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**Conflict and
vulnerability to
famine:
livestock raiding in
Turkana, Kenya**

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INTRODUCTION

It is now widely recognised that violent conflict plays a decisive role in the creation of conditions leading to famine in Africa today (de Waal, 1990, 1993; Macrae and Zwi, 1994). This is especially true in dryland pastoral environments where violence magnifies trends already discernible as a result of natural events such as drought. None the less, the links between drought, violence and famine are complex and remain poorly understood. For this reason, and given the fact that most relief organisations are ill-equipped to deal with conflict, famine is still largely treated as a 'drought-driven' event. In practice, this involves giving hungry herders food or helping them to restock their herds. Little else is done, or seemingly can be done, to address how exactly violence undermines the viability of herds in the first place.

Drawing on a case study of Turkana district, Kenya, this paper examines one specific form of conflict: livestock raiding. Although raiding is an age-old feature of pastoral relations, it is still often viewed as superimposed on pastoral life rather than as an intrinsic feature of competition between groups in harsh environments. As a consequence, the complex links between this pastoral institution and famine have received insufficient attention. The key problem, this paper argues, is not livestock raiding per se. Rather, it is the way in which raiding has been transformed over the years, from a quasi-cultural practice with important livelihood-enhancing functions, into a more predatory activity. Predatory raiding occurs on a very large scale, is extremely violent and is sponsored by actors from outside the pastoral sector with criminal motives. Turkana herders are at constant risk today of being violently dispossessed of their livestock. With their mobility already constrained by generalised insecurity, the impact on livelihoods is devastating.

Analysts have been slow to come to terms with these new dimensions of raiding, both because they are hard to see and because they raise issues beyond their capacity or desire to address. This paper first of all examines the recent context for famine in Turkana and why relief and development workers have tended to downplay the contribution of livestock raiding. Next it contrasts the livelihood-enhancing functions of traditional livestock raiding with the more predatory forms common today. The complex interaction between raiding, drought and famine is then examined more closely. Finally, some implications of this analysis for famine relief and development activities in pastoral areas are briefly discussed.

