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To generate and disseminate knowledge by conducting basic and applied research of social, economic and political significance to Uganda in particular and Africa in general, so as to influence policy, raise consciousness and improve quality of life.

**Pastoralism, Crisis and Transformation
in Karamoja**

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Pastoralism, Crisis and Transformation in Karamoja*

Foreword

The Centre for Basic Research began its research programme on pastoralism in Karamoja in May of 1989. We were convinced that nothing less than a wholistic approach to the study of the question would do. It was clear that the many dimensions of the crisis - ecological, social and political - were intertwined. To unravel these would require a historical analysis.

To be equal to this task, we decided to put together a research team comprising social and natural scientists. The research process was designed to ensure that individual research in libraries and visits to Karamoja would be preceded and followed by group discussions. At each step, reflection was followed by investigation which fed into further discussion, reflection, and yet more investigation. The process took a good two years to complete.

Once final papers had been revised following submission to CBR seminars, we began to think of how to feed the results of our research into the wider process of public discussion and policy formulation. We finally decided to prepare for a workshop which would bring together persons from different sectors with an interest in pastoralism in Karamoja: community organisations, Churches, the press, NRC members, teachers, government extension workers, RC Chairpersons, representatives of line Ministries, foreign NGOs, donor agencies, and finally, researchers.

The workshop was originally planned to be held in Moroto. It was postponed twice due to circumstances. When we faced yet a third postponement, we decided to shift it to Kampala. It was finally held on August 14 and 15 at the new Faculty of Science Building at Makerere University.

This report is divided into four sections: the programme of the workshop, the list of participants, a summary of the discussions held in the various sessions of the workshop, and the recommendations of the workshop. A word on the recommendations. They were initially drawn up by the research team and presented to the workshop for deliberation and revision. The recommendations included here are those passed by the seminar participants.

We have a number of debts to acknowledge. The Ford Foundation funded the research over two years. Makerere University - in particular, the Faculty of Science, Africa Hall and the Senior Common Room - generously allowed us access to their facilities at a reasonable charge. The response to the workshop, from both Karamoja and Kampala, was overwhelming. We are proud to present this record of workshop proceedings to a wider audience for critical assimilation.

Mahmood Mamdani
Executive Director

* Being a synthetic summary of the deliberations at the CBR Workshop on "Pastrolism, Crisis and Transformation in Karamoja," held at the Faculty of Science, Makerere University, August 14-15, 1992

Introduction

This report seeks to recount and synthesize the main points of deliberation at the Centre for Basic Research (CBR) workshop on "Pastoralism, Crisis and Transformation in Karamoja", held at the Faculty of Science (New Building), Makerere University on August 14-15, 1992. It is basically divided into three parts that cover the five sessions of the workshop *viz*:

1. Ecology, History and Social Change;
2. The Karamoja Famine and the Significance of Cattle raids; and
3. The role of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Karamoja.

Five papers were presented at the workshop, including the following:-

- Mahmood Mamdani, P.M.B. Kasoma and A.B. Katende, "Karamoja: Ecology and History";
- Charles Ocan, "Pastoralism and Social Change in Northeastern Uganda: Factors That Have Determined Social Change in Karamoja";
- Ben Okudi, "Causes and Effects of the 1980 Famine in Karamoja";
- Charles Ocan, "Pastoral Crisis in Northeastern Uganda: The Changing Significance of Cattle Raids", and
- Arnest Wabwire, "An Evaluation of the Role of NGOs in Karamoja".

Rather than focusing on the papers in any great detail, this report instead highlights the major points of concern, the disagreements and divergences, the points of concurrence and agreement, as well as the hopes and the disappointments of the 105 participants at the workshop. This is done by summarizing the gist of the paper-presentations and dwelling in some detail upon the various discussions that followed them.

I. Ecology, History and Social Change

The first workshop paper, which comprised research on the history and ecology of Karamoja was presented by Mahmood Mamdani, and sought to unearth the "suppressed truth" of the story of Karamoja, against the backdrop of a critical examination of the historical and ecological developments in the area. That truth, according to Mamdani, comprised mainly of an examination of the relationship between rainfall patterns as a key feature of the ecology of the area, and the ever-consistent struggle by the colonial state to destroy the phenomenon of "mobility", which is central to the organization of traditional "non-destructive" Pastoralism. The historical examination demonstrates that as conditions for a non-destructive pastoralism were undermined, the stage was set for a series of short term survival strategies that finally amounted to a cumulative "tragedy of the commons". The colonial solution -- a combination of shutting out pastoral communities from using

surrounding resources by demarcating them as "forest reserves" in the 1940s and "game reserves" from the 1950s, forcible destocking of pastoral herds, and attempted resettlement of pastoralists -- set the parameters of the "problem" of Karamoja. The paper concluded by pointing out that ecological circumstances necessitate that, short of an ambitious irrigated supply of water, pastoralism must be the mainstay of productive life in Karamoja, and that the pre-condition of a non-destructive pastoral way of life is mobility of herds.

