



# *Indigenous Affairs*

No.2 - April - May - June - 1999

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs



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Cover: Participants at the Arusha Conference, Tanzania

# Editorial

Indigenous peoples in Africa face a whole range of problems and suffer from serious human rights abuses. African indigenous peoples are among the poorest and most marginalised populations in Africa. Whether hunter-gatherers or pastoralists, their traditional way of life is often based on extensive land use and their traditional territories are increasingly being encroached upon by states and dominant groups who have an interest in exploiting those areas economically in various ways. African indigenous cultures are threatened by this encroachment, they are looked down upon as "primitive" and "less developed" and African indigenous peoples experience severe discrimination.

To address the situation of African indigenous peoples it is not sufficient merely to handle it as a poverty issue. Indigenous peoples in Africa truly rank amongst the poorest of the poor. However, in order not just to target the symptoms but to genuinely seek to change the root causes, it is important to address the structural marginalisation and discrimination from which indigenous peoples suffer.

Gradually, African indigenous peoples are starting to organise in order to raise their voices and perspectives on the kinds of development which they would like to take place. However, whereas indigenous self-organisation has come a long way in regions like North and South America, the Arctic, Australia and also increasingly in large parts of Asia, indigenous self-organisation is still in its infancy in Africa, and contact and exchange of experiences between indigenous groups across the continent are few.

To offer a forum where indigenous representatives from Eastern, Central and Southern Africa could meet, exchange experiences and make forward-looking strategies, IWGIA and the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum) co-organised a conference in Arusha, Tanzania from the 18th to the 22nd of January 1999. "The Conference on Indigenous Peoples from Eastern, Central and Southern Africa" took place at the Training Center for Development Co-operation (TCDC) in Usa River, around 20 kms outside of Arusha.

Originally, the Conference had been planned for 50-60 participants. However, the initiative generated tremendous interest and

in the end more than 80 people attended the Conference. Of these, 50 were indigenous people representing more than 30 different organisations from 8 African countries.

The indigenous representatives belonged to hunter-gatherer and pastoralist communities. The hunter-gatherers were San from Namibia and South Africa, Batwa from Rwanda, Pygmies from the Democratic Republic of Congo, BaSua and Abayanda from Uganda, Hadzabe and Akie from Tanzania and Ogiek from Kenya. The pastoralists were Himba from Namibia, Barabaig from Tanzania, Maasai from Kenya and Tanzania, Pokot, Samburu, Rendille and Somali from Northern Kenya. There were, likewise, a number of representatives from regional and international indigenous networks such as the Working Group on Indigenous Minorities of Southern Africa (WIMSA), the African Indigenous Women's Organisation (AIWO), the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC) and the International Alliance for Tribal and Indigenous Peoples of the Tropical Forests.

In addition, a group of African experts and Human Rights activists, as well as representatives from international institutions like the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the European Commission, participated as resource persons. A number of representatives from Northern NGOs likewise participated.

The overall vision of the conference was to contribute to the empowerment of indigenous peoples in Africa and their organisations. The concrete objectives of the conference were to bring indigenous peoples from Eastern, Central and Southern Africa together to be able to share experiences and forward-looking strategies and to bring about a forum for indigenous peoples of Africa where they could meet with representatives from international institutions such as the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights and discuss how they might use these institutions to promote their case. At the conference, hunter-gatherers and pastoralists from different parts of Africa were able to meet, many of them for the first time, to discuss and to experience that they, in many ways, share the same problems:

profound discrimination and marginalisation; land alienation; forced displacement as a result of agricultural schemes, mining, dam construction, creation of national parks, wildlife reserves etc.; cultural losses; poor coverage and poor quality of social services; lack of education and development opportunities, and often the same violent human rights abuses, collective punishment and genocide.

While in many respects pastoralists and hunter-gatherers share the same problems, there are also a number of factors that separate the two groups. Hunter-gatherers have always been integrated into a social system with agriculturalists or pastoralists, but most often as vassals or in other kinds of inferior positions. This is still today obvious in the naming practices whereby the names used for groups of hunter-gatherers are often derogatory names originally used by the pastoralists or agriculturalists.

Pastoralists are usually better organised and educated than hunter-gatherers and when land becomes scarce we can observe how the pastoralists encroach upon the lands and territories of groups of hunter-gatherers. Whereas the pastoralists are thus being squeezed by farmers and by government agencies, they themselves turn to the territories of the even weaker hunter-gatherers. The statements from the conference in Arusha gave several examples of these divide-and-rule processes. However, although there is a long distance between the conference room and practical action, there was an understanding among both groups that only by being united can an impact be made upon government policies.

It therefore became apparent that much could be gained by joining forces as this would give the indigenous peoples of Africa more strength when presenting their claims. While the indigenous organisations being represented varied a good deal in terms of capacity and scope, getting to know the experiences and results obtained by some of the more established organisations was an important learning process, especially in terms of negotiation strategies towards governments. The role that regional organisations can and already do play was another valuable input.

The session on Indigenous Peoples and International Organisations also provided

the participants with important new knowledge about how to approach and use these organisations. Regarding the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), it became clear that indigenous human rights issues had so far never been discussed by the Commission. It was therefore one of the main resolutions of the conference that this situation should be addressed as soon as possible and contact made with the ACHPR Secretariat and its regional commissioners.

By the end of the Conference, the participants had formulated a draft "Final Resolution" and a Plan of Action. Because of time constraints, the conference's Steering Committee was asked to come up with a final, edited version of this draft - the final resolutions are printed in this issue of *Indigenous Affairs*.

The conference focussed on the very real problems of marginalisation, discrimination and human rights abuses which African indigenous peoples are facing. Discussions on African indigenous peoples' own experiences and visions for the future were central to the conference and promoted a substantial and constructive debate. Lengthy discussions on the definition of "indigenous peoples" in Africa were avoided. Such discussions often come up in other fora and can at times be necessary. However, they tend to draw attention away from the urgent problems which certain extremely marginalised groups are facing towards fruitless discussions on semantics. In this connection, the concept of self-identification is an important one to bear in mind: some groups, who have for decades experienced contempt, persecution and discrimination from Nation States and dominant groups and whose way of life and whole existence is endangered, choose to apply the term "indigenous peoples" to themselves as they feel that they share major problems and characteristics with other indigenous peoples around the world. It is a concept by which they can address their structural marginalisation, as well as link up with a global indigenous movement which is gaining ever increasing strength.

It is the hope of PINGO's Forum and IWGIA that this conference has contributed constructively to the exchange of experiences, establishment of new contacts, per-

ception of new ideas and strategies and to the ongoing process of self-organisation among the indigenous peoples of Africa. PINGO's Forum and IWGIA highly appreciate the immense interest and committed participation from all participants and it is our sincere hope that further debates and new initiatives will emanate from the conference.

This issue of *Indigenous Affairs* brings a number of the presentations from the Arusha Conference, as well as other articles on African indigenous issues relating to the themes of the conference.

The first article by Sidsel Saugestad discusses the importance of the indigenous concept in an African context. Thereafter Lucy Mulenkei sums up some of her impressions from the conference with a focus on increased self-organisation among African indigenous women.

The following section deals with the situation of, and self-organisation among, hunter-gatherers and we bring articles by Bushmen from Namibia and South Africa, by Pygmies from Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon and by Hadzabe from Tanzania. Thereafter comes a section on the situation of, and self-organisation among, pastoralists with articles by Maasai from Tanzania and Kenya, by Barabaig from Tanzania and on pastoralists from Northern Kenya. The particularly difficult situation for indigenous women is addressed by Lucy Mulenkei and Mary Simat, both of them Maasai women from Kenya.

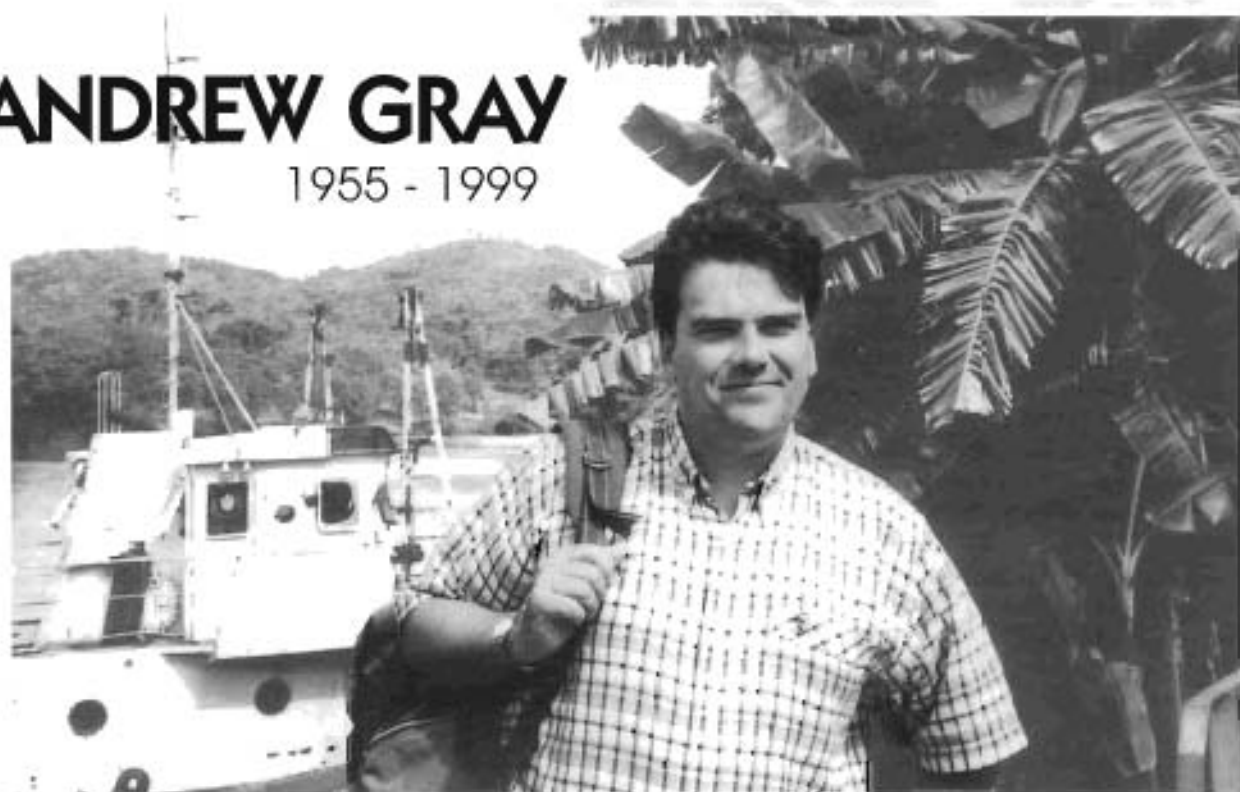
The African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights and its potential role in relation to African indigenous peoples is presented by Dr. Nyameko Barney Pityana, who is a member of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Finally the severe human rights abuses committed against the Ogoni people in Nigeria is frighteningly described by Vincent Idemvor.

Whereas indigenous issues have been on the political agenda in many regions of the world for several years now, the discussion is still new to Africa. It is our hope that the Conference on Indigenous Peoples in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa and this publication will constructively contribute to the debate and will play a fruitful role in the further process of improving the critical situation of the indigenous peoples of Africa. □



# ANDREW GRAY

1955 - 1999



**A**fter 16 years of intensive work for the international movement for the rights of indigenous peoples, Andrew Gray is no longer among us. On a networking trip for IWGIA in the Pacific, Andrew Gray and Jens Dahl managed to get out of the Twin Otter plane which crashed into the sea seven kilometres from the shores of Vanuatu on 8 May. Andrew was severely injured in the impact, and in the dark, rain and waves, he did not survive.

In 1983, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs had advertised a position vacant following the departure of our former secretary. We were looking for an anthropologist who could serve as a Director in the Secretariat in Copenhagen, and at the same time a person who possessed the academic skills necessary to do research and to write. We were interviewing a number of anthropologists whom we had singled out on the basis of their applications when suddenly this young man, of whom we knew nothing, appeared. Andrew had come straight from Gothenburg where a friend of his, a fellow South-Americanist, had told him about the vacant position in IWGIA. We interviewed Andrew, and there was no doubt in our minds: this was our man.

Andrew immediately came across as an anthropologist who had done not only excellent field work, but was engaged in the lives of the people he had lived with, the Harakmbut,

and their future. He already said then that he would not look for a university position. He wanted to use his experience and skills to work actively to strengthen the situation of indigenous peoples who were being assaulted by State societies. Ever since then, whenever he was asked if he would apply for a vacant position, he would decline the suggestion. With his outstanding intellectual resources and his enormous capacity to work, he could easily have chosen a purely academic path, and with brilliant results. But he always declined for the same reasons: his compassion for the many vulnerable small-scale societies in the world. We cannot stress enough the rare and valuable qualities Andrew possessed, and how delighted we were that he chose to channel so much of his energy through his work in IWGIA.

Very quickly, Andrew gained an impressive amount of knowledge on indigenous affairs and, coupled with his ability to analyse complex issues, he soon gained respect wherever he went. He worked tirelessly within IWGIA's Secretariat in Copenhagen, writing and editing documents and our newsletter 'Indigenous Affairs', preparing for conferences and meetings and then writing up reports from them, as well as numerous reports from his networking trips. His contribution to the understanding and promotion of indigenous issues spans the whole spectrum of topics, such as

indigenous rights, self-determination and self-government, biodiversity and other environmental concerns. He was a hard working and prolific writer who managed to put into print his own thoughts, as well as those of many indigenous individuals and organizations who entrusted this to him. From 1983 on, Andrew's written contributions can be found in numerous IWGIA publications. In addition to his documents on the gold rush in Harakmbut territory in Peru and his document on indigenous peoples and biodiversity, he can be found as a major contributor to a number of other documents, as well as to 'Indigenous Affairs', Special mention must also be made of IWGIA's yearbook, 'The Indigenous World', which was Andrew's brainchild and to which he contributed substantially ever since its first issue. Anthropology remained the solid foundation of his work, and in 1997 he published three impressive volumes on the Harakmbut of Amazonian Peru.

Andrew engaged himself wholeheartedly in international fora such as the ILO and the UN. It is in IWGIA's yearbook that we find Andrew's numerous and lucid reports from the meetings of the United Nations' Working Group on Indigenous Populations, including the process of drafting the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a process which started in 1983. He also engaged himself extensively in the proceedings aimed at establishing a UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples. Andrew played a major role in the International Commission which IWGIA set up to investigate the dire situation of the Juma peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh and this helped lay the ground for the negotiations of the recently signed peace agreement.

After six years as IWGIA's Director, Andrew became a member of the International Board of IWGIA, and then its Vice-Chairman in 1998. He continued his contributions to IWGIA's publications but he also engaged himself in projects administered through IWGIA, such as a huge land titling project in Peru and a holistically conceived project which he planned together with the Harakmbut.

As Andrew became renowned for his work for the rights of indigenous peoples, he also became a council member of Anti-Slavery International and a Policy Advisor to the Forest People's Programme.

For six years he worked as the first incumbent of the position of Director of IWGIA and he established an excellent precedent for that position before he became a member of the International Board of our organization and then Vice-Chairman. In these capacities he also made use of his unique way of dealing with all kinds of people: his fabulous sense of humour and his sincere way of attending to people always made it pleasant to be in his company and it invariably meant that whenever there were difficulties within IWGIA as an organization, Andrew was there with deliberations based on his perceptive and sensitive analysis of any situation involving a number of people with different qualities and interests.

After the long days of meetings and intense work, how we enjoyed his fun-making, his ability to re-enact sequences of

the meetings and to imitate people and caricature them, never mockingly, but with affection. And here we touch upon some crucial dimensions in a small organization such as IWGIA, namely the closeness, the warmth, the friendship that we all share. The loss of Andrew as a friend is so immense that words do not suffice. With Andrew a supporting wall has been torn from IWGIA. With Andrew we have lost a close and intimate friend. We lost him in the middle of his stride. Only a few days before he left for the Pacific, at our Board meeting in Copenhagen, we agreed to design a new research project together. And so it is with many of us who had the privilege to work with him, because Andrew was torn away so young and so fully engaged in his life projects, into which he so generously invited us all.

Among fellow anthropologists, Andrew stood as an extraordinary and uncompromising figure, with solid roots in his scholarly field, in his extensive work with the Harakmbut people in the Peruvian rainforest and in his moral engagement. He stood as a tall and straight tree with interests and a compassion for people which stretched beyond the horizon of so many of his contemporaries. In spite of his young age, Andrew has left a legacy: a legacy which he shaped through a process which we were so lucky to be able to participate in.

It is with a profound sense of grief that we go through the process of coming to terms with the fact that the energetic Andrew, so full of life and laughter, has died. On behalf of IWGIA, we wish to convey our deepest sympathy and compassion to his wife Sheila and son Robbie and to all of Andrew's family. □

## A FUND FOR ANDREW GRAY

A fund for Andrew Gray has been established whereby all donated funds will be used for the Harakmbut indigenous people in Peru. Andrew worked for many years with immense dedication and affection to support the cause of the Harakmbut people, and a close relationship developed between Andrew and the Harakmbut people. Specifically the funds will be used for making a boarding facility for Harakmbut students from remote communities who come to attend school in the city of Puerto Maldonado.

Donations can be made via IWGIA: Sydbank, Købmagergade 45, Copenhagen, account no. 7031-1097110. Please indicate your name on the transfer. Sterling donations can be forwarded to: Forest Peoples Programme, 1C, Fosseyway Business Centre, Stratford Road, Moreton-in-Marsh, GL 56 9NQ, UK

# CONTESTED IMAGES: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN AFRICA



See woman, Romania. Photo: Christer Ene.

By Sidsel Saugestad

**T**he concept 'indigenous' is increasingly popular but also highly contentious in international discourse and in national negotiations. As a sociological category it is subject to various definitions. As a legal concept it is only just beginning to find its form. When it comes to implementation, the concept stands out as particularly difficult to handle for bureaucracies. General problems connected with the use of this term become even greater when applied to an African context. The present paper looks at some of the historical context to how the concept developed, and the African context for its use, and concludes by discussing some arguments that may be put forward for and against using the concept. But first three general points that are worth noting.

## **A moral claim**

The only legally binding statement about indigenous peoples is found in ILO Convention 169, which so far has not been ratified by any African country. Moreover, there is a long way to go before the United Nation's Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is passed by the General Assembly, and many African states are among the strongest opponents to the declaration. The legal basis for claiming indigenous rights is therefore particularly weak in Africa. However, the importance of such statements expressing concern for indigenous issues should not be measured solely by their weak legal status. They are the most explicit expression of a general trend that has grown over the last three decades or so. This trend is spearheaded by indigenous and human rights organisations, and sustained by networks of co-operation between national governments, and organisations meeting in national and international fora. The very formulation of these international instruments introduces a moral standard, and sets a new agenda. This moral standard is not a matter of degree, and cannot be measured by the number of ratifications. In other words, even if the core of the concept is its legal implications, we must also look at its sociological significance. Indigenous movements now look at declarations made in international fora and take them back as levers for reform in a national context. In the foreseeable future, this is the main significance of the international process for the African scene.

## **A cumbersome bureaucratic concept**

However, leaving moral and legal questions aside, it should also be kept in mind that any procedure for singling out one





group for special treatment and/or affirmative action disrupts standard administrative routines for equal treatment, and goes against administrative preferences for clear-cut and unambiguous target groups. And while recognising that Africa is a special case, one should keep in mind that the concept of indigenous peoples is perceived by bureaucrats all over the world as a concept that is inconvenient, diffuse and difficult to handle. My own country, Norway, provides ample examples of government dismissal and administrative neglect of the indigenous Saami population. Up to 1987, the Saami were not recognised as a distinct group within the Kingdom of Norway, instead they were described according to criteria such as language (Saami speaking), domicile (Inner Finnmark, the county with the largest proportion of Saami), or by economic adaptation (reindeer herding) (Mathiesen 1978, Thuen 1995). It took the greatest civil conflict in post-war Norway (the Alta-Kautokeino case in 1981) and a new paragraph in the Norwegian Constitution before the Saami became recognised as a distinct people, and 'Saami' became a legitimate category within the Norwegian administration.

The need to find a balance between the general ideals of equal rights and equal treatment, and the special needs of the minority for protection, is a dilemma which troubles all democratic states with indigenous minorities within their borders. The conclusion we can draw from other countries is that a gradual recognition of special problems and therefore special needs has only come about reluctantly, after indigenous peoples have mobilised themselves. Governments in power have initiated few changes. Changes have come about as reactions to pressure from organisations and from political movements (Brantenberg et al. 1995). The concept introduces and emphasises collective rights, while all previous human rights instruments have emphasised individual rights.

### **'Indigenous' is used with two meanings**

A third point, which is not specific to Africa, is that confusion is caused by a linguistic ambiguity. The concept 'indigenous' is frequently used as an adjective to mean 'local', 'native' and 'non-European'. This is fairly unproblematic when used about e.g. 'indigenous agriculture' or 'indigenous plants'. In fact, a group around Robert Chambers at the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex, UK, used the term in this sense long before its current legal fashion. Their research uncovered the considerable knowledge and experience contained in 'indigenous' systems of cultivation, in contrast to Western and 'scientific' farm-

ing systems, and argued for a greater emphasis on "indigenous knowledge systems" in development programmes (Brokensha, Warren and Werner 1980). This school of thought has been widely influential and may account for some of the resistance among development workers and bureaucrats for using 'indigenous' in the more restricted UN and ILO sense.

### **An inconvenient concept in Africa**

In this global picture, Africa, and much of Asia, represents special conceptual challenges. If we look at the colonial roots of the concept, indigenous peoples are the descendants of those who occupied a given territory that was invaded, conquered or colonised by white, colonial powers. Structurally similar problems were created in places as diverse as the Americas, Australia, New Zealand/Aotearoa and Greenland. However, in a global perspective the situation is most clear-cut where white settlers arrived from outside, while relations are more varied and ambiguous in Europe and Asia. Some of the most complex relationships are those between original occupants and incoming groups in Africa.

It is more difficult to analyse Africa, but also more challenging. The dominant position of white colonial forces left all of black Africa in a subordinate position that was, in many respects, similar to the position of indigenous peoples elsewhere. In relation to the colonial powers, all native Africans were (a) first comers, (b) non-dominant and (c) different in culture from the white intruders. Moreover, local people were associated with 'nature' and 'traditional lifestyles', which are common indigenous attributes, in contrast to the control of technology, manufacturing and development which was associated with the intruders. Thus, the dominant black/white dichotomy in Africa tended to reinforce the notion that all native Africans were 'indigenous'.