FAMINE RESPONSES IN TURKANA: DROUGHT DRIVEN

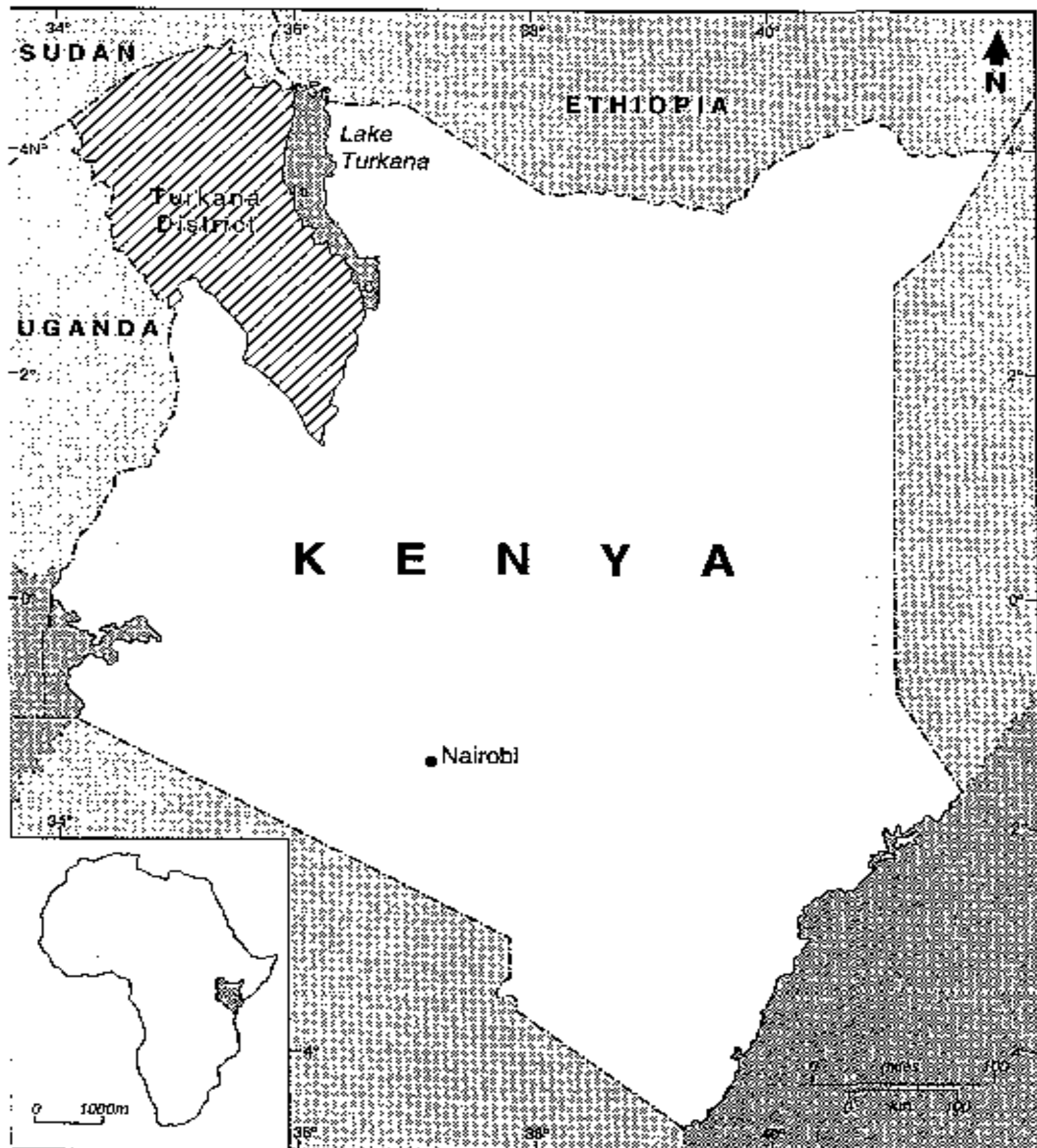
The context for famine

The Turkana, numbering some 300,000, of whom 70 per cent are pastoralists (Buchanan-Smith and Davies, 1995), inhabit a desolate region in north-western Kenya. To the west, north-west and north-east, Turkana district is bordered by Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia, respectively (see Figure 1). The Turkana are divided into 13 sub-tribes, each of which occupies a well-defined territorial 'sub-section'. Like the majority of pastoralists in Africa, the Turkana have traditionally led a lifestyle geared towards subsistence. Their principal asset, and the primary source of their sustenance, is livestock. Though precarious at the best of times, the herding lifestyle is well suited to the harsh, dryland environment which the Turkana inhabit. Drought and famine are constant hazards; only one year in four is likely to bring adequate rain (Gulliver, 1955).

Owing to extreme climatic variability, the Turkana pursue a nomadic existence in search of fodder and water for their livestock. Their migration routes habitually take them across district boundaries and, during prolonged droughts, even into neighbouring countries. During their long experience of environmental uncertainty, the Turkana have also developed a highly flexible social system and an elaborate set of both individual and collective-based survival strategies. These include herd diversification, herd splitting, the redistribution of surplus livestock within social networks, the formation of alliances with neighbouring groups and recourse to raiding livestock from other herders (McCabe, 1990). In particular, complex social security networks based on kinship, friendship and patronage - the so-called 'moral' economy - constitute the final protection against destitution and are key to famine recovery. Over the years, Turkana herders have also become more reliant on the market and relief assistance to make up for deficits in food production.

For the Turkana, like other herders in Africa, the chief preoccupation is not the daily struggle for subsistence nor the uncertainty. Their harsh environments have conditioned them to accept these and to which they have adapted more or less successfully over the centuries. Rather it is the introduction of extreme instability into their lives and more aberrant forms of

Figure 1: Map of Kenya showing Turkana District



uncertainty for which they cannot plan. What is 'new' in the modern era is the extent and duration of the famines they are experiencing, combined with the slow rate of recovery. These are largely products of local environmental changes and more intrusive external influences which have undermined their abilities to cope with drought.

Growing instability

The stage for extreme food insecurity within Turkana was set decades ago (Oba, 1992). As is the case with the north-eastern herder-occupied periphery, Turkana has been consistently politically marginalised under both the colonial administration and the post-independence Kenyan governments. Famine prevention in pastoral areas has not been a foundation for the political legitimacy of Kenya's ruling classes as it has been in the urban areas and, at crucial political moments preceding elections, in the central highlands (de Waal, 1997). Consequently, little has been done by the government to tackle the structural causes of famine and impoverishment in Turkana. These have always been as much political as environmental and economic in nature.