Much of the discussion about Mamdani's paper, stemmed from one participant's characterization of the crisis in Karamoja as the dilemma between "modernization and tradition". While some viewed this as an "historical paradox", others sought to subject the two terms to more intensified scrutiny: is everything modern, good, and is everything bad, traditional? It is wrong to believe that tradition does not change and that there is only one, single, straight and narrow road to modernization. This mistake in the characterization of the conflict has led to a fatal misconception of the nature of the crisis presented by the phenomenon of Pastoralism and consequently, in the solutions that have been adopted to deal with it. There has been both a lack of appreciation of the changes that have taken place, as well as a certain degree of impatience in seeking any such change.

The modern vs. traditional debate led participants into the argument over the failure to involve the indigenous peoples of the area in the search for solutions, because the problem is simply dismissed as one of tradition, at best, or "backwardness" at worst. And yet, it is the Karimojong who know their environment best; they know the grass-types, the best sources of water, and they have also developed methods over time to deal with crises and disaster. How can you solve the "problem" of Karamoja with a so-called "modern" solution that completely eliminates the Karimojong from the equation? There was both a need to borrow local knowledge and expertise as well as to make a correct contextualization of the issue. Such context must consider factors on the ground as the commencement-point. Thus, when the Karimojong decide to move their cattle from one place to another, researchers must search for the ticks and other related scourges that they left behind in a bid to protect their cattle, in order to appreciate the need for such movement.

At the same time, participants argued that the notion of modernization as applied in Karamoja could actually produce positive results; however, this must be married to a correct method of application. The "top-down" approach that consists of ideas formulated by arm-chair bureaucrats and technocrats, will result in an obvious failure of the solutions arrived at unless the "bottom-up" factor is integrated into the process right from the start. Modernizing techniques must begin with the question: why is the ownership of cattle the most important thing to the Karimojong? As one participant argued, the Karimojong cannot be divorced from his or her cow: the two must be changed together. Indeed, the idea of mobility is part and parcel of this equation: provided that resources remain scarce for the Karimojong and their cattle, mobility will be a constant factor in their social existence, as it is to their economic existence.

It thus followed that unless a suitable answer to this relationship were to be found, all efforts aimed at the transformation of the situation will simply result in greater

disasters and crisis. Any attempt at modernization, must also be married to a critical increase in the resources which are pumped into any of the schemes that are devised. It is also crucial to devise an appropriate model of change, both for the region, as well as for the individual Karimojong. This would incorporate a vision that will not only make it more attractive and understandable to the non-Karimojong, but would at the same time create possibilities for more peaceful co-existence: how do we arrive at a proper cross-pollination?

Such cross-pollination between the two sides of the equation would have to get rid of the "law and order" mentality and the belief that "Karamoja cannot change". On their part the Karimojong will also have to accept the idea that they do not live on an island, but rather, are part and parcel of a wider geo-political and economic entity known as Uganda. With respect to the former, the coercive, disciplinary position adopted by the state came under particular criticism -- not only from the colonial position but right up to the present. Thus, for example, the 1961 Bataringaya Report had advocated for the application of force rather than dialogue; for military, rather than civil methods of dispute resolution, and for the outright alienation of the Karimojong, instead of for their incorporation into the Ugandan mosaic. These attitudes were further reflected in the 1964 Administration of Justice (Karamoja) Act, which both jettisoned strict rules on the admissibility of evidence, and placed sole discretion in the hands of a single judge. Furthermore, it overturned the time-honoured legal principle of the presumption of innocence. Indeed, any person who was accused of engaging in a cattle raid in which someone had been killed, was presumed guilty until they could prove their innocence to the judge. The search for a forceful solution to the crisis has failed because it does not also look at the problem of poverty, nor does it appreciate the cultural dimensions of the issue. Those who have tried to address the issue instead attempt to impose their own cultures and solutions. Of particular concern was the "Pajero culture" of government officials as well as NGOs, who have also developed an "enclosure mentality" of distributing hand-outs that are meaningless, while they enjoy all the fruits from within -- locking the local Karamojong outside.

Several participants were concerned about a number of methodological issues that underlined Mamdani's presentation, and called for more comparison with other pastoral societies, both within Uganda and elsewhere. First, there was a need for a more specific treatment of each area of the region and to avoid over-generalizations. True that Karamoja was ecologically disadvantaged, however, certain parts of the district (Namalu, Labwor etc.), were actually quite fertile and there was much hope for growth and development of a non-pastoral nature. The usefulness of drawing comparisons with other areas in which Pastoralism was the dominant mode of production would help not only in drawing lessons, but also in the formulation of appropriate solutions. Indeed, as one participant pointed out, the crisis under study was not confined to Karamoja alone, but could be witnessed in other parts of the country, particularly in the Western region. Here, it was critical to appreciate and correctly locate Pastoralism in relation to other aspects of the economy, and to pose the question: has there been any serious attempt to transform the economic status of pastoral people? Indeed, such comparative studies would lead to a

better appreciation of the question of mobility, which may in fact be less important than the issue of access.

