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## Mapping of seasonal migrations in the Sanaag region of Somaliland

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### • Introduction

Shortly after Somaliland declared its independence from Somalia following four years of civil war, ActionAid set up a rehabilitation programme in the Sanaag region. The programme provides basic animal health care to the pastoral communities living in the region whose livelihoods depend upon their livestock. Camel, sheep and goat milk and meat are mostly consumed by the herders and their families, while sheep are frequently sold or exchanged with traders in return for imported wheat, rice and other products. ActionAid contracted VetAid to design and provide technical support for the programme.

The existing rehabilitation programme provides basic veterinary health care training for Primary Veterinary Assistants (PVAs). It also provides drugs, at a subsidised price, to herders who have had their flocks and herds decimated by the war (herders now pay the market price for drugs). PVAs visit the herders and supply them with veterinary drugs and advise them on basic health problems. The PVAs are trained in basic diagnosis, treatment and prevention skills but the majority of medications requested by and prescribed to the herders are used to control internal and external parasites.

### • The pastoral grazing system

Project staff have been using participatory research methods on an informal basis throughout the course of the development programme. Their main objective was to build up a more detailed picture of the herders' lifestyle, particularly their management of communal resources, animal husbandry practices, and methods of managing disease.

Participatory methods were used during routine meetings with herders rather than as part of a planned, structured appraisal. Much of the information gathered by the project staff was collected using semi-structured, informal interview techniques. Of particular interest to the team were details of the seasonal migration patterns followed by different groups of pastoralists in the region. These details were mapped and provided a fairly comprehensive picture of seasonal migration patterns in the Sanaag region and the distances covered during the individual migrations.

During the *jilal* (long, winter dry season), livestock are concentrated around permanent wells. This is the hardest time of year, especially if the preceding *dhair* rains have failed. Conflicts can break out over access to water during this period. Camels are taken up to seven days' walk from the wells to graze, and watered every two weeks.

The herding boys live only on camels' milk during this time. Women and elderly men look after the sheep and goats up to a day's walk from the wells. As the dry season progresses they are taken further away to graze and camels bring them water. The *jilal* ends with the *gu* rain after which herds are moved to grazing lands in places without wells. Livestock can get adequate water from fodder and puddles following showers. As the *hagar* (summer) progresses the grass becomes dry and fibrous and livestock are moved to grazing near permanent wells. The *dhair* rains fall at the end of the summer. If they are good the herds are taken back to the wet season grazing grounds.

## Migrations in the Sanaag region

The Isaaq and Darod clans inhabit the west and east of the Sanaag region respectively. They maintain a natural buffer zone between them over which neither clan claims to have definitive overall grazing rights. During the civil war there was a great deal of conflict between the Isaaq and Dorod clans in the Sanaag region. But in peace-time there is greater flexibility of movement and the clans enter into each other's territory, subject to prior agreements.

Interviews with herders indicate that the distances travelled by Sanaag herders and their flocks are relatively short. Typically the limits of their migration may be around 80km apart. Project staff were surprised to find that the migration patterns are not seasonal movements to and from the same grazing grounds annually, as they had previously believed. Instead, herders are opportunistic and move their animals according to the prevailing

rainfall and quality of the pasture. The extent of change in pastoral grazing strategies during the civil war years is not clear. Herders apparently continued with their traditional seasonal migration patterns. In some instances, access rights to grazing lands may have changed hands between clans and sub-clans depending on the outcome of local battles. However, in general, herders continued to migrate with the rains or pasture.

### • Mapping pastoral movements

One herder, Warasame Hirsi, described herders' general movements and then recalled where his own *rer* (flock) had been in the recent past. His stock stay near Erigavo, to the east. Their movements are recorded in Figure 1. He was asked questions such as "Where were your animals last season? Where were they the season before that?" and so on. These prompted him to describe his flocks' general movements which are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1. Seasonal pastoral movements: camels, sheep and goats**

Season	Description of Movement	
	Camels	Sheep and Goats
<i>Gu</i> (spring rain)	They often go down to the plains at Karaman (south of Eil Afwein) if it is peaceful; otherwise to Sol Giriyo	When it rains, they move to the south of the district (eg. Sool Giriyo)
<i>Hagar</i> (hot, windy summer)	They stay on the plains, remaining close to water sources such as Gof	Towards the escarpment and closer to the water points (Madare, Erigavo area)
<i>Dhair</i> (autumn rain)	If there is plenty of rain, they move to Sool Giriyo	To the plains (Sool Giriyo, Qaarey)
<i>Jilaal</i> (long, dry winter)	Stay near water sources around Sool Giriyo eg. Gof	To the nearest water source, especially towards the escarpment

This table illustrates how the seasonal movements of camels differ from those of the sheep and goats.