The indigenous livestock economy in Kenya was seriously weakened following pacification by the colonial regime at the turn of the century. After independence, Turkana tribal lands were increasingly brought under state control. National borders were fixed and more closely monitored, often disrupting traditional patterns of pastoral land use. Starting in the 1970s, physical insecurity in the district increased dramatically as internal wars in Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda spilled over into Kenya. The widespread availability of modern weapons of war has also contributed to more destructive and lasting hostilities among the Turkana and with neighbouring tribes: the Toposa, the Donyiro, the Merille, the Karamojong and the Pokot.

In the past two decades, major drought has struck three times in the region with devastating effects. The severity of the 1979-81 drought, which hit the north particularly hard, obliged many herders to give up pastoralism as a way of life at least temporarily (Hogg, 1982). In February 1982, 80,000 out of 180,000 Turkana in the north were still receiving food aid, many of them in relief camps. In 1994, Oxfam was still providing food to as many as 155,000 people stricken by the 1990-92 drought (Bush, 1995).

The coping strategies and fall-back activities which have traditionally played a key role in sustaining Turkana herders during periods of stress have become increasingly unsatisfactory over this period of time (Swift, 1989; McCabe,

1990). As a result, external food assistance has become more fully integrated into the Turkana's arsenal of survival strategies, although at the great cost of dependence on outsiders.

Raiding overlooked

Although anecdotal evidence about raiding abounds in the food security literature about Turkana, its key contribution to recent famines has not been extensively documented or examined. There are three principal reasons for this.

First, development interventions in Turkana have been characterised by general ignorance about pastoralists and pastoral systems. The failure of many development projects can in part be attributed to the stereotypical views and images of African pastoralists and their environments held by researchers, government officials, aid and development workers (see Baxter and Hogg, 1990; Leach and Mearns, 1996). These views represent African pastoralists as arrogant, warlike, economically irrational, unresponsive to development and environmentally destructive. Cattle raiding, for instance, has largely been seen as a 'primitive' feature of pastoral relations. Its complex role in socio-cultural reproduction and the management of pastoral resources has long been poorly understood by outsiders. These stereotypes, while colonial in origin, have persisted to the present and identify pastoralism itself as the primary source of herders' misfortunes.

The frequency of drought in the region has also led to a perceived 'inevitability' about famine. To the extent that it could be avoided, it was originally thought that this would involve the sedentarisation of herders on agricultural schemes or in fishing villages. Ironically, instead of strengthening livelihoods, this more often damaged them through a poor understanding of indigenous strategies of self-reliance which are well adapted to risky dryland environments. By constraining the traditional mobility of herders and concentrating human and livestock populations in more-fertile areas, development interventions have themselves been environmentally damaging.

Second, it has been famine and a particularly narrow conception of it more than any other factor which has shaped outside interest in Turkana. Famine relief was provided as early as the 1930s by the colonial administration and in more recent years the district has become the target of the largest famine relief efforts in the country. Guiding these interventions has been a Western definition of famine equating it with starvation and mortality. The focus has

tended to be on the consequences of famine rather than the causes, in particular sidelining those which were not 'drought' related in origin. For this reason, the complex socio-political processes which have an impact on livelihoods and increase famine vulnerability have remained poorly understood.

The third reason why livestock raiding has been overlooked is political. As Cullis and Pacey note in their study of Turkana:

"drought is politically neutral, and to present it as the cause of crisis avoids blaming national governments or district administrators for failure to control the security situation. It also avoids the need to identify and remedy other factors which may encourage raiding factors that might include chronic poverty, alienation from national institutions, and trading in weapons" (1992:8)

Development and relief workers have traditionally had neither the mandate nor the experience to deal with armed conflict. Conventional understandings of conflict see it as a temporary and abnormal feature of social relations which will eventually give way to more peaceful forms of co-operation and development. A common response in many analyses of food insecurity in Turkana, dictated by insufficient information, the lack of options to confront the problem, or by the need to appear politically 'neutral', has been officially to ignore the role of raiding or to downplay its contribution to famine (see, for instance, Bush, 1995).

THE TWO FACES OF LIVESTOCK RAIDING: REDISTRIBUTION AND PREDATION

There are various studies which do underline the important role raiding has played in recent famines in Turkana. A 1985 study noted that the problem of raiding 'is one of the most dominant and intractable of constraints to the full realisation of livestock potential' in the district (Ecosystems, 1985: 9.3.1). More recent studies argue that raiding and generalised insecurity played a key role in the 1979-81 famine in north Turkana (McCabe, 1990) and confirm that raiding is a prominent feature of famine and chronic food insecurity in the district (Buchanan-Smith and Davies, 1995). These studies, however, largely portray raiding in a negative sense, ignoring both its key livelihood-enhancing features and the changes this pastoral institution has undergone in the modern era.