Finally, several participants pointed out that a critical examination of the situation in Karamoja will reveal several areas in which change has indeed taken place, which would in fact call into question the present appraisals and the need for novel researches. Some of these changes related to dressing habits, the use of salt in beef, the development of serous agriculture, the growth of labour-intensive projects (under ILO sponsorship, for example), tree planting and building. All of this reflected a much higher degree of participation, as well as the involvement of the Karimojong in the determination of their own destinies. It also reflects the keen attempt by the people of the areas to initiate and extend dialogue, mobilize and educate the people, as well as to discover novel mechanisms of utilizing structures such as the RCs as principle focal points for change in the district. At the same time, there was a need to marry all of these different initiatives to the reversal of environmental degradation and the restoration of ecological harmony, while at the same time, dealing with national and international imperatives concerning the protection and conservation of game and nature.

In responding to the discussion, Mamdani strongly defended the importance of the historical approach adopted in appraising the question of Karamoja. Not much has changed in the transition from the colonial to the neocolonial, he declared. Unless we appreciate the lessons of history, we shall be doomed to repeat it. Revisiting the "Modernization vs. Tradition" debate, he asserted that the real danger lies in falling prey to the idea of modernization as a means of legitimizing a particular form of domination. In other words, while we should not romanticize tradition, any attempts at change must be informed by an emphasis on persuasion as well as the needs of the community. Lastly, there was also a need to revisit the unilinear thesis of the development of society, since historical critiques of this thesis have demonstrated that this is not necessarily true for all time and all places.

Charles Ocan's paper on social change addressed many of the concerns raised in the discussion that followed Mamdani's paper and developed them further. Ocan sought to clarify both the methodological framework within which the debate over social change in Karamoja has been conducted (in the main by colonial anthropologists) as well as the background factors that had influenced the particular context being examined.

Methodologically, it was essential to appreciate the dynamic fashion in which various concepts (such as age-sets, clans, gender relations and labour roles) were closely inter-related. There was a salient distinction between the form that such relations had assumed over time, in link with the substantive content that they represented. Given that form has a tendency to persist for long durations in pastoral settings, the tendency of anthropologists to focus on form at the expense of substance has created the illusion that pastoral societies are unchanging. He asserted that Karimojong society was undergoing dramatic changes, and that these were not related to natural phenomena alone.

Transhumance -- which is in fact the dominant pattern of Pastoralism in the area -- had to be distinguished from the nomadic interpretation of Karimojong society, which had been the dominant view, and continues to be so. This had led to a distinction between the modes of social organization, as well as the somewhat forced separation between the permanent settlement (the "manyatta"), and the Kraal. His study provided two main conclusions, viz: there has been a general tendency for the state to treat Karamoja as a war zone, and to reject the application of democratic methods of resolving the crisis as mere luxuries. State policy has been ad hoc and haphazard and this has led to the overall situation of emergency and crisis existing in the district. Secondly, RCs in Karamoja provide an interesting avenue for finding a solution to the crisis, but have not been constituted following a comprehensive study of the reality of pastoralists on the ground.

The ensuing discussion produced more critical insights into the nature of state intervention in the determination of social change, as well as the obligation of the Karimojong themselves to set their house in order. This was necessary, as one participant noted, because of the fact that despite a more or less continuous impact and influence of outsiders (including relief workers) on the district, there was almost nothing to show for this hyperactivity. The notion that Karamoja was a "Human Zoo" still continues and thus there was a need to pose the question: What can be done? Many participants felt that although it was essential to establish the exact situation on the ground through research, much more than research alone is necessitated.

Such further action would need to basically adopt a two-pronged approach:

- i) A much more serious self-examination by the Karimojong themselves of the experiences they have undergone, and how to implement all that they have learnt through the course of this experience, and
- ii) A critical examination of the external actors on the scene, viz: government administrators, NGO and relief agencies, the Military etc. It was essential to question the motives of these external forces and not to simply assume that they are beneficial to the district. The question to ask is: Are these external actors good for Karamoja?

Such a critical reconsideration of the situation would of necessity imply that there was a greater need for organization, exemplified, for example, by the interesting adaptation of the RC system in Kotido, where there were two types of RCs in existence: the "real" or "official" type of RC, and the "kraal" or "unofficial" RCs, which exist in order to deal with the specific problems of the pastoralists. Furthermore, the Karimojong needed to unearth the actual forces involved in the phenomenon of "cattle raids", for example, which have also involved nationalities other than the Karimojong, and included many from the neighbouring districts. There was an urgent need to stop the use of the Karimojong as mercenaries.