The conceptual problems were noted in the report from the first conference on indigenous people in Africa, convened by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) in 1993:

*The concept of indigenous people, as applied to the African setting, is a complicated and much debated one. But this is mostly so from the perspective of the decision-makers and those dealing with international human rights issues, and less so when seen by those who themselves claim to be indigenous ... Every one of the presentations made to the conference testified to the discriminatory treatment accorded indigenous people by the dominating populations in the countries, not as a result of attempts to set themselves apart*



*socially or politically - but because indigenous peoples looked different, dressed differently, behaved differently or otherwise were perceived to be different from the rest. Indigenous identity was an experienced social reality whether consciously acknowledged and made part of public and political discourse or not. (Veber et al. 1993:10,14-15, emphasis added)*

The important difference from the other situations mentioned above is that, eventually, the white colonial forces withdrew from Africa. Accordingly, many national politicians argue strongly that all Africans are indigenous, or alternatively, that this is a distinction that does not apply to the African continent. Neither position, however, helps us to analyse the complex internal relationships in parts of Africa. Part of the problem on this continent is that this linking of indigenous with a colonial situation leaves us without a suitable concept for analysing the same type of internal relationships that have persisted after liberation from colonial dominance. In a number of African countries, minority ethnic groups have historically occupied inaccessible regions, often geographically isolated and socially marginalised, and with their cultures distinct from the national hegemonic model. These minorities suffer various forms of exploitation and domination within the national economic and political structures that are commonly designed to reflect the interests and activities of the national majority.

The modern, analytical, use of the concept focuses precisely on this post-colonial, internal relationship. A concept is needed in international law to describe such sections of a population and their position as indigenous peoples in relation to (politically and numerically) dominant sections. The term 'internal colony' is sometimes used to refer to peoples that will never achieve independent statehood. Unlike the peoples of the Third World who have been able to take control of their territories through strength of numbers, "the tiny internal colonies that make up the Fourth World are fated always to be minority populations in their own lands." (Dyck 1985:1)

### Limitations to definitions

Both indigenous organisations and the UN system argue strongly against a very strict definition of who is indigenous. This is partly because many governments may use a strict definition as an excuse for not recognising indigenous peoples within their own

territories. Moreover, international debates emphasise that a concept such as Human Rights has been used in a number of important declarations without a very precise definition of the concept. Indigenous is a relative term: a group is only indigenous in relation to another encompassing group that defines the dominant structures of the state. The meaning thus depends on context. The core criteria of 1) priority in time, 2) perpetuation of cultural distinctiveness and 3) experience of subjugation and marginalisation, together with 4) self-identification as a distinct people, seem to have gained universal acceptance but may appear in very different combinations.

My own emphasis would be on the structural features; not the specific properties of a group, but their relationship to the governing structures of the state. The core feature of this relationship is the lack of recognition of the distinct background and special needs of indigenous people from the nation-state.

Among other things, this has implications for handling the dimension of time. A strict linear perception of time should not overshadow the impact of historical relations on the present situation. In other words, emphasis should not be on the historical fact of suppression by annexation or conquest, but the degree to which this suppression - be it by physical violence, deprivation of rights, stigmatisation or marginalisation - has continued as a living memory and contemporary experience. It is a sense of continuity with those living in a territory at the time of contact that is important. This may be expressed in the use of land, or in a clear sense of having been deprived of its use.

A similar emphasis on structural features can be found in a report from the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (1998), noting:

*If Africans had been at the UN table at the start of the UNWGIP process they could have emphasised that the issue is not aboriginality, but rather the on-going particular relationship of hunter-gatherers and pastoralists to natural resource management. This relationship, which is ancient in character and relatively untouched by colonialism, has shaped cultures, languages and identities. These communities have been stigmatised in post-independent African states as backward and unproductive.*

### Choice of terminology - a choice of strategy?

It is important, especially in Africa, to distinguish between the relationship of subordination that characterises indigenous groups, and various and widespread forms of ethnic or tribal differences. Groups that are disadvantaged may, for a variety of reasons, want to be included under the umbrella of indigenous, for whatever protection or support this can furnish. However, any concept that conceivably might bring about some benefits may also be used opportunistically. It is not helpful to describe all ethnic minorities suffering from human rights abuse as indigenous. Being coined as an instrument for redressing certain types of injustices, the concept loses its strength if it is being used to describe all types of injustice. But while the discussion of appro-



priate use of the term is important, this is not yet a significant problem in an African context. (However, it may become so, if/when indigenous organisations become more influential).

In the present situation, a more acute dilemma is posed by the question of whether or not one should avoid arguing lines of indigenousness, if this is seen to antagonise governments. It is a regrettable fact that most indigenous peoples in the Third World - however defined - also find themselves in a situation of poverty and deprivation, lacking in resources, scoring low in education, often suffering from apathy, alcoholism and despair. Governments often argue that one should not focus too much on the contentious and abstract issue of 'indigenousness' but rather address the evident situations of poverty. Development organisations, noting genuine human needs, may be inclined to agree and play down the political issue. If help can be extended to deprived indigenous groups under the label of welfare programmes, so be it, provided it still reaches the target groups and alleviates human suffering.

Whether this is a wise strategy to follow or not depends on the objective. Clearly, indigenous peoples' problems are almost always also problems of poverty that can be alleviated by welfare. However, this removes the symptoms, not the cause (Saugestad 1998). Addressing the root causes implies, in anthropological terminology, a recodification of the situation, and a contestation of meaning. This means challenging the dominant rules whereby society allocates people different value and unequal position in society and rewards cultural qualifications and skills differently. The indigenous struggle seeks to change this. The appropriation of selfhood concerns the development of an expanded 'vocabulary' with which to speak of oneself internally as well as inter-culturally (Eidheim 1992).

Talking about cultural differences, identity, and contestation of meaning may appear less radical than those who argue along the lines of class differences. Economic mechanisms usually relegate indigenous people to the bottom of society. Paradoxically, a focus on class conflict may appear less controversial to many governments because it simply implies a tacit acceptance of the view that the problem of indigenous peoples is one of poverty only. The underlying mechanisms of unequal opportunity can never be removed by welfare, but need a change in the dominant political discourse. In Keesing's terminology, a counter-hegemonic movement "entails a contestation of meaning as well as of political power" (1992:232).

A state's attitude is expressed in its political and legal structures. The conflicting world-views between state bureaucracies and hunter-gatherers or pastoralists can appear as different approaches to land use, differences in the organising role of kinship, differences in traditions for accumulation and consumption, and in the different perceptions of leadership (Barnard 1998). Wherever conflicts of interest over land occur, bureaucratic ignorance about the logic of foraging systems, and the lack of recognition of the legitimacy of non-farming use of land tends to aggravate such disputes. In this perspective, it is not entirely obvious that avoiding the kind of antagonism that the

concept of 'indigenous' may provoke from those in power is the best strategy. The terminology used to describe a given situation also indicates what can be done to change it.

The formation of indigenous representative organisations, and the recognition by governments of such organisations as legitimate partners in negotiations, have been among the most successful innovations in the troubled field of relations between nation-states and their indigenous minorities. A constructive minority policy can only be developed through consultation, and consultation requires independent, representative indigenous organisations that can negotiate with the government. Recognition of this condition implies the recodification of a relationship from one of dominance and subordination to one of mutual respect between different but equal partners. Far from being a threat to political stability, this recodification has turned out to be a vital contribution to the democratic process. It is a lesson that governments in Africa can but benefit from applying.

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# A VOICE AT LAST FOR THE AFRICAN INDIGENOUS WOMEN

by Lucy Mulenkei

**A**fter the formation of the African Indigenous Women's Organization (AIWO) in April 1998, there is hope for African Indigenous Women to be recognized. The journey has just started but there is light ahead - as the saying goes a long journey starts with a step.

It is great that in a few year's time, with the help of our partners, the African Indigenous Women can see themselves working like our sisters in Asia and the Americas. I say this because when I first attended the meetings in Geneva, I wondered where we had been all these years. A lot had been going on for years on indigenous issues but African Women were in the dark. Special tribute goes to the Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples for helping form the African Indigenous Women's Organization and to IWGIA for their continuous facilitation in attending the Indigenous People's Forums in Geneva and other parts of the world. As for me, I am very grateful that this has enabled me to attend and represent African Indigenous Women in Accra, Ghana and Geneva, both during the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Population, during discussions on the United Nations Permanent

Forum for Indigenous Peoples and in the Arusha Conference on Indigenous Peoples from Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.

The Arusha Conference was a learning process for many of us. It was a time to learn and share experiences with other indigenous peoples we hardly ever met. This was the first time I met and learnt about the hunter/gatherers; a community I did not know existed in Tanzania. I heard their story and concluded that we indigenous people who are working with our people, we have to move and take stock of our indigenous communities, hunter/gatherers and minorities in the different countries of Africa. On the African continent we have yet to discover more indigenous peoples. I am more worried about the role played by women in these communities. Are they in any way recognized? What role do they play as supporters of their communities? Arusha has given us hope to move forward.

We met as indigenous women among ourselves to express our concern regarding different issues. It was evident that we had long been isolated. AIWO is the only hope with which to highlight our fight. Sharing our views, I realized that as the focal point for AIWO in Eastern Africa, I have a big task ahead of

me, working for my fellow indigenous women. The problems are similar from one country to another. There are many factors that constrain the participation of indigenous women in different decision-making structures. These are structures that could help in the recognition of the African Indigenous Woman. Some of these constraints are

- a) A lack of knowledge about their roles, rights and powers to implement and perform.
- b) Men lack the willingness to share resources and power with women.
- c) Women lack economic power.
- d) Negative cultural beliefs exist in almost all indigenous communities. For example, in African indigenous communities, women are virtually behind the scenes.
- e) Inadequate understanding of gender issues.
- f) High illiteracy rates (80-90%) amongst most indigenous women.
- g) Women do not own or have the right to property.
- h) Lack of leadership and advocacy skills.
- i) Poverty.

In Kenya, indigenous women have come together to identify the above issues as the major hindrance to their development and recognition. This has taken place in two different areas. From North-Central Region (Samburu, Marsabit and Isiolo) the women identified problems which are similar and faced by all women in that region. They formed NOPWIK - the Network for Pastoralist Women in Kenya. This is a network to help pastoralist women organise themselves and identify ways in which they can move forward in development. The second place where the indigenous women have come together is in Kajiado. Women in decision-making positions discussed problems that constrain their participation in economic decision-making in the district. The outcome from the two meetings was similar. Through a participatory process, they identified local policy concerns in their districts. Among these are:

- a) Marketing of livestock and crafts products
- b) Adult literacy
- c) Girls education and, amongst other things
- d) Security

In Arusha, these issues came up again and again, and not only among women but also among indigenous men, especially the hunter/gatherers. It was here that the indigenous peoples spoke a great deal on representation in different forums; an issue that sometimes creates conflict among people. Representation from the international NGOs guided us on how to get funding and how to organise ourselves.

As for our development partners, it is great and wonderful that you have given African indigenous women a chance to be heard. Our voices will be louder as we organise ourselves. In the Eastern African Region, we are planning a Conference to bring more indigenous women together to learn, share and inform our region of the role we play in our communities. This will also take place in other regions of Africa in the future. AIWO has focal points representing five regions: North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa. This was discussed by indigenous women who met in Amsterdam in December 1998, during the launch of the report on the first African Indigenous Women's Conference held in Agadir, Morocco.

Forming the regions will make it easier for AIWO to coordinate activities and communicate easily with indigenous women. The focal people have a big role as they are the ones who will organise their own region and come up with ways of forming the structure of AIWO in the future. It is also at the sub-regional level that problems facing indigenous women can be easily identified and solutions discussed. Activities and priority areas can be well planned. It is at these points that the indigenous woman can have a visibility.

There is a challenge ahead for us indigenous women. Our organisation is just one year old, without any funds and trying to be visible and heard. Do we have hope? Yes we do. But we need help, especially in funding. To build the capacity of indigenous women so that their voices can be stronger.

*Lucy Mulenkel is a Maasai and focal person in the Eastern Africa region for AIWO. She is an environment and development radio journalist and the coordinator of "Indigenous Information Network".*



*Samburu women, Kenya. Photo: David Vinding*



*Mother and child of the Efe (pygmies), Ituri Forest, Upper Zaire. Photo: Espen Wæhle*



# THE PRESENT SITUATION OF THE PYGMIES IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

By Stephan Ilundu Bulambo



The Pygmies, who formerly lived as hunter-gatherers in the large forests of our country - the Democratic Republic of Congo - have seen themselves expelled from their homes, which have become reserves for wildlife and flora and converted into national parks. In South Kivu, it is particularly the National Park of Kahuzi-Biega which has become a world heritage for the protection of rare fauna and flora species, being also used as an important tourist site. Today, however, we know how these reserves have been destroyed as a consequence of war.

The National Park of Virunga in North Kivu, as well as the big equatorial forest in the Eastern Province (formerly Upper Zaire province) have also become important attractions, guarded by the authorities. They also constitute areas where the Pygmy communities, as a result of their expulsion from the forest, now live in small, isolated and dispersed groups.

This expulsion has been carried out without any indemnification and the expelled Pygmies are left on their own; they live without any access to land and they are compelled to sell their labour for a meagre income in order to survive. The few actions taken in the past in order to integrate these people have failed because they were not adapted to, nor in accordance with, the aspirations of the people concerned.

The rights of the Pygmy people have for a long time been abused by their non-Pygmy neighbours and ignored by the Pygmies themselves. The former have taken advantage of this ignorance, and benefitted from the support of the local authorities in order to maintain the Pygmies in the same situation; the latter have been purely and simply kept away from any contact with positive external contributions.

Today, while the country is submerged in a war-like situation, the Pygmies are those who are the most affected



and thus become the first victims, as has always been the case and according to the old saying: "When two elephants are fighting, it is the grass which suffers".

As a consequence of the war, the small communities are being further dispersed, poverty increases even more, people live without any defence or recognition of their basic rights and their cultural values are disappearing. Massacres are carried out against this defenceless population.

Because of their strong attachment to traditional values and to the protection of their cultural identity, the Pygmies are accused by each of the two conflicting groups of belonging to the enemy; the two groups thereby seeking to satisfy their shameful interests: the alienation of land, the appropriation of property, etc.

We therefore ask for the support of all those who work in favour of indigenous peoples and for a better understanding of their problems so that through well-channelled actions we can bring about sustainable and efficient solutions in favour of these people who are victims of all sorts of human rights abuses.

We suggest actions that aim at empowering the communities and directed towards education, health, housing, land tenure systems, agriculture, animal husbandry, peaceful cohabitation between communities, peace education as well as support to local grass roots initiatives.

*Paper presented during the "Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa", organised by the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum) and IWGIA. The conference took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 18th to 22nd of January 1999.*

**Stephan Ilundu Bulambo** is a Pygmy from the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is working for the organisation P.I.D.P.- Kivu (Programme d'Intégration et de Développement du Peuple Pygmée au Kivu) in the Democratic Republic of Congo. □

# PYGMIES AND INDUSTRIAL LOGGING: THE CASE OF THE BAGYELI OF SOUTHERN CAMEROON

By Jacques Ngoun



Industrial logging has been taking place in the region of Bipindi-Lolodorf for 40 years. The logging companies SAFOR and SFIL carried out activities there in the 1950s and the 1970s respectively. Following them, WIJMA, BECOL, SFK and others, established themselves. When evaluating the present situation, it is clear that, far from being a factor promoting development, industrial logging threatens the life and survival of forest populations in general, and the Bagyeli Pygmies in particular. The benefits that the Bagyeli have derived from logging companies are limited whereas the damages are considerable: destruction of their way of life, their sources of food, their environment. The Bagyeli challenge the decision-makers in the logging companies with the following questions:

- \* Where can we live now?
- \* What will we and our children eat?
- \* With which barks shall we cure our ailments?
- \* Are the government and our brothers aware of our situation?
- \* Will we survive as the forest disappears?

Felling of Obeshe tree,  
Cameroon.  
Photo: Dorothy Jackson

## Introduction

Logging has been taking place in the Océan Department, more specifically around Bipindi and Kribi, for roughly 40 years. We heard of the activities of SAFOR in the 1950s and SFIL in the 1970s. These activities have increased as more and more licences and concessions have been given out to logging companies. We know that WIJMA, BECOL, SFK, UTC and others are present in the same area. Over the past years, the companies have removed more and more logs, they have increasingly devastated the forest and have thus been able to reach the most remote areas. Unfortunately, Bakola and Bagyeli Pygmy communities live in these exploited forests. We have all learned the history of the Pygmy communities of our country. They are relatively small groups of people who live in so-called camps in the forest of southern Cameroon. Over a period of time, the Pygmies have become more and more sedentary, living in chosen forest camps or along the road, to the point where some now speak of Pygmy villages. However, as a result of the devastation caused by the logging companies, the Pygmies have encountered new difficulties in the forest, causing a different rhythm of life – that of uncertainty and continual anxiety.

## The effect of industrial logging on the Bagyeli Pygmy communities

The Pygmies live mainly from hunting and gathering, that is to say, Pygmies are able to feed themselves thanks to the forest. The forest is their nourishing mother. It is for them a source of life. Hunting and gathering normally take place in the forest. But, sadly, today this forest is suffering various disturbances. Does logging bring any benefits to the Pygmies in these exploited areas? It is difficult to identify any benefits. With the progressive impoverishment of the forest ecosystem, due mainly to the acceleration of industrial logging, there is a real concern that the food sources of the Bakola/Bagyeli Pygmies will collapse and the food security which has existed up to the present day will be undermined, threatening the Bagyeli's livelihoods.

## The negative impacts of logging on the Bakola/Bagyeli

We believe that the loggers should not invade our forests, especially the areas inhabited by Pygmies, because they destroy certain tree species which are important for their fruits or their bark.

Sometimes they fell other trees carrying *Strophanthus*, a species which underpins our economy, even though the buyers try to cheat us.



They also destroy a multitude of seeds which are very rich and used in preparing food. We are very worried that the loggers are taking all our forest and destroying it, and we ask ourselves what the Pygmies will live off, and how they will live, today and in the future.

Let us take the example of a Pygmy camp traversed by the machines of a logging company. Of course, unaware of the danger threatening them, the Pygmies will be happy to see the bulldozers passing in front of their doors. But the next day it will be their turn, and they will certainly be gnashing their teeth.

The tree from which honey is harvested has been felled: the tree which carried the *Strophanthus* has been cut, the traps which were laid have been swept away, the game which was easy to catch has become wary and moved far away, the stream which provided drinking water has become a stagnant pool due to the devastating bulldozers.

Dear participants, imagine for a moment the reaction of this man. He will surely cry out, and if we study his cry we will discover that it is the proclamation of a heartfelt message composed of a multitude of questions:

- \* What will happen to our environment?
- \* What is the fate of our forests?
- \* What will we eat?
- \* With what bark will we heal our ailments?
- \* Are the government and our brothers aware of our situation?
- \* Why does logging bring so much chaos?

In one word – will our Pygmy brothers and sisters survive?

In all of this, we must be aware that the forest and the Pygmy people are inseparable because, for the Pygmies, the forest is their first classroom, and has been for a very long time. Why deprive these people of their forest, because therein they find everything that they need to live? We must be aware that the wisdom of the Pygmy people lies in the forest.

#### Direct consequences of industrial logging on Bagyeli society

These are the direct consequences of industrial logging on Bagyeli society:

- \* Extreme disturbance of the habitat and the way of life of the Pygmies.
- \* Conflicts between the Pygmies and their Bantu neighbours.
- \* Dispersal of sedentarised Pygmies.
- \* Partial or complete disappearance of food products (game, fish, fruits, leaves, wild yams...).
- \* Sources of fuel wood are further away.
- \* Pollution of water courses making water supplies precarious.
- \* Perturbations of the rhythms of traditional practices directly linked to primary forest.
- \* Desecration of sacred sites.
- \* Reduction in hunting, gathering and foraging activities, causing a sharp change in our way of life.
- \* Increased suspicion amongst the Pygmies of the Bantu, and the associated structures of the logging companies.

#### Logging and the Bagyeli Communities: some suggestions

The environment for a Pygmy person is the forest. To help the Bagyeli, this environment, the forest, must be protected. Its exploitation must be better controlled. The communities' way of life should be re-

spected, they should be consulted about the exploitation of their heritage, and the loggers should uphold policies to promote regeneration of the forest, which up to now have not been applied.

Furthermore, the new law on the management of forest resources should be promoted to the public and implemented by the logging companies based on a framework of cooperation with the State and NGOs. The State and NGOs must raise the awareness of logging companies in order to persuade them to become agents of development in our areas.

#### Conclusion

The Bagyeli Pygmies are the first victims of industrial logging. They have had to endure logging despite all their efforts. The management of our forest and our environment remains a problem to which Cameroonians must find well thought out and concrete solutions as quickly as possible. The equilibrium and connections between the forest populations of Pygmies in Cameroon and their immediate environment must be preserved.

Let this International Conference in Yaoundé be the beginning of the establishment of a strategy for the rational, sustainable and beneficial exploitation of the forest and its resources.

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Translated from French by Dorothy Jackson, Forest Peoples Programme.

Paper presented at the "International Conference on Forest Ecosystems and Development in the South and East of Cameroon", Yaoundé 16-17 February 1999. The paper is written by Jacques Ngoun with the support of Planet Survey, an NGO working for sustainable development and environmental development.

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**R**wanda traces its population back to various important migrations around the eleventh century. These migrations led the Bahutu from the shores of Lake Chad and the Batutsi from the high lands of Abyssinia. These two peoples, who both came in search of new agricultural lands and open spaces for their cattle, found the

indigenous (Batwa) living with what nature put at their disposal, such as the products from hunting, fruits, roots, etc.

The hour of sedentarisation rang for everybody and exchanges - both social and economic - were unavoidable. The political organisation of the country fell into the hands of the rich and agricultural exploitation was taken up by the agriculturalists. Indigenous people, having nothing to offer in exchange for the farmers' products, found themselves relegated to second rank and their marginalisation began.

Unable to live from nature, which was being attacked by those clearing the land, the indigenous Mutwa tried to become sedentary by exploiting a new area of interest where their "masters" could not push them around, i.e. pottery. Alas, they would soon know better for even in this area indigenous people would only be allowed to work with ceramics.

At the time of colonisation and "Christianisation" of Rwandese society, there followed a socio-economic stratification which arbitrarily made references to the intellectual capacity and organisational skills of social groups. Its instigators ended up classifying indigenous people as having an IQ below that of the other groups, yet another occasion to marginalise.

The Batwa indigenous people were soon to be presented to the colonisers as a people that was going to disappear since it had not been able to adapt itself to the new realities of sedentary living and the exploitation of nature within a more advanced vision.

As they belong to the poorest strata of the country, indigenous people are also left out of the school system and have thus been unable to redress their economic and socio-political situation.

From this double marginalisation comes the political quarantine of the indigenous people. Since feudal times, indigenous people have been characterised as buffoons, no-good people who only serve to improve the spirits of their masters, at court as well as elsewhere, and left only to do the dirty work.

