well-intentioned individuals dedicated to changing the world to make it a better place for the poor, marginalized and downcast" (p.1). He sees this self-characterisation and self-perception as being at the root of the failure of NGO activists to recognize the historical context that has defined the evolution of the sector, a context that locates this evolution in the womb of neo-liberalism. This failure makes NGO activists easy prey to and conduits for the advancement of the neoliberal agenda in Africa.

He sees the neoliberal offensive, of which NGOs are such an important feature, as a continuation, even a culmination of the struggle between nationalism and imperialism that dates back to the Partition of Africa "when European kings, princes and presidents sat in Berlin to slice up the African continent with their geometrical instruments" (p.2). The struggle against colonialism was informed by the desire and dream of transforming brutalised colonial societies into national societies, the so-called national project.

Over a period of two decades, between 1960 and 1980, the national project faced major challenges and suffered successive defeats at the hands of imperialism. Shivji identifies three of these challenges and defeats as: Pan-Africanism versus territorial nationalism, the developmental state versus democratic development, and nationalism versus imperialism. In each instance, forces that aimed to liberate Africa from the grip of imperialism



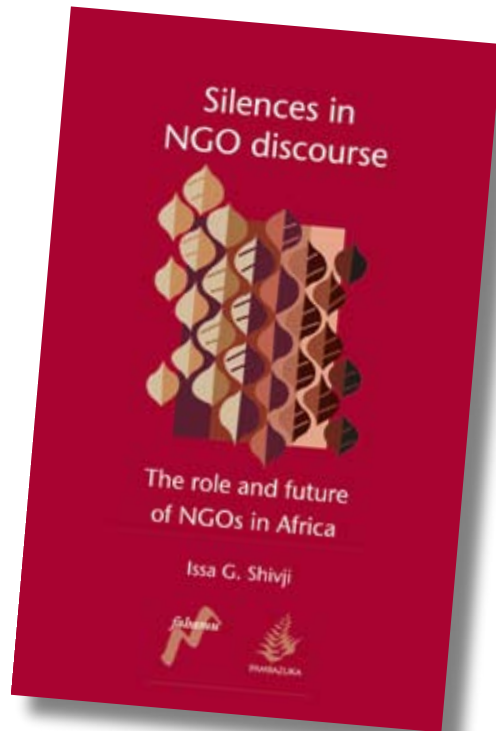
contended with those that sought to keep the continent within that orbit. In each instance, the latter forces prevailed upon the former, ensuring the continued subjugation of Africa to the dictates of its former colonial masters.

The 1980s marked a critical threshold for Africa's development agenda and a transition period from the beginnings of the decline of developmentalism to the rise of neoliberalism or globalization. According to Shivji, the 1980s "signaled both the decline of the developmental state and the loss of its political legitimacy: the loss of both development and democracy" (p.16). But the practical and ideological rethinking that this engendered proved still-born as the Western powers intervened with multi-party democracy and 'good governance' as the new panacea for the ills besetting Africa. Thus, he reckons, the imperial powers reasserted their hegemony and recovered the ground lost during the nationalist decades.

According to Shivji, the collapse of the Soviet Union worked well for imperialism in Africa, enabling Western powers to regain the ideological initiative. Imperialism was recast through the neoliberal economic and political packages "centering around trade liberalization, privatization of national assets and resources, commodification of social services, and marketisation of goods and services" (p.23). He argues that the sudden rise of NGOs and their prominent role in Africa is an integral part of this "neoliberal, organisational and ideological offensive" (p.26).

### Five silences in the NGO Discourse

The emergence of NGOs in Africa came on the heels of the decline of the State. NGOs were in fact presented as a third sector (as opposed to the state and the private sector) and used by donors as the substitute conduit for dispersal of development aid. But this de-linking of NGOs from the state is, according to Shivji, a charade. "NGOs are neither a third sector,



nor independent of the state. Rather, they are inextricably imbricated in the neoliberal offensive" (p.29). Failure to recognize this leaves NGOs "playing the role of ideological foot soldiers of imperialism" (p.29).

In Shivji's view, NGOs in Africa are not alive to the fact that the support they receive from Western donors is given as a contribution to the advancement of imperialism. He identifies what he terms the five silences in NGO discourse that serve to mystify and obfuscate the role of NGOs while objectively situating them within the imperial project.

The five silences are about: the historical, social and theoretical understanding of development, poverty and discrimination; the historical foundations of African poverty and underdevelopment; the class composition of society; politics, power and production relations; and the nature of the better or alternative world that they work for.

Shivji accuses African NGOs of eschewing theory and privileging activism. In the

process, they either take for granted the fundamentals of neoliberalism and financial capitalism or challenge them only piecemeal on specific issues such as debt, environment or gender discrimination, and thus end up being allies in the imperial project that informs neoliberalism. As a result, they fail to locate the present reality of Africa in its historical context, thereby risking being complicit in the perpetuation of global inequities that are a function of that history. Referring to the slogan 'Make Poverty History', Shivji asks "how can you make poverty history without understanding the history of poverty?"