Participants espoused the view that there was a glaring necessity for a much more concise definition of the "crisis" in Karamoja: what are its major components, and what

kind of impact do they have? How can solutions to the problems they present be found? A number of the components of the crisis were identified during the course of discussion, including the following:

- 1) The enduring food crisis, which had led to a situation of almost perennial food insecurity. How had this problem emerged and how could it be reversed?
- 2) The destruction of the social fabric of Karamoja, which had led to the upsurge in the level and the degree of violence.
- 3) The continuing application of brute, military force from both sides (e.g the rise of the "WarLords" and the decline of the Elders), with Karimojong society consequently become more militarized, and
- 4) The changing character of leadership, which has ceased to be based on gerontocracy, and has come instead to revolve around the military situation in existence.

A number of participants took the view that there was nothing immortal or immutable about Pastoralism in Karamoja: definite steps can be followed in order to introduce different kinds of production activities, rather than confining themselves to cattle-keeping alone. In addition, there was a need for a more critical focus on the status and function of women in social relations and their potential to act as positive engines for change in the region. This needed to be ultimately combined to a review of the system of formal education that is in existence, which fails to address the pastoral nature of the members of the community.

Participants concluded the session by urging for a more balanced and critical appraisal of the ecology, history and social structure of Karimojong society. That ecologically, a balance must be found between the need to conserve and reproduce the environment in a sustainable fashion; that the historical experience of military force (the "Guns and bullets" syndrome) had been counter-productive and had to be seriously addressed, and that socially, there was a need for a more fundamental, grassroots involvement of the subjects of any change and transformation in the region. This conclusion set the appropriate stage for the discussion of the next major theme of the workshop, *viz*: the question of famine (the 1980 one in particular) and the phenomenon of cattle raids -- the subject matter of the following section of this report.

II. The 1980 Famine and the Phenomenon of Cattle Raids

Ben Okudi's paper on the causes and effects of the 1980 famine in Karamoja focussed on an event of recent historical occurrence, and described not only the magnitude and impact of the event, but also its sociological, political and economic underpinnings. These related to the low rainfall of 1979/80, leading to increased inflation brought about by the scarcity of agricultural produce; poor harvests; the 1978/79 War of "Liberation" as well as raids into Karamoja by outside nationalities, and by the Karimojong into neighbouring districts. Okudi also sought to expose the contradictory impact of the famine -- that although a disaster of great social consequences, there were both winners and losers -- the former opportunistically taking advantage of the increased impoverishment in the area. The state studiously ignored both the warnings and the outcry that followed once the famine gained momentum, all of which culminated in a crisis of intense proportions that was only abated by the action of international relief and development agencies. Moreover, that intervention was spurred on by the international media publicity that the event attracted. Okudi strongly asserted that although the 1980 Famine was perhaps the most intense demonstration of the crisis, a number of structural factors still have to be removed in order to prevent its recurrence. These include:-

- i) The ad hoc response of the state and other institutions in dealing with the crisis;
- ii) Transformation involving the local populace;
- iii) The involvement of the local populace at the level of project planning and
- iv) Long term solutions focused on sustainability.

The ensuing discussions brought criticism of the role of the state in the Karimojong crisis to a head, with a clear division between those who felt that such criticism was justified and others who were of the view that it should be tempered with an understanding of the unenviable position of the Ugandan state in the course of the 1980 famine up to the present time. One participant argued that there was a need for a moderation of the criticism leveled against the state in light of the size of the "public purse". If the 1980 Famine were to be revisited in 1992, this would require an expenditure of shs.17 billion (approximately 50% of the present national budget for the Education sector), in order to provide a minimum diet of 350 grams of maize and 40 grams of beans per day to each individual in Karamoja. Was this possible for a government with a total budget of only shs.350 billion? It was also pointed out that international agencies do not have inexhaustible budgets, especially in light of the prevailing "compassion fatigue", in which they feel that enough has been done for the crisis-ridden Third World.

Pursuing this line of argument other participants pointed out and argued that as a matter of fact, the state had actually contributed to the increase in the current food levels that now prevail in Karamoja. However, the Karimojong do not adequately preserve their food, and furthermore, when they harvest it, they consume the excess in feast and ceremony.

Other participants were far less sanguine about the role of the state, in the development and maturing of the crisis in Karamoja. Some stated that all this was merely a reflection of a lack of priorities, such as attention to the issue of the environment (reafforestation etc), and that it was also reflective of an insidious pattern of neglect of the minority members of Ugandan society, such as the Bacwa and the Banabachumbi, to cite only two examples. Moreover, there is a general crisis (for example in agriculture with the cooperative organizations) but a place like Karamoja suffers additionally because of the ecological context. Indeed, as was clear from the 1980 Famine, it was observed, the government was more concerned about the external constituency (donors and foreign governments) than it was about the domestic populace. This was clear from the fact that the-then President denied the existence of any crisis in Karamoja, until the Church had brought in foreign TV cameras. Reports by field officers of the Ministry of Agriculture were ignored. This raised the question: to whom is the Ugandan state accountable? Add to all this the fact that politicians were so busy fighting among themselves, the disaster was almost inevitable.