At the socio-political level, indigenous people have tried to integrate into various areas such as agriculture, ceramics and education but they have always come up against this barrier which qualifies them as "sub-human beings"; they will always be the object of discredit underpinned by numerous proverbs, which will reinforce the other societal groups' impression of them being "incompetent", and "good for nothing".

Because of this, the indigenous people are automatically condemned to live among themselves and they end up being true pariahs. These forgotten people, having no spokesperson

# INDIGENOUS SELF-ORGANISATION IN RWANDA - THE EXAMPLE OF CAURWA



*Kalimba Zephyrin*

By Kalimba Zephyrin



*Central African Twa, Ahayanda and BaSua representatives at the Arusha Conference. Photo: Dorothy Jackson*

in the political circles of the decision makers, ended up believing - in a fatalistic way - in their condition of "cursed" and "incompetent".

At the economic level, the indigenous people (in particular the Mutwa) live in scandalous poverty and hopes for overcoming this situation are nowhere to be seen. In fact due to the colonisers' ignorance, and the egoism of their heirs having prevented the Mutwa of the chance to benefit from a normal school education, it is impossible for them to rapidly change their socio-economic status.

The only area where the indigenous people have a monopoly no longer holds the same importance. Ceramics is the only area where they excel, although their know-how has not been developed and is still an unexploited potential. Should efforts be given to making ceramics market-oriented or should other viable possibilities - and they do exist - not rather be identified?

Problems are good for something. At the cultural level, the indigenous people have known how to preserve their cultural heritage, which is extremely rich both for women and men, and

goes back to time immemorial. This cultural wealth that has been kept by the indigenous is a token of their cultural identity. For this, the indigenous Rwandese, who have suffered so much deprivation as a result of their marginalisation, should be honoured.

### **Emerging self-organisation**

After so many years of being forgotten at a socio-political and economic level in this country, the awareness of the indigenous people was awakened in 1991 with the creation of the Association for the Promotion of the Batwa (A.P.B.) and in 1993 yet another association, the Association for the Global Development of the Batwa of Rwanda (A.D.B.R.) was created to follow the first one in its global efforts to promote the condition of the indigenous people. These two associations aim at the emancipation and socio-political and economic integration of the indigenous Rwandese, for so long pushed aside by their co-heritors the Hutus and the Tutsis.

In order to harmonise and better coordinate their programmes, but especially in order to avoid potential rivalries or



struggles for influence (since they have the same target group), the two associations decided in 1995 to unite in a coordination structure, the CAURWA (Communauté des Autochtones Rwandais), which opens its doors to similar future initiatives in order to better serve the cause of the Rwandese indigenous people.

For the past three years, CAURWA has been pursuing the noble task of organising self reliance, trying to open up for other new socio-economic opportunities.

To do this, CAURWA organises training in various areas in order to improve the intellectual level of the indigenous people. CAURWA works at organising both the national and international community for the cause of the Batwa. It lobbies donors and partners on behalf of its member organisations, notably in order to mobilise funds for projects that will benefit the target groups of the two associations.

### Objectives of CAURWA

The objectives of CAURWA are to:

- \* Ensure concertation and complementarity between the interventions of the member associations.
- \* Unite the Twa organisations that work for the defence of rights, and the promotion of Rwanda's indigenous people.
- \* Coordinate and support the programmes of the aforementioned associations.
- \* Serve as lobbying body for the negotiations of funds for its members.
- \* Follow up on the budgetary implementation of the projects where funding has been negotiated by CAURWA.
- \* Support and promote the formation of regional and local organisations.
- \* Assist its member organisations in structuring and internal organising (procedures).
- \* Assist with the training of member organisations.

### Structure and organisation

CAURWA is composed of the founding organisations - i.e. the Association for the Promotion of the Batwa (A.P.B.) and the Association for the Global Development of the Batwa of Rwanda (A.D.B.R.) as well as by others who can become members after having fulfilled the conditions of the statutes. CAURWA's mission is to coordinate the activities of the grassroots organisations. CAURWA has three main bodies: the General Assembly, the Board and the Executive Council. The General Assembly is the supreme body of the association and enjoys full sovereignty. Its mission is to:

- \* Identify and unite the indigenous organisations that work for the defence of indigenous people's rights.
- \* Adopt the statutes and the internal regulations of CAURWA.
- \* Elect and dismiss the members of the Board, the Executive Committee and the treasurers.
- \* Take note of the reports and help the members of the Board and the treasurers.
- \* Decide the transfer of the head office of CAURWA.

The Board is elected by the General Assembly for three years and can if necessary be re-elected by the G.A. It meets once a month and when necessary. Its mission is to:

- \* Coordinate the activities of CAURWA.
- \* Make proposals to the General Assembly on measures to be taken on problems that present themselves to the organisation.
- \* Prepare and convene the meetings of the General Assembly.

The Executive Committee is elected by the General Assembly upon the proposal of candidates made by the Board. Its mission is to:

- \* Ensure the daily management of the organisation.
- \* Carry out the recommendations and decisions of the General Assembly.
- \* Take any initiative that might improve the good functioning of the organisation.

### Realisations

After the tragic events of 1994, CAURWA was created to be the spokesperson of the bereaved people of Rwanda. To this effect contacts were made with various donors, national as well as international. It is within this frame work that various personalities of goodwill, such as Ms Dorothy Jackson, have visited CAURWA in order to hear about the true situation. These various messengers have helped us a lot in our know-how and general knowledge. Thus with the help of Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), a consultant has helped us to formulate the following projects:

- \* Rehabilitation project for the Kanzenze refugees
- \* Small food stores
- \* Goat breeding
- \* Poultry project
- \* Exploitation of cassiterite
- \* Manufacture of tiles and bricks

- \* Beverage shops
- \* School funds for children from poor families

The first six projects have been provided for the member associations of CAURWA, as they work closely with the Batwa villages. Among these various projects, two so far have been financed - one (the goat project) has received half the necessary funds, thanks to FPP. Not forgetting that FPP has financed the running costs of CAURWA's office. Other projects have not yet been funded although they have been sent to various donors. CAURWA has just received a fund agreement for a rehabilitation project thanks to a Canadian agency (Peace and Development).

However, we have received funds for training in financial management from FPP and in the elaboration of micro-projects. This training will be held before the end of this year. This time an English organisation (COMIC RELIEF) will ensure core funding of the office for a three year period.

CAURWA gives many thanks to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which has never failed to support it morally and financially, since it has funded identification of the refugees, prisoners, orphans and widows following the events of 1994, and CAURWA has just published a folder thanks to the help of HCHR and UNDP. CAURWA also gives thanks to the British Embassy for a computer and software which it was kind enough to give us. This helps with the work of the secretariat. During 1998, CAURWA gave itself the following objectives:

1. Visit and follow-up on the activities of its member organisations.
2. Approve the projects presented by the member organisations.
3. Report on the projects approved and financed by CAURWA thanks to external funding.
4. Make contact with the authorities at various levels and NGOs.
5. Visit the forest Pygmies (Gisenyi, Ruhengeri, Gikongoro, Kibuye).
6. Convene a General Assembly by the end of 1998.

Most of these objectives have been realised. The General Assembly remains, which will be held soon.

### Future perspectives

CAURWA should act immediately within the following areas:

1. Improve the structure of its grassroots organisations. This structuring will essentially be based on the training of its members in order to create awareness of their own future.
2. Train technicians who will be able to ensure the supervision of the grassroots member organisations of CAURWA.
3. Find partners that are capable of helping us carry out our self-development programme.

As CAURWA is still very young and still has to identify itself, its perspectives will not be fulfilled without the support of various donors working in support of the forgotten people. Therefore, CAURWA wishes to be supported in:

1. Setting up a shop to sell and exhibit ceramic products.
2. Securing spokespersons who can advocate our cause both nationally and internationally.
3. Exchanging know-how and technical consultants among the indigenous people.
4. Obtaining funding for projects that have been approved and that are in support of the member organisations and Batwa groups.
5. Obtaining funding for intensifying awareness raising visits to indigenous families.

*Paper presented during the "Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa", organised by the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum) and IWGIA. The conference took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 18th to 22nd of January 1999.*

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# INDIGENOUS SELF-ORGANISATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA



**A**t the regional conference on development programmes for African San (Bushmen) populations, held in Windhoek, Namibia in 1992, the San representatives expressed the need to form committees to present ourselves at the local, regional and international levels and to explore the possibility of setting up a regional San network. A needs assessment was carried out in 1994 among the San communities in Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Representatives of the relevant government offices and non-governmental organisations in the region, as well as the international academics focussing on San affairs, were also consulted for the assessment.

The findings emphasize the San's unanimous hope for the effective exchange of information and experience among their communities and for their involvement in regional development processes. These hopes were reiterated by the 54 San delegates from South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana at a conference on self-development and resettlement held in D'Kar, Botswana in 1995.

In early 1996 the regional WIMSA (Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa) was established in Windhoek, Namibia and shortly thereafter WIMSA Botswana was established in D'Kar. The regional WIMSA is registered with the Namibia Ministry of Health and Social Services as a welfare organisation and WIMSA Botswana is registered with the Botswana Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs as a society. Both Ministries fully acknowledge WIMSA's objectives, which focus on supporting and networking around San affairs.

WIMSA's 15 member organisations in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa are the backbone of the network. These are San organisations which have the right to participate in formulating WIMSA policies and work programmes, to receive appropriate services from WIMSA, to delegate representatives to the WIMSA annual General Assembly and to nominate candidates for election to the WIMSA Board of Trustees.

A member organisation is obliged to observe the aims and policies of WIMSA and supply WIMSA with copies of each publication it produces. The General Assembly, being the highest official organ of WIMSA, meets once a year as the WIMSA constitution prescribes. It consists of San representatives delegated by member organisations and is responsible for formulating policies and major issues affecting WIMSA's future. The Board of Trustees currently comprises three San board members and three alternates each from Botswana, Namibia and South Africa.

The regional WIMSA office is run by a small team composed of two trainees, a part-time mentor and a

coordinator. The coordinator is mandated to implement decisions taken by the Board of Trustees.

In addition to its 15 member organisations, WIMSA has 11 support organisations which include regional as well as international institutions in Europe, America and Africa concerned with indigenous minorities groups worldwide. Support organisations have a right to participate in the annual General Assembly, but they are not permitted to vote. They are required to supply WIMSA with copies of their publications. The regional support organisations provide professional expertise to WIMSA when called upon and assistance with logistical matters. International support organisations are most helpful in bringing urgent matters to the attention of media and governments in their countries and in providing moral support.

## Objectives and activities

The WIMSA mission statement prepared by the San delegates during the board meeting in May 1997 emphasises that WIMSA shall enable the San to gain political recognition, to secure access to natural and financial resources, to raise human rights awareness among the communities, to become self-sustainable through development projects and to gain integrity and pride in their culture.

At a San conference hosted by WIMSA in Namibia, the San delegates requested WIMSA's support in the areas of education and training, development planning, gaining control over tourism, securing land and rights and access to natural resources, obtaining project funds, procuring legal advice, and coordinating San affairs across regional borders.

WIMSA has provided six months of job training courses in its Windhoek office for young San and conducted a series of workshops with San traditional authorities from Namibia on land tenure, income generating possibilities and specific community problems. WIMSA played an important role in organising the first secondary school San learners conference held in Windhoek in 1997, and provided opportunity for San delegates from the southern Africa region to participate in regional workshops, international conferences and exchange visits abroad.

As a networking organisation, WIMSA is not involved in implementing projects. However, San communities have continuously requested WIMSA's advice in their efforts to plan projects, raise funds and generate income.

The issues of land tenure and control over tourism have required a great deal of patience, motivation and commitment from all the parties involved. For example, it took two and a half years to negotiate and sign a balance agreement between the San communities and a lodge owner who had entered into a great tourism venture. Also the struggle to prevent the Namibian government's planned eviction of Khwe community members from a portion of their land in West Caprivi has continued since May 1997.

WIMSA activities relating to institutional capacity building have consisted of Board and General Assembly meetings providing support to and/or advising WIMSA member organi-



# THE EXAMPLE OF WIMSA

By Kxao Moses #Oma

sations and visits to San communities by WIMSA delegates. The San have regarded the exchange of views and experience facilitated during the gathering for San from Botswana, South Africa and Namibia, and in workshops with international indigenous delegates, as most useful and eye-opening exercises.

## Constraints and the achievements

In the short period since its inception, WIMSA has gained considerable recognition at the local, regional and international level. The organisation's expertise and resources have frequently been requested by San communities, NGO personnel, government officials and academics. On several occasions WIMSA personnel have been valued for their role in engendering self-confidence among the majority of WIMSA trainees and San traditional authorities, which has enabled them to speak out in unfamiliar environments such as conferences - like this one - and to lobby their governments around issues affecting their communities.

Although the traditional leaders of 31 Namibian traditional communities were, in March 1998, recognised by the government as members of the council of traditional leaders, none of the San traditional authorities' applications for recognition were taken into consideration at the time. It was only after WIMSA initiated a meeting between the Minister of Regional and Local Government and Housing and San traditional leaders and subsequently facilitated the fulfilment of the minister's requirements of the San communities, that two San traditional authorities were recognised by the Namibian government.

WIMSA also emphasises that all parties involved in accomplishing set goals around San issues must accept that the San themselves should set the pace for any action taken. However, experience told WIMSA that compromise is often called for in this regard, for example the fast growing tourism industry determines its own rules and if the San wish to be involved in this industry they will have to be willing to compromise their ideas in some instances.

Other constraints which have hampered endeavours supported by WIMSA are negative tendencies relating to the generation gap which is evident in most San communities, the prevalence of individual advantage over collective interests, the apparent passivity of most San women regarding developmental and political matters and the competitiveness prevailing among a couple of NGO's in the southern African region. It is believed that the constraints posed by the enormous geographical distances separating San communities and the current lack of basic communication links can be tackled far more easily than the social constraints noted above.

## Challenges for the future

One of the most difficult challenges for WIMSA is to achieve the aim of ensuring access to land and natural resources for the San in their respective countries. Negotiations are continuing with the South African government regarding the land restitution claim in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, with the

Namibian government on the land dispute of the Khwe from West Caprivi and with the Botswana government concerning the relocation of the San from their ancestral land in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve.

The process of empowering the San will be pursued through further capacity training for traditional leaders and skills training for San playing specific roles in the communities. These training efforts will enable the San to have their say on, and make informed decisions about, social development and political issues affecting the wider society in each country and region as a whole.

A WIMSA long term goal is to unite all San communities of the southern Africa region through the San council, which is officially recognised by the Southern African Development Community (SADEC). It is hoped that all the stakeholders will have the necessary patience, commitment and solidarity to achieve this long term goal.

*Paper presented during the "Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa", organised by the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum) and IWGIA. The conference took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 18th to 22nd of January 1999.*

**Kxao Moses #Oma** belongs to the Ju'hoan-speaking San group which lives on remnants of its ancestral land. From 1981-98 he worked for the previous government as register officer and he participated in the election campaign. Before he joined the then Nyae Nyae Farmers' Co-operative, NNEC, (now Nyae Nyae Conservancy) he worked in the Literacy Programme in Tsumkwe. In 1993 he was appointed manager of NNEC and he was one of the major players in acquiring a conservancy for Nyae Nyae. Kxao Moses #Oma has been the WIMSA chairperson since 1997. □

*Kxao Moses #Oma (top to the right) at The Arusha Conference.*





San women from the Elandsbush Camp. Photo: Mariette Jansen

# THE SAN OF SOUTH AFRICA

by Petrus Vaalbool



I would like to first give you a brief background on the conditions of the San people of South Africa - some ten thousand people who have been living under very harsh repression. The San people are one of the oldest tribes of Africa and we are suffering, having lost our language. In Namibia, Botswana and throughout Southern Africa there are many San or Bushman people who still speak their language, but it is not the official language in any school.

The worst suffering of the San people of South Africa is the impact of apartheid and oppression. The worst thing was that our land was taken away from us and we were driven out of our traditional areas. Many of our areas were turned into National Parks and conservation areas. The attitude of the government was that the animals were more important than people. You can get an income out of animals but the people, they were just driven away. What we have learnt is that without our land, our culture begins to die away. That we lose part of our culture because we have no access to our land.

During the years of apartheid, our young people - our youth - were brought under the influence of the government, of state officials and the Park's board not to use their language in public. One of the greatest sufferings for our people, the San of the southern Kalahari, is that we are left with only about twelve of our elderly people who can still speak our original language. It is our hope and expectation that the South African government will be able to support a sharing of the knowledge of this language with our people.

In 1994 South Africa had a major national election, our first democratic elections, and during that time South Africa developed a very good constitution. Subsequently there have been very good policies developed and nice promises and good things said by different ministers. But we have one fear. We understand what happened to us under apartheid and although we have good expectations of the new regime - of the new government - we are also concerned that we will not get our rights. We have to see, and we will only believe it when it is in our hands. We have expectations, but only when we achieve these promises will we know that we really do have our rights.

Taking as the point of departure the new land law and the policy framework relating to the national parks board, this latter has come up with a new policy which says that South African national parks must accommodate the needs of communities displaced from or neighbouring onto national parks. Well, I can tell you that in our park, the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, there is no such thing. There is still oppression of our people and we are not allowed to visit the park. To get permission to go into the park, you must get a special letter to be allowed to go in. And I can tell you that even though there should be a positive relationship between the park and the people, in the place where we are there is no such relationship.



We, the San people, we are hunters, we are people of the open grounds. But nowadays, without our lands, we are living on white farms and in the townships close to cities, spread more than 1000 kilometres apart from each other. Now we must make an income, we struggle to be able to make money. The traditional community, the Khwe community in the Kalahari, lives by the sale of bead work and also by being able to make a bone arrow and sell it to tourists. There are a number of opportunities open to us, from films, parks, researchers and tourists, but what happens at the moment is that the tourists drive by, see us in our traditional clothes, stop and maybe offer five cents to take a picture. They just put five cents in your hand, and that's what you get for it. If they think you look really sad, they may throw one more Rand in. The same with the film people. They come with so many promises, they promise you all sorts of things, then they disappear and you never see them again. They promise that they will send you a copy of the film, and they don't do that. They promise you that there is going to be money in the contract and that doesn't count. They give you a little bit to eat at that time and then nothing more.

That is how we are exploited. The way that we are exploited is, for instance, there is a lot of research being conducted in the National Park, and they will pay our people to do the work. It is research into lions, honey badgers, cheetahs and leopards and other animals. So our people will get maybe 30 or 40 Rand a day - that is less than five dollars - and that's all they get out of it. But the researchers obviously make more out of it, so that is another way we are exploited.

Even the park uses our people in an exploitative manner. They offer us the worst paid manual labour in the park to do the worst kinds of jobs. They oppress our people. I can give you an example of one of our people who works in the park. He is one of the cleverest of all our people. A very clever tracker and very good in the field. When there is a problem or a crisis they will fly him to any place in the park and drop him off to sort it out, because he knows the bush so well. He is a very skilled man in bush ways. But you will see that he works under the whites and even under the mixed race people, as if he is nothing. Sometimes the people who are his bosses are just young people with a little bit of education, but they are always above him. He is always at the bottom.

I was in Cape Town and I bought a book. This book sells in Cape Town for about 40 Rand or 6 Dollars and on it was a picture of our leader, the leader of our people. I asked myself, how can it be that you can sell a book like this? People are making money from our ethnicity, they are making money from our pictures and we get nothing from all this - we are not even sure who gives permission to use these pictures.



A rented army camp at Schmidtsdrift where 4000 San people live.  
Photo: Mariann Jansen



I recently travelled to Shakawe in Botswana to look at the new museum that has been established, with rock paintings from that area. And I must tell you that it is an example of the rights that are being taken away from us. There are rock paintings throughout southern Africa and it is the museums which have taken control of these. It is a further stripping of our rights. Even our people, when they were taken away to Johannesburg in 1936 and brought back and then kicked off of their lands, they never regained those rights, the right of access to their traditional sites and to traditional artwork. It is the museums in particular that are controlling our art resources, our art tradition and giving people often false information or inaccurate information about what Bushman rock paintings are and what our art means.

In 1994 the South African government established our new Constitution. Our Constitution promises equality for all South African citizens. From the content of that Constitution we were able to make our land claim for our traditional lands. It was for us a great privilege when the Minister of Land Affairs recently came to see us in the place where we live. He has already now allocated a small area for us, 25,000 hectares for our community. This is a start of something new although 1,000 Bushmen will have to try to be able to live in this area.

Furthermore, we have been offered another 25,000 hectares inside the national park. Well, this is a very good promise they have made, and it is evidence that the South African government is beginning to take the needs of the Bushmen community seriously. But we are still faced with our fears and our concerns; we still have the problem that we do not yet have access to our traditional grave sites in the national park.

It is a great privilege for me to address you this morning and tell you about the situation of the San of South Africa, but I tell you we are still suffering, we are suffering from the past and the legal discrimination against us. There are many beautiful promises being made to us and we look forward to those, but I say to you we cannot sit still and we cannot just wait. For instance with the language use, we ourselves have got directly involved in building up our language and sharing the information with people. We have invited teachers and researchers to help us in this, for instance Nigel Crawhall, who has come as a language

researcher and also Tony Traill, the professor in South Africa who helps us with this language.

On 14th of January we participated in the World Archaeological Congress in South Africa. It was at that time that we put forward a resolution that was adopted concerning the relationship between the government, archaeologists and indigenous communities. There, we passed the resolution that archaeologists should work to reestablish the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, that land rights should be recognised, that archaeologists and government should work towards promotion and protection of our languages and cultures and towards the promotion and protection of our traditional artwork. It was adopted by this congress, and we feel that this was another opportunity to promote our rights and needs.

I would like to end now and to thank you very much for this opportunity. I have just shared with you a few brief thoughts and given a brief report about our conditions. I have to tell you I didn't write anything but I really spoke from my heart and what I know and God has sent me here to represent my people, to express the needs that we have and to share them with you. I would like to especially thank you for having invited me to participate in this particular forum. I have some friends in the room here and I hope tomorrow to make some more, and I would like to share with you the idea that being informed about each other is an opportunity for us to recognise that we have common problems and that we can come together and cooperate in making solutions to those problems. Thank you very much.

*Paper presented during the "Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa", organised by the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum) and IWGIA. The conference took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 18th to 22nd of January 1999.*

**Petrus Vaalboom** is a San activist from South Africa representing the organisation San Vereniging. □

**OUT OF THE SHADOWS**  
THE FIRST AFRICAN  
INDIGENOUS  
WOMEN'S CONFERENCE



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Edited by Angeline van Achterberg

Published by The Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples (NCTV), P.O. Box 94098, 1090 GB Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and International Books, 1998.

