perspectives on pastoral development

A Casebook from Kenya

Isobel Birch and Halima A. O. Shuria

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perspectives on pastoral development
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Facing page: A temporary homestead south of Kutulo in Wajir District.
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We wrote this book because what has happened in Wajir has inspired us, and many others, and it deserves to be more widely known. Despite the complexities which characterise any development process, the story of Wajir is at heart a simple one. Like countless others around the world, it is based on the belief that injustice and suffering are wrong, and that they can be overcome.

*Isobel Birch, Oxford*

*Halima A. O. Shuria, Kampala*
Glossary

Somali terms

baadia  rangelands
bulla  village
daryelle  ‘the caretaker’, or ‘the concerned’, used to describe a nomadic community worker combining the roles of community health worker and paravet
dufful  a palm mat traditionally used to cover a Somali hut
hanuniye  someone who enlightens or educates others, used to refer to a teacher providing basic education to nomadic families
herio  traditional rounded Somali hut
hersi  collection of milk for travellers, or for those who have lost livestock
kulmiye  ‘coming together’, a term used in the context of both the District Pastoral Association and the umbrella groups which manage the credit scheme on behalf of the primary groups in each bulla
rer  a group of between five and 20 nomadic households; the smallest unit of the clan structure
sabeen  traditional and symbolic payment to someone who has been wronged
sadaqa  giving of alms to the poor
xeer  customary law
zakaat  mandatory Islamic tax (2.5 per cent) which every individual must pay annually to the poor
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Swahili terms

-boma- homestead
-jembe- hoe

Acronyms

ALDEF Arid Lands Development Focus
ALIN Arid Lands Information Network
ALRMP Arid Lands Resource Management Project
ASAL Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
BDDEA British Development Division in Eastern Africa
DC District Commissioner
DDC District Development Committee
DFID Department for International Development
DPA District Pastoral Association
GoK Government of Kenya
NPHC Nomadic Primary Health Care programme
PA Pastoral Association
PSC Pastoral Steering Committee
TBA Traditional Birth Attendant
WPDC Wajir Peace and Development Committee
WPDP Wajir Pastoral Development Project
WVG Wajir Volunteer Group
Preface

*Intaat haaysa ninkaan ogen, intaat qaban donta maoga.* In our Somali language this is a proverb which means, ‘The person who does not know what you are already doing cannot know what you are capable of’. It helps to explain how and why our pastoral association was started.

Wajir district lies on the border of Kenya and Somalia. Most people are nomadic pastoralists, who depend entirely on animals for their livelihoods. The rest live in small towns as petty traders, government staff, or casual workers. The people of Wajir are of the Somali culture, and most practise Islam as their religion. The district has vast and varied pasture lands, besides other natural resources. These include whitewash from gypsum rocks, sand and stones for building, Arabica gum and myrrh, medicinal herbs, and forests, which provide a natural habitat for livestock and wildlife. Livestock give us meat, milk, and hides, and we sell live animals when we need cash. Our main sources of water are shallow wells, boreholes, and natural or man-made catchments scattered across the district.

Although there are many good things in Wajir, there are also many problems. There is insecurity, often because of conflict over grazing and water, or because of political interests. Watering points are not well distributed. There are no reliable markets: people get a low price for their animals, and so cannot adequately meet the costs of educating their children, providing for their families, and treating and watering their animals. There is no tarmac road in the whole of Wajir – just tracks, which are abandoned during the rainy season.

Government support has declined. Our boreholes are left unserviced and broken, and health and education standards have fallen. Very few people have a formal education, and the few schools that exist are all understaffed and poorly equipped. Poor nutrition is another problem, and the main cause of disease. Other difficulties that we face include land degradation and a lack of access to information about things which affect us.

Our pastoral association in Khorof Harar, right on the border with Somalia, was started in response to all these problems. The elders met and discussed the situation and suggested setting up an organisation which would address our community’s needs. Membership was open to men and women pastoralists, by-laws were drawn up, and officials elected. At this crucial moment we met
Oxfam, who wanted to carry out a project in the area. They sat and discussed with us, and agreed to support our work.

The pastoral association is directed by its by-laws and managed by a committee of 14 members, with six office bearers. The committee implements projects, manages funds from NGOs, members, and well-wishers, and supervises specific groups working under it, such as water users, veterinary-drug users, women's groups, and the parent–teacher association. A general assembly of all its members approves budgets and expenditure, and there is an internal audit after every six months, to ensure that funds are used well. The pastoral association monitors drought, so that proper response is made in time. It also takes part in peace discussions, and in district meetings with government and with other pastoral associations.

Since the pastoral association started, there have been real changes in our lives. We have better water supply, our animals are healthier, and the standards in our school have improved. People appreciate the importance of sharing the cost of all this, and they feel that they own the association. They know that the borehole and other facilities are there for the welfare of the whole community. Oxfam has helped us to prepare proper plans and budgets, raise funds, and assess and evaluate what we do. They have also helped us to manage our livestock better and understand the importance of monitoring drought and making appropriate plans.

But we have also faced problems. Conflict over roles, mainly with government, at one stage almost destroyed our association. We have done a lot to harmonise this, through talking together. Some members have difficulties in paying membership fees or the charges for borehole maintenance. Often there are conflicts between pastoralists over grazing or water, but these have been reduced by meetings of elders from the various communities, who have agreed customary laws to control crimes and other conflicts between herdsmen.

We have not always agreed with Oxfam. Sometimes we feel that they have been a barrier between us and other organisations, and some of us feel that they have tried to deliver women’s rights in ways which are contrary to Somali culture. But the most important thing that they have done for us is to give us knowledge, and we value that more than anything. They also helped us to realise that we had knowledge of our own. The most valuable thing that has remained now that they have gone is that knowledge, and the positive attitudes they encouraged.