On a reflective note, some participants raised the question of which state were we talking about, especially given the nature of state demise and succession that had characterized much of the post-colonial history of this country. With particular reference to the 1980 famine, it could be argued that there was in fact no state in existence, given the conditions of war, pillage and plunder that were in existence at the time. Not only was the armoury at Moroto raided, but in addition, the Karamojong realized quite quickly that the most valuable "legal tender" for their purposes was "guns and bullets".

Following from this consideration, the session turned to address itself to the delicate questions of security and disarmament in Karamoja, which, it was argued, were the basis for food insecurity in the area, and consequently, the immediate cause of the famine in 1980. A number of participants argued that there was an over-abundance of destructive weapons in Karamoja, and also a duplication of duties between the Armed Forces, the Local Defence Units (LDUs) and a number of other armed groups. There was therefore a need to have only a single force that would be deployed on the borders in order to defend the area from external aggression, particularly in the form of raids by the neighbouring peoples of Kenya. In addition, some participants argued, there was a need for the immediate disarmament of all Karamojong. However, caution was counseled over the issue of disarmament, and insecurity in Karamoja. It was essential that the social conditions of existence be addressed first, and that the politically volatile context which presently engulfs the issue of disarmament be properly weighed.

Participants debated the related issues of food security, poverty and the selection of priorities. It was pointed out that Karamoja is a net exporter of seeds, and that the revenues accruing from such trade should be utilized to bolster the food situation in the district. However, nobody knows where the money received ends up, except that it does not return to the district! The allegation that the Karimojong simply indulge in large feasts rather than in storing surplus food, was refuted as unfounded. In fact, the Karimojong had for several years practiced a system of food storage, and there was a need to revisit the historical experience of these systems in order to explore the possibilities of

establishing similar systems of storage today. Thus, for example, between 1948 and 1952 in Labwor, Kotido District, groups of individuals collected food for each sub-county and stored it, in preparation for periods of drought. In 1991, Karamoja even registered a food surplus, and with a viable food storage system, the problem of perennial famine can be eliminated. Means should be devised for educating the Karimojong on the need for food storage, and centres (perhaps at sub-county level) must be set up to accomplish this objective. This would require more positive state intervention, in order to create buffer food stocks, irrigation schemes and crop diversification, all of which will enhance the situation of food security in the region.

In his second paper at the workshop, Charles Ocan examined the significance of cattle raids, both within Karamoja, and in the outlying areas of the district, including Kumi, Soroti, Lira, Apac, Gulu etc. Beginning from the assertion that the popular conception of the Karimojong revolves principally around the issue of cattle raids, Ocan sought to demonstrate the social, economic and political underpinnings of the phenomenon, especially within the contemporary context in which they have attained pandemic proportions. Three main reasons were advanced for the phenomenon of cattle raids, *viz*:

- 1) As a mechanism designed to satisfy social requirements, e.g the restocking of livestock.
- 2) Private accumulation, either for personal gain through the re-sale of acquired animals, or in order to boost one's social position.
- 3) General social dislocation, resulting in a breakdown of general social order, and consequently collapsing into a recklessly violent society.

Ocan discussed the origin, development and impact of raids on the Karimojong way of life, and concluded with the recommendations that there was a need for a reconceptualization of the nature and function of grazing committees that would oversee security and protection of cattle, as well as for the establishment of a livestock insurance scheme to create buffer stocks so that the issue of cattle as such, does not become one of crisis.

The discussion on the question of cattle raids, elicited varied (often emotional and charged) responses from the Workshop participants. It was asserted that the phenomenon of raiding cattle was not unique to Karamoja, but must also be view in light of the social disintegration that Ugandan society has undergone, and which has been manifested in ills such as corruption, misappropriation of public funds, and robbery with violence, which exist all over the country. But others cautioned against stretching the analogy too far and from making over-generalized conclusion about the reasons for raids. Corruption was a clear social ailment, but there was a distinction in the kinds of corruption that presently afflict Ugandan society. There were clearly two types of corrupt persons in Uganda, the ones who sought to amass large amounts of wealth, and those who must steal simply to

survive the vagaries of existence in present-day Uganda. The former category of persons exploited the skewed systems of access to government resources and the lack of efficient mechanisms of accountability, in order to plunder state coffers, while the latter were both limited in their access, as well as in the amount of resources they could appropriate.