284 pp. (combined in English and French)

ISBN 90 5727 0269

# THE CURRENT SITUATION IN TANZANIA MAASAILAND

By Benedict Ole Nangoro



There is a combination of factors which poses serious threats to pastoralism as practised in the four districts of Kiteto, Monduli, Ngorongoro and Simanjiro (Tanzania Maasailand) and to pastoral livelihoods<sup>1</sup>:

The insecurity of resource tenure and a barrage of land use conflicts feature as the most outstanding threats facing pastoralists in the four districts. Land use conflicts emanate from conflicting land use practices between pastoralism and agriculture, pastoralism and wildlife conservation, pastoralism and mining activities, pastoralism and charcoal burning. Alienation of key pastoral resources such as land, water and salt licks is the most serious threat facing the Maasai. It has reduced mobility of herds and, in doing so, it has destroyed mechanisms that have previously been effective in coping with ecological vicissitudes. This has contributed to the increase in the frequency and intensity of ecological shocks among the pastoral population of the region.

As a result, an increasing number of people are being forced out of pastoralism, are unable to re-enter into the economy and are unable to find other economically viable alternatives outside their areas. Evidence of this trend is noted in the increasing numbers of pastoralists moving away from their areas in search of employment in peri-urban centres of major towns. Having no marketable skills, most of them live in sub-human conditions in urban slums and earn a pittance as security guards. More secure livelihoods could be available to them if the trends that are forcing them out of pastoralism could be stemmed.

## Influx of agriculturists into pastoral districts

Another factor is an uncontrollable influx of agriculturists into pastoral districts which has reduced the physical base and is undermining the viability of pastoralism. This uncontrolled influx is further threatening the socioeconomic, civic and political representation of the pastoral groups in the four districts. Following planned relocations of people and haphazard migration, the Maasai are becoming a minority in their own areas in some districts. This is bound to result in the denial of political representation should migrants vote along ethnic lines. It also has implications for cultural pride and autonomy and further losses of pastoral resources. It also has the potential for increasing conflicts which have already emerged over competition for resources.

Another important factor are the unfavourable terms of trade for pastoralists hence a decrease in the value of their products leading to increased economic vulnerability. Pastoralists in the four districts experience price differentials every dry season, with livestock prices plummeting and those of grain sky-rocketing.

## Anti-pastoral bias

There exists a strong anti-pastoral bias in policy circles, hence lack of policy formulation and development interventions sup-



*Traditional Maasai leader.  
Photo: Diana Vinding*

portive of pastoralism. Tanzanian livestock policies reflect official bias against pastoralism and in favour of other economic systems. Development planning in pastoral areas has been based on three assumptions: 1) that pastoralists are not contributing adequately to national development; 2) that they overstock and overgraze and that overstocking is environmentally destructive since it causes desertification; 3) that pastoral lands could be put to better and more productive economic activity.

This bias has manifested itself in the alienation of lands occupied by pastoralists to other uses such as wildlife parks, forests areas, farming, mining, etc. The anti-pastoral bias is also evident in the common practice of distribution of seeds and farm implements following droughts as opposed to re-stocking.

Some of the national programmes also reflect more official bias against pastoralism. The Villagisation programme was one of these policies, introduced in the 1970's with the purpose of bringing services closer to the people. The programme affected many Tanzanians, but the impact among pastoralists was enormous since it suppressed customary rights to resources for pastoral communities by settling agriculturists on pastoral lands and not the other way round, and brought none of the intended services. This then set off an uncontrollable trend of infiltration into Maasailand by agriculturists.

Farm lands have been allocated to local and foreign crop cultivators in all the four districts where high potential areas have been cultivated and pastoralists are pushed to the more arid zones. This has often resulted in the blockage of access to water sources, salt licks and dry season grazing areas and has also created fierce competition over critical pasture and water resources. Where shifting cultivation takes place, as in the case of Kiteto District, it is creating environmental degradation which is increasingly reducing the viability of pastoralism as an economic activity.

### **Conflicts between wildlife and human activities**

The alienation of pastoral lands for wildlife has taken place in Simanjiro through the creation of Tarangire National Park; in Ngorongoro, during the carving out of Serengeti National Park and Ngorongoro Conservation Area, and in Monduli through the creation of Lake Manyara National Park, Ngordoto National Park. In every case, the process involved the eviction of the indigenous Maasai from prime grazing areas for the exclusive use of wildlife. Hunting blocks also exist in all the four districts and have similarly introduced restrictive measures to pastoral activities.

Conflicts between wildlife and human activities originate in the historical approaches to conservation movements in the region. Official policies and attitudes relating to wildlife management in the region have tended to over-emphasise a law-enforcement approach. This method of conservation had been inherited from the colonial era during which time the rights of people occupying the same territories with wild animals were regarded as secondary to those of the wildlife. Accordingly, the training of park management followed the same trend, whereby development concerns of local people are disregarded in favour of wildlife.

Paradoxically, while pastoralism and wildlife are the most compatible forms of land use (as opposed to pastoralism/agriculture or wildlife/agriculture), the imposition of exclusive models of property rights heightened the wildlife-pastoralism conflicts and these conflicts have now reached unsustainable levels in some areas of Maasailand. Whereas the Maasai bear the brunt of wildlife presence in their areas (diseases, the maiming and killing of people and livestock by predators), benefits generated from wildlife resources through tourism are utilised by the central government, park authorities and by outsiders. In cases where the wildlife transmits diseases to domestic stock, no programmes have been initiated to combat such diseases from funds generated from wildlife/tourism. Although collected locally, the revenue is used nationally and local communities do not benefit, and conflict persists.

### **Poverty**

Increasing levels of vulnerability and poverty also constitute a major factor. The ability of pastoralists to manage ecological uncertainty and spread risks has been reduced significantly. Some of the consequences of the shrinkage of the resource base is a decrease in the mobility of herds and a change in patterns of resource utilisation. This has in turn led to livestock losses and increased levels of poverty and food insecurity. While food insecurity in these pastoral areas was often transitory, with dry seasons being associated with food shortages, more households find it increasingly difficult to withstand shocks, such as drought and disease. Food shortages have now become a permanent feature, with the majority of households being unable to provide for themselves. Some children, for example, were reported dead in Moita Division of Monduli District following the 1997 drought. The remoteness of pastoral areas, coupled with inadequate coverage of basic services, has reinforced marginalization of pastoralists and slumped them further into the trap of poverty.

### **Lack of social services and infrastructure**

The coverage and quality of basic social services is inadequate. All the four districts are in a dire state of underdevelopment. The majority of the people have no access to basic social services. In the whole region, it is common knowledge that teachers seek transfers away from the region for lack of services. Since supervision does not take place, again because of distances and a shortage of transportation, many teachers undertake other activities instead of performing their duties. This, coupled with a lack of the necessary school equipment and long distances to schools, leads to massive drop-outs and creates a situation whereby Maasai children never seem to advance to secondary schools. The resulting effect of all this for the Maasai is a lack of trained professionals to perform services in their own areas.

The infrastructure for the livestock sector does little in terms of rendering services. There is a chronic shortage of water and the little which is available is shared both by people and livestock. For instance in Kiteto, out of 20 dams only 9 (45%) are operational. The same is true with the other districts. The



problem is further exacerbated by an inefficient livestock marketing service, since markets are too few and far apart. The staffing of these infrastructures is also poor. People move to other regions seeking these facilities (e.g. Handeni, Tanga, Dar-Es-Salaam and Dodoma) but they encounter serious difficulties, including robberies and physical assaults. Trekking livestock to markets in Kenya is a common and necessary phenomenon, especially from Monduli and Ngorongoro, despite the fact that cross-border stock movement is considered illegal.

The most common livestock diseases are tick-borne, such as East Coast Fever and anaplasmosis; also trypanosomiasis, which is transmitted by the tsetse fly.

Health Services are also poor and far apart. Government facilities lack equipment and drug supplies and officers are corrupt; patients do not get the attention they require. The facilities that are managed by the voluntary sector are few and crowded.

The most common diseases are malaria, pneumonia, respiratory infectious diseases, diarrhoea, anaemia, eye and skin diseases. These diseases are mainly caused by inadequate and unsafe water supply, poor environmental sanitation and poor nutritional status, especially of pregnant and lactating mothers and of children. Human ailments are mainly caused by low levels of hygiene, inadequate calorie intake or transmitted by bugs.

The infrastructure of these facilities is poor and some government-owned dispensaries need re-building, while others need repair. Some rooms are too small to facilitate the provision of basic dispensary services. The church-run



dispensaries are more popular, with efficient care compared to the government facilities, which lack hospital equipment, adequate and experienced staff, transport, drugs etc., resulting in very poor quality of health care service delivery. In all the areas visited, government extension officers had never been heard of.

The effectiveness of social services is negatively affected by the poor transport and communication systems. Most roads are in poor condition and are impassable during rainy seasons. Between 80 and 90% of patients walk or use bicycles, lorries and tractors to reach health facilities. There are hardly any reliable telephone services in any of the districts.



Maasai warriors, Ngorongoro, Tanzania. Photo: Frans Wolmer

Social costs of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) have similarly worsened an already bad situation. The implementation of SAPs has led to the scrapping of social services such as the village health worker programmes which operated between 1983 and 1992 and the school health programme which operated between 1986 and 1992. The plan to train TBAs, who handle 80% of deliveries in rural areas - especially in Arusha region, has also been shelved following the implementation of austerity measures as part of the SAPs. Similarly, government budget cuts affected other sectors such as education, water supply and livestock drugs and services. Whereas SAPs have been persistently advocating a friendly market providing services, examples of market failures are evident in the four districts. It is only in the mining village of Merarani that liberalisation has resulted in an increase in health facilities. But even so, the private health facilities are in a poor state and health standards are violated by the practitioners.

While some development interventions have taken place in the Arusha region, most of them have been misguided, hence they have exacerbated the problem further. The USAID sponsored Maasai Range Project of the 1970s, with its top down approach, led to the construction of some livestock infrastructure without preparing people to take it over once the project ended. The result was that facilities such as cattle dips have remained but most of them are in a state of disrepair since no body was given the responsibility of taking care of them.

Some other development initiatives are taking place under the auspices of NGOs and CBOs. But the new initiatives are too young and too small to have made much difference.

### **Social transformation and commoditisation**

Social transformation and commoditisation of the pastoral economy (livestock and their products) seems to have placed men as owners of family property, leaving women with only usufruct rights of the product of their labour. Consequently, women are increasingly finding themselves with neither access to nor control over productive resources and hence without access to income. In addition, women's workloads have been increasing as women have retained the traditional role of manager of the household and, as such, it is their responsibility to provide the household with food, water and fuelwood. They also provide care to the young, the sick and the elderly. But having retained these traditional roles, modern society has not provided women with the necessary resources to make their work easier. In addition, new chores have been added to them by the new changes. Since service provision is poor, women have found themselves overworked.

The NGOs involved in the area are many, but they still lack co-ordination in their activities. While most of them have been initiated in response to the most critically felt needs of their communities, the lack of co-ordination of their activities, as well as an inadequate focus of their involvement, has resulted in duplication of activities and a complete disregard of the most important needs of the pastoralists in the region.

### **Alternatives for the future - recommendations**

Overall pastoral development policy needs to focus on poverty reduction. Policy interventions should be concerned with the underlying causes of insecurity of pastoral livelihoods. The study has shown that factors such as loss of key resources, disease and loss of livestock, combined with increased incidents of drought and famine, constitute serious threats to pastoral livelihoods and have increased the incidence of disease among the people. The underlying causes of these threats need to be addressed in order to curb further destitution of pastoralists and to avail them of a livelihood of their own choice. For the policy (and pastoral development initiatives emanating from it) to protect and promote the entitlements of pastoralists, its formulation needs to reflect on the following issues:

*Support security of resource tenure.* Alienation of key pastoral resources such as land, water and salt licks is the most serious threat that the Maasai are experiencing today. In 1978, Dr. Alan Jacobs, in the evaluation of the Maasai Range and Livestock Development Project, stated that it was the single biggest priority for Maasailand that major efforts should be made to assist the Maasai in securing the total enclosure of all their present lands as soon as possible ... with large scale legal boundaries and the organisation and registration of collective development units ... more meaningful development priorities for particular enclosures ... to be decided upon locally (original stress) (Jacobs 1978:38). This recommendation, made 20 years ago, is more valid now than at any other time before. If pastoral villages and pastoral districts are not enclosed, it is feared that encroachment on pastoral lands by farmers will bring disaster on the pastoralists.

Ownership of land through demarcation and titling and the creation of a mechanism for the management of critical resources are some of the strategies being proposed in order to curb further losses. Along with this is the need to design and implement appropriate land use plans that would support optimum production in all spheres - pastoralism, agriculture, wildlife, mining and other forms of land use, depending on the needs and priorities of a given area. This would assist in reducing the occurrence of the present conflicts, increasing productivity and bringing about better management of resources.

*Establishing an early warning system.* It is evident that droughts are now a recurrent feature in Maasailand. An EWS should be established to gather, analyse and disseminate the information necessary to prepare communities for such eventualities. This would alert people to prepare and store food to be used in times of scarcity.

*Investment in basic services* (water, livestock, education, health). There are serious shortages in all essential services in pastoral areas. Water sources, schools, health and livestock services are all few and far between, which reduces their effectiveness.

Since water is critical for survival, water development should be made a priority. Clean safe water should be provided for people. Livestock water should also be provided through the

rehabilitation of water sources such as dams, wells, charcos and boreholes. Appropriate technology should be used in harvesting rain water.

In order to enhance security of pastoral livelihoods and promote the socioeconomic development of pastoralists, it is necessary to support the rehabilitation of the existing dilapidated livestock infrastructure and introduce disease control programmes. The health sector should equally be supported in order to facilitate the initiation of better coverage and improved quality of health care. Emphasis should be put on preventive health care and safety nets should be put in place for those who cannot afford user charges.

*Support of the destitute to re-enter pastoral economy through re-stocking.* It has been shown that many people who have been pushed out of the pastoral economy and are unable to reconstitute their herds are always struggling to do so, but they lack the means. They have the necessary skills and interest and they consider it a heritage; a little financial support would facilitate their re-entry into the pastoral economy, generating means of livelihoods for themselves and their families.

*Women and youth* are a special problem in pastoral areas. It was evident from the field research that the brunt of underdevelopment in pastoral areas is particularly borne by women. Most domestic chores traditionally considered to be women's have remained so and new ones have been added. The lack of basic services therefore hurts them the most.

Because of these obvious strains that women undergo, any pastoral development policy intervention should take into account practical and strategic needs from a gender perspective in order to focus on the specific needs of Maasai women. In the light of these, it is imperative that any initiative which reduces the workload of women and enhances their status should be supported. Local NGOs should be supported and enabled to sensitise pastoral communities in enhancing gender equity and distribute the workload equally between the sexes.

One area in which policy consideration is required is the emphasis on the initiation, design and support of pastoral youth and women's groups in small-scale development projects designed to alleviate poverty. Women and youth are good agents of change in pastoral communities, and engaging them in food production, processing, and preservation will improve the living standards of the pastoral households.

*Creation of a micro-fund.* From the field survey, it became evident that the few women who received credit facilities to start small businesses were able to meet their basic needs and those of their children. However, these were very few and such a success story needs to be continued and replicated in other districts. There is a need to create a fund which would provide credit facilities to support women (and youth groups) in the creation of employment opportunities. It would also provide credit and insurance for those willing to invest in the pastoral sector and services. Such a fund would provide a buffer, especially when terms of trade for pastoralists are not favourable.

## Co-ordination of activities by stakeholders

The issues which need well thought out strategies, resources, policies, procedures and actors are so many, urgent and painstaking that no single actor or donor can manage singlehandedly. This calls for practical and close co-ordination among stakeholders in pastoral development in the region. It is therefore, proposed that a conference/workshop be organised between various NGOs/stakeholders and funding partners in Arusha. The workshop should be organised around the following: Comprehensive Strategic Plan on Pastoral development in Northern Tanzania; security of resource tenure; areas of collaboration between NGOs; issues for lobbying, advocacy and networking. These could be organised in two stages. Two separate meetings should be held, one by donors and one by NGOs operating on the ground. The second step is to bring together both donors and NGOs to deliberate on the above issues.

It is hoped that the research findings of the study "Pastoralism in Tanzania: its Status, Challenges and Development Alternatives"<sup>1</sup> will be used to generate the setting of appropriate priorities and sufficient preparations for the formulation of a pastoral support NGO. Such an NGO would offer professional advice, training, facilitate exchange of experiences, disseminate relevant information, carry out evaluations for local pastoral NGOs and funding agencies. The support NGO would also source funding for various pastoral NGOs.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This paper refers to the study: "Pastoralism in Tanzania Maasailand: its Status, Challenges and Development Alternatives". Research Report by Pastoral Research and Development Programme, P.O.Box 11141, Arusha, Tanzania. May 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

*Paper presented during the "Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa", organised by the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum) and IWGIA. The conference took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 18th to 22nd of January 1999.*

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# THE HADZABE OF TANZANIA

By Gudo Mahiya, Gonga Petro and Simon Charles



**W**e Hadzabe are hunter-gatherers living in four districts in Tanzania: Mbulu and Karatu Districts in Arusha Region, Iramba District in Singida Region and Meatu District in Shinyanga Region. Our total population is about one thousand people. We speak a click language which is unlike any other language in Tanzania. Everybody recognizes that we are the original inhabitants, the first people to live here. Everyone else came later. Until recently we lived entirely by hunting and gathering:

- By hunting eland, buffalo, zebra, wildebeest, hartebeest, impala and other animals with bows and poisoned arrows.
- By gathering baobab fruit, undushibi berries, //ekwa roots, the honey of wild bees and many other bush foods.

We did not cultivate and we had no cattle, sheep or goats. Now our life is much more difficult. Most of our land has been taken by other people. Few game animals remain and even our undushibi trees are being cut down by other people to clear land for farming or to make into charcoal. Land clearance is reducing the plants and trees on which the bees depend for nectar and the amount of honey we obtain is much reduced.

For many years the Government has tried to change us into farmers. We were taught to cultivate at Yaeda Chini, Munguli, Endamaghan and Iramba Ndogo. But we prefer our own food and the hunting and gathering way of life and only a few of us are living by farming. Most of the best farming land has, anyway, been taken from us by strangers. At Munguli we were given a



*Hadzabe representatives together with Gunga Petro, Andrew Cuthbert and Dr. Banny Mpondo at the Arusha Conference. Photo: Hans Vreders*

school and a dispensary but both of these, together with our houses and all of the farming land there, have been taken by strangers.

Other Tanzanians often think of our land as unused and empty. But it is not empty. Every part of it is owned and used by us. We have looked after it well. Until so much of our land was taken, the animals, the bees and the plants all multiplied well. We were never hungry. All our neighbours suffered from famines. In the history of the Hadzabe there has never been a famine. No Hadzabe ever died of hunger when we had our land. But now that so much of our land has been taken, and is still being taken, many Hadzabe are hungry.

For our future and for the future of our children, we must have our land. Without land, we will have nothing. We are citizens of Tanzania and our land rights need to be protected like those of other citizens of Tanzania. Why are our fellow Tanzanians taking our land without our permission? We are all Tanzanians.

We Hadzabe want development. We want to develop trade in bush products - in honey, in baobab fruits, in local medicines and in grass mats. We want to control the tourists who come to Hadzabe country and to make contracts with them. We want, as free citizens of Tanzania, to choose our own development on our own land without being told what we have to do.

*Translation from Swahili original.*

*Paper presented during the "Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa", organised by the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum) and IWGIA. The conference took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 18th to 22nd of January 1999.*

**Gudo Mahiya, Gonga Petro and Simon Charles are Hadzabe and representing the Hadzabe Programme.** □



*Hadzabe in starvation. Molegore among Wabudzabe settlement, Mbudu District, Tanzania 1991. Photo: Frans Welman*



# THE BRIEF HISTORY AND SITUATION OF THE BARABAIG INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF TANZANIA



By  
Augustino Marangu



**T**he Barabaig tribe is considered nomadic. They are an ethnic group of the Datoga and they are situated in the Hanang district of the Arusha region. The livelihood of the Barabaig is based on livestock grazing (cows, goats, sheep and donkeys). They are friends of animals, too, because in most areas where the

Barabaig live the wild animals live too. The Barabaig people have traditionally had very productive lands for their livestock.

The term Barabaig means "beating sticks" (wapiga fimbo). The sticks (fimbo) are used in many cultural aspects. They are used in driving the livestock, in meetings and speeches, in ceremonies, etc. The language used is Kibarabaig and only a few can understand a little Swahili. These people have very strong culture and traditions. Even after formal education was introduced to their areas they resisted it because they were worried it would change their culture. And they were also concerned that the type of education provided was not fitting to their lifestyle. They believed that protecting their culture meant protecting the security of the whole community in a broad sense.

The government system during the colonial period and after independence did not educate and mobilise the Barabaig to see the importance of education. Instead it forced the parents to accept it and made the children attend school. This was a very negative approach because the Barabaig community felt that they were trapped and forced to abide by something which they did not understand. The Barabaig began to isolate themselves as

a means of protecting themselves from mainstream society. Most of the schools were very far away from where the Barabaig were living, so the Barabaig children had to stay in boarding schools (away from their parents). This was also a wrong approach. The government should have placed the school facilities and other infrastructure within the Barabaig areas and the next step should have been for the government to educate and mobilize the Barabaig community to go to school, as had been done in other regions of Tanzania such as Kilimanjaro and Bukoba regions. The issue of participation and involvement of the community in the decision making process would have been very important.

## **The problems facing the Barabaig community**

There are many problems in the Barabaig community, but here I would like to highlight a few which are the most striking.

### *Lack of education*

The areas where the Barabaig live are marginal and not yet developed. The few schools present are poor, with a lack of teaching materials and low standard teachers. Very few of the Barabaig finish primary school and as you go up to university level the number decreases. The community does not yet consider education to be a positive contribution to their lives. Some children go to school by themselves without asking their parents. If they do so, they are considered undisciplined and the parents do not give them any support as they are perceived to be 'run aways'. Only boys can afford to run away to school, so the situation of girls attending school is even worse. The bad result of having no education is that the Barabaig community is lagging behind.



The community has no political power, none of our people are professionals; how then can we continue and improve our lives in this world of new and very modern technologies? How can we fight for our basic rights which are being violated? In my view the way forward is for the community to make strategic plans and decisions together with the very keen support agencies.

#### *Social services*

There is no basic infrastructure in the Barabaig settlements. They are just left as remote areas, no good water services for humans or animals, no health centres or school facilities.

#### *Displacement of people's homesteads (land grabbings)*

In the Barabaig areas land problems have been very serious. As the Barabaig are pastoralists, their land is considered by the Tanzanian Agricultural Community as unoccupied, it is perceived as an empty or open land. They do not recognize the pastoralists' activities but they recognize the presence of 'nyaman choma' (roasted meat) and milk i.e. the pastoralists' products. Pastoralists of Tanzania contribute a lot to the national economy, but they are not assisted accordingly as compared to the Tanzanian agricultural community, which is provided with farming implements and pesticides. The pastoralists are not yet aware of zero grazing. This can be done only in urban areas by educated people, not by the pastoralists per se.