We want to work with other people from outside, as long as they follow some fundamental principles. We want them to be people who have pastoralists' interests at heart, who are friendly, who respect our culture and beliefs and keep their promises, who fund projects which reflect what people really need,
and who help us to develop our vision for the future. Pastoral associations need that clear vision. They must also have a sense of ownership, and the ability to identify and prioritise their needs. They must appreciate service which is given voluntarily, and be ready to contribute from their own wealth. And they must link with government, while avoiding politics and any bias towards particular clans.

We have another saying: Waxaas firsata iyo waxaas fiqsata kuma dilaan, which means, 'What you have critically analysed, and what you have sipped slowly, will not fail'. It reminds us that a pastoral association like our own will prosper and be strong if we take time to think and plan together, and if we are patient and persevere.

A.O. Hussein, Secretary; Mohamed Osman, Chairman; Emoy K. Ali, Vice-Chairman; Abdullahi Kalmoi, Member; Hussein Mohamud, Treasurer; Mohamed A. Abdille, Member.
Khorof Harar Pastoral Association, October 2000
Introduction

'The assumptions and generalisations [about pastoralists] run the gamut from romanticised visions of the exotic “nomad” to scornful depictions of their primitivism and backwardness. Through them all, African pastoralists appear only as caricatures, but it is these caricatures which have filtered into development thinking.'

Pastoral development across much of Africa has a chequered history. There has been no shortage of good intentions and enthusiastic ideas, but rarely have the intentions been matched by adequate institutional commitment, or the enthusiasm complemented by a sound understanding of pastoral production systems. Nor have pastoralists themselves been able to exercise much influence over what has been done in their name. They have been misunderstood in many ways, and remain so today. Myths and conventional assumptions about their way of life have led to a series of inappropriate interventions by governments and development agencies which have delivered little lasting benefit.

However, over the past decade a new direction for pastoral development has emerged from the work of a range of academics and practitioners. It recognises the essential viability of pastoral production systems, i.e. that their adaptability and flexibility make them well suited to unpredictable environments. It emphasises the responsibility of institutions at all levels to address poverty in pastoral areas in a collaborative manner. And it tries to transcend the caricatures by advocating support for local organisations through which pastoralists can manage development on their own terms, and exercise claims on the State with respect to the full range of their rights.

The Wajir Pastoral Development Project (WPDP), which Oxfam has been implementing since 1994, is consistent with this broad approach. A central objective of the WPDP has been to nurture local pastoral associations through which herders can manage essential services and begin to engage with and influence others. This work has been balanced by efforts at other levels to influence the policy environment within which development choices are made. Thus, although the WPDP is described for practical purposes throughout
this book as a ‘project’, this is a term which fails to do justice to its ambitions, which were to change fundamentally the institutional context within which pastoral development takes place. This process of building and shaping institutions is the main focus of this book.

The work in Wajir has been well documented over the years, but there is as yet no text which tries to synthesise the components of the project into a coherent whole. The purpose of this book is therefore to tell the story of the WPDP, highlighting the most significant aspects of the project’s approach and working practice. Many of these lessons are of general relevance to development workers, and thus it is hoped that the book will be of interest to those working in the field of pastoral development and beyond.

The first chapter gives a brief summary of the history of the WPDP. Chapter 2 explains the project’s context, describing the nature of poverty in pastoral areas of Kenya, including Wajir, and the history of Oxfam’s work with pastoral communities. Chapter 3 describes the process by which pastoral associations were formed, while Chapter 4 analyses the strategies used to influence the wider policy environment. Chapter 5 highlights some important aspects of the project’s management practice, considering in particular the issue of accountability. The book concludes with an overview of the main lessons that have been learned, some of the challenges faced by the project, and an indication of what its third and final stage might involve.

An important feature of the WPDP is that it has avoided some of the barriers often encountered in development. Its holistic analysis of poverty, its collaborative approach, and its integrated mix of activities – bringing together service delivery with policy change, and long-term poverty reduction with short-term emergency response – are all illustrations of the openness and flexibility which have characterised the project’s approach. The book tries to reflect this breadth of vision, and does not therefore include detailed material on the more technical aspects of pastoral development.

The book tells the story of the project’s work with livestock keepers and with those who have lost their animals and settled in town, many of whom are women. Three case studies illustrating the work with women are dispersed between the main chapters, presented from the perspective of an Oxfam staff member, a partner organisation, and a woman community leader.

During an interview for this book, a pastoralist in Wajir referred to a Somali saying: *Il waxay hayso ilala waykadanyihin*. It means, ‘You do not need to be told about what you can see’. The Wajir project receives many visitors, who have learned from, and in their turn influenced, what has happened there. This book is a way of reaching the many more who are unable to make that journey.
Wajir Pastoral Development Project: an overview

‘Pastoralism will remain the predominant means of livelihood in Wajir in the foreseeable future. It is the livelihood which most efficiently exploits the resources of the arid climate in the district. As such, it will remain the backbone of the district’s economy ... Development efforts ... will continue to support nomadic pastoralism for as long as the communities who pursue it recognise it as the optimum lifestyle.’

Wajir and its people

Wajir district lies in the north-eastern corner of Kenya, cradled by the borders of Ethiopia to the north and Somalia to the east. The tarmac road from Nairobi ends in the neighbouring district of Garissa, where businesses flourish from easy access to the passing trade, and where papaya, peppers, and watermelon are harvested from the gardens which line the stately Tana river. From Garissa to Wajir town, the district centre, the journey on a dirt road takes a further day in the dry season – longer, if it is passable at all, in the rains.