Conflict as integral to resource use

Local-level conflicts over natural resources, of which livestock raiding is one specific form, are endemic in Africa's pastoral and agro-pastoral systems (Hussein, 1996). As Anacleiti (1991) cautions, these belligerent relations must be seen in the context of the complex processes through which pastoralists have built up and sustained the physical and cultural components of their survival in harsh environments. The rigorous daily routine of being a herder fosters a number of physical and mental attributes essential to survival which often translate themselves into aggressive behaviour. The ultimate objective of aggressive behaviour, however, is not necessarily the physical overcoming of an adversary nor is it influenced solely by material considerations.

Many conflicts in pastoral systems can in fact be seen as crucial to defining relations between different groups. The 'multiple resource systems' common to dryland areas are characterised by the utilisation of natural resources for multiple purposes or by more than one user (Cousins, 1996; Swallow et al., 1997). Because groups have different objectives and interests in the use of resources, competition is often accentuated though violent conflict is not necessarily inevitable. Where there are no formal institutions to manage natural resources, conflict can be seen as indicating an incompatibility between social institutions and new problems such as a shortage of resources (Chauveau and Mathieu, 1996). Conflict thus serves as a means of communication between different groups, the ultimate objective of which may be to set the context for a re-negotiation of access to resources and to re-assert group identities.

If the aggressiveness of herders can in some part be attributed to the demands of survival in harsh environments, then the need to form alliances and co-operate with herders or agriculturists is the other side of the coin. Gulliver's seminal ethnography of the Turkana (1955) highlights that these patterns of conflict and co-operation are integral to the functioning of the nomadic pastoral lifestyle in the face of severe ecological pressures. He described a society where social relations were defined by reciprocal rights in stock exchanges, often enabling access to dry-season pastures under the control of neighbouring groups in times of shortage. When the balance of power between groups shifted, relations based on peaceful exchange could quickly be replaced by reciprocal raiding. Perpetual enmity between groups was none the less rare, Gulliver suggested.

Mechanisms have also traditionally existed within pastoral societies for mitigating the most destructive effects of conflict (Fukai and Turton, 1979). Herders pursue a complex range of conflict avoidance strategies to minimise vulnerability and to avoid confrontations with other resource users. These include the diversification of livelihood strategies, the intensification of resource use and migration. Where conflict avoidance is not possible and violence erupts, pastoral societies typically possess a rich array of strategies for managing them which are embedded within local social norms and include roles for councils of elders, religious chiefs and traditional courts. Lamphear (1994) notes that many institutions associated with warfare among Turkana herders such as 'generation systems' have traditionally served to restrict violence as well.

These 'livelihood-enhancing' roles which conflict can serve in pastoral societies are key to understanding the shift from so-called 'redistributive' forms of raiding to more 'predatory' forms as well as the accompanying increase in famine vulnerability among Turkana herders in recent decades.

Redistributive raiding

'Redistributive' forms of raiding have traditionally been a sophisticated way of reallocating pastoral resources between rich and poor herders, and have been an equally common feature of both intra-tribal and inter-tribal relations (Dyson-Hudson and McCabe, 1982). Raiding serves to rebuild herds after livestock have been killed by drought or seized in raids and its incidence is thus often closely tied to climatic conditions and the prevailing state of the 'tribal peace'. Raiding is governed by very complex rules within the context of an indigenous conception of livestock as collective property. The use of extreme violence, especially against women and children, was generally socially unacceptable in earlier times, at least among the Turkana.

Other social and political factors also help explain the prevalence of redistributive forms of raiding. Many elements of Turkana culture display a military ethos which blends in with religious, political and economic matters. For young men, warfare is an important rite of passage; one which has become linked with raids and is often an important inspiration for raiding (Lamphear, 1992). Raiding cattle is also one of the few ways by which a young man can earn prestige and gain independence from his father. Because livestock are the currency used in social transactions, there is often tremendous pressure to accumulate cattle. Marriage, for instance, requires

payment of high bride prices which Bollig (1990) has argued constitutes a very strong motivation for young men to raid.

In many ways redistributive forms of raiding contribute to the stability of the pastoral system as a whole. In the absence of any over-arching authority in pastoral society, raiding and other forms of warfare serve to maintain separate identities and rule-governed relations between different groups as well as acting as a balance. It would be wrong to romanticise redistributive forms of raiding by overlooking the extremely negative impact they can have, in certain cases, on the livelihoods of herders. This is especially the case as the use of modern weaponry has become more common in Turkana over recent decades. Nevertheless, redistributive raiding could be seen to occur within a social framework able to accommodate its excesses.