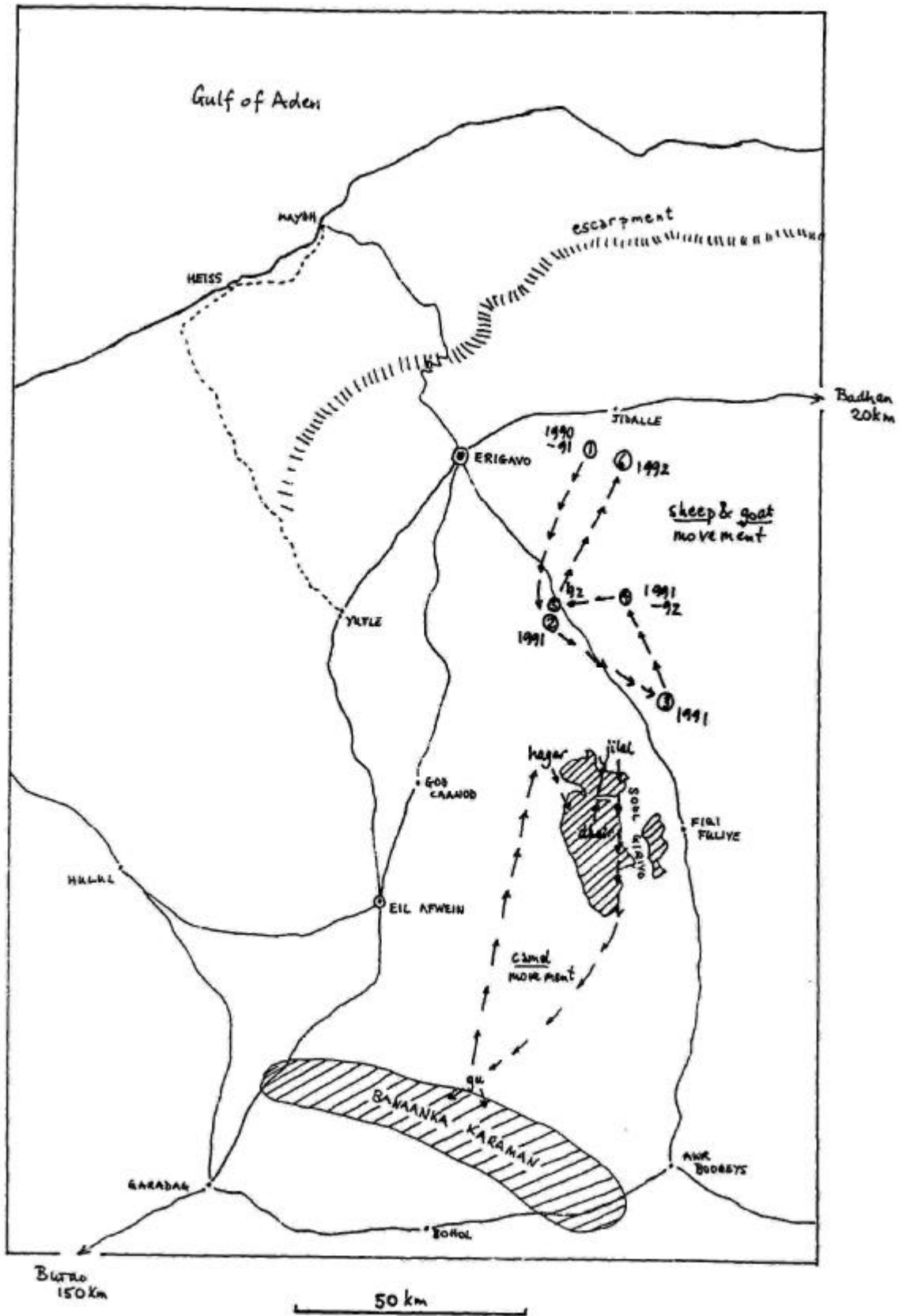
Jama Ashkir then recalled the places his *rer* (flock) had been during the last three years. In peaceful times 10-15 families of the same sub-clan would move together. However, now about 50 Isaaq families may move together for

security. For example, they all moved to Sool Giriyo earlier this year when there was tension between Isaaq and Darod clans. However, when they moved to Kabid recently only three families moved together. The details of where the *rer* moved are summarised in Table 2, and also illustrated in Figure 2.