Figure 1: Herders watering goats at Mansa, Wajir District
Three-quarters of Kenya’s land-mass is arid or semi-arid, and pastoralism is a logical response to the unpredictable environment of these areas. The geographical location of the pastoral districts around the edges of the country could be said to reflect the sense of exclusion and marginalisation felt by many pastoral communities. The national boundaries are in some sense an artificial divide, superimposed on traditional patterns of trade and migration, while insecurity in neighbouring countries inevitably has an impact on pastoral welfare and development.
Approximately 60,000 people live in Wajir town, and a smaller number in the little trading centres which are scattered across the district. However, most of the district's population of between 300,000 and 350,000 people follow a nomadic life on the baadia (rangelands). Wajir is a vast sandy plain, rising gently from the south and east towards the foothills of the Ethiopian highlands in the north. No permanent rivers feed this land. Average rainfall of only 200mm per year means that drought is a regular event. In the north, where rainfall is higher, crops like maize, sorghum, and vegetables can be grown; but most people depend on livestock for their living, herding a combination of camels, cattle, goats, sheep, and donkeys across the dry earth.

Nomadic pastoralists are organised in herding groups called rer, each one consisting of between five and 20 households. The rer is the smallest unit of the clan structure, which, though weakened, remains the most important traditional institution in the district, and has been in existence for generations. There are three main clans in Wajir: the Degodia, Ajuran, and Ogaden, each of which is divided into sub-clans and then further into sections.

When the Wajir Pastoral Development Project (WPDP) began, the district was recovering from the worst drought in living memory. It was also suffering a particularly brutal period of inter-clan conflict. Drought and conflict, and the failure of government and other agencies to manage either of these effectively, are major causes of the poverty and vulnerability which characterise most pastoral areas of Kenya, including Wajir.

The Wajir Pastoral Development Project

The aim of the WPDP is to reduce poverty and vulnerability among both the pastoralist and settled populations of the district. The project started in July 1994 and was designed to span a nine-year period, managed in three phases of three years each. This book draws upon the experience of the first two phases; the third is just beginning at the time of writing. Each phase has had a specific geographical focus, complemented by work at district level: Phase 1 in the east, Phase 2 in the north, and Phase 3 in the south and west. Nine years was felt to be a realistic period of time within which some lasting impact might be seen, taking into account the depth of poverty in the district and the failures of previous pastoral development projects, which had tended to take a far more limited perspective.

The project spans several sectors, including animal and human health care, water supply, and education. In partnership with other organisations, it has experimented with various models for delivering basic services to nomadic communities. A system of mobile health workers and teachers was put in
place, for example, as well as procedures for managing the purchase and distribution of livestock drugs. To help those who have lost their place in the livestock economy, the project has also initiated activities such as re-stocking and credit. At its heart is a commitment to strengthen institutional capacity within the district. This involves support both to community organisations, principally pastoral associations and a network of women’s groups, and to non-government and government bodies at district level. The third and final stage of the project will be integrated with work by Oxfam and others at the national level to develop a pastoral development policy for Kenya.

A phased approach
A summary of each phase of the project, taken from the respective planning documents, is given in Table 1. The first phase was to some extent experimental, piloting new methods and approaches in a defined geographical area. After the first three years it was evident that there had been a general improvement in the socio-economic welfare of the target communities. An economic-impact assessment, carried out towards the end of 1997, noted the following.

Through these institutions [pastoral associations, NGOs, and government departments], the project has improved the supply of human and animal health care services to nomadic pastoralists; provided credit facilities and livestock to women’s groups and destitute pastoral families; improved the quality and availability of education services to pastoral families; enabled private and communal water supplies to be developed and maintained; contributed to greater security, law and order in the area; and sought to influence the wider national policy and legislative framework in order to create a more enabling environment for a thriving and resilient pastoral economy.2

Donors’ assessments were on balance also positive, noting that, despite the difficulties which still beset Kenya’s pastoral districts, the WPDP represented a ‘best bet’ case for supporting pastoral livelihoods.3

The second phase of the project should in theory have been more straightforward, in that the lessons learned during the first phase could be applied, as the project expanded into new areas. However, in practice it was a period marked by almost continuous emergencies – from drought in 1996–97, through flooding in 1998, to drought again in 2000. The end of the second phase was also marked by a resumption of inter-clan conflict in the north of the district. The project team responded to these crises in a variety of ways, with food distribution, cash-for-work projects, and support for the public-health infrastructure. But all this had an inevitable impact on the team’s
## Table 1: Summary of the planning frameworks for each phase of the WPDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>To reduce poverty and vulnerability among pastoralist and settled communities in Wajir Bor division and Wajir town.</td>
<td>To reduce poverty and vulnerability and increase social equity among pastoralist and settled communities in Wajir District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>To improve the sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance of target groups.</td>
<td>To achieve sustainable changes in pastoral livelihoods and increase participation of target communities in institutions which influence their lives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Outputs** | • Access to animal-health services improved.  
• Access to human-health services improved.  
• Access to water improved.  
• Income-generating opportunities in rural and urban areas created and/or improved.  
• Pastoral associations able to plan and manage community-development projects are established.  
• Capacity of local NGOs to implement poverty-reducing activities on a sustainable basis strengthened.  
• Efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of project assessed, and plans for second phase of the project developed. | • Improved availability of and access to water.  
• Improved provision of and access to basic health care for livestock and humans.  
• Strengthened capacity of local NGOs and community groups to manage development needs and economic opportunities.  
• Improved responsiveness of institutional structures.  
• Project management and impact monitored and assessed, plus plans for Phase 3 produced. | • Strengthened capacity of local NGOs to enable community-based organisations and target communities to manage their development needs.  
• Increased capacity and improved responsiveness of key institutional structures to plan and manage district development programmes.  
• Improved access to water, livestock, and income-generating opportunities.  
• Improved access to basic health and education services.  
• Policies on conflict, education, drought, water, and land researched, documented, and communicated at all levels.  
• Project management and impact monitored and assessed. |
| **Beneficiaries** | Nomadic pastoralists in five centres in Wajir Bor division, and poorer families in Wajir town (particularly women).  
Total direct beneficiaries estimated to be 40,000. | Settled and nomadic pastoralists in nine additional centres, and poorer families in Wajir town (particularly women).  
Total direct beneficiaries estimated to be 100,000. | Settled and nomadic pastoralists in ten additional centres, and poorer families in Wajir town (particularly women).  
Total direct beneficiaries estimated to be 80,000. |
| **Budget** | £1,136,384  
(approx £9 per person per year) | £1,113,382  
(approx £4 per person per year) | £911,024  
(approx. £3.80 per person per year) |