The land of the Barabaig has been taken by the government to establish wheat farms - NAFCO. The Barabaig were not involved in the decision to establish national wheat farms. I am not saying that establishing wheat farms is a bad idea but the government should have negotiated this with the people living in those areas and they should have found alternative lands to move the people to. People were just forcibly driven away without knowing where to go. The houses of the Barabaig were burnt down; they were beaten and harassed in many ways in order to make them move away from their lands. There is now a crisis between the Barabaig and other communities after the Barabaig were forced to move onto their lands, e.g. the Barabaig have gone to the Hadza people's land without the Hadza people's consent. Some have gone to Dodoma region, Iringa, Mbeya and there are some who have crossed the border into neighbouring countries e.g. Malawi, where we do not know for sure if they have a permanent settlement or if they are likely to be moved on at any time by those who own that land. The consequences of losing their land have been very severe as the pastoralist community economy has broken down and many of the Barabaig have to depend on poor jobs.

#### *Questionable relations with the Government.*

The Barabaig community still feels very strongly about the bad treatment it received in 1968 and 1976 when the tribal war broke out between the Barabaig and Nyaturu tribes. The Barabaig still remember this today, as it is known as 'Motrar-da Madeda ae Motra de biyenya'. The government ordered the arrest of the young Barabaig men and they were imprisoned -

many died in prison - while the Nyaturu people were left peacefully. The government still uses mass arrests (collective punishment) against the Barabaig. For instance, if one person in the community has made a mistake, the government is likely to punish all the people (men especially). This has happened several times. This gives the Barabaig the bad impression that the government is treating them unfairly.

#### **The strategies so far to solve the problems**

The Barabaig have so far achieved the following to try to address the serious problems:

1. Creation of community awareness and mobilization of individuals, community groups and various organizations. We have started to educate people about their rights and their responsibilities and about self-determination so that they may overcome the mentioned problems.
2. Formation of local NGOs. We have two local organizations which are working to try to solve the peoples' problems. We have the Kipoc Barabaig Programme and the Balgald Development Organization.
3. Collaboration with other local, national and international NGOs.
4. Encouragement of the members of the Barabaig community to send their children to school so that in the future the community can achieve its own autonomy.
5. Education and mobilization of members of the community to identify, explore and use their internal resources for their own development.
6. Building unity and new hopes in the community.
7. We have started court cases against the NAFCO wheat farms with regard to the land.
8. Explaining and lobbying the government structures about affairs affecting the Barabaig community. We want the government to understand the appropriate ways of bringing about positive change.

*Translated from Kiswahili.*

*Paper presented during the "Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa", organised by the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum) and IWGIA. The conference took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 18<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1999.*

*Augustino Marangu is a Barabaig and is working for the Kipoc Barabaig Programme.* □

# INDIGENOUS SELF-ORGANISATION IN TANZANIA: THE CASE OF PINGO'S FORUM



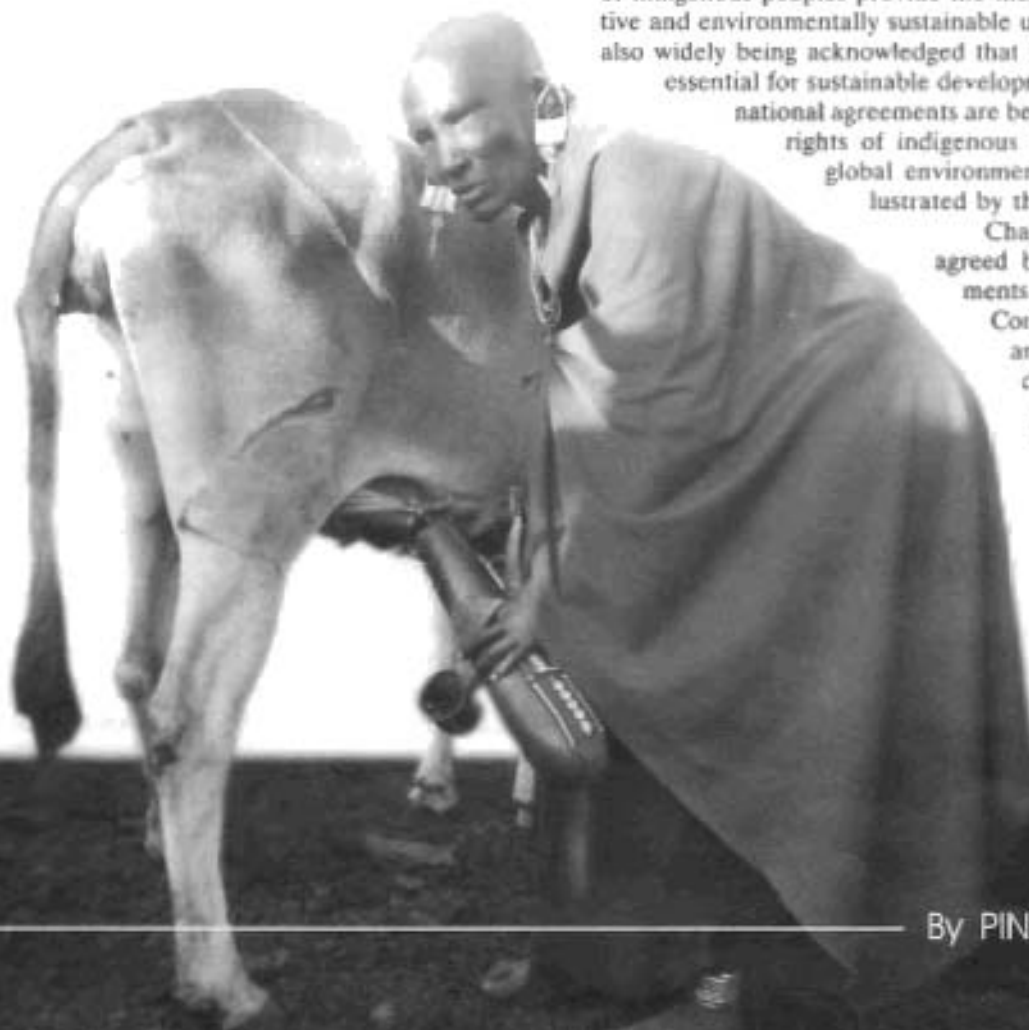
The Pastoralist Indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations' Forum (PINGO's Forum) is a loose coalition of like-minded, pastoralist and hunter-gatherer community-based groups or organizations (CBOs) situated mainly in the northern drylands of Tanzania, and who have collaborated over the years on joint activities through the sharing of scarce human and financial resources.

There are at present twenty one organizations actively participating in the PINGO's Forum, representing Maasai, Barabaig, Hadzabe, and Dorobo communities. These communities have been marginalized from the mainstream of Tanzanian society and suffer from human and land rights violations.

Our indigenous communities are struggling for survival in Tanzania. We are faced with hostile government policies that deny the legitimacy of our governing structures, condone land alienation, undermine traditional resource management, discourage cultural practices, and ignore human rights. We are suffering from the rapid alienation of our traditional resources and are simultaneously excluded from many government services in such areas as health, education, transport, and communications.

This struggle is happening at a time when many experts are recognizing that the traditional resource management systems of indigenous peoples provide the most economically productive and environmentally sustainable use of the drylands. It is also widely being acknowledged that people's participation is essential for sustainable development. In addition, international agreements are being signed to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and to restore global environmental sustainability, as illustrated by the following:

Chapter 26 of Agenda 21, agreed by the world's governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 1992, affirmed the need to recognize and strengthen the role of indigenous communities in sustainable development. In view of the economic and physical wellbeing of indigenous people, it specifies that national and in-



By PINGO's Forum

ternational efforts to implement environmentally sound and sustainable development should recognize, accommodate, promote, and strengthen the role of indigenous people and their communities.

Agenda 21 (26.3ii) recognizes that the land of indigenous people and their communities should be protected from activities that are environmentally unsound or that the indigenous people concerned consider to be socially and culturally inappropriate. It calls for the empowerment of indigenous communities and the establishment of arrangements to strengthen their participation in the development process.

Agenda 22 and other international agreements also recognize the importance of information and communication as the basis for local organization and effective participation. For example, the International Convention to Combat Desertification states that the parties shall ensure that collection, analysis and exchange of information addresses the needs of local communities and those of decision makers, with a view to resolving specific problems, and that local communities are involved in these activities.

### **Background to the PINGOs Forum**

The founding member organizations of the PINGOs Forum are the Korongoro Integrated People Oriented to Conservation (KIPOC), Orkonerei Integrated Pastoralist Survival Programme (OIPSP) and its branch, the Mkomazi Programme; Moipo Integrated People's Organization (Inyuat e Moipo); BULGALDA; and the Hadzabe community in Mongo wa Mono. These groups established PINGOs on 8th April 1994 as a forum to facilitate their shared activities which include(d) workshops, meetings, discussions, advocacy, exchange visits and joint projects. The events leading up to the formation of the PINGOs Forum were as follows:

- a. From 1991 - 1994, indigenous CBOs worked hard together advocating on the problems of land alienation occurring in pastoralists areas.
- b. In June 1993 indigenous CBOs formed a task force to establish an advocacy centre and to coordinate donor and local CBO activities.
- c. From February to March 1994, indigenous CBOs held several meetings with the aim of strengthening the task force on advocacy and coordination, and establishing different means of collaboration and mutual support.
- d. On 5th March 1994, a meeting of indigenous CBOs in Arusha decided to convene a special meeting to be held in Terrat, Simanjiro in the Maasai Steppe, to form a network for pastoralists and hunter/gatherers.
- e. On 8th April 1994, PINGOs Forum was established as an open and informal coalition with the aim of supporting and facilitating collaboration and mutual support of its participating organizations.

Subsequently, the Forum established a Coordination Office and Advocacy Centre in Arusha where people could meet, share information and plan collectively. If human rights violations occurred in one community, a communications centre would spread the news and decide on what support action to

undertake. PINGOs Forum members are dispersed mainly across the northern regions of Tanzania. Given the vast distances between them and the dearth of modern communication systems available to them, the rationale for a centre was clear: information is more easily shared when members come to Arusha to pick up mail, do their banking, marketing, and other business such as liaising with Arusha-based donors.

Thus in early 1995, the PINGOs Forum rented premises in the Kaloleni area of Arusha. The Centre contains two office rooms, a meeting room and a small library and resource room in addition to modest sleeping and dining facilities available for visiting members.

### **Governing structures of the PINGOs Forum**

The governing body of the PINGOs Forum is the General Assembly, which is made up of individuals nominated from the member organizations. Each member organization (CBO) elects 6 members, 3 executive members and 3 ordinary members, to represent them in the General Assembly. The Forum's General Assembly appoints the PINGOs Joint Council and approves all collaborative activities of PINGOs. The Forum's General Assembly meets once a year, in December, rotating the venues among its CBO members.

The PINGOs Joint Council oversees the ongoing activities of PINGOs; it also forms sub-committees. Acting as a steering committee, it receives reports from, and approves the activities of, the sub-committee at its quarterly meetings. The Joint Council and the Chair are responsible to the Forum's General Assembly, to whom it submits its reports once a year. The Joint Council also has responsibility for the recruitment of employees for the Coordination Office and Advocacy Centre (the Management Group).

To carry out the work of the PINGOs Forum, members have organized themselves into sub-committees to formulate and implement programmes. PINGOs subcommittees allow for decentralization of activities. Whenever a sub-committee is assigned a certain activity, it is wholly responsible for undertaking that activity and reporting to the Joint Council. However, sub-committees may collaborate on initiatives. These sub-committees are as follows:

- \* Land Rights Advocacy and Human Rights Committee
- \* Gender and Child Welfare Committee
- \* Pastoralists Information and Communication Committee
- \* Pastoral Economic Diversification Committee.

The sub-committees also meet quarterly, or when the need arises. Generally, the different sub-committees have been allocated specialized functions.

Representatives from each of the committees meet regularly in the Joint Council to discuss and to plan collectively.

The Management Group is comprised of a PINGOs Coordinator and Treasurer, an Administrative Secretary, an Information Officer, a Documentalist and a CUSO cooperant as the assistant to the coordinator. As far as possible, PINGOs members will be supported by the Management Group in programme design and the drafting of fund-raising and other documents.



## Membership of the PINGOs Forum

*Inyuat e Moipo* (*Moipo Integrated People's Organization*) was the first registered member of PINGOs. It existed as a community-based group from 1983 but was not registered until 1990. *Inyuat e Moipo* is based in O'Loiborsoit Village which is situated in Moipo Ward, Simanjiro District in Arusha Region. Its area of operation is Moipo Division. *Inyuat e Moipo* has 750 members (450 men and 300 women), a Council of 35 community leaders, five administrative Committees and some staff. With respect to infrastructure and internal capacity building, *Inyuat e Moipo* has constructed a trade and training centre which serves as a base for organizational meetings, training sessions and pastoral economic diversification activities. Within the community, this CBO has mobilized four women's groups to establish agricultural projects (veterinary services and a maize and bean farm), milling machines, a tractor service and small enterprises such as a pharmacy, livestock veterinary shop and a tea house. Future initiatives will focus on literacy programmes, health education and water development.

*Korongoro Integrated People Oriented to Conservation (KIPOC)* was officially registered in 1991 although it has been operating as a Maasai CBO since 1988. Based in Loliondo Division, Ngorongoro District, Arusha Region, its areas of operation extend throughout the villages of Ololosokwan, Soitsambu, Wasso/Sakala and Oldonyowas. Currently there are over 1,000 members represented in the General Assembly, a Board of Directors of 12, and about 20 employees. Initially its activities focused on human resource development, mainly through training and education. Community empowerment occurred by way of KIPOC's 16 women and youth groups whose activities involved agricultural projects (ox-plough training and maize growing for subsistence) and the building of local community centres to house further educational programmes (literacy and health education) and income generating projects (sewing, medicines and veterinary supplies, shops). KIPOC has also been involved in legal advocacy, mainly supporting the communities of Ololosokwan and Sukenya on the issue of land rights.

*Ilaramatak Lorkonerei* (OIPSP) became the third member organization of the PINGOs Forum to be established and was registered as an NGO in February 1993. Its head office is located in Terrat Village, and it has two other programme areas, one in Orkesumet village, Simanjiro District and the Mkomazi Programme in Kisiwani village, Same District. At present, *Ilaramatak Lorkonerei* has 1080 members coming from 72 villages (290 members coming from the Mkomazi Programme). The organization is comprised of a General Assembly, an executive coordination council, a Board of Trustees, an Elders Advisory Tribunal and 42 staff members. In terms of internal capacity building, *Ilaramatak* has concentrated on staff training and education, construction of administrative and training centres in Terrat Orkesumet and Kisiwani and legal advocacy work focusing on land alienation of the Maasai pastoralists. Community empowerment activities include supporting its 32 women and 8 youth groups (16 women and three youth groups coming from the Mkomazi Programme) who are undertaking initiatives such as income-generating projects and the establishment of solar-powered lighting/radio communication systems. Future initiatives will focus on veteri-

nary supplies and livestock extension work, enhancing *Ilaramatak's* documentation centre in Terrat, Orkesumet and solar sales and servicing, establishing a daycare centre to support family literacy and health education programmes.

*BULGALDA* (The Barabaig word for drylands) is one of two Barabaig pastoralists NGO members of PINGOs. Established in 1993 and receiving its registration in 1994, *BULGALDA* is based in Katesh village in Hanang District, Arusha Region. Its operations encompass over eleven different areas. At present, there are 94 members of *BULGALDA* plus a staff of nine. The main activities of *BULGALDA* have centred on organizational development and the construction of office premises. It has supported training and education initiatives including voter education, as well as legal advocacy work around land alienation. *BULGALDA* is also participating in the Eco volunteer water project and has helped to establish two water committees in the villages of Balang'da and Wendela. Currently it works with 3 women and 2 youth groups. At the Forum Council meeting at Kisiwani 1996 it officially withdrew from PINGOs, at least on a temporary basis. Since its restructuring, *BULGALDA* has requested readmission into PINGOs. However, its current position within PINGOs remains unclear.

*The Hadzabe Hunters and Gatherers* are, as yet, a loosely-knit, community-based group located in the Yaida Chini area, in and around the village of Mongo wa Mono, Mbulu District, Arusha Region. Over the past three years, they have participated in many PINGOs Forum activities. It is believed that the Hadza number approximately 700 people spread over the districts of Singida, Karatu and Mbulu. It should be remembered that some groups are nomadic, making the establishment of CBOs problematic. The Hadza's present water situation is not good. There is also a CUSO cooperant working with the Hadza through the Department of Community Development.

*LADO* (*Ilaramatak Development Organization*) was established in 1993 and registered as an NGO in 1995. Located in Loliondo Division, Ngorongoro District in Arusha Region, its field of operations include the villages of Arash, Losoito/Maalono, Enguseroaambu, Lorien, Sakala and Loliondo. *LADO* has 60 members and a staff of five working on a voluntary basis. *LADO* has acquired a plot and is building an office in N'gawa, and has supported its staff in a number of training initiatives such as primary health care and voter education. Four women and two youth groups have been established in some of the communities, particularly on land and forest issues. Initiatives include environment and forest activities, a maize mill, construction of a water dam and the establishment of a pharmacy centre.

*Oseremi* is located in Loliondo Division, Ngorongoro District, Arusha Region. The groups itself is new and its activities few. There are 58 members and a staff of five. Activities include a 4,000 acre livestock ranch with 80 cattle.

*UWAMA* (*Matebete Integrated Pastoralist Organization*) is located in Chimala Village, Usangu Valley, Mbeya Region and was formed in 1994. *UWAMA* has 20 members. Many of its activities have focused on internal capacity-building in the area of education and training. *UWAMA* has centred its community development work around raising the awareness of its

members on the issue of pastoralist land security. Also, there are plans to improve the economic conditions of its members through co-operative livestock training services. At present, UWAMA has facilitated the formation of one women's group.

*Emanyata Secondary School (ESOS)* is under the Aigwanak Trust which was funded by the Italian NGO, GAO. ESOS provides secondary school education to pastoralist children in Ngorongoro District. Many of these children have not been able to attend government secondary schools and their parents are not able to pay for private schooling.

*Ngorongoro Pastoralist Development Organization's (NGOPADEO)* main focus is the protection of human rights, conservation and animal health in the Ngorongoro Crater area.

*KIPOC Barabaig* at present has no external funding and conducts its activities on the basis of self-reliance. The impetus for its creation was the land conflict caused by the NAFCO/CIDA wheat schemes.

Aspiring members have requested to join the PINGOs Forum. Their requests will be considered at the next General Meeting. These indigenous organizations include KINNAPA (Kiteto); Imusote Purka, Handeni, Emanyata Mbeya Longooku Women's Cultural Boma (Ngorongoro Crater); Walezi - Gaeyeaw (Hanang) and Ziwa la Damu Pastoral Development Programme (Babati).

Finally it should be said that much of the information in this section will be revised during the course of this year.

### **Benefits gained by the CBO members of the PINGOs Forum**

The members should ideally expect the following support from the PINGOs Forum.

- a) Lobbying of the government of Tanzania and other related ministries.
- b) Organization and facilitation of different kinds of training, based on CBO members' needs. The PINGOs Forum annually evaluates and develops training plans for its members for the following year, e.g. paralegal, solar, media, participatory research, conflict resolution, etc.
- c) The coordination of resource sharing and the development of a radio call, an e-mail, and a newsletter network for information sharing.
- d) The lobbying of international bodies like Amnesty International, Survival International, IWGIA, UN Human Rights Commission, International Human Rights Tribunal, etc. for the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples within Tanzania and globally.
- e) The organisation of workshops, seminars, and annual conferences where CBO members share experiences and shape the direction of the indigenous movement in Tanzania.
- f) The provision of advice, support, and consultancy for its members.
- g) The mediation and facilitation of reconciliation using traditional customary law and modern conflict resolution techniques between member CBOs, individuals and any other persons seeking help.
- h) Solidarity and friendship plus a home away from home at the PINGOs Coordination Office and Advocacy Centre in Arusha,

which provides a meeting place for all members as well as modest accommodation and communication facilities.

### **Medium term objectives**

Although the medium term objectives have yet to be fully formulated or finalized, based on our current vision the following objectives will have been met by the end of the 3 year plan:

- a) The PINGOs Forum will have the capacity to serve its CBO members effectively.
- b) The PINGOs Forum will have achieved a greater degree of self-reliance in terms of human and financial resources.
- c) The PINGOs Forum will have an ongoing programme of publishing human rights violations occurring in indigenous communities in Tanzania.
- d) The PINGOs Forum will have established bonds of solidarity with like-minded organizations nationally, regionally, and internationally.
- e) The PINGOs Forum will have strengthened partnerships with donors on a basis of mutual respect and understanding.
- f) The CBO members will have a stronger understanding of their human rights as a basis for action in defending them.
- g) The CBO members will be more effective in implementing development initiatives with their respective constituencies

The means to achieve these objectives will be through the efficient provision and documentation of information, communications, training and advocacy services at the PINGOs Forum Coordination Office and Advocacy Centre in Arusha.

### **Long term objectives**

The long term goal of the PINGOs Forum, to strengthen the Tanzanian indigenous movement, will be reached with the fulfilment of the following long term objectives:

- a) The PINGOs Forum will influence policy-making processes in both the South and the North along lines sympathetic to the indigenous movement in its widest sense.
- b) The PINGOs Forum will facilitate the beginning of a process of building a civil society.
- c) The PINGOs Forum will facilitate the beginning of the creation of a 'good life' for pastoralists, hunter/gatherers, and other marginalized groups.

There are different routes to achieving these long term objectives. It will eventually be necessary for the PINGOs Forum membership to more fully articulate its aspirations. This will involve a process of struggle and the posing of fundamental questions on the appropriate organizational forms for the indigenous movement; it will involve a synergy in which folk and ethical philosophies and ideologies will interact as the indigenous movement situates itself vis-a-vis the outside world.

*From paper handed out at the "Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa", organised by the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum) and IWGIA. The conference took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 18th to 22nd of January 1999.* □



# THE SITUATION OF THE MAASAI WOMEN

By Mary Simat







**C**hairperson, members of the indigenous people, ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank the organisers of this unique conference to allow me to give an overview on the situation of the Maasai women. The Maasai comprise some of the indigenous peoples of East Africa. They are found in Narok

Laikipia, Kajiado, Transmara and Samburu District, and they also live in the northern parts of Tanzania. There are major problems which have constantly made Maasai women's life very tough and unbearable:

### Education

Since time immemorial, the aspect of girl child education among the Maasai has never been taken seriously. This has contributed to very few Maasai women having ever gone to school. However, boys have enjoyed this privilege as opposed to girls. A survey done by a women's lobby group shows that there are about 150 educated indigenous Maasai women in Narok District, and also in Kajiado District. The major factors responsible for these low figures are high drop-out rates among the girls, caused by poverty and early marriage. The men will not allow a girl to be educated for economic reasons. The girl also looks after the younger siblings while the mother performs the unending chores which begin before dawn and last until after dusk.