The phenomenon of cattle raids per se was therefore not the problem in Karamoja, but the fashion in which it has been transformed over the years from a quasi-cultural practice, into one with definite criminal, economic and acquisitive underpinnings, all of which are conducted in a context of highly sophisticated technological methods. This last factor extends from the use of semi-automatic weaponry, to the vast expanse of territory that is covered by the raiders, which reflects not only external collaboration and assistance, but also that there are considerable resources involved in the exercise. Participants sought to clarify as untrue, and also highly stereotypical and reactionary the argument that the Karimojong regard all cattle -- both within and outside the area -- as belonging to them. This had led to a gross misinterpretation of the nature of the problem, and consequently, of the necessary solutions that had to be designed in order to arrive at a comprehensive end to the problem.

The issue of the highly militarized context was once again revisited and comprehensively debated. It was concluded that the most feasible approach to this issue did not lie in seeking the complete disarmament of the people of the district, but rather, in the design of a multiplicity of methods, including increased resources and a greater emphasis on education of the peoples of the area. It was felt that the presence of guns alone is only part of the problem. Why had the national security agencies failed to control their soldiers who were forced to sell off their ammunition in order to obtain food and the other necessities of existence? In a situation where those army personnel deployed in the area were unable to fend for themselves, it was inevitable that they would convert their "tools of trade" into legal tender for the exchange of essential commodities.

In light of the above problems, it was argued that the Karimojong themselves, should be responsible for their own disarmament, or for the process of transforming the guns and bullets into positive instruments of protection, rather than factors of aggression. This could be executed either through the creation of different types of Local Defence Forces, peoples' militias and RC Security Committees. In short, disarmament cannot be pursued at the expense of removing the right of the people of Karamoja to their own self-defense. In this process, and indeed in the whole context of transforming the social conditions of cattle raiding in Karamoja, participants argued for a more prominent role for women, who had generally been ignored as agents of social change and transformation. Women have in many respects been the most prominent victims of the phenomenon of cattle raids, and there was an urgent need both to involve them more in the process of arriving at solutions to the crisis, as well as inculcating them with the consciousness that was necessary in order to positively discourage the menfolk from engaging in such activity. By addressing the education of women as well as by seeking to ensure that they play a more positive role in Karimojong society, it was argued; some steps will have been taken in achieving a resolution to the issue of cattle raids, and thereby set the stage for further transformation of the political economy of the area. On this note, participants

turned their examination to a consideration of one of the most prominent agents in the struggle to achieve positive social, economic and political change in Karamoja viz: the case of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) in the area.

III. The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Karamoja

The main discussions on the role of NGOs in Karamoja was stimulated by Arnest Wabwire's paper on the subject. Wabwire argued that there had been a long and often chequered history of these organizations in Karamoja. Right from the commencement of colonialism, there had been an attempt to destroy the pastoral life of the Karimojong, and NGOs also share part of the blame in the process of attempting to transform the area, often without a full appreciation of the situation on the ground, nor have they been willing to directly involve those who would be affected by their policies, in the formulation of such programs. This did not mean that there was nothing good that had emerged from NGO programs, but on the whole, the conclusion that must be reached, is that they have failed to radically alter the social and economic context with which they are purportedly most concerned. He concluded by arguing that it was high-time for the formulation of a comprehensive program of development and action in order both to streamline the activities of NGOs and to eliminate duplication, but more importantly, to ascertain how such activities can be made most meaningful for the peoples of the area.

The discussion of the paper in many respects built upon arguments that had been made in earlier sessions, reflecting many of the erstwhile divisions and positions, but also dealing with a number of unexplored, fresh issues. The divide was quite clear between those who felt that Wabwire had over-criticized the work of NGOs (and of the main governmental agency, the Karamoja Development Agency -- KDA), and others who felt that the assessment was indeed correct, and there was a clear need for NGOs to reorient their activities in the area. One participant argued that credit had to be given where it was due, especially to some of the foreign NGOs that despite their obvious ideological leanings, have managed to make a number of useful achievements in the area. The criticism should therefore not be blanket, but rather, selective, considering the actual record of the agencies that have been involved in the district and assessing whether or not these have been positive.

The discussion turned rather quickly to a consideration of the role and function of local, as opposed to foreign NGOs, and consequently to the question: are local NGOs to act merely as intermediaries for foreign NGOs, or can they develop a radically different conceptualization of the issues, which simultaneously seeks to give indigenous priorities pride of place? It was essential to revisit the definition of the term "NGO", as well as the historical record of their emergence and operation in Uganda. Disputing the assertion that local NGOs were few and far between, one participant pointed out that the number of indigenous, local, grassroots "NGO-type" activities are legion among Ugandan peoples, and have been in existence for a significant period of time. Such attempts reflected the strength of the independent organization and initiative of ordinary people. This attempt

was in many respects destroyed over the years of both colonial and post-colonial autocracy, and it is with the struggle to achieve their reinvigoration that all concerned persons should be most devoted.