* Provisional information from draft logical framework; data taken in part from 'Evaluation of Sustainable Agricultural Programme in Kenya' (DFID 2000), and from project documentation.
capacity and on the speed at which long-term plans could be carried out. Nevertheless, a review of the second phase, carried out in mid-1999, was still broadly positive: ‘As a result of the formation of the pastoral associations and the effective participation of communities in contributing to and implementing their action plans, there now seems to be a shared purpose among community members, a feeling of empowerment and an awareness that they are agents of their own lives and futures.’

**Building for the future**

Perhaps this is the most important factor impelling the project as a whole: the desire to increase people’s ability to control their lives and to build a secure and sustainable future for themselves. This was a particularly significant ambition for pastoral communities who, as the next chapter will show, had historically been marginalised from national political and economic developments. Evidence of people’s attempts to begin exercising this kind of control in Wajir can be seen in the active participation of the pastoral associations and traditional institutions in peace building, and in the efforts of women in Wajir town to provide the educational opportunities for their children which most of them were denied. The most significant investment made by the project has been in nurturing organisations through which people can begin to influence what happens to their families and communities, and in developing the skills they need to manage and lead those organisations effectively.

There are two important characteristics of the WPDP’s design and implementation. The first of these is its holistic approach to poverty reduction. It is an approach which recognises that the causes of poverty are inter-linked, and therefore need to be tackled together, so that people’s material resources are built up at the same time as their capacity to sustain them. It recognises that people’s lives do not fit neatly into sector-shaped boxes marked ‘health’ or ‘education’, and that in places where poverty is so acute and development actors so few, as in Wajir, a single-sector intervention risks being undermined by failures in other areas. Moreover, this approach can be a cost-effective way of maximising project and community resources. In places where economic activity is minimal, and where the turnover from any one activity, and therefore the cost which is recovered, may be very small (such as income from sales of pharmaceuticals), various elements of a project can effectively subsidise each other. The overhead costs for a single activity would otherwise be simply too high. The logic of thinking about poverty in a holistic way extends also to the way in which drought-response and conflict-management strategies, and policy-influencing work, have been embedded within the project’s design and guided by the same values, rather than treated as separate activities.
The second important feature of the WPDP has been the team's approach to development practice. This has been guided by three main principles. First, *facilitating the work and efforts of others*, leaving implementation as much as possible to communities, government, or other agencies. Second, *investing in monitoring and learning*, taking the time to think through the consequences of each decision and to learn from each action. And third, recognising that strong relationships with communities and with other organisations are built on some core values, such as *accountability, transparency, and trust*, which must be clearly evident in the team's behaviour. A high degree of internal consistency between what a team expects of others and what it expects of itself is an essential part of establishing confidence, credibility, and respect.

The rest of the book illustrates how both these approaches were put into practice in Wajir. But first, the next chapter looks at the way in which the choices made in Wajir were informed by lessons which Oxfam had learned from previous experience. It begins with an overview of poverty in the pastoral areas of Kenya.
Learning from the past

‘Applying learning is the most difficult thing. We know what should happen, but changing is hard.’
(Oxfam participant at a workshop in Uganda in 1995)

Poverty and pastoralism in Kenya

Sixty per cent of the land mass in Kenya is classified as arid, and a further 15 per cent as semi-arid. These arid and semi-arid lands, known as ASAL, are home to approximately 25 per cent of the country’s population. The most rational response to the dynamic and unpredictable environment of the ASAL areas, where rainfall is highly variable, is pastoralism. A commonly accepted definition of pastoralism is that given by Swift: ‘Pastoral production systems are those in which 50% or more of household gross revenue (i.e. the total value of marketed production plus the estimated value of subsistence production consumed within the household) comes from livestock or livestock related activities.’ Nomadic pastoralism, in turn, is a way of managing livestock according to the seasonal availability of pasture and water and the particular requirements of the herd. Although livestock keeping is still the bedrock of their economy and culture, pastoralists have successfully diversified their livelihoods to the extent that other forms of income – from trade, or from family members in employment – have made increasingly important contributions towards their economic security.