There is therefore an urgent need for sensitization meetings and girls boarding schools to rescue the girls from this calamity. Women's lobby groups would also need sponsorship to meet some of their goals/objectives towards girl child education. The organisation MDA (MAA Development Association) has been of great help in writing proposals and bringing women together.

### Health and sanitation

Health is another major problem within the Maasai community. This is due to a lack of health facilities, a lack of education and knowledge. The Maasai women have to be educated and sensitized on how to keep the household clean, prepare nutritious food and have kitchen gardens. Incidentally, we don't have many cases of kwashiorkor on Maasai land.

Sanitation, too, is another major problem up to now. Most Maasai people have never owned latrines.

Maternal and infant mortality is on the increase because of the long distances to health centres in the catchment area. Women also give birth in poor conditions and unhealthy places. Traditional birth attendants (TBA's) lack the training to perform this job in more hygienic ways. They may also use unsterile tools which could lead to HIV/AIDS. And in case of any problems the health centres/hospitals are far far away. This has led to many deaths of mothers and infants.

### Socio-economic problems

The Maasai women generally are not business oriented people - neither are they agriculturists. Their lifestyle has only been based on working around the clock for the household. However,

because of consistent harsh environmental problems, the Maasai women have added the selling of milk to their normal work. This is done by trekking long distances to the nearest shopping centre. Most of them take a whole day there and back. During rainy seasons they sell their milk at throw away prices because of the increase in production. The morans (young Maasai men) also drink their milk by force, either on the way or at the bomas (Maasai homesteads). Availability of dairy centres and skimming machines could help curb these problems. Projects relating to this would be sustainable and would empower Maasai women economically.

There are several women's groups which were formed out of political motivation. A small percentage have involved themselves in business, i.e. beadwork, selling tobacco and posho. However, due to lack of business/banking skills most of the businesses have collapsed. The rest have frozen their bank accounts because they do not know what to do with the money. MDA is planning to build and strengthen capacity for the existing groups in Narok District though they may not be able to reach over 500 groups in the District. MDA needs more sponsorship to be able to accomplish this task.

### Women's rights awareness meetings

Kenya has a lot of women organisations (NGOs) which are mainly based in the city and other towns. They have historically concentrated their activities in Nairobi and other major towns. The Maasai women have even been marginalised by their counterparts in big towns. They have continued to take advantage of our illiterate/semi-illiterate women leaders elected into the mighty organisation 'Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation' (MYWO). The grassroots Maasai woman is still ignorant about so-called women's rights because she doesn't have any form of communication except oral dialogue.

Indigenous women do not have representation in parliament, higher government positions or even in non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This has prevented us from gaining the right to a voice. Civil education and community based organisations should be strengthened and encouraged by the government and non-governmental organisations at the grassroots level to enable indigenous women to address their own special needs.

There will never be gender balance or equity until the indigenous women have been recognised by their counterparts, because the world cannot be complete without us.

### Long Live Mothers of Africa!

*Paper presented during the "Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa", organised by the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum) and IWGIA. The conference took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 18th to 22nd of January 1999.*

*Mary Simat is a Maasai from Kenya and works for the MAA Development Association - a Kenyan Maasai organisation. She is likewise the gender coordinator in IPACC (Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee).* □



Tribes and Places: From Africa

# THE PASTORALISTS OF NORTHERN KENYA

By Daoud Tari



*Rendille shepherds. Photo: Diana Vindling*



**N**orthern Kenya has been defined as the part of Kenya about which the rest knows nothing and cares even less. It is a region covering almost 37% of Kenya's land mass, divided into the seven administrative districts of Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Moyale, Marsabit, Isiolo and

Samburu. The major economic activity is nomadic pastoralism based on cattle, camel and goat husbandry. The region receives erratic rainfall and the environment is characterised by a fragile ecosystem. Drought resulting in famine is a common occurrence.

This region is dominated by the tribal peoples of Rendille, Boran, Samburu, Dasnech, Somali and Turkana. All these tribes inhabit a defined territory in this region and are still attached to their cultural and traditional practices.

This paper will discuss the colonial and post-colonial situation of the area, drawing examples and experience from Isiolo District, which is the operational area of the organisation 'Friends of Nomads International'.

### Colonial period

The European imperial powers that colonised Africa and divided it into nation states laid strong foundations that nurtured marginalisation and discrimination of the pastoralists of northern Kenya.

The colonial administration governed the region through a policy of pacification. They divided the region into tribal grazing reserves that were monitored very rigidly. A pass system was used to monitor peoples' movements, and people from the region were not allowed to mix with people from other areas.

Because of the mobile nature of the people, the colonial government felt that pastoralists were hard to govern and tax, and therefore no meaningful economic development could be invested in the region. Throughout the entire colonial period in Kenya, this region had neither any economic nor infrastructural development.

In the meantime, the highland region of Kenya had vibrant infrastructural, economic and social development. The seeds of marginalisation and imbalance were therefore firmly planted and, at the advent of independence, the regions could not compete. The Northern region did not participate in the process of drawing up a constitution at Lancaster House and their interests were effectively shut out of independent Kenya. They lived in a Kenya that did not appreciate their existence at all.

### Independence

At independence the region suffered a brutal war of secession that was supported by Somalia. The first decade of independence was characterised by the war and its devastating effects, which are felt even today. In an attempt to suppress the secession, government security forces adopted a scorched earth policy that unleashed terror on the population of the area. Concentration camps, mass killings of people and livestock, rape and horror punishments were some of the measures used against the peoples of the region.

The war left a stigma on the people of the region in that they were not taken to be genuine citizens. The State was constitutionally empowered to invoke emergency laws to administer

the area. This only changed in 1992 when plural policies were introduced in Kenya.

Development interventions that were initiated after the war in the livestock sector did not succeed either. They became a massive waste of resources. Development initiatives in fact resulted in the destruction of the environment and in the erosion of traditional resource management practices that have been used by the people.

Game Reserves and Natural Parks were created in areas which served as drought reservoirs and salt licks for livestock, without taking into consideration the needs of the local communities (e.g. Samburu, Shaba, Buffalo Springs, Bisanteli Kora, Marsabit, Sibeloi etc.). These parks and reserves are owned by, and benefit only, the powerful people from outside the area.

Mining of gemstones has led to people losing land and benefits from those mines, because they are also owned by outsiders.

The area suffers from endemic insecurity that arises out of competition over resources, inappropriate land tenure mechanisms, an inefficient security apparatus, absolute poverty, a proliferation of weapons from neighbouring states and the erosion of traditional authority structures that were used in conflict resolution.

Marketing of livestock and livestock products is also a nightmare in the region and the pastoralists rarely get value for their livestock.

### Way forward

Despite the sad predicament that has bedevilled this area, a ray of hope and opportunity is emerging. This has come about through Kenya adopting a plural political system and the ruling elites liberalising the management of the country. In the early 1990s all draconian laws that inhibited freedom and liberty of persons were repealed from the statutes of the country. Emergency laws that were often used to unleash terror on this area were also removed from the constitution.

The Constitutional Review Process that is currently unfolding in the country provides major hope for the region to amend the lost three decades of independence.

Land and minority rights are issues of cardinal concern to the residents of the area. Civil society groups have emerged in the area and are addressing constitutional issues. Currently members of parliament are organised in a pastoralist parliamentary group. Kenya Pastoralist Forum (KPF) is engaged in advocacy work on behalf of the people and has achieved several accomplishments.

This paper ends by making an appeal to the international organisations represented here to come forward and assist this region to achieve its rights during this historic change which is taking place in Kenya.

*Paper presented during the "Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa", organised by the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum) and IWGIA. The conference took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 18th to 22nd of January 1999.*

**Daoud Tari** is a Boran from northern Kenya and the Executive Director of the organisation Friends of Nomads International (FONI), Isiolo, Kenya. □



# THE AFRICAN INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ORGANISATION



By Lucy Mulenkel

*Simburi women, Kenya. Photo: Diana Vinding*



**H**onourable guests, ladies and gentlemen, the African Indigenous Women's Organisation (AIWO) takes the opportunity to thank the organisers very much for inviting us to participate in this very important conference. We also thank them humbly for organising the Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and South-

ern Africa to meet and discuss issues which are of great concern to our Region.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the African Indigenous Women's Organisation was formed on 24th April 1998 in Agadir, Morocco during the 1st African Indigenous Women's Conference organised by the Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples (NCIV) and the Moroccan Indigenous Organisation 'Tamaynut'. Over 13 African countries were represented.

Why was there a need for this conference? The idea and dream was conceived by NCIV who had been attending UN meetings and conferences on indigenous populations. During the various proceedings, African women's issues were not well represented, nor were their voices heard. NCIV started consultations among African indigenous organisations through visits, meetings and correspondences. The consultations, which lasted two years, led to the first conference in Agadir, Morocco and two major subjects were selected for discussion:

- 1) The role of African indigenous women as treasures of the cultural and intellectual heritage of their peoples and
- 2) Violence against African indigenous women.

Apart from these two main topics, which were discussed in plenary, two minor subjects were also discussed in the conference workshops:

- a) The legal situation of African indigenous women in the countries they inhabit and
- b) Bio-diversity and traditional medicine and African indigenous women.

The conference was a big success for the indigenous women of Africa, considering that these are people who had never been considered or given any attention in regional or international conferences.

Ladies and Gentlemen although the cultural and intellectual property of a people is created by women and men alike, it is mostly women who develop and propagate the culture of their people and pass it on to future generations. Women have saved and developed culture, including language. There is a great need to recognise their contribution to the development of any given society. The main objectives of the African Indigenous Women's Organisation are :

- a) To defend and promote the rights of African indigenous women.
- b) To defend and promote indigenous women of Africa who are victims of violence and genital mutilation.
- c) To support African indigenous women to preserve knowledge and natural resources.
- d) To take action at the international community level in order to prevent all acts of genocide and ethnocide.
- e) To make every effort to guarantee the private property of African indigenous women in order to enable them have decent lives in their communities.
- f) To provide skills through training, sensitisation and sustainable income generating activities for African indigenous women to alleviate poverty.
- g) To organise information sessions for African indigenous women in the field of human rights.
- h) To ensure the realisation of objectives determined by African indigenous women.

AIWO's Ad Hoc Committee has already met since the organisation was formed. Due to lack of funding, AIWO has taken the opportunity to meet whilst attending UN International meetings on indigenous people, to plan the way forward.

In one such meeting, the AIWO Ad Hoc Committee discussed membership, with particular regard to the recommendations of the 1st Pan-African Conference on Indigenous and Forest Dependent Peoples held in Accra, Ghana, from 7th to 12th September 1998.

## Membership

The first question is whether membership will be individual or collective for the indigenous organisation concerned. The women present came up with the suggestion that membership of AIWO should be collective. Indigenous (Women's) organisations should choose a representative from amongst the women members. If she leaves the organisation, it is the organisation which remains a member of AIWO. If the woman concerned goes to another indigenous people's organisation, this organisation too can apply for membership.

The participants of the meeting called on women who are now individual members of AIWO to join an indigenous people's organisation or to establish one.

There was discussion on the criteria of AIWO membership with regard to the 'indigeness' of the organisations that would apply. Some of the women present feared non-indigenous organisations might try to infiltrate AIWO, pretending they are indigenous. Further discussion showed that it is hard to give an exact definition of the term 'indigenous', as one of the criteria is self-definition. On the other hand, it was argued that AIWO has little to conceal from the world as all information is open. One can also wonder what would be gained by pretending to be a member of AIWO if one is not an indigenous (women's) organisation. The women present therefore suggested that AIWO should take the risk, at least

for the first period, and then consider restrictions to the membership.

It was also suggested that all organisations that want membership should send in a declaration that they agree with the objectives of AIWO. At the same time, the organisations should send in a copy of their by-laws or, if not officially established, the objectives of their own organisation. AIWO members also discussed the future actions.

As the discussion on the structure of AIWO shows, future actions will be first of all based around local and regional meetings resulting in the election of a regional representative. This does not mean, however, that this is the only subject of discussion at local and regional meetings. These meetings will themselves form the base for AIWO actions to be taken, such as: actions of support for important issues to member organisations of AIWO or actions of informing indigenous and non-indigenous women and men on the objectives of AIWO and on the meaning of the term 'indigeness', etc. The chosen members of the Executive Committee will also come up with ideas for actions, although they will do so after consultation with the regional AIWO members.

AIWO has so far achieved a lot by having its members recognised internationally. The participation in international meetings has been motivating. The members have also been able to start fundraising on different projects with the help of NCIV who has introduced them to donors; this is a hard task for new organisations.

AIWO's report 'Out of the Shadows' was launched in Amsterdam on 3rd December 1998. This was a very colourful and successful event for AIWO.

Though we still have financial problems, we hope to keep going and look to a bright future. It has been very difficult to communicate and get feedback from our members, but we hope that sub-regional meetings can tackle this problem. But communication and finance still remain major problems for AIWO.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am happy on behalf of all the members of AIWO to thank you very much for letting us participate and meet you all. Special thanks to PINGO's Forum and IWGIA for facilitating our participation and we look forward to future collaboration.

*Paper presented during the "Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa", organised by the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (Pingo's Forum) and IWGIA. The conference took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 18th to 22nd of January 1999.*

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# THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS AND THE ISSUE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

By Dr. Nyameko Barney Pityana



Dr. Barney Pityana

Chairperson, let me just say thank you very much for the opportunity to come and participate at this conference. It is a very long time since I was involved, or in touch with, indigenous issues. Having spent five years at the World Council of Churches in Geneva, heading a unit programmed at combatting racism, I was very much involved in the development of indigenous issues. It's a long time since then, and I do

feel a kind of connection with this issue once again.

But I'm not coming here today as an expert on the issue, because I'm not. I'm really coming as a member of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Essentially to just try to find connections between the African Charter and the issues that have been of concern to all of us here during these days. To my knowledge, the issue of indigenous peoples has not been discussed in the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. It's not too difficult to know why. I think firstly it is fair to say that the issue of indigenous peoples has not had priority nor has it been prominent in political or other discussions in Africa. To my knowledge not even in the context of the OAU has the issue been discussed by heads of state.

Secondly, there may be, and in fact there has been, evidence from the presentations that we received yesterday that there is some dispute about the understandings of indigenous peoples in Africa. And whereas the issue of indigenous has not been discussed, it may have been discussed in other ways. And I think there are also ideological problems that can be expressed around indigenous. I'm going to come back to this a little later.

Thirdly I think the African states are very weary of secessionist movements or civil strife. I don't think that anything that may appear potentially controversial in one state or another - maybe seen as responsible for divisions and civil strife - is likely to receive a lot of attention at an Africa-wide level.

And of course as we have been saying here all along, the indigenous peoples in Africa are not influential people, they are marginal or marginalised people and they are weak people, so their issues never really make their way on to the agendas of nations, even in our continent.

And finally there is of course the image of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights which hasn't really been seen as being strong in advocacy on any human rights issues on the continent. So one might say that it is not surprising that the issue hasn't come up in the commission at all.

## The environment in Africa for discussion of indigenous issues

Having said that, I think we need to pay some attention to the environment in Africa within which we wish these matters to be discussed. First it must be said that in 1964 - the OAU was founded in 1963 - the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments passed a resolution in Cairo recognising colonial boundaries which basically suggests that the way in which it was thought that Africa would organise itself was by maintaining colonial boundaries. I don't think it was because there was an ideological commitment to colonial boundaries but it was easier than trying to "unscramble the egg", because the controversy regarding what belonged to whom could lead to interminable strife. So, pragmatically, the recognition of colonial boundaries was a very necessary act in the wake of Africa-wide organisation that sought to unite Africans.

The other aspect of the international legal regime in Africa is the respect for the integrity of states. African states by and large pledge to respect the territorial integrity of other states and that is why there are problems when Rwanda and Uganda are allegedly involved in fuelling strife and occupying parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo or when Eritrea is occupying parts of Ethiopia. This is a violation of a very sacred principle in international law namely, respect for the territorial integrity of states.

Alongside this, there is another principle, the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs of states. Over the years this has become weakened and minimized a great deal as the human rights regime comes into force. When states ratify international treaties they invite monitoring and interference by other external bodies. So the principle is not as absolute as it used to be. But it is still a principle that is respected and interference is not resorted to very lightly.

What have been the developments in Africa that are worth our noting? I think that since 1990 there has been a greater degree of consciousness on the continent of Africa of human rights issues. There has been a strong movement, particularly in democratisation, good governance and multiparty states. This has happened in the first flush of removal of the Cold War. But I think that, to a large degree, this movement has become



much weaker now than it was seven or eight years ago, although some of these principles are not going to change. Nonetheless, if one takes the resolutions, for example, of the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments - in my case of SADEC states - there is a greater degree of consciousness of the importance of human rights and good governance in Africa.

A seminal document that is worth referring to is the Secretary-General of the United Nations document on Africa and the causes of conflict, which fundamentally asserts the importance of human rights in Africa in ensuring peace, security and prosperity for all. As a result of that, naturally there has had to be a movement towards redrafting of constitutions to a greater or lesser degree. At times there has been peace made with previously warring groups or factions and recognition of international pressure for human rights. So by and large African countries are now seeking to redraft their constitutions in order to reflect some of the new realities of international situations.

Furthermore there has been - and still is - the menace of civil war. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and others there is incipient civil strife. Generally whenever such things happen, human rights always suffer and civil liberties are constrained. Wherever there is civil strife, human rights almost always become the victim.

More positively there has been the adoption by the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments last June of an African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights. An African Court is very important because, for the first time in Africa - at least notionally - there will be, as there is in Europe and in the Americas, a court that will seek to enforce decisions and make them binding on nation states. I say notion-

ally, because even within the protocol of the African Court, it is still going to be necessary for each state to agree to ordinary citizens approaching the court directly. But if they do, then the decisions of the Court will be binding on each nation state, and that is a very important and very positive development.

And finally there are greater moves to enhance the cohesion of Africa as a continent. Not just as a hopeless basket case of beggars and those that are always at war with one another, but so that we can actually begin to raise the profile of the continent as a very progressive place where investments can be made and where corruption and nepotism are not the order of the day. So if good governance can at least transpire and if there is a movement - I'm not going to say it's a very strong movement - but if there is a movement that is seeking to link human rights together with good governance, democracy, and dealing with corruption and nepotism as effectively as possible, there is cause for optimism.

That is why my last point is that because of all of these things, the Assembly of African Heads of States and Governments agreed to have a continent-wide OAU ministerial conference on human rights, which firstly would have taken place in Luanda, Angola. However, because of the outbreak of war between UNITA and the government it had to be postponed.



Then it should have taken place in Mauritius but it had to be postponed, too. It is still hoped that it will take place probably around May or June. It is a major, major African initiative. When it does happen it will, I think, for the first time bring together the whole of Africa at ministerial level, along with the recognized participation of NGOs, to really begin to assess the situation of human rights in Africa. Something that I think has not happened before.

Secondly I want to talk about the African instruments for the promotion and protection of human rights. We need to say that as a background we have just celebrated the 50 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and this is important in relation to what we are trying to do during this conference. The preamble to the Universal Declaration has this to say: That disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of humankind, and the Declaration marks the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy the freedom of speech and belief, and freedom from fear. That has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people. This is important because it says fundamentally that since the Second World War we can no longer afford to be in a situation where violations of human rights almost inevitably lead to major destabilization, even rebellion. And therefore good governance is essential for the maintenance of good order and democracy in our countries.

### Self-determination

Now what are the problems that we then have to look at in Africa in the context of that? For one thing the key issue that indigenous people raise, I know, is a very controversial issue, the whole issue of self-determination. The Draft Declaration for example has this to say: "Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and fully pursue their economic, social and cultural development". That's a section on self-determination. But I want to suggest that there is another section on sovereignty. It says: "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, economic, social and cultural characteristics as well as their legal systems, while retaining their right to participate fully if they so choose in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the state in which they reside". So self-determination, sovereignty, are major issues that really need a major consensus and some understanding if there is to be a breakthrough in the whole movement of indigenous peoples. And I'm certain that this is one of the issues around the Draft Declaration, that is very much at the heart of the debate in order to make sure that the declaration will be acceptable to states later on.

But against that we need to remind you that there is a declaration, for example, on the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. And that declaration says that the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, to use their own language freely and without interference or discrimination is



*Els (Pygmies) from the Democratic Republic of Congo working in the field (planting maize) for the neighbouring Lese Dese people.  
Photo: Egon Wacht*





fundamental. When it is put like that it seems to me that self-determination defines autonomy. Autonomy by a group of people, a nation - a population. Not simply political independence as opposed to the nation state where they reside, because international law states that sovereignty remains unassailable, it is not an issue that is up for debate.

But the rights exercised by ethnic minorities are important. There have to be rights exercised by law, and according to the constitution of the country. And they must be the rights that are exercised out of an acceptance of the inviolability of the territorial integrity of the state. So self-determination is important. Self-determination as autonomy is important in relation to the specific interests of a group - generally a minority group. So, I think it is important to stress this point a little bit because it raises all kinds of fundamental concerns and fears among governments concerning indigenous issues.

Generally there hasn't been a lot of acceptance of secessionist movements in international law. By acceptance, I mean diplomatic national acceptance in international law. An example has been made regarding the USSR and the changes that have taken place since 1989. There have been a lot of changes, I think for the better. For example, the constitution of the USSR guaranteed Soviet states the right to secede from the Union. And there is, of course, the special case of the Baltic states, whose annexations were never accepted internationally. So there have been such cases.

But there are two major principles in international law that have to be borne in mind. That the recognition of separateness of states or parts of states is predicated on two major principles. One is that such a decision must be freely determined by a people and by that it means across the whole cross section of the entire population. That is the decision to free one part of the country, and to do this the decision has to be taken democratically by all the people of the country. However, quite often separation happens as a result of a settlement following an armed conflict, after which the boundaries of states are redrawn. Generally speaking, it is around these two principles that the recognition of separate states has been accepted.

### Definition of indigenous peoples

I want to return to the problem of definition of indigenous which I started with earlier on. I'm not going to attempt a definition, but I want to say why the issue of definition keeps coming up.

First I think we all know, and I have heard it mentioned here, about the special conditions of Africa. The concern about translating a concept generally in the special circumstances of the Americas, for example, or South Asia and transplanting it to Africa have raised concerns in some cases. And therefore the question is raised as to whether the term is relevant for Africa at all? Is it helpful? Does it enable us to come to a better understanding or to raise the issue more pertinently than would otherwise be the case? Does it deal with what one might call conceptual difficulties? How does it deal, for example, with the issue of the extra-territorial character of indigenous issues?