**Table 2. Details of *Rer* moves (the numbers refer to Figure 2)**

Season	No.	Month	Place	Duration
<b>1992</b>				
<i>Jilal</i>	16	November	Durdur	Next move
<i>Dhair</i>	15	October	Kabid/Dhabeeda	There now
	14	September	Dibqarax	
<i>Hagar</i>	13	August	Carmo, south of Jidalle	
	12	July	Higliquran	20 days
	11	June	Eil Qoxle	25 days
	10	May	Dhir Galeedhle	1 month
<i>Gu</i>	9	April	Darawayne	15 days
<b>1991-1992</b>				
	8	February	Bohol	2.5 months
<i>Jilal</i>	7	December	Karin Biyood	2 months
<i>Dhair</i>	6		Gureer area	3 months
<i>Hagar</i>	5		Wareeg (well) near Hulul	2.5 months
	4		Xanig (well) near Garadag	
<i>Gu</i>	3			
<b>1990-1991</b>				
<i>Jilaal</i>	2		Karaman	4 months
<i>Dhair</i>			Buur Caanod	

Figure 1. Mapping pastoral movements: Warsame Hirsi's Rer (Flock)



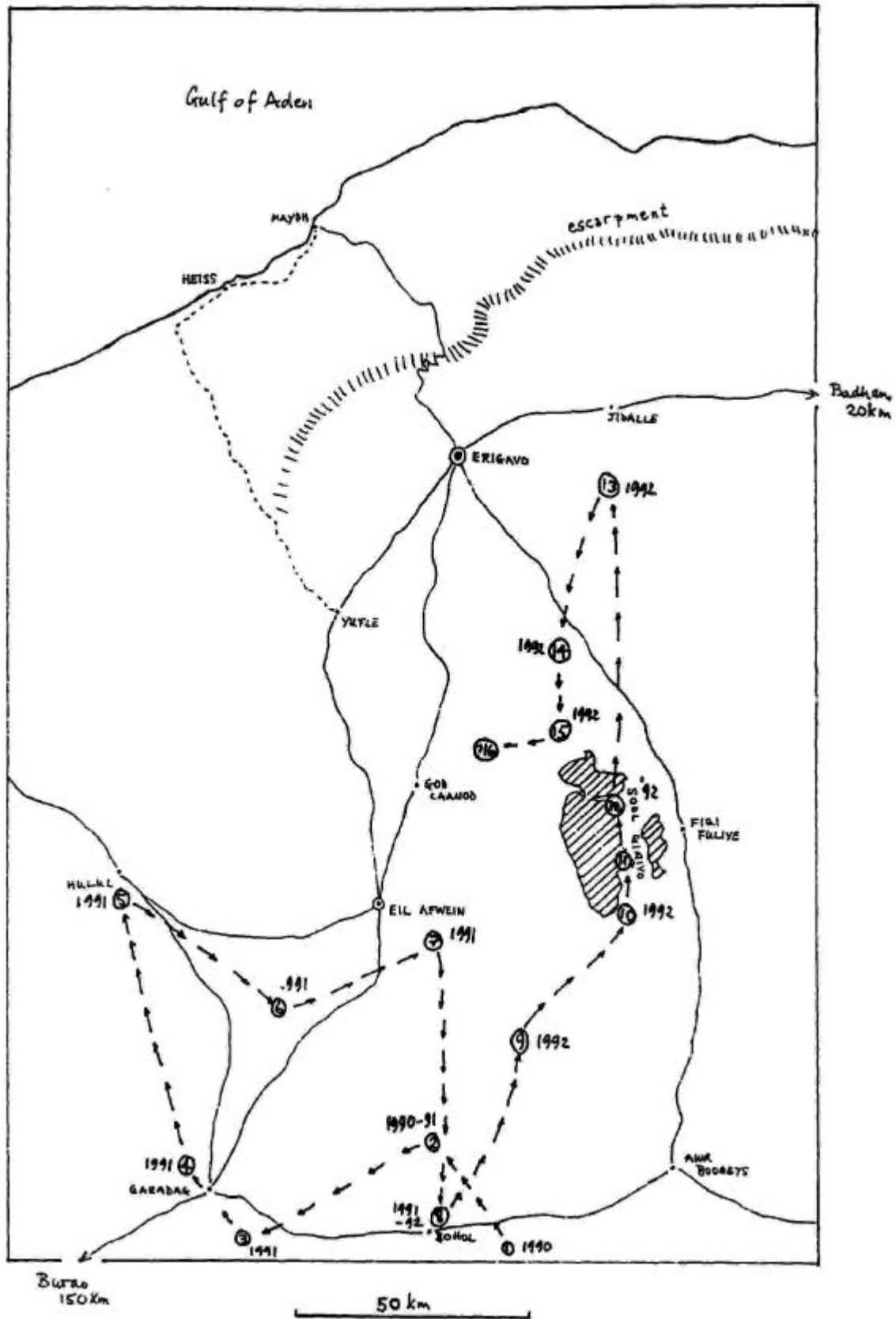
The maps indicate that Jama and Warasame move stock to the territories of their Diya-paying group. Information about seasonal migration patterns confirmed that herders are likely to be in a certain area during a particular season of the year. This knowledge assisted with the planning of drug distribution, making it compatible with the herders' needs and seasonal location.