However, in common with many other countries in Africa, development planners in Kenya have not in the past recognised pastoralism as being essentially rational. There has been a widespread failure to understand how pastoral societies function, particularly nomadic communities. For example, restrictions have been imposed on pastoralists’ mobility, and disincentives to pursue nomadic lifestyles put in place, while land-tenure policies have ignored the customary institutions which govern access to and control of natural resources. The geographical position of pastoral districts around the borders of Kenya symbolises their relegation to the political and economic margins of society.
This failure to appreciate how pastoral societies function is at the root of the marginalisation and consequent impoverishment which has so damaged pastoral communities. A World Bank appraisal report, written in November 1995, noted that the literacy rate in Kenya’s arid districts was below 20 per cent (compared with a national average of 69 per cent); that there were fewer than 2.2 doctors per 100,000 people (national average: 15); and only 40 km of roads per 1000 sq km (national average: 200 km). Those living in arid districts used less than one-hundredth of the average per capita electrical-power consumption. The report concluded that ‘almost the entire population in the arid lands can be classified as below the poverty line’. Recent assessments of poverty in Kenya indicate that little has changed. The National Poverty Eradication Plan for 1999–2015 acknowledges that the greatest depth of poverty is in the ASAL areas, where the poor comprise almost 80 per cent of district populations. And yet evidence of the essential logic of nomadic pastoralism has been available for decades. The author of a report into range management in northeastern Kenya, writing in the late 1960s, stated the following.

I cannot emphasise too strongly that given the low and unreliable rainfall, and in present conditions of water supply, this system of competitive opportunism is a most able adaptation to a harsh and unpredictable environment. Its flexibility, and the incentives it provides for vigorous exploitation of transient resources, make for more effective use of water and grazing than with a more rigid and more administered system. With present water supplies, nomadism is necessary. The rain falls differently each year. As Somalis say: ‘We follow the rain. We have to.’

The Kenyan government developed a policy paper for the ASAL areas in 1979; it was subsequently revised in 1992. It addressed many relevant issues, such as drought-contingency planning, natural-resource management, human-resource development, and the integration of the ASAL areas into the national economy. However, there was still no clear vision for pastoralism. There was no focus on pastoralism per se as a livelihood, nor any elaboration of the implications of the realities of nomadic pastoralism for methods of service delivery. There was no evidence that the increasing vulnerability of pastoral populations to the effects of drought and conflict was adequately understood. And whatever the policy might state, the practice of many staff in government and non-government organisations suggested that negative perceptions of pastoralists were still widespread.

The Oxfam strategic plan for Kenya for the period 1992–95 described the human consequences of continued policy failures.
Confined to increasingly marginal lands, pastoralists become more vulnerable to drought and insecurity. Growing numbers of stockless families survive by herding the animals of absentee owners, as wage labour replaces traditional herding arrangements. Indigenous systems of redistribution have broken down, leaving many destitute. Forced to move to urban centres to obtain food aid, and removed from traditional support structures, their chances of re-entering the pastoral system decrease... Government policy-makers and planners, who view pastoralism as incompatible with the goals of the modern nation-state, propose no alternative viable livelihood, thus consigning many pastoralists to join the swelling ranks of the urban destitute.

Destitution was a major problem in Wajir at the time when the WPDP began, and strategies to address it – primarily through re-stocking and credit – have been a significant part of its work.

The mid-1990s saw a marked change in the national picture, with the emergence of the Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP), an initiative funded by the World Bank and located at the heart of government, within the Office of the President. It has three components: drought management, marketing and infrastructure, and community development. Since its inception, the ALRMP has provided a high quality of leadership to pastoral development planning in Kenya. With teams in each ASAL district, and a national co-ordination mechanism in Nairobi, the ALRMP provides a medium through which policy options for pastoral areas can be defined, and experience of best practice promoted. More recently, the existence of the ALRMP has enabled development workers to contribute to a debate about the future of pastoralism as part of the process of drafting the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, now being developed as a 15-year blueprint for national development.

Poverty and pastoralism in Wajir
Kenya won its struggle for independence from Britain in 1963, but the early years of independence in the north-east of the country continued to be marked by conflict. The so-called shiifta rebellion during the second half of the 1960s sought the secession of Somali people from Kenya. The new government's response to the conflict was harsh, and included restricting pastoralist families to live within four kilometres of towns. Abukar Shariff, Emergency Co-ordinator for Oxfam in Wajir, remembers that time. 'The government's response to the banditry was to bring people into towns, so that they were more manageable. If you were found outside that four-kilometre radius, you would be considered to be helping the bandits. The camel owners couldn't bring their animals close to town for fear of disease;
but if they resisted, their camels would be shot. We had cattle, and so were better off than those with camels. But even at five years of age I can remember our houses being burnt down and our family being brought into Griftu centre. Our cattle didn’t die, but it was a terrible time.’

Once peace was restored, there was an expansion of government activity during the 1970s, and in particular the start of a large-scale donor-funded intervention called the Livestock Development Programme. Health and education services increased, livestock were vaccinated, and people became accustomed to the government providing for their needs. But quality of response did not accompany quantity of inputs. There was little consultation with the beneficiaries of this investment, and an assumption that settlement-based service delivery was both appropriate and sufficient, thus ignoring the particular needs of nomadic communities. As Mohamed Mursal, later to be Oxfam’s Project Manager in Wajir, recalled: ‘Nobody would consult you, but they were so generous. Every officer in the government had plenty to offer. Everyone was full of admiration that the right government, committed to people’s welfare, had now come, after decades of segregation and repression by the colonial rulers.’

A decade later, however, this level of service provision proved unsustainable. Stringent economic adjustment in the 1980s led to a sharp reduction in government resources and capacity. Cost-sharing was introduced for health care, education, veterinary services, and water supply. Major assets such as boreholes were unceremoniously handed over to communities to manage. There was little attempt to explain these changes, and consequently very little of the investment has survived. A feeling began to grow among people that they had been abandoned by the State.