Predatory raiding

'Predatory' forms of raiding have overwhelmed this social framework through their sheer intensity and scale. The main distinction between redistributive and predatory raiding does not relate to the use of sophisticated weaponry. Rather, it is the growing involvement in raiding of actors from outside the pastoral system which has significantly undermined pastoral livelihoods and the socio-economic integrity of the pastoral system as a whole. While Turkana herders have always been prey to raiding activities by outsiders, predatory raiding has increased in frequency and intensity over the past few decades.

Predatory raiding is driven by a criminal logic contrasting sharply with former notions of balance and reciprocity. Predatory raids are largely initiated by people outside Turkana, including armed military or bandit groups in Kenya or surrounding states as well as economic 'entrepreneurs'. The motives are commercial: to procure cattle in vast quantities either to feed warring armies or to sell on the market for profit. This has been made possible by general economic stagnation in the Horn of Africa which has contributed to the development of informal 'parallel' economies (Duffield, 1994). These markets are unconstrained by national frontiers and are largely controlled by people in positions of political power or with access to weapons. The illicit cross-border trade in arms and cattle in the Horn of Africa is thus at the very crux of the security problem in Turkana today. An important negative consequence of this has been the militarisation of Turkana district as local herders have been forced to arm themselves for defensive purposes.

The shift towards greater state control of pastoral affairs through legal and administrative frameworks introduced in colonial times has not only curtailed the ability of herders to pursue their productive activities but has also aggravated raiding. In a bid to centralise power, successive governments have actively sought to undermine the influence and legitimacy of tribal elders who customarily worked together after a period of raiding to forge a new truce. The breakdown of traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms in Turkana society has thus greatly exacerbated tensions both within and between tribes.

Elements within the Kenyan state are also important actors in livestock raiding in Turkana today. The occurrence of predatory raiding at the local level often resonates with political events at the national level, especially the heightened inter-ethnic competition which regularly accompanies national elections in Kenya. Because raiding continues to be seen as something 'primitive' that pastoralists do, it provides a convenient front behind which substantial political realignments unfavourable to pastoral interests are taking place. The undermining of the pastoral way of life, which is dependent on a certain systemic cohesion and balance, is thus an inevitable consequence (and in some cases, a direct objective) of actions by outside groups.

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN DROUGHT, RAIDING AND FAMINE

It is not possible to generalise about the impact of drought and raiding across Turkana district. Conditions and problems tend to be very location specific. In the 1979-81 famine, for instance, herder populations in the north were hit very hard while those in the south emerged relatively unscathed due to the more effective functioning of their famine coping and recovery strategies (McCabe, 1990). While the relationship is complex, the Turkana case gives some indication of how drought and raiding interact to undermine the individual and collective-based livelihood strategies on which herders rely in times of crisis.

Insecurity and famine vulnerability

The starting-point for understanding this process is a much broader definition of famine. Conventional views of famine tend to portray it as a short-term, time-bounded event stemming from simple lack of food. Narrowly defined in terms of its impact on population mortality rates, this detracts attention from the strategies herders pursue to maintain their livelihoods and the ways in which these are undermined. In line with broader African definitions, it is more helpful to view famine as when a 'way of life' suffers increased

mortality (de Waal, 1990). Viewing famine as a process the erosion of the basis of subsistence opens the way to a better understanding of how man-made events contribute to famine and how they can be addressed.

In dryland pastoral areas, livelihood strategies are inherently adaptive to the radical changes in environmental conditions which occur (Corbett, 1988; Davies, 1996). Turkana herders constantly switch back and forth between a range of 'normal' livelihood activities pursued when conditions are good and a set of 'coping' strategies which they resort to during times of stress. Due to their extreme poverty, a succession of severe droughts in recent years and the growing problem of insecurity in Turkana, coping has in effect become a normal state of affairs for many herders. The line between coping and destitution has thus also become much finer, resulting in a virtually permanent state of famine vulnerability for many herders with a reduced ability to weather transitory disturbances.

This is particularly the case when shocks such as disease, drought and raiding occur simultaneously. The incidence of raiding, for instance, probably increases when drought occurs. Livestock diseases are often spread through raiding and can have a devastating impact on livestock populations. Though not immediately recognised at the time, disease is now thought to have been decisive in bringing about the 1979-81 famine in northern Turkana which was triggered by the loss of 90 per cent of all cattle, and large proportions of the goat, camel and donkey populations. The epidemic itself stemmed from diseased livestock seized during a massive raid carried out by Turkana herders in north-eastern Uganda (Cullis and Pacey, 1992).