Some participants counselled for extreme caution in dealing with NGOs, and to establish their actual motives, which, it was contended were blatantly insidious. NGOs, it was stated, are nothing more than latter-day missionaries, who heralded colonialism with the bible and the prayer. They are financed by the same Western industrial entrepreneurs who bankrolled imperialism, and their motives are little different. Consequently, their operations are in no way designed to assist those to whom they are applied, but are essentially motivated by self-interest and ideas of paternalism and domination. Again, it was strongly asserted that any schemes for the transformation of Karamoja must come from within Karamoja itself, and from among the Karimojong themselves, and not from those who are outside the actual situation that is sought to be transformed.

A number of the operations of both new and old local NGOs were described by the participants, in a bid to demonstrate that the work they were involved in was both developmental and liberative. One of the most prominent is MAPEDI (Matheniko Peoples Development Initiative) that has emerged to mobilize the people of the county and to turn them away from destructive to developmental activities. Participants also spoke of WAFKAD (Women Action for Development of Karamoja), which is gender-based and designed to address the problems that have typically confronted the women of the area. Finally, there was the Karamoja Adult Education Association that had began as an initiative to promote adult literacy and was seeking to utilize resources from within the community itself in order to facilitate its activities.

All of the above initiatives emerged as a local critique of the failure to observe tangible results from the large resources that have been pumped into the area from outside, and to seeking for alternative, and local solutions that examine both the historical experience, as well as the contemporary record, in order to achieve a different strategy that directly involves the local populace. Such a strategy, which has been adopted in the case of MAPEDI, for instance, would incorporate the leadership of the RCs, sub-county and parish chiefs, elders and women. It would also seek to move development away from the satellite stations where activities have been traditionally focussed and take it out to the manyatta, where it is badly needed. Such initiatives are more likely to succeed, because the agents of change have faith in the people they are seeking to transform, and are also involved in the process of achieving such change.

Much of the discussion revolved around the position and function of KDA which had come under some critical scrutiny by Wabwire. It was observed that the people expected more from KDA than it was actually in a position to deliver, which arose from the manner in which the agency was constituted. There was also a problem with the raising of monies to enable the agency get in to full operation, but very few of the initial expectations have actually been met, either by the government or by prospective donors. In addition, a culture of competition which has focussed on the running down of KDA, has arisen among the NGO community and other actors on the Karimojong scene which is essentially counter-productive. Such competition has led to unnecessary duplication of

projects, as well as a struggle for limited resources -- all of which can be eliminated if there is better coordination among the various actors on the scene.

The issue of competition was hotly debated by participants, many of whom asserted that competition was in fact a very healthy situation as those who were not up to the mark would be eliminated from the scene, leading to only the more serious actors remaining in place. Consequently, it would be possible to determine who was actually in the area to help the Karimojong, and those who had a different agenda. To conclude, participants reiterated that the paper and the ensuing discussion had illustrated the various gaps that remained in the manner in which NGO activity had been developed and executed in Karamoja. Such gaps needed to be plugged by constraining foreign NGOs to directly involve the peoples of Karamoja in the formulation and execution of their programs in the area. It also meant greater support for and assistance to local NGOs, which in fact provided the only real alternative to the continuation of the situation in which the Karimojong were the mere objects of the designs of others, and not initiators and executors of programs that they have themselves determined would be most beneficial to their social, economic and political advancement.

Recommendations from the Research Team as endorsed by the workshop

1. To recognize:

- a) that there has been a tendency to treat Karamoja as a perpetual war zone where democracy is considered a luxury and policy is seldom made through sustained inquiry and deliberation, and scarcely through popular consultation. Rather, policy is usually the end product of a string of ad hoc decisions taken in response to immediate situations.
- b) that the majority of population in Karamoja can only be sustained through a way of life whose mainstay is pastoralism and whose necessary complement is agriculture. The centre point of "development policy" should therefore be to ensure the sustainability of a nondestructive pastoralism in Karamoja.
- c) that mobility of herds and herders is vital to the reproduction of pastoralism as an environmentally and socially viable way of life.
- d) that the role of local communities in the regulation of access to resources has ensured their sustained reproduction prior to this century. The trend in this century, however, has been to alienate communities from surrounding resources, for example, by demarcating them as game or forest reserves. The result has been to recast the relationship between communities and resources from a historically productive to an increasingly predatory one, and thereby set in motion a cycle of ecological destruction.