At about the same time, insecurity began to worsen as a consequence of two factors. First, the effects of the conflict and the collapse of authority in Somalia in the early 1990s spilled across the border into Kenya. Second, a combination of severe drought in 1991 and the shift to a multi-party political system in 1992 caused an increase in clan tensions, as political alliances began to coalesce around people’s traditional networks and relationships, which were further heightened by the pressure on natural resources caused by the drought.

It was thus hardly surprising that a survey conducted in August 1992 by UNICEF and the government of Kenya showed that the human-development indicators for Wajir district were well below the (already low) averages for the ASAL areas. A literacy rate of just 12.5 per cent, and an under-five mortality rate of 339 per 1000 live births, seven times the national average, exposed the critical weaknesses in the provision of health care and education. A combination of political neglect, inappropriate development models, and poor governance had led to the deepening poverty, insecurity, and disillusion which were so characteristic of the context out of which the WPDP developed.4
Perspectives on Pastoral Development

Oxfam's pastoral development programme in Kenya

Poverty in Kenya's pastoral districts acquired a higher profile in the Oxfam country programme from the early 1980s onwards. Two major droughts - between 1979 and 1981, and again in 1984 - had highlighted the vulnerability of populations living in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands. A series of relief and rehabilitation projects was launched. They helped to alleviate the worst of people's suffering, but were not designed to address the underlying causes of this vulnerability. However, two interventions made during the mid-1980s had far more long-term significance. The first was collaboration with the district authorities in Turkana, in the north-west of the country, in developing a contingency-planning system for response to future droughts. This model, designed to deliver an early warning of food crisis and to prompt timely and appropriate response, has since been adapted and expanded into a national programme, and is now also influencing similar work in other East African countries. The second intervention was a series of re-stocking projects in the districts of Samburu, Turkana, Isiolo, and Wajir. Several hundred households, many of them female-headed, who had lost their animals to drought, conflict, or disease, were provided with new stock with which to rebuild their lives on the rangeland. The process through which this was done, and its strengths and weaknesses, have been extensively documented.

These two interventions were significant for several reasons. The drought-contingency planning initiative was shaped by a sound understanding of the impact of drought on the pastoral economy. It highlighted the responsibility of key institutions, both official and private, to act in a timely and collaborative way, and it sought to integrate the perspectives and experiences of herders themselves in the process of information gathering and response. Assessments of the impact of the re-stocking projects have been variable, but on balance they have been positive. At the time, they were important for their recognition of the viability of pastoral production systems, and their focus on the particular social and economic pressures facing women in pastoral societies. All these attributes remain central to contemporary pastoral development planning.

A new direction in Turkana and Samburu?

In its annual report for 1985/6, the Oxfam team in Kenya made its first reference to an approach to pastoral development that was based on human rights, recognising that a major cause of poverty lay in the fact that pastoralists were denied the most basic of rights, and lacked the means by which to claim them. The report recommended a shift 'from the technical, operational approach to more concentration on strengthening social organisation, to enable
pastoral people to adjust to the modern economy on their own terms, and make their demands on GoK [government of Kenya] and agency development services'. Pastoral development projects in the districts of Turkana and Samburu were subsequently designed in this light. They sought to strengthen the food security of local populations, not only by investing in activities such as animal health care and water harvesting, but by supporting the development of viable pastoral organisations. They were driven by a set of valid and genuinely held beliefs: that pastoralism was the most appropriate production system for these arid environments, and that pastoralists – particularly pastoral women – should be central to the development process. At the time, these beliefs were in marked contrast to previous technocratic, top-down approaches to poverty reduction in pastoral areas.

In time, however, it became clear that neither the Turkana nor the Samburu project had been able to move beyond the rhetoric of community-driven development. As testified by Peter Kisopia, Oxfam's Pastoral Programme Officer at the time, there was insufficient critical analysis of the dynamics that were building up between the implementing agency and community.

Yes, people learned new skills in rainwater harvesting, but to what extent were those activities productive or sustainable by themselves? If the jembes [hoes] broke, Oxfam either repaired or replaced them. No one was looking at the subsidies that Oxfam was putting in, or asking what would happen if Oxfam withdrew.

Concerns began to be raised within Oxfam about the level of resources being invested year after year in comparatively small populations. The subsidy required to sustain project activities, even when operating on such a limited scale, was clearly not viable. External assessments of the projects became much more critical, pointing to their isolation from the wider political and economic context, their inability to measure or communicate purpose and impact, and the partial and flawed understanding of pastoral society upon which they were built. Growing recognition of the problems faced by both projects meant that there was a deliberate attempt, through visits and team discussions, to learn from this experience prior to the design of the WPDP.

But whatever the strengths and weaknesses of individual projects at this time, it was well understood that they needed to be complemented by action at other levels, if poverty in pastoral areas was to be reduced. The analysis in Oxfam’s strategic plan for Kenya for the period 1989–1993 demonstrates a clear recognition that the causes of poverty are often rooted far away from the
pastoral areas themselves. These roots may lie in policies which change land-use patterns and encourage herders to settle; or in negative attitudes on the part of policy makers and planners; or in the exploitation of pastoral resources for tourism and economic development, or for the personal benefit of the powerful. This kind of analysis led to a considerable investment in public-communications capacity, beginning in the late 1980s, out of which an important development was the Pastoral Steering Committee.