He asserts that NGOs cover up class differentiation in society by presenting society as a harmonious whole of stakeholders neatly compartmentalized into the state, the private sector and the voluntary sector. In this way, NGOs are presented as the moral champions of social welfare, which then ceases to be the responsibility of the state. In reality, the nature of society is defined by conflicting and unequal interests. Thus, "to pretend that society is a harmonious whole of stakeholders is to be complicit in perpetuating the status quo in the interest of the dominant classes and powers." (p.41)

Shivji sees a serious contradiction in the fact that NGOs, while claiming to be working for change, also purport to be non-political and non-partisan. In his view, by so doing NGOs perpetuate a bourgeois mythology that mystifies the reality of capitalist production and power, thus contributing to its legitimisation.

### The way forward

But the situation is not hopeless. Shivji sees an important role for NGOs as long as they critically interrogate the context in which they are operating, make the choice to work for Pan-African liberation, social justice and human emancipation, and work in alliance

with other progressive forces in Africa, particularly intellectuals. Shivji articulates a vision of NGOs that is revolutionary and catalytic, but a number of things have to change in the way NGOs are currently organised and work, if they are to realize that vision. In his words, "If NGOs are to play that role, they must fundamentally re-examine their silences and discourses. They must scrutinize the philosophical and political premises that underpin their activities. They must investigate the credentials of their development partners and the motives of their financial benefactors..." (p.47).

This publication should be read by all persons interested in African development, governance and the role of civil society. It raises many pertinent issues that NGOs and other development actors need to interrogate. Some readers may have problems with an analysis of the NGO sector that focuses so entirely on Western donors when Japan, China and Arab countries are also increasingly investing huge sums in the sector in Africa. Other readers may also not share in the Professor's understandable faith in intellectuals as the leaders of critical thought. Indeed, the emergence of NGO research is in large measure a reaction to the decline of intellectual leadership by the universities, and Prof. Shivji's intellectual colleagues should take a greater share of the blame than he apports them for the weaknesses in the development discourse in Africa.

*Reviewed by Michael Ochieng Odhiambo*

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**i** Issa G. Shivji, *Silences in NGO Discourse: The role and future of NGOs in Africa, Fahamu – Networks for Social Justice, 2007*

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**Erratum:** Please note that VETAID is no longer part of the LEGS Steering Group and has been replaced by *Vétérinaires sans Frontières Belgique (VSF-B)*. We wrongly reported this in the REPORTS section of Haramata 52 (p. 26). We apologise for this error to those concerned.

# Sonja Fagerberg-Diallo

8 March 1950 – 5 March 2008

ARED and IIED are very sad to announce the death of Sonja Fagerberg-Diallo in March 2008.

She was the founder and Executive Director of Associates in Research and Education for Development (ARED) based in Senegal. She lived in West Africa for over 30 years, during which time she worked tirelessly to promote non-formal education in local languages providing rural people with the skills and confidence to understand and claim their rights. Sonja's work has been a major factor in supporting the emergence of a strong rural civil society movement in Senegal.

A memorial for Sonja was held in Dakar on April 10, 2008. Over 200 people attended, and many gave testimonials to Sonja and the quality of her contributions. It is a testament to the wide impact and respect for her work that people from government Ministries as well as rural villages came to pay their respects.

Happily Sonja's success in establishing a strong and robust organisation in ARED means that the important work she began will continue.




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# The Haramata takeaway

*A quick nibble of the delicious dishes to be savoured in this issue...*

\* First, a roundup of news that may have escaped your daily newspaper. Did you know that Algeria seems to have its eye set on making Tamanrasset 'a new Timbuktu' for the Sahelian zone? Or that Angola has the highest economic growth in the world but is almost bottom of the African class for helping its poor people? We have pictures of two recently discovered dinosaurs from the Sahara, and a story on the building boom transforming a number of African cities.

\* On gender issues, Elizabeth Kharono (p10) goes head-to-head with Senorina Wendoh, saying her article in the last issue showed "a considerable amount of confusion on what gender is". Kharono says the real problem is patriarchy. Anyone ready to disagree?

\* Another issue up for debate is whether educated elites (in this case pastoralists) use their education for their own advantage. The question is raised by Michael Ochieng Odhiambo (p12) and we imagine it will prompt some educated rebuttals.

\* Our survey of climate change offers a series of snapshots from Sudan to Limpopo Province, South Africa. After millions of gallons of research, however, it's still not clear whether people in the Sahel will be better off with a sunhat or an umbrella.

\* Carbon offset schemes are very controversial, and the one at Mount Elgon in Uganda (pages 24-27) is no exception. Do they really compensate for the amount of greenhouse gases we go on pumping into the atmosphere? Our authors naturally disagree vehemently on which of them is wearing the halo.

## **And next time...**

> Calls for a moratorium on biofuels have been getting louder as the accelerating switch of farmland to fuel crops has contributed to alarming food shortages in many countries.

> A more detailed assessment by Serigne Mansour Tall of the building boom in Dakar, mentioned briefly in the current issue. Sustainable urban growth, he points out, requires the revitalisation of agriculture and the development of other rural businesses, while the development of market towns would help the villages around them and thus reduce the pressure of inward migration on the capital.

> From Ethiopia, a report on female genital mutilation makes the point that a huge change in cultural perceptions will be needed if groups such as the Afars are to abandon this practice. According to a study, over 80 per cent of young Afar men said they would refuse to marry a girl who had not been circumcised.

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