- e) that the history of state-people relations in Karamoja has created an enormous crisis of popular confidence in official proclamations. To restore confidence requires nothing less than practical reforms.
- f) that reforms need to precede disarmament, and that disarmament should proceed within the context of an overall recognition of the right of people to self-defence.
- g) that communities in Karamoja have a history of being armed, but that self-armed groups have performed a contradictory function: defending the community from both neighbours and the state, but at the same time threatening others during times of scarcity. Over the past two decades, control over local armed committees has also shifted from clan elders to warlords. The point of any reform should thus be to recognise the community's right to self-defence, but not to any right to attack others; and to shift the exercise of this right from warlords to elected organs of the community.
- h) that most foreign NGOs have become increasingly crisis-dependent in their work instead of servicing the normal functioning of a healthy community.
- i) that reforms should be flexible enough to be suited to concrete conditions obtaining in Karamoja.

2. Social Reforms:

- a) Resistance Committees: To be effective, RCs need to be reconstituted with a clear recognition that
 - ❖ they should be elected from the whole population, not just permanent residents of manyattas and urban centres; for this to be possible, RC elections should be held at the time of concentration of cattle in manyattas, not at the time of their dispersal in grazing grounds;
 - ❖ posts on RCs should be designated to ensure the representation of every age set, with the proviso that there continue to be special representation for women, a group excluded from traditional age set-based organisation.
- (b) Grazing Committees (mobile RCs) should be elected on a territorial basis, and should be composed of individual households as members, whether these households own cattle or not.
- (c) Liaison Committees should be established to bring together relevant grazing committees with their across-the-border counterparts on a long term basis.

3. Economic Reforms:

- b) A comprehensive economic programme should be formulated and implemented to strengthen the pastoral economy through measures designed to address the problem of pastoral destitution, e.g., through restocking, animal health improvement, environmental protection, etc.
- c) Land use in grazing areas should be regulated, and land conflicts adjudicated, by grazing committees (mobile RCs).
- d) Local communities should be allowed a say in the administration and use of all "reserves", through their respective grazing committees (mobile RCs).
- e) A livestock insurance scheme should be instituted to ensure a buffer stock at times of crisis; and to guarantee an alternative to raids as a way of restocking cattle at such times.

4. Military Reforms:

- a) Local defense forces should be created under the control of grazing committees.
- b) Reconstituted RCs should have the right to censure particular deployment of locally-based state military forces; and conversely, a degree of popular representation should be allowed on relevant state organs charged with deploying these forces.

5. Policy Reforms:

- a) A systematic development programme should be formulated through consultation among all levels of reconstituted RCs. This programme should also define the priority areas in which foreign NGOs be invited to focus their efforts. These areas should include both normal productive activities and emergency measures such as restocking of cattle, establishing a cattle insurance scheme, and setting up famine food stocks.
- b) Foreign NGOs should shift their general focus from a concentration on agriculture, public works ("food for work") and emergency welfare services to ensuring the sustainability of cattle-keeping as the backbone of productive life in Karamoja.
- c) Effective policy making is not possible without an adequate research base. To reflect faithfully conditions on the ground and to define alternatives available in an

existing situation, research needs to be carried out by locally-based research institutions, whose capacity it will help develop in the long run.

6. For Further Consideration:

Besides revising and endorsing the above recommendations from the research team, workshop participants identified the following issues on which further recommendations need to be developed:

- a) Participation of women;
- b) Generating further employment opportunities;
- c) Education, both formal and informal, school age and adult; and
- d) Coordination of foreign NGOs under KDA.

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Programme

Friday, August 14

9.00 Opening Remarks and Introduction

9.30 - 12.30 Session One: Ecology and History

9.30 - 10.15 Presentation (M. Mamdani)

10.15 - 10.45 Tea

10.45 - 12.30 Discussion

12.30 - 1.45 Lunch

1.45 - 4.15 Session Two: Social Change

1.45 - 2.35 Presentation (C. Ocan)

2.35 - 4.15 Discussion

4.15 - 4.45 Tea

4.45 - 7.00 Session Three: 1980 Famine

4.45 - 5.30 Presentation (B. Okudi)

5.30 - 7.00 Discussion

Saturday, August 15

9.00 - 11.00 Session Four: Cattle Raids

9.00 - 9.30 Presentation (C. Ocan)

9.30 - 11.00 Discussion

11.00 - 11.30 TEA

11.30 - 3.00 Session Five: Role of NGOs

11.30 - 12.15 Presentation (A. Wabwire)

12.15 - 1.00 Discussion

1.00 - 2.15 Lunch

2.15 - 3.00 Discussion (cont.)

3.00 - 4.15 Rapporteurs' Reports
(Chief Rapporteur: Oloka-Onyango)

4.15 - 4.45 Tea

4.45 - 6.45 Recommendations

6.45 - 7.00 Conclusion

7.00 Reception

CBR Workshop Reports

1. **Pastoralism, Crisis and Transformation in Karamoja**; Report of a Workshop Organised by CBR and held at the Faculty of Science Makerere University, August 14 - 15, 1992, by Joe Oloka-Onyango, Zie Gariyo and Frank Muhereza; 26p.