The Pastoral Steering Committee
In March 1987, Oxfam held a workshop in Benin, attended by its staff and partners from 12 countries covering the west and east African Sahel, including Kenya. This led to the formation of the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN), whose purpose was to address the isolation of project officers working across the Sahel, by promoting stronger contact between them, through the use of appropriate communication materials – principally the newsletter *Baobab* – and through face-to-face exchanges and workshops. ALIN facilitated writers’ workshops to increase the confidence of the network’s members in recording their work, and produced a series of booklets recording learning about a range of pastoral development issues, such as cereal banks, paravet projects, and re-stocking.9

The emergence of the Pastoral Steering Committee (PSC) in Kenya (not to be confused with the PSC in Wajir, an entirely different institution, which developed in the mid-1990s) was a consequence of the Benin workshop. It began life as a loose network of Oxfam’s staff and partners, but its membership gradually expanded to include delegates from most pastoral districts in the country, whether Oxfam was active there or not. Karen Twining, Oxfam’s Representative in Kenya in the early 1990s, describes the context out of which the PSC took shape.

Projects were struggling in an information vacuum. By the late 1980s, many development workers were beginning to feel isolated and out of touch. The expatriate workers who had designed the post-1984 rehabilitation projects had gone home, leaving small teams who often lacked institutional support and external contacts. Often they had no access to new research findings challenging “the old orthodoxy” of rangeland management theories... Growing awareness of the need to address important policy issues had no outlet.10

The purpose of the PSC was to provide a forum at national level through which issues and policies of concern to pastoralists could be debated and publicised. These were varied; they included land rights, HIV/AIDS,
access to legal processes, and female genital mutilation. Inter-project visits and workshops fostered the development of a peer group of practitioners. Members wrote articles for a newsletter called *The Pastoralist*, and made contributions to policy debates in forums convened by institutions such as the World Bank, UNICEF, and the government of Kenya. They met and briefed the Tanzanian Presidential Land Commission, and persuaded law students from pastoralist districts at the University of Nairobi to hold a series of workshops on land rights in their home areas. Significantly, gender issues were given a high priority. Efforts were made to balance attendance by women and men at meetings; a series of training workshops was arranged on issues of gender and development; and the costs of child care were met when women were travelling on PSC business. The positive emphasis given to gender equity within the pastoral programme at this time was striking.

However, the PSC remained closely tied to Oxfam and heavily subsidised from its budget. There was often inadequate follow-up of initiatives, and no monitoring or evaluation mechanism with which to justify the resources invested in the network or to guide its development. Its membership remained largely self-selected and unconnected to any parallel structure in the districts, which meant that it lacked representative roots at the local level. There were discussions about trying to establish an organisation which could be more independent of Oxfam, but these were overtaken by a bigger debate about NGO registration, which began in response to Kenyan government proposals in the early 1990s to strengthen co-ordination and supervision of NGO activity in general. When it became apparent that an isolated pressure group such as the PSC was having limited impact on policy issues, Oxfam and other agencies decided to try bringing pastoral-development practitioners, academics, and policy makers together within the same forum. This became known as the Kenya Pastoralist Forum, which continued to pursue policy concerns at national level throughout the 1990s.

Despite its limitations, the PSC was an important attempt to establish a mechanism through which the ideas and experience of front-line project workers could be recognised and shared, and through which policy concerns could start to be raised. Many of the lessons learned at this time later informed both the Wajir project and subsequent work on national pastoral policy. The principle of collective action by pastoral development workers was applied in Wajir in the 1990s, but it was considerably strengthened by the way in which the pastoral associations provided an anchor for the co-ordinating bodies above them. The commitment to policy change remained strong, but the strategy to achieve it shifted from one of lobbying by pressure groups
Figure 3: A map showing Wajir district, and specifically the geographical areas covered by the WPDP in Phase 1 and Phase 2. Both phases included work in Wajir town. The places marked are those where pastoral associations are based.
to more direct engagement with the government, which became possible in the more open political climate of the 1990s.

**Oxfam in Wajir in the 1980s**

Oxfam’s work in Wajir at this time was very similar to that taking place elsewhere in Kenya’s pastoral districts. In addition to the re-stocking project, various small-scale activities were funded, but with little sense of an overall strategy. Most of them were located close to Wajir town, and implemented through church or welfare organisations, managed in large part by outsiders. However, Oxfam’s approach to its work in Wajir was more cautious than elsewhere in the country, given the perceived political sensitivity pervading the district and its troubled history.

In 1984, hundreds of members of the Degodia clan were massacred by the Kenyan army at Wagalla, close to Wajir town. This was the most brutal incident of many instances of violence and repression in this part of the country from the time of the colonial administration onwards. Throughout the 1980s, Wajir was still technically a ‘closed’ district, administered under emergency powers – a legacy of the British regime, which had sought to check the movement of pastoralists southwards in order to ‘protect’ the security and livestock businesses of white settlers. The emergency regulations were not lifted until 1992, after the introduction of a multi-party political system, but by then they had played their part in deepening the isolation and marginalisation of the district and its people.

Many of the re-stockees in Wajir were widows of the Wagalla massacre. At the time, Oxfam’s only staff member, Yusuf Muktar, travelled on foot, following their movements and reporting to Nairobi on their progress. He describes that work as follows.

> I used to send livestock prices and re-stocking data back to the office in Nairobi. It was very hard ... I walked long distances, even sleeping under trees where there were no people. But I’m proud today that 27 out of those 30 households are still in pastoralism and earning a living. Some of the women got married; others have educated their children. They will tell you that if it hadn’t been for those animals, their children would not have gone to school.

Then in 1987, in line with the general shift in emphasis across the country programme, the Oxfam office in Nairobi decided to commission a study of the options for a more significant programme of participatory development in Wajir. The Country Representative, Nicky May, wrote at the time of the marked lack of investment by both public and private bodies in the district,
and of the justification in expanding. Unfortunately, a critical report about the official response to the 1987 drought became public at a time of particular political sensitivity. Oxfam was subsequently asked to leave the district, and only retained a toe in the door through Yusuf’s quiet monitoring of the re-stockees. The transfer to the district a few years later of a senior government official who knew of Oxfam’s work in west Kenya pushed the door open a little further, and in 1990 a formal relationship with the district authorities was re-established.