Informal interviews were always attended by clan chiefs and community leaders and were carried out through an interpreter. More often than not the quality of information collected depended upon the individual characters of the chiefs and leaders. The most successful informal interviews often took place when a member of the project staff was called by the

herders to treat an animal and took the opportunity to make a few enquiries about their livelihoods.

The team also endeavoured to draw maps, calendars and use visual aids. If nothing else, they provided a talking point and helped to stimulate a discussion. The strict Muslim culture made it necessary for an exclusively male team of researchers to conduct the informal interviews and mapping exercises. However, this made it virtually impossible for discussions to take place with the women in the communities. The team were aware of the gender bias and consequently appointed a woman to try to redress the balance.

Figure 2. Mapping pastoral movements: migration of Jama Ashkir's Flock over the past three years



## • Indigenous knowledge

During informal interviews herders gave information on the different celestial observations used to divide their year into seasons. Researchers also learned details of the indigenous system of classifying the characteristics of rainfall, drought periods, plant species, soils, and livestock diseases and their traditional treatments.

### The herders' calendar

An appreciation of the herders' calendar is important in the planning phase of any

development project. An understanding of the calendar can help explain why herders plan their movements and grazing patterns. The names given to the different seasons are often linked to meteorological factors. The herders divide their year into two seasons, each of 180 days. The first 180 days are called *biyo daalalo* and are divided into nine periods of 20 days. This season coincides with the *dhair* (autumn rain) and *jilaal* (dry winter). The second 180 days are called *diriir* and are divided into six periods of 28 days. These coincide with the *gu* (spring rain) season and the following *hagar* (hot, windy summer). Table 3 lists the names of each of the periods within the *Biyo daalalo* and *Diriir* seasons.

**Table 3. The Herders' Calendar**

Period	<i>Biyo daalalo</i> Season	<i>Diriir</i> Season
1	<i>dyeer halalood</i>	<i>aminla</i>
2	<i>dyeer habr adlin</i>	<i>adhi caseye</i>
3	<i>dyeer habis</i>	<i>deydo</i>
4	<i>diraac good</i>	<i>sermaweydo</i>
5	<i>xoomir</i>	<i>diriir cawleed</i>
6	<i>wajino</i>	<i>diriir sagaalaad</i>
7	<i>xeyse</i>	
8	<i>canbaaro</i>	
9	<i>agaaliyo</i>	

Herders often plan their movements and herd management around the seasons and position of the stars. For example, the beginning of the *deyr* season, which falls during the first part of the *biyo daalalo* season, is denoted by seven stars appearing in the sky. They are named *haltodobaalo*. These stars begin to disappear in sequence. The interval between the disappearance of each star is either 7 or 14 days, depending upon the star's position in the sequence. When all the stars have disappeared (after about 56 days), it is the end of the *deyr* season.

Another example is the *diriir* star that lies close to the moon on the first day of the *gu* season and denotes the *aminla* period of the calendar. A full cycle of 28 days passes before a second *diriir* lies close to the moon. This denotes the beginning of the *adhi caseye* period. This cycle continues, each time different *diriir* lying close to the moon until six *diriir* periods are completed.

#### • **Lessons learned**

This information has alerted both VetAid and ActionAid to the need for a more detailed and more participatory appraisal in the near future. Cooperation with the herders should allow a better understanding of the pastoral economy in preparation for the second phase of the programme which envisages herders paying market prices for drugs.

On reflection, the research was more informative than participatory - the herders were not given an opportunity to design their own development programme. However it did provide the development agencies with sufficient information to reflect on their past work, and to assist with the future planning of the programme.

Whether the current programme is sustainable in terms of drug supply is questionable, but it has helped to reduce the incidence of helminth and tick related disease in the area, allowing herders to rebuild their stock numbers. The development agencies are now planning to embark upon the second phase of the programme. The emphasis is to shift away from relief and rehabilitation towards a longer-term, sustainable method of health care provision and community development.

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#### NOTE

This paper was extracted from a report written for ActionAid by David Hadrill in November 1992 on the Sanaag Livestock Health Programme.

#### REFERENCE

Yusuf, H.A. 1992. *Notes on the Pastoral System*. VetAid, CTVM, Roslin, Midlothian, Scotland.