The direct impact of raiding can be particularly devastating in human terms as illustrated by a major cross-border raid in 1992, in northern Turkana, which resulted in more than 100 deaths (Buchanan-Smith and Davies, 1995). However, the tendency to view raiding as a 'one-off' shock fails to account for the important indirect impact it has on livelihoods through the permanent state of insecurity and the knock-on effects which are generated. Paradoxically, it is perhaps not so much raids themselves as the uncertainty stemming from the threat of raids, along with the measures taken to cope with this uncertainty, which undermine herders' livelihood strategies the most.

Constraints on mobility

Uncertainty has a direct impact on herder mobility. While raiding is a strategy for expanding the size of one's herd, avoiding being raided is critical to protecting it. None the less, self-imposed restrictions on mobility in the face of insecurity can have very negative implications for the viability of herds. The Nginsonyoka of south Turkana, for instance, have traditionally moved 10-15 times per year in search of patchy rainfall zones and pockets of high-potential rangelands for their livestock (McCabe, 1990). Mobility is all important because different species of livestock require different kinds of vegetation. The evolving security situation dictates that at any one time certain rangelands are effectively 'off-limits', forcing herders to find others.

The severe problems posed by insecurity are impossible to ignore in any serious assessment of the conditions which give rise to famine in Turkana today. A 1985 study found that 47 per cent of Turkana district including much of the best grazing land was virtually unused during the 1982-4 period due to the mere threat of raiding faced by local herders (Ecosystems, 1985). Another study by McCabe (1990) estimated that up to one-quarter of the territory of the Nginsonyoka, comprising their best highland grazing areas, was rarely used for the same reasons. The consequences of these constraints on mobility are threefold.

First, herders are forced to restrict the grazing of their livestock to pastures which are less suitable or provide insufficient fodder. The immediate problem of over-grazing which arises can, in the longer term, lead to serious degradation of the pastures. Second, constraints on mobility also affect the vegetation of ungrazed pastures, although in a very different way from over-grazing. When pastures are not grazed by livestock, they give way to thorny shrubs that make them less suitable for grazing over time. Finally, the forced sedentarisation of pastoral populations restricts their access to the wild foods and local markets which are key fall-back survival strategies.

The effectiveness of a livelihood strategy based on mobility is thus a function of the prevailing state of security in a region. For herders this often involves a trade-off between the perceived risk of being raided and the fear of starvation. Redistributive forms of raiding were largely expected and could be dealt with; while the risks of grazing in an unsafe area might be high, they were not necessarily unacceptable so given the existence of the collective social security system for herders to fall back upon. The high intensity and

unpredictability of predatory raiding has introduced an extreme degree of uncertainty into subsistence calculations. For Turkana herders, not only are their lives at risk when they graze their livestock, but the moral economy which many rely upon in times of crisis is also being undermined today by violence and insecurity.

Breakdown of the moral economy

The undermining of the moral economy not only affects the livelihood strategies of individual herders but has implications for the integrity of the wider pastoral system. The moral economy gives herders the right to make claims on other herders in times of crisis for goods such as cereal or livestock. This right carries with it an obligation to reciprocate with transfers of goods or services when others are in need. The moral economy is not intrinsically welfarist, however, and may involve relationships entailing the loss of a herder's status and autonomy in exchange for some measure of security. Nevertheless, it represents the backbone of the collective social security system upon which both richer and poorer herders depend.

Redistributive forms of raiding can be seen to operate within a set of rules and reciprocal relationships which fit in with the functioning of the moral economy: other things being equal, over time, the give and take of mutual raiding on a small scale leads to a redistribution of resources between richer and poorer herders and leaves the pastoral sector as a whole better off. The emergence of more predatory forms of raiding has contributed to the breakdown of this moral economy. One key reason it fails is when herders living near one another are raided at the same time. A single raid can devastate an entire herding community, forcing its members to go much further afield in search of assistance.

Another factor behind the breakdown of the moral economy is the manipulation of herders by outsiders using inter-tribal tensions as a springboard for their actions. Where Turkana herders are involved in raiding initiated by outsiders, they stand to gain at least in the short-term although the bonds to the rest of the pastoral community are weakened. It thus seems unlikely that the benefits these herders derive are as widely redistributed within the local community as they would be through the normal functioning of the moral economy. Those benefiting from raiding are increasingly located outside the pastoral system, while within it the benefits are accruing to a smaller number of people.