There are Maasai in Kenya, there are Maasai in Tanzania. Indigenous peoples straddle boundaries in general. There are Batwa all around the central part of Africa. There are San

people in South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. So the extra-territorial character of indigenous peoples is something that needs some kind of consideration. But I want to suggest that there is an issue at heart here. Whatever view one takes of the questions that are raised, and I've done no more than raise the questions for now, there is an issue crying out for attention. And the issue is that there are distinct identifiable communities who have a common identity, who have a shared cultural heritage, who exhibit ways of life, world views and customary practices, and who have a long ranging history and a religion together. Communities who have generally suffered dispossession, alienation and marginalisation and who even continue to suffer discrimination, who are generally vulnerable, and who are generally people who are victims of domination by more powerful groups.

They need not necessarily be numerically less than others. It is conceivable that minorities are not numerical minorities. I can speak of South Africa: for a long time we South Africans were essentially a minority even though we are a majority, because the powers that were exercised in the country were by a minority of people, who were dominant and controlled just about everything. So one has to move away from the numerical understanding of minority/majority issues. And then having said that, questions need to be asked for example on what basis the South African Afrikaners constitute an indigenous community in terms of the way which the UN understands the concept?

### The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights is an important player here. Because the African Commission has a continent-wide responsibility. All African states accept Eritrea, which is a new African state, and the Western Sahara, which is not recognized everywhere. All African states have ratified the African Charter. It means that all African states have an obligation to abide by the principles of the African Charter. The African Charter was adopted by the OAU in 1981 and came into force in 1986. So it has been in existence for over 10 years now. The Charter is distinctly African in its understanding of human rights. I think this is because it recognizes some of the key issues that Africans wish to raise around human rights. It is not just a matter of relevance or particularities, but the relationships between rights and responsibilities.

It recognises, for example, group rights which no other international instrument does. I think one would agree that this is a distinct feature of the African Charter. Article 62 of the Charter requires states to report every two years on steps they have taken to observe the principles of the Charter and this is a very useful instrument because it says that states must report, and in reporting that they need to be able to raise how they have ensured conformity in their country with all the principles in the Charter.

Until recently, this was a mechanism that was not very much respected by states. Very few states, in fact, have reported and the African Commission has now made a resolution to seek to provide reports for states that have not reported, which really shames and embarrasses states. In order to do so, it is going to rely on Non Governmental Organisations and other researchers on the state of human rights in that particular

state. And that is an opening which can really open up some of these issues for indigenous communities in Africa about how states relate to ethnic and other minorities as the African Charter requires.

Another opening is by way of communications. Communications are complaints - writing to the African Commission to make a particular complaint regarding a violation or lack of respect for the rights of the people that are in the African Charter. The African Commission does now attempt very much to investigate and to make states accountable in terms of the complaints it has received. To my knowledge I don't think we have received any complaint relating to treatment of indigenous people. I say to you: I hear a great deal about genocide or something like that. But in fact there has been no complaint to the African Commission - that I'm aware of - against any state. And that means that unless indigenous people, or those who work with them actively, utilise the instruments that are there in Africa to raise the issue of concern to any particular community in Africa, it will not be addressed. Because if you don't get a hearing within your state, then it is possible certainly through the African Commission to get a Pan-African hearing across the whole continent of Africa. And very, very often states do take complaints made to the African Commission very seriously.

I think that states are increasingly coming to the sessions of the African Commission to defend themselves against complaints that are made against them, and they take seriously the rulings and decisions of the African Commission because they have a bearing on the image of the state and foreign relations in general. So I do think that complaining to the African Commission is a very important way that can be pursued.

Next I think every country in Africa has an African commissioner who is responsible for promoting human rights in that country. Every country in Africa. So it should be possible for all the NGOs which have observer status in the African Commission to make use of this. These NGOs receive the reports and the communications of the African Commission every year, and they know who the commissioner is, who is responsible for that country. And there is nothing that is as effective as making your commissioner work in order to bring to his attention what happens in your country that is in violation of the Charter. So I do think that if you know who the commissioner is for any one country, it is important.

For example, a judge - Robert Kisanga - was for many, many years a member of the African Commission based here in Tanzania. He is a judge of the appeal court of Tanzania and he had responsibility for Kenya. During all the years when Robert Kisanga was a member of the commission he never brought indigenous issues to the attention of the commission. Why? I suspect it is because indigenous peoples and NGOs did not bring them to his attention. Or because he himself did not make himself available to NGOs and to the indigenous peoples in the countries which he had responsibility for. So I think that it is important that the commissioner responsible for a particular country should be made aware of these issues and certainly should be given opportunity to report on them and made to account for actions that he has taken on those issues.

That brings me to the role of NGOs. Non Governmental Organisations are a very important part of the promotional activity of the African Commission. There are a number of NGOs that have observer status in the African Commission, through which they receive reports of the work of the commission, through which they attend as observers of the sessions of the commission, through which they can bring issues before the commission and make complaints to the commission on behalf of others. It's a very important role if it is well used by Non Governmental Organisations. To obtain observer status you only have to submit your constitution and your activity report on the activities that you are undertaking in promoting the African charter to the African Commission regularly. And if you are an observer NGO in the African Commission you can also make the commissioner for your country or your particular interest accountable.

More recently, in an effort that the African Commission has made to try and bring critical issues to special attention, the African Commission has adopted the strategy of having special rapporteurs on specific issues. During the time I have been in the Commission - which is only two years - there has been a special rapporteur on prisons, and we have received very important reports on the conditions of prisons in Kenya, in Mozambique, in Mauritania and another country. We have got a special rapporteur on executions and genocide in Africa following Rwanda. And there is a special rapporteur on women and rights of women in Africa. So the idea of special rapporteurs is a mechanism to enable important critical issues to be brought to the attention of the Commission through the accessing of a commissioner who has special responsibilities for that issue.

The African Commission reports to the African Assembly of Heads of States and Governments every June. The Assembly of Heads of States and Governments meets in June in one or another capital of Africa. Every June the activity report for the previous year, including the decisions that have been taken on communications by the African Commission, are brought to the attention of the Heads of States and Governments. It is still very, very important that we enable the African Heads of States and Governments to take these reports most seriously, as I suspect they do. But I think that once there is an African Court then the African Commission can take matters to the African Court for a juridical decision. So that's a sign in Africa.

*Paper presented during the "Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa", organised by the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum) and IWGIA. The conference took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 18th to 22nd of January 1999.*

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Participants at the Arusha Conference. Photo: Diana Vinding

# ARUSHA RESOLUTIONS

## Whereas

1. Indigenous peoples from East, Central and Southern Africa convened together with delegates from international organisations and NGOs at Arusha - Tanzania from 18-22 January 1999;

2. Indigenous delegates recognised the fact that they share common problems and will seek common solutions;

3. Indigenous delegates also emphasised the fact that in certain circumstances hunter-gatherers in Africa are in a particularly vulnerable position.

4. Indigenous delegates more specifically pointed to the special case of the Great Lakes region, where the impact of conflicts has been particularly disruptive to Batwa and Pygmy communities, who have been subjected to massacres, torture and human rights violations which have turned them into refugees, exiled from their ancestral lands and their countries.

## The Conference declared that

5. The indigenous peoples have the same right as other African communities to live in peace. It is the responsibility of the

governments to take care of all its citizens, and conflicts and wars must be brought to an end through the promotion of traditional methods of conflict solving and/or through lasting and effective peace treaties;

6. The indigenous peoples have the same right as other African communities to live according to their cultures and freely determine their future and development just as other African communities do;

7. Indigenous peoples' distinctive rights to land, to environment and natural resources, as well as their human and cultural rights should be respected;

8. Indigenous peoples should have control of all their sacred sites and the graves of their ancestors;

## The Conference emphasised

### THE RIGHT TO LAND

*Indigenous delegates at the Conference*



**Stressing** that the problem of ownership of land and all its resources - animals, water, trees, other vegetation etc. - is acute for all indigenous communities, and that many communities have lost all of their land and others are in grave danger of losing their land;

**Noting** that this land alienation is due to the lack of recognition by governments of customary occupancy and modes of production and to the lack of adequate land tenure and land ordinance systems;

#### *9. The Conference resolved that*

9.1 Compensation and reclamation of already lost land should be given to aggrieved indigenous communities;

9.2 The distinctive rights of hunter-gatherers must be enshrined in the constitutions and legislation, present and future, of all African countries;

9.3 Pastoralism should be recognised as a major form of production and be given due respect;

#### *10. The Conference furthermore urged*

10.1 Pastoralist and hunter-gatherer communities everywhere to identify and seek solutions to common problems, and seek ways and means of co-existing in shared territories in harmony;

*11. Aware of some pressing cases, the Conference specifically recommended that*

11.1 The Tanzanian Parliament removes from the Constitution the clause which states "that all land in Tanzania is vested in the President"; thereby allowing the executive to control the land;

11.2 The new Tanzanian land legislation takes adequate account of the interests of the pastoralists and sets up effective mechanisms to prevent the illegal alienation of land, which is a serious continuing problem for the pastoralists;

11.3 The international organisations give their support to hunter-gatherers and pastoralists to rally against the Tanzanian proposed land amendment bills;

11.4 The Kenyan government tables in Parliament as soon as possible the proposed Land Adjudication Amendment bill that nullifies the Ilodoriak/Mosiro land adjudication sections and guarantees the protection of the land rights for all pastoralists in Kenya;

11.5 The Kenyan government declares a moratorium on the sale of land among Maa speakers as part of the Constitutional Review in Kenya;

11.6 The Kenyan government fully involves hunter-gatherer and pastoralist communities in re-writing the Kenyan Constitution, ensuring that any clauses on individual and collective land title reflect the values and needs of indigenous peoples;

11.7 The Government of Botswana, pending the resolution of the land claim by the residents of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR), agrees to a moratorium on the removal of San from CKGR;

11.8 The Government of Botswana permits the return of residents who have been resettled outside the CKGR to their former homes within the CKGR;

11.9 The Government of Botswana continues to provide health and other social services to those indigenous villagers pending the resolution of the land claim;

## **THE RIGHT TO NATURAL RESOURCES**

### *Indigenous peoples at the Conference*

**Noting** that indigenous peoples' traditional way of life - living in harmony with their natural environment - has preserved the animals and other resources up to the present;

**Stressing** that indigenous peoples are knowledgeable and skilled in the techniques of managing and preserving their habitat;



*A Hadzabe representative  
at the conference.  
Photo: Diana Vinding*

**Aware** of the fact that their governments, often misled by bad advice, have failed to make use of indigenous peoples' conservation expertise and instead have resorted to the wrongful and unlawful expulsion of indigenous peoples from their traditional lands;

**Noting** furthermore that some of these ancestral lands have become forest reserves and national parks (see annex for a few examples of this), while others have been taken over by mining concessions or have been flooded in connection with the construction of dams and hydroelectric plants;

**Noting** also that some of these resources and the indigenous peoples' knowledge of them is being used without respecting these peoples' intellectual property rights;

**Conscious** that all these activities adversely affect the lives and livelihood of indigenous communities and the national resources upon which they depend, and

**Distressed** by the fact that sacred sites and ancestral graveyards have been destroyed by these activities;

#### *12. The Conference demanded that*

12.1 The affected communities always be consulted and involved in the decisions leading to land alienation;

12.2 The security of tenure covers all the natural resources in the indigenous lands;

12.3 The legislation be challenged in all the countries to protect natural resources;

12.4 Sanctions be imposed on governments who do not protect the land, the resources and the cultural sites of the indigenous communities;

#### *13. The Conference furthermore appealed to*

13.1 All governments, donor agencies, international organisations and all well-wishers to address these issues urgently and effectively.

### **Regarding national parks and wildlife reserves**

#### *14. The Conference asked that*

14.1 The customary rights of hunter-gatherers and pastoralists in forest reserves and game parks be recognised;

14.2 The legislation governing reserves/parks be reviewed to allow more participation by communities;

14.3 Joint management be organized with the local communities so that they can benefit from the park revenues;

### **Regarding mining**

#### *15. The Conference demanded that*

15.1 African governments should recognize sub-surface rights of indigenous peoples and the current policy on mining in all the countries should be challenged;

15.2 No mining or other developments should take place on indigenous lands without indigenous peoples' informed consent and without a formal agreement having been obtained from the local community; mining companies should be held to repair environmental damage that negatively influences traditional economies and opportunities for eco-tourism or other uses.

### **Regarding the construction of dams**

#### *16. The Conference appealed to*

16.1 The international organisations not to give financial assistance to the construction of dams affecting indigenous communities;

16.2 In the case of two specific dam projects presently planned by the governments of Kenya and Namibia respectively, the Conference furthermore

a) Urged the Kenyan Government to shelve all plans regarding the construction of an electric power dam on the Wusio Ngiro River. There is evidence that this dam will adversely affect the life of the pastoralist communities both in Kenya and Tanzania by flooding swampy lands that provide grazing for livestock and water for both livestock and humans and even wildlife;

b) Appealed to international organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and any other organisation to request governments and other institutions not to give any assistance to the government of Namibia for the construction of a dam on the Kunene River. This dam will threaten the Ovahimba Community residing at Epupa area by destroying a lot of their grandfathers' graves, which for them are a very significant symbol in their culture, by flooding most of their land and grazing areas, and by evicting the people residing along this area. The Ovahimba Community also feels that many people will be coming to this area, and as a result the rate of crime and of different diseases will rise.

### *17. The Conference finally called on*

17.1 The tourism industry to show respect and concern for indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples should receive an adequate proportion of the profits of tourism, and the promotion of tourism should be under the control of indigenous groups.

17.2 All researchers working among indigenous peoples should only conduct research with the full consent of the peoples and ensure that the information they collect is available to the people themselves.

## **THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**Noting** that the UN Commission on Human Rights has established an open ended working group to consider the Draft Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and that African states will in due course vote on the adoption of the declaration by the UN commission;

### *18. The Conference*

18.1 Urged African countries to ratify all international legal instruments relating to indigenous peoples and to incorporate them into domestic law in order to empower local indigenous communities;

18.2 Requested the European Union, in their political dialogue with the different African government authorities, to urge these governments to ratify diverse international instruments for indigenous peoples and to monitor the ratification.

18.3 Demanded adequate representation of hunter-gatherer communities in all contexts and in particular that all relevant hunter-gatherer communities be represented in any relevant national or international body that may be established as well as in all future conferences;

### **Regarding indigenous women**

#### *19. The Conference furthermore recommended that*

19.1 The rights of indigenous women be strengthened.

19.2 Practical gender needs be taken into consideration in every sector (economic, education, development, etc.) in order to alleviate and solve some of the problems experienced by indigenous women.

19.3 Legal instruments be created to allow indigenous women to own property/land.

### **Regarding education**

#### *20. The Conference stressed that*

20.1 The indigenous peoples' right to education should be respected and enhanced and more education facilities should be provided by the governments;

20.2 The indigenous peoples should be given a chance to design a special curriculum which caters for their needs;

20.3 Provisions for girl child education should be made as it will eliminate some cultural practices which marginalize them;

20.4 The services, i.e. staffing, equipment and facilities, to the already existing schools should be improved;

20.5 Teacher training issues should be revisited by the Kenyan government for the benefit of the pastoralists who have no teachers. One or two teachers' colleges should be retained with the help of mobilized resources;

### **Regarding the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights**

#### *The Conference*

**Noting** that the situation of indigenous peoples has aroused concerns in the international community as evidenced by the declaration of the International Decade 1995-2004;

**Informed** that pastoralists and hunter-gatherers are still being forcibly evicted from their traditional lands, that collective punishments of indigenous communities are still taking place, and that political, economic, social and cultural discrimination of indigenous communities occurs all over Africa;

**Aware** that the issue of indigenous peoples in Africa is essentially a matter of human rights;

**Conscious** of the strong provision for collective rights and right to culture provided for by the African charter on human and peoples' rights;

**Regretting** that the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has to date not addressed the question of the rights of indigenous peoples in Africa;

**Convinced** that failure to do so is neglect of the mandate granted to the Commission under the Charter;

#### *21. The Conference therefore resolved:*



21.1 To encourage all NGOs concerned about the rights of indigenous peoples in Africa to seek observer status in the African Commission;

21.2 To request the African Commission to include an agenda item on the rights of indigenous peoples in Africa in all sessions of the Commission;

21.3 To ask the Commission to establish a working group to consider all aspects of the rights of indigenous peoples in Africa and to promote consideration of the matter by African states;

21.4 To ask the Commission to reconsider the requirement that indigenous peoples exhaust their local remedies before lodging a complaint with the Commission as the lengthy delays and postponements in judicial proceedings affecting them effectively deny African pastoralists and hunter-gatherer societies justice.

## PLAN OF ACTION

### 22. *The Conference resolved to implement the following*

#### 22.1 *At the local and national level*

- a) Implement awareness campaigns to ensure that local communities are made aware of their land rights.
- b) Make sure that country-by-country profiles of indigenous NGOs and CBOs are drawn up, so that we can identify each other and strengthen our common stand.

#### 22.2 *At the regional level*

- a) Encourage Kenyan and Tanzanian Maasai groups to assist each other in lobbying and reaching consensus on the conservation of sacred sites that are common to both of them, and other concerns that affect them in similar ways.
- b) Encourage Central African forest dwelling people to assist each other in lobbying and reaching consensus on strategies for peace in the region, the conservation of forest areas, management of wild life including mountain gorillas, democratic representation of their needs and protection from human rights violations;

#### 22.3 *At the continental level*

- a) Ensure that indigenous NGOs and CBOs start to co-ordinate and strategise, to find practical solutions to the following questions:
  - How do we feed into each other's efforts?
  - How do we disseminate information (e.g. through responsible organisations like IPACC, AIWO, The Inter-

national Alliance for Tribal and Indigenous Peoples of The Tropical Forest).

- b) Encourage indigenous groups to affiliate themselves to IPACC.
- c) Request the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to provide all the participants with the names and addresses of ACHPR-commissioners, as well as a 2-3 page summary of ACHPR's instruments.
- d) Discuss how we can influence/lobby and get support from African states in an appreciation of our concerns, e.g. through capacity-building of our institutions and networking.
- e) Request African governments to ratify the ILO Convention 169 and other instruments related to indigenous peoples.
- f) Organise a training workshop on international human rights standards and mechanisms in Arusha in 1999 as an instrument to increase African indigenous peoples' knowledge of the UN processes.
- g) Organise, with the support of the Forest Peoples' Programme (FPP) and the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), a conference in the year 2000 in order to promote a discussion on the issues caused by the establishment of national parks and wildlife reserves. This conference will bring together indigenous peoples involved in conservation projects and conservationists to discuss case studies from indigenous peoples describing their experiences.

#### 22.4 *At the international level*

- a) Urge the UN Voluntary Fund and The Human Rights Fund for Indigenous Peoples to ensure greater participation for African indigenous peoples at the UNWGP through the allocation of travel funds and to revise their criteria to ensure that only genuine indigenous persons are funded.
- b) Send a letter to the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Miguel Alfonso Martínez, regarding his report "Study on treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements between States and indigenous Populations" in which we confirm that there are indigenous peoples within African States.
- c) Send the "Arusha Declaration on the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples within the United Nations", which was adopted at the Conference, to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- d) Request ILO, EU and other main donors to monitor activities relating to development co-operation and foreign investment in all African countries, and encourage indig-

enous organisations to ask these donors for information about their activities in the different countries.

- e) Request ILO to brief (in an easily understood language) about all instruments related to indigenous peoples.
- f) Request indigenous organisations to gather good factual information about specific situations and forward this information to the northern/international NGOs, so that they can give more effective support and lobbying and also forward it to the international donors so that they are properly informed about local conditions. International NGOs at this Conference undertake to share information and co-ordinate activities on issues arising from this Conference.

#### 22.5 Specific actions to be taken at the local, national and international level

- a) Lobby at national and international level about the new Tanzanian land bills being debated in Dodoma, in order to ensure that:
  - the new legislation takes adequate account of the interests of the hunter-gatherers and pastoralists of Tanzania.
  - the new legislation sets up effective mechanisms to prevent the illegal alienation of land, which is a serious continuing problem for the hunter-gatherers and pastoralists of Tanzania.
- b) Ensure that Indigenous organisations lobby the EU delegation to press Tanzanian authorities to involve indigenous peoples in constitutional reforms.
- c) Ensure that the Barabaig of the Baraguyo draft a resolution/document regarding their situation.
- d) Ensure that the Kenyan Pastoralist Forum, hunter-/gatherer organisations and other indigenous NGOs and CBOs in Kenya jointly lobby and strategise for the forthcoming Constitutional reforms. IWGIA could be asked to facilitate such a process. Arrange for workshops and awareness-raising campaigns in order to draw up a strategy for involving the indigenous communities of Kenya that are not informed about this process and therefore left out of the movement so far.
- e) Request the Norwegian and Swedish governments to clarify their position on the Epupa dam project in Himba territory which will imply the relocation of the Namibian Himba.
- f) Request the ILO and the European Union to monitor activities related to any kind of foreign investment in the same location.
- g) Request the main donors involved in Rwanda, Burundi, D.R. Congo, Cameroon and Uganda to review their devel-

opment co-operation to ensure that the Batwa and other Pygmy peoples are taken into account.

- h) Bring the special situation and position of the Batwa in Rwanda to the attention of the Tribunal. As a consequence of the genocide in Rwanda, the Batwa experience death and imprisonment. As the tribunal is located in Arusha, it is suggested that CUSO and Pingo's Forum follow up on this issue and explore the possibility of the Batwa presenting their case directly to the Tribunal.

#### 22.6 Follow-up to the Conference

- a) Discuss with IWGIA what will be the next step after this Conference, in order to build and sustain a common stand and build the capacity of some of the indigenous groups.
- b) Discuss how the dissemination of the information which has emerged from this Conference can strengthen networking among African indigenous peoples, e.g. through publication of a summary of the presentations and discussions. The distribution mechanisms should include the international press and distribution media and ERIN based in Nairobi.
- c) Set up a small committee and ask IWGIA to monitor the implementation of the plan of action as agreed by this Conference and to report to all participants in 6 months time.

**As adopted by the delegates to the Conference on  
Indigenous Peoples in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa  
Arusha 18-22 January 1999**

#### Examples of hunter-gatherers and Pastoralists having been displaced by National Parks and Conservation areas:

People	Park	Country
Hai//om	Etosha	Namibia
-Khomani	Kalahari Gemsbok	South Africa
G//ui, G//ana	Central Kalahari	Botswana
!Kung	Gemsbok Park	Botswana
Batwa	Parc National des Volcans	Rwanda
Batwa	Forêt Naturelle Gishwati	Rwanda
Abayanda	Mgahinga Gorilla park	Uganda
Abayanda	Echuuya Forest Reserve	Uganda
BaSua	Semliki National Park	Uganda
Ogiek	Park Volcan Makurale	Kenya
Ogiek	Mau Forest	Kenya
Maasai	Amboseli Park	Kenya
Maasai	Serengeti	Tanzania

# THE ROLE OF MULTINATIONAL OIL COMPANIES IN NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

The Continuing  
Ogoni Crisis  
as an Example

by Dr. Vincent Idemyor



## Abstract

**T**he Ogoni region, comprising 404 square miles in the Niger River Delta of Nigeria, is home to 500,000 Ogonis who depend upon agriculture and fishing for their livelihood. Subsurface petroleum deposits were discovered by Shell Oil in 1958. Since that date there have been steadily increasing pollution problems

stemming from spillage from Shell's operation. In addition to the pollution of farmlands and waterways there has been extensive gas flaring, resulting in severe air pollution.