The decline in per capita stock wealth within the pastoral system increases the pressure on local herders to raid. This is especially true in the case of young men whose role in pastoral society has worsened because of the difficulty of fulfilling social obligations linked to raiding. Recourse to violence is also more common because the influence of local elders, once sufficient to check the aggressive ambitions of younger 'age-sets', has in many cases dwindled significantly.

But it is the poorest and most vulnerable herders - women and children in particular - who end up on the losing side most often as the viability of the pastoral sector declines. As dependants, women and children are the first to leave the pastoral sector in times of crisis. They are sent to stay with distant relatives or, increasingly, to urban areas where their vulnerability to food insecurity may not be relieved. Often women have been forced to turn to prostitution to survive. As the collapse of the moral economy becomes more generalised, herders dispossessed of livestock are themselves often forced out of the pastoral sector into relief camps or in search of wage labour.

This represents the final blow to hopes of recovery as the crucial social ties needed to resume herding are often irrevocably severed. McCabe's (1990) analysis of the 1979-81 famine in Turkana suggests that this was a key reason why herders in the north had a harder time recovering than herders in the south. Northern Turkana pastoral society was vulnerable to extreme stress arising from inter-ethnic conflict, raiding, political instability, national boundary restrictions and the famine relief effort itself. These problems were much less pronounced in the south. Despite the loss of some 60 to 90 per cent of their livestock and with no recourse to food aid, the Nginsonyoka were able to recover almost completely thanks to drought-coping strategies based on the moral economy and mobility.

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The 'new thinking' on pastoral development (Scoones, 1995) poses a serious challenge to claims that herding is an economically unproductive and environmentally damaging activity in the arid environments where more than half of Africa's pastoralists live today. Better understanding of the complex ways in which herders interact with their environments has underlined the rational functioning and economic productivity of dryland production systems. It is now recognised that, in the context of extreme environmental uncertainty, the survival of herders is dependent - as far as possible - on maintaining a

lifestyle based on livestock and mobility. The effectiveness of famine relief and pastoral development policies needs to be evaluated with this in mind.

Famine relief

It is well understood today that famine among pastoralists is not simply a condition of food shortage but stems from the collapse of pastoral livelihoods. Relief policies implemented by various agencies in Turkana in recent years have sought to address both problems. These interventions have ranged from traditional feeding programmes (a focus of the World Food Programme) targeted at herders concentrated in relief camps, to efforts to buttress the pastoral economic system and protect livelihoods. The latter approach was adopted by Oxfam in north Turkana between 1992 and 1994 (Bush, 1995) with the dual objective of preventing the long-term destitution of herders and, where this had already occurred, aiding their recovery.

The principal problem faced by traditional feeding programmes has been the creation of dependence on outsiders as well as a further weakening of indigenous strategies of self-reliance (McCabe, 1990; Oba, 1992). A focus on saving lives which neglects the fact that the basis of livelihoods has been undermined is ultimately tackling the symptoms rather the causes of destitution.

With this in mind, Oxfam's efforts to strengthen the pastoral economy sought to increase the provision of food aid as a means of maintaining the independence of herders. Beyond meeting immediate consumption needs, food aid was also intended to prevent livestock depletion by minimising the need for herders to sell their livestock to acquire grain or to slaughter them for consumption. Food aid was also able to play an important role in strengthening the traditional social networks which make up the moral economy (Bush, 1995). It was found that herders regularly shared the food assistance they received among themselves, not simply for 'humanitarian' reasons, but because this served to strengthen their social bonds which might be counted upon for support at a later date.

Oxfam's food aid programme had the same general objective as its restocking programme which was to bolster the pastoral economy by preventing the depletion of herds or by rebuilding them. While many lives were no doubt saved, these strategies do not in themselves constitute an adequate longer-term response to the collapse of pastoral livelihoods brought about by violence and insecurity.

Linking relief and development

Oxfam's 1992-4 relief programme in Turkana was in line with a growing interest in linking short-term relief efforts with longer-term initiatives to relaunch development activities. Much discussion about linking relief and development focuses on the need for better planning, earlier action when emergencies arise, helping people to restore their assets and livelihoods and rebuilding community structures. The danger is in overlooking the political causes of famines and in seeing the task of linking relief and development as only a technical issue.

In responding to famine, a distinction needs to be made between the causes of destitution which are drought related such as when livestock perish from a lack of water or good-quality fodder and those which stem from raiding and generalised insecurity. These have a direct and immediate impact on herd size and the mobility of herders. Food aid or restocking - where appropriately provided - can contribute to rebuilding livelihoods assuming that herders are able to resume normal livelihood strategies based on mobility. Where resources such as cattle or grain are actively sought by marauding bandits or military groups, the provision of food aid or restocking may also serve to attract armed predators. In such cases, seeking to rebuild livestock herds as a famine relief strategy must be seen as seriously inadequate, if not flawed.

The challenge of ensuring unfettered mobility for herders in Turkana requires nothing less than addressing the broader problems which give rise to predatory raiding today. These are extremely complex and any solutions must have geo-political dimensions which go far beyond the scope of what most relief agencies are able to do. Relief agencies are nevertheless well placed, given their proximity to these problems, to raise awareness and lobby for more effective responses by both national governments and international development agencies.

Conflict resolution

Given the problems posed by conflict, there is growing interest in a range of 'conflict resolution' techniques which seek to target conflict explicitly. While this is an encouraging sign that relief and development agencies are coming to terms with the underlying causes of conflict, a number of pitfalls loom large which require careful consideration. Oxfam, for instance, has had some

success in brokering a 'peace agreement' in northern Turkana using food aid as an incentive to get rival groups to collaborate. While this demonstrates a potential role for conflict resolution work, it is important to be clear whether the objectives are purely functional (to expedite the delivery of food aid) or to establish a long-term institutional mechanism for dealing with conflicts.

In the first case, the objective could be criticised as being overly short-termist in nature and may serve to mask the complexity of the broader problem. In the second case, a more pragmatic assessment is required as to whether conflict-resolution interventions can really have a constructive impact on the level and direction of violence given the underlying structural factors. Conflicts in pastoral areas are usually political in nature and can involve large disparities in power between opposing groups. In the haste shown by certain relief and development agencies to build 'local' capacity to manage conflicts, there is a danger that two key issues will receive inadequate attention (Hendrickson, 1997).

The first has to do with the appropriate balance between the role of the state and that of local-level groups in managing conflicts. Just as there is growing recognition that effective natural resource management in the pastoral sector is linked to the reform of state legislation and institutions, so it is with dispute resolution. The state must be brought into any debate on the problem of insecurity in the pastoral sector. This is so, not simply because the state is often - directly or indirectly - involved in raiding, but because the state in the long run offers the best forum for mediating in conflicts where outside actors are involved and for enforcing any settlements which are reached.

The second issue has to do with the appropriate balance between 'local' and 'outside' approaches to conflict resolution. Many outside approaches seek to import new techniques for managing conflicts based on Western notions of mediation and negotiation. The 'new thinking' on pastoral development, with its emphasis on supporting what 'pastoralists do best', also applies to conflict resolution. Conflict resolution mechanisms are already embedded in local cultural and institutional norms and evolve continuously to meet changing demands. While the nature of conflicts in the pastoral sector today is changing dramatically, the starting-point for addressing them is to examine how this local knowledge can be deployed in new ways. The tendency for too long has been to ignore indigenous knowledge to the detriment of pastoralists' livelihoods.

CONCLUSION

Coming to terms with the links between conflict and famine, the Turkana case suggests, requires a much better understanding of the role which conflict has traditionally played in pastoral societies. Forms of conflict such as livestock raiding have been integral to local patterns of resource use for centuries. Understanding how these conflicts have changed in the modern era offers an important window for examining how herders' livelihoods are being undermined today. While the problems posed by contemporary forms of pastoral conflict in many ways seem intractable, the fact that they have been exacerbated by years of inappropriate relief and development interventions offers hope that improved policies can help bring about constructive changes.

At its core, the problem of predatory raiding is about the unequal allocation of power and resources between groups, not so much within pastoral systems, but across Sahelian societies as a whole. Addressing the political marginalisation which pastoral communities in Africa face today is thus an essential element of any meaningful, long-term strategy to alleviate famine vulnerability among them.

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The Drylands Programme aims to contribute towards more effective and equitable management of natural resources in semi-arid Africa. It has built up a diverse pattern of collaboration with many organisations. It has a particular focus on soil conservation and nutrient management, pastoral development, land tenure and resource access. Key objectives of the programme are to: strengthen communication between English and French speaking parts of Africa; support the development of an effective research and NGO sector; and promote locally-based management of resources, build on local skills, encourage participation and provide firmer rights to local users.

It does this through four main activities: collaborative research, training in participatory methods, information networking and policy advice to donor organisations.

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