While the Ogoni have protested about the pollution for many years, matters reached a head with a peaceful demonstration in 1993 of over 300,000 Ogonis. Following this demonstration, the Nigerian government began a reign of terror in Ogoni, which included numerous raids resulting in the deaths of over 2000 unarmed civilians and the razing of 37 villages. The reign of terror was designed to send a message to any other minority group in Nigeria that might attempt to assert its rights.

Ogoni has been occupied by the Nigerian military since 1993. Following a riot in 1994, 36 Ogoni men were arrested and charged with murder. Nine were hanged following a fraudulent proceeding that was condemned internationally. Following the hangings, most countries withdrew their ambassadors from Nigeria. Various sanctions were imposed, but no nation refused to import Nigeria's oil. A bill was introduced in the US Senate that would have banned oil imports from Nigeria, but received little support. Nearly half of Nigeria's oil exports go to the United States. However, the United States imports only about 3 to 4 percent of its oil from Nigeria.

From 1993 until his sudden death in June 1998, General S. Abacha ruled Nigeria by decree. Upon Abacha's death the dictatorship was assumed by General Abdulsalami Abubakar. Elections were held in February/March 1999, with a transfer of power on the 29th of May 1999. The dictatorship is totally dependent financially upon the production of western multinational oil companies (Shell, Mobil, Chevron, Agip, and Elf-Aquitaine) for its revenues. Under the dictatorship of Abacha, freedom of the press was eliminated and thousands of people were imprisoned for political reasons. Under Abubakar there appears to be a very gradual return to more democratic freedoms; however there are still political prisoners. Ogoni remains the only area in Nigeria under military occupation although in September 1998 the military stopped patrolling the roads in Ogoni as intensively. Under Abubakar, the 20 Ogonis who had remained imprisoned since 1994 on false murder charges have been released on bail.

Environmental pollution remains an extreme problem in Ogoni with skin diseases, respiratory problems and increased death rates associated with the pollution. While Shell has ostensibly temporarily ceased operations in Ogoni since 1993, the Nigerian government continues operating two of Nigeria's four oil refineries in Ogoni. Nigeria's only petrochemical byproducts production plant is also in Ogoni. Shell has yet to



clean up the enormous amount of spillage in Ogoni or to pay reparations and compensation to farmers whose land was destroyed or taken.

### The Ogoni situation: background

Ogoni is in Nigeria, on the west coast of Africa. Ogoni occupies an area in the north-east plain terraces of the Niger Delta, in Rivers State. The Ogonis lived here long before the British came to Nigeria. The Ogoni people are mostly farmers and fishermen.

Before Shell Oil came to Ogoni in 1958, the Ogoni people had beautiful streams from which they could drink water and the land was fertile. Historically, Ogoni was the food basket of the Rivers peoples. Oil was discovered in Ogoni in 1958 when Shell came to Ogoni to start drilling. Shortly thereafter the Ogoni started noticing that agricultural production and fishing catches started to deteriorate. A series of complaints were made to Shell and to the authorities; however there was no response.

Why was this situation so critical? Because Ogoni is only 404 square miles in size, with half a million people. With a population density of over 1200 people per square mile, Ogoni has the highest population in Africa for a rural agricultural setting. The average Nigerian population density in rural areas is about three hundred persons per square mile. Because of the uniquely high population density in Ogoni there is a great pressure and dependency on the land and on the fishing grounds.

As Shell increased its operations over the years, with increases in oil spillage, the environmental pollution problems for the Ogoni intensified. In 1990 the Ogoni people had a series of meetings from which came one of the most historic documents to come out of Africa, called The Ogoni Bill of Rights. Thirty Ogoni men signed the Bill of Rights and submitted the Bill of Rights to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The cardinal point in the Bill of Rights was a denunciation of the environmental devastation of the land. It also denounced the economic strangulation and the social denigration of the Ogoni people. The Federal Government of Nigeria ignored the Ogoni Bill of Rights.

In January of 1993 three hundred thousand Ogoni people protested the excessive pollution in Ogoni, at the same time marking the International Year of Indigenous People. The protest was totally peaceful. There was no violence, not one stone was thrown. The protest focussed on Shell Oil (Royal Dutch/Shell Group), the multinational oil company.

Shortly after this peaceful protest, new problems began. The Nigerian military sent troops into Ogoni. Shell Oil, as they have admitted, sponsored some of these federal troops. The troops were sent to clamp down on Ogoni so that there would be no more protests. Over the next two years over two thousand Ogoni people were killed by the federal troops. About one hundred thousand Ogoni people became internally displaced. Thirty-seven Ogoni villages were sacked - destroyed completely - all in an attempt to silence the Ogoni people who, essentially, were denouncing the government, asking that the environmental damage be cleaned up, and that there be an end to a pervasive corruption that surrounded the entire oil operation. This is the



Ogoni man watching his field which has been destroyed by an oil blow out from Shell drilling operation. Photo: Anne Hege Simonsen

sequence of events, in general, which led to a crisis condition, with full time military occupation, existing in Ogoni. At the end of September 1998, the military reduced its road patrols markedly in Ogoni; however they remain there as a force quartered in barracks.

On September 15th 1993 the Nigerian military, under the direction of General Sani Abacha, without any provocation whatsoever, attacked ten Ogoni villages. Seven hundred and fifty people were killed and thirty thousand people were left homeless. Some of this was documented on video tape. Most notably it can be seen in a video, "The Drilling Fields" by Glenn Ellis<sup>1</sup>.

During five years of intense military occupation in Ogoni, the situation remained bleak. The Ogoni people were not able to move around freely in order to trade, as is necessary. There have been instances of people being shot by the military because they did not pay a road toll of 25 cents.

The Abacha approach to the Ogoni was widely seen as a genocidal ethnic cleansing approach designed to terrify other groups who might think of standing up for their environmental rights and their human rights<sup>2</sup>. Abacha and the military junta, in cooperation with Shell Oil, were particularly concerned with other groups in the oil-rich Niger Delta.

All of this led to the events of November 10, 1995, when Ken Saro-Wiwa, the foremost Ogoni leader, and eight others, (Baribor Bera, Saturday Dobee, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbokoo, Barinem Kiobel, John Kpuinen, Paul Levura, and Felix Nuata) were judicially murdered, hanged, by the Nigerian military. Shell Oil shared in the blame for these hangings.<sup>3</sup>

When Shell Oil came to Ogoni in 1958 the oil company promised to do many things for the Ogonis: they promised to pay royalties for the land, they promised to drill for oil in a modern and environmentally sound manner. All of these promises have been ignored. What you saw, instead, was an operation that was totally substandard from an environmental point of view. Agreements to pay royalties at a fair rate of compensation were also ignored. When the way in which Shell proceeded in Ogoni is compared with the way oil is drilled for in the western world you see that there is a clear double standard. This environmental situation exists not only in the Ogoni region but in the entire Niger Delta.

According to Shell Oil's own statements, the oil that Shell Oil gets from Nigeria represents 14% of Shell's worldwide production. The oil spillage in Nigeria represents 40% of Shell Oil's total worldwide pollution - on average, about three times as much pollution as at Shell's operations outside Nigeria. There have been thousands of spills in the Ogoni region and none of them have been cleaned up.

For example, take the situation of one aspect of petroleum production, gas flaring, in which the gaseous byproduct of oil extraction is openly burned on site in Ogoni. If you look at a study by the World Bank, published in 1995, it states clearly that 76% of the natural gas byproduct is being flared in the operations in the Niger Delta, as opposed to 0.6% in America and 4.3% in the United Kingdom. In other words, from twenty to one hundred times as much natural gas is being flared in the Niger Delta operation as is flared in similar operations in the West. Twelve million tons of gas is being flared on a yearly basis,

resulting in a significant contribution to global warming. Gas flaring is another example of the environmental double standards that are practised in the Ogoni region, and the Niger Delta.

Water sampling shows that the water pollution situation has become extreme. A study carried out by Project Underground in 1996 showed a level of 18 parts per million of petroleum product in some Ogoni water courses. This is 360 times as high as the standard set by the European Community guidelines. These water pollution tests were performed three years after Shell Oil stated that they had left Ogoni. In fact, three of the four oil refineries operating in Nigeria today are in the Niger Delta, with two of the four at Eleme in Ogoni.

In addition to the refineries, there is also the only petrochemical processing plant in Nigeria, also located in Eleme. These huge refineries, operated by the Nigerian government oil company, and the petrochemical processing plant, are enormous sources of ongoing pollution of the environment. The refineries handle petroleum from all oil companies in Nigeria. The environmental impact on Ogoni has been very extensive. Crop yields and fishing catches are down markedly. Wildlife has become nonexistent. In some cases entire farms have been destroyed without compensation paid. All you see around Ogoni is death. More Ogonis die than are being born, according to an unpublished study carried out in selected villages by some Ogoni physicians. They concluded that petrochemical pollution was the major factor in these statistics.

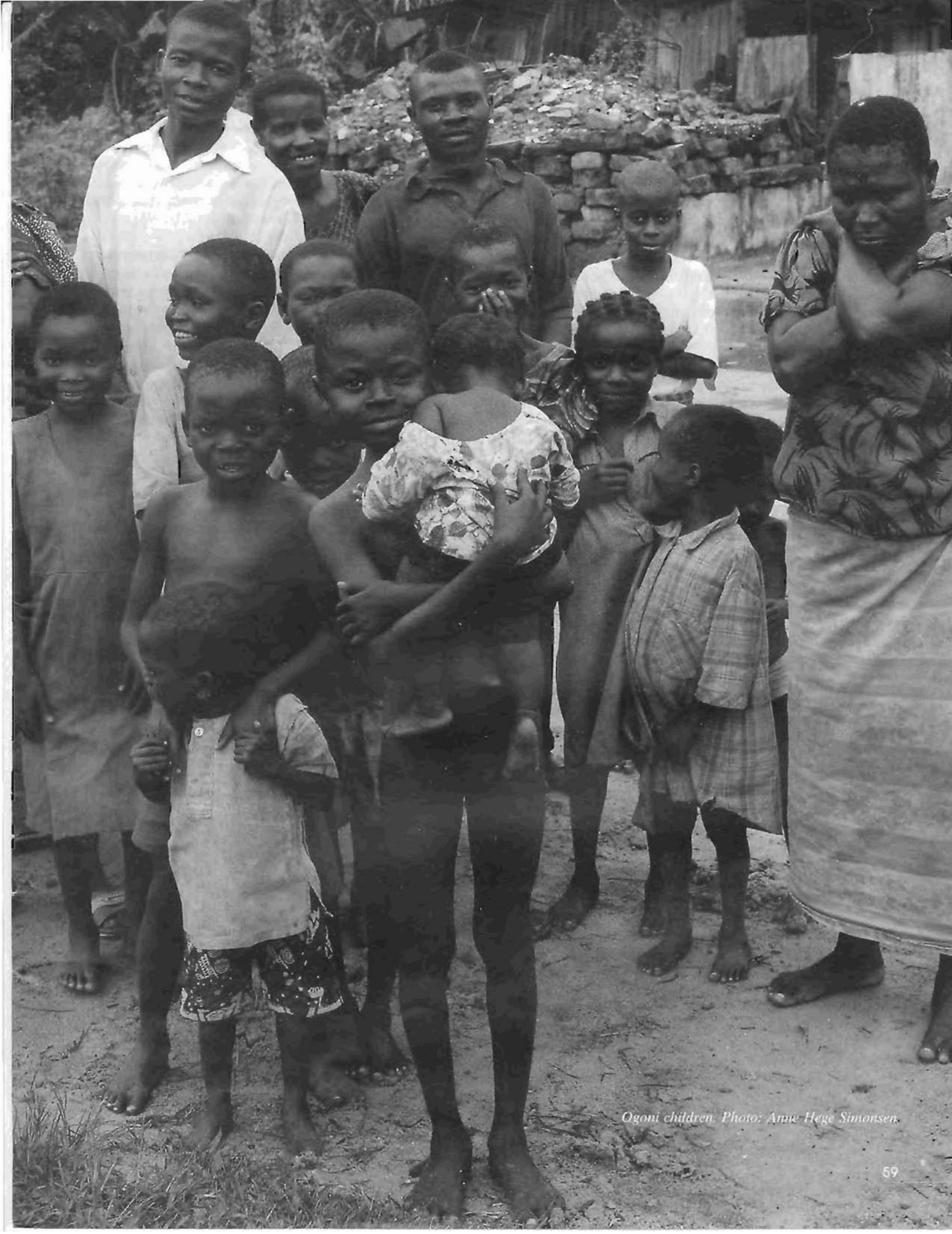
Twenty percent of Nigerian children die before the age of five, according to World Health Organization data. According to a World Bank study of 1996, over 80% of Nigerians are living in poverty. This is a dramatic increase in the poverty level, which was at 42% when Abacha took over in 1993. The average per capita income in Nigeria has fallen radically to a current figure of \$300 per year. This is less than 25% of per capita income 18 years ago, adjusted for inflation, according to World Bank Data.

Shell Oil has supported the military regimes in Nigeria, including Abacha. Without oil, the military would not be in power. In the situation with the Ken Saro-Wiwa sham trial, Shell Oil was involved. Shell had a lawyer there to witness the trial and monitored everything that was going on. There was an alliance between Shell Oil and the Nigerian military. Basically, Shell Oil used the Nigerian military to do the dirty work.

There are documents that show that Shell directed the Nigerian military to enter Ogoni on a number of occasions. Shell has admitted that they bought weapons for the Nigerian military, whereas initially they had denied involvement in such activities.

### The international response

While international concern for Ogoni was almost non-existent prior to the judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni men, after the hangings governments all around the world condemned the acts and removed their ambassadors from Nigeria. But following these moves foreign governments did not do the things that many Ogonis expected them to do. Ogonis hoped that foreign governments would place an oil embargo on



*Ogoni children. Photo: Anne Hege Simonsen.*



Nigerian oil that would ultimately force the military to leave the Ogoni region and cease the military occupation. There was also hope that an oil embargo would force the Nigerian government to step down, since under a democratic government the sort of things that were seen in Ogoni would not happen. The people in Ogoni in the Niger Delta, and in fact in all of Nigeria, preferred to see a democratic form of government in place. The people are quite aware that the oil companies, including Shell, Mobil, Chevron, Agip, and Elf-Aquitaine, make more money when there is a military government in place. The multinational oil companies therefore prefer the military government to stay in power. There is a direct profit motive.

Shortly after the November 1995, hangings a bill was introduced in the United States Senate, called the Nigerian Democracy Act (S1419). The Senate bill was quite strong and was welcomed by the Nigerian people. It would have placed an oil embargo on Nigerian oil coming into the United States, with the goal of forcing the Nigerian military to step down. The bill died a death, however, because there were not enough sponsors in the Senate. The Nigerian government, which spends considerable sums lobbying in Washington and advertises in the national newspapers in the United States, lobbied heavily to kill the bill. The oil companies also lobbied heavily to kill the bill, and to thereby make certain that the military stayed in power.

About 45% of all oil exported from Nigeria comes to the United States. Yet this oil represents only about 3.5% of American oil consumption. The impact on the price of American gasoline of an American embargo on Nigerian oil imports is generally calculated to be less than five cents per gallon of gasoline at the pump, if indeed there would be any price rise at all.

After the Senate bill died, a bill was introduced in the US House of Representatives that would ban the sale of military hardware to Nigeria, but the House bill lacked any reference to an oil embargo. The concern in Nigeria was that without the oil embargo the military government would not leave. This is related to the fact that over 90% of the Nigerian government's foreign exchange comes from oil. It is this revenue which keeps the military dictatorship in power. There was a general feeling that with an American oil embargo the military government would have been out within three months. Part of this expectation was based on national events surrounding an oil workers strike that had occurred in 1994.

The strong feeling was that with the military government out, all the events related to the suppression of human rights throughout Nigeria in general, and most seriously in Ogoni, would not be happening - that with democracy restored there would be a restoration of human rights and a return to a much healthier physical environment in the Ogoni region.

From November 1993 to June 1998, Nigeria was essentially ruled by one man, General Sani Abacha, who died suddenly and was replaced by another military person, General Abdulsalami Abubakar. Following the 1995 hangings virtually all European countries condemned the Abacha regime, as did the United States and a number of other countries around the world. The verbal and paper condemnations were not, however, accompanied by actions that would have forced the Abacha regime from

power. Under Abacha, many Nigerians continued to die every day as a result of government actions and policies.

Under the new Abubakar regime political parties will be allowed to form, if they meet certain standards that have been developed by a government council created by Abubakar. It is not at all clear what, if any, guidance is being sought from the Nigerian constitution.

### **The responsibility of the American consumer**

The American consumer should be aware that whenever they purchase Shell products they are basically buying blood oil. If consumers do not want the blood of innocent people to be on their hands they should not buy Shell products.

The Nobel laureate in literature, Nadine Gordimer, has written: *"to buy Nigeria's oil under the conditions that prevail is to buy oil in exchange for blood - other people's blood. The exaction of the death penalty on Nigerians"*. Another Nobel laureate in literature, Wole Soyinka, was forced to flee for his life from Nigeria for being an outspoken critic of the Abacha regime. Conditions must change so that Nigerian people can return to their country when they wish to do so.

The Sierra Club has urged a boycott of Shell. Project Underground, an organization in Berkeley, California, that focuses on the problems often arising from oil and mineral extraction, has organized protests that have focussed on Shell. A number of organizations, including, Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network, World Council of Churches<sup>1</sup>, Service Employees International Union, Student Environmental Action Coalition, TransAfrica, and a number of other groups are all supporting a boycott of Shell Oil. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have condemned the human rights situation in Nigeria in general, with particular emphasis on Ogoni.

If consumers show Shell Oil that what they have done in Ogoni is not acceptable, at least that would send a signal to other oil companies drilling in Nigeria, or who are planning to go there to drill. A consumer boycott would also send a signal to oil companies about how they conduct operations in other parts of the world.

### **A need for advocacy**

In 1994, 36 Ogoni men were arrested and imprisoned following a riot in which four Ogoni chiefs were bludgeoned to death. After a sham trial that was universally condemned, nine innocent men were hanged on November 10th 1995. One of those hanged, Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was clearly the main target of a government operation, wrote of the riot that he "suspect[ed] that the Nigerian security agencies had a hand" in the killings. With the exception of this riot, the origin of which is highly suspect, all Ogoni activities have been nonviolent.

21 of the men arrested in 1994 continued to be held after the sham without being formally charged with any crime. Nigerian prison conditions, some of which are discussed in Saro-Wiwa's "A Month and a Day. A Detention Diary", are frighteningly horrible. The conditions under which the Ogoni 20 were held amounted to ongoing torture, all being held in one small cell and forced to draw drinking water from a pit into which bodies were sometimes thrown, with a total lack of any medical attention,

and torture - sometimes extremely severe. One of the Ogoni prisoners died, another went blind.

In May 1998, the 20 men still held were ordered to be freed on bail by a Nigerian court.<sup>6</sup> Eventually, in September 1998, these men were released on bail. We believe that without the amount of international effort that was focussed on the Ogoni 20 they would not have been released. All the Ogoni 20 still face the prospect of a kangaroo court, a military tribunal, such as that which convicted and executed nine Ogoni men for a crime they did not commit. World attention continues to be necessary, in order to prevent further grave injustices from occurring.

America occupies a unique position in the world community, and a very special role as the largest importer of Nigerian oil. Because of the role that elected officials play in international policy, the act of calling or writing to their elected officials, their congresspersons and president on the part of American citizens is regarded as an important help in rectifying what remains a difficult situation for Nigeria as a whole, but most intensely for the Ogoni people, whom the Nigerian government continues to hold up to the rest of Nigeria as an example of what will happen to any group that dares to assert its rights.

## Conclusion

There is a general consensus that without the support of the multinational oil companies the Nigerian dictatorships would have ended long ago. A succession of dictatorial governments have financed themselves solely on oil revenues. The Western oil multinationals have continued to serve the Nigerian dictatorships in spite of human rights violations and environmental standards that would not be tolerated for one day in any of the countries where these multinational oil companies have their corporate headquarters. It is the application of a brutal and inhumane double standard.

With the death of Abacha in June 1998, and the assumption of power by Abubakar, there has been some hope that the situation will improve. There are signs of improvement, and presidential elections have been held in the first quarter of 1999. A transfer of presidential power has taken place on May 29th

1999. Military occupation continues in the Ogoni region, as do extra-judicial government-sponsored killings.

The failure of Shell Oil to engage in any significant clean up of its oil spills leaves the Ogoni agricultural and fishing livelihoods in great peril. The pollution from the petrochemical plants continues to be deadly.

In spite of the change of leadership in the Nigerian military dictatorship, life for the average Ogoni living in Ogoni remains, to borrow a phrase, nasty, brutish, and short.

## Notes

1. Available through the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), 5305 S. Drexel Ave., Chicago, Illinois 60615.
2. "The Ogoni region is the testing ground for Abacha's blueprint for ethnic cleansing among all national groups in Nigeria that are resolutely opposed to his rule." Wole Soyinka in interview with Nathan Gardels, Los Angeles Times, November 15th 1995.
3. There is no way Shell can avoid culpability. They are guilty of calling the military to pacify the Ogoni region instead of negotiating with the Ogoni movement. Shell, however, wanted the protection of Abacha's butchers." Wole Soyinka, Los Angeles Times, November 15th 1995.
4. New York Times, May 25th 1997, OP-ED page.
5. World Council of Churches has published materials about the situation in "Ogoni The Struggle Continues" Address: World Council of Churches, Unit III, P.O. Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland. Telephone: (41) 22 791-6111.
6. Decision to release the Ogoni 20 made by Mr. Justice Ebie Daniel-Kalio of the High Court in Port Harcourt, Rivers State (Suit No. PHC/150M/97: Commissioner of Police v Sampson Nigwee & others).

**Dr. Vincent Idemiyor** is currently the President of MOSOP-USA. He was declared 'persona non grata' by the Abacha regime in June 1995 after testifying before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus in Washington D.C. Since then he has not visited Ogoniland, his home in Nigeria. Dr. Vincent Idemiyor is presently working in the USA at the University of Illinois College of Medicine, Department of Medicine in Chicago. He is also Head of Section of Clinical Pharmacology at Mercy Hospital and the Medical Center in Chicago. □

## INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES Vol 1, no. 1, December 1998



*Indigenous Perspectives* is a new journal published by the Tebtebba Foundation, the Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education, Philippines.

*Indigenous Perspectives* aims to analyse crucial issues and aspirations of indigenous peoples from varied perspectives and vantage points.

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