New organisations emerge

The Wajir Volunteer Group
Towards the end of the 1980s, two significant developments took place in the district. The first was the start of the Wajir Volunteer Group (WVG) in 1989. A group of health workers, teachers, and other individuals had started to meet together, prompted by their disquiet at increasing levels of poverty in Wajir town. In their spare time they visited the poor and the elderly and helped them from their own resources. With their first grant from Oxfam, they distributed, as a repayable loan, 30 donkeys to women around the town, for carrying water or firewood for sale. Their commitment and professionalism struck many visitors to Wajir, and for a while it seemed that the WVG might be a possible long-term partner for Oxfam, which was still seeking to build up a more significant poverty-reduction programme in the district. The WVG also developed a substantial proposal for further re-stocking; but in 1991, just as the plan was being finalised, drought again hit the district.

By early 1992 the drought situation was critical. Many of those worst affected were women and their children, who were coming into the town in a near-destitute condition, some of them carrying little more than a sleeping mat. The WVG resubmitted its re-stocking proposal as an emergency-relief proposal, and began nutrition, water, and shelter interventions around Wajir town. The shelter project was particularly imaginative. It identified women who lacked shelter, but who had the skills to make the palm mats, or duffuls, which are traditionally used to cover the rounded Somali huts, called herios. These women were paid for their work, thus earning income and gaining a sense of purpose and occupation at a time of severe loss and dislocation. Duffuls were also purchased from them for distribution to people unable to make their own, such as the elderly, widowers, or sick people.

The 1991/92 drought had a profound influence on subsequent development in the district. First, the level of suffering was immense. A UNICEF nutrition survey, carried out in August 1992, reported that more than
43 per cent of children were malnourished (8.5 per cent less than 70 per cent weight for height (WFH), and 35 per cent less than 80 per cent WFH). At the peak of the crisis, many children were dying daily in the villages around the town. The memories of those times are still vivid for those who survived them. Second, the extent of livestock loss caused severe and long-term damage to the pastoral economy. The August 1992 survey conducted by UNICEF and the government of Kenya suggested that as many as 80 per cent of small stock (goats and sheep), 70 per cent of cattle, and 30 per cent of camels had died. Recovering from that level of loss would be a major challenge. Third, it had been shown only too clearly that the district lacked the kind of drought-management system which, had it been in place, might have prompted a faster and more appropriate response, thereby preventing the damage to pastoralists’ asset base, and certainly avoiding the tragic loss of life. The perceived lack of accountability of parts of the international relief system at that time was also instrumental in convincing those working in the district that there must be a more effective way of managing drought and responding to crisis.

When the worst of the emergency was over, discussions of Oxfam’s long-term plans for the district resumed. The WVG was still perceived as a potential partner, but there were some doubts about whether it yet had the capacity to
work at the scale which Oxfam felt was necessary. Moreover, it was itself uncertain about giving up its voluntary status and taking on a more formal role. But it retained its close links with Oxfam, becoming a key partner in supervising the credit programme in Wajir town, and subsequently deciding to establish itself as a registered NGO called Arid Lands Development Focus (ALDEF). ALDEF’s work is described at the end of Chapter 4.

Nomadic Primary Health Care programme
The Nomadic Primary Health Care (NPHC) programme was initially funded by UNICEF. Its first co-ordinator was Mohamed Elmi, who was later to become the first project manager of Oxfam’s WPDP. He remembers how the idea of the NPHC arose.

In June 1990, UNICEF organised the visit of a major delegation to the north-east, including the UNICEF country director and the Permanent Secretary for ASAL areas. The UNICEF director was once a governor in Iran, where nomadic education had begun in the 1920s. At that time I was working in the hospital, and I knew how low the immunisation statistics and so on were. In the afternoon we had a large meeting, and I remember saying that something was wrong – that we were not properly equipped to provide health and education services to nomadic people. I also recalled an old man once answering questions about immunisation coverage who had said to me, “Look around you – there will never be a time when the government will have doctors and nurses travelling with us. You need to train our families.” His comment really hit me at the time, and was the beginning in my mind of the idea of the daryelle. After the UNICEF visit, five of us developed the idea of the NPHC further.

Daryelle is a Somali word which means ‘the caretaker’, or ‘the concerned’. In the context of WPDP, a daryelle is a community health worker, trained to recognise and treat sickness in both animals and humans, who is a member of a nomadic household and therefore easily accessible to herders as they move. A similar role is played by the hanuniye, or teacher, in providing basic education to nomadic families. Both these concepts were developed by the government’s inter-sectoral NPHC programme, and were important attempts to experiment with alternative models of social-service delivery to nomadic communities. The idea of the daryelle was subsequently transferred directly into the design of the WPDP.
Learning from the past

Figure 5: Ali Omar Adan, like other teachers in mobile Koranic schools in Wajir District, has been trained by the Nomadic Primary Health Care Programme to teach basic literacy and numeracy to children and adults.

Conclusion

What is striking about Oxfam's pastoral development work in Kenya throughout the 1980s is how difficult it proved to turn intentions and ideas into practical interventions which would have a lasting impact on people's lives. Project workers were in principle committed to applying participative approaches to their work with communities, but in practice they had not developed the level of judgement required to use such techniques appropriately. Theoretically, the scale of the problems facing pastoralists was recognised, but in reality the investment made in tackling them was not sufficiently deep or concentrated to deliver lasting change. The complexity of the poverty-reduction challenge in pastoral areas and the need for change at various levels was well understood, but the complexities and dynamics of the policy-making process were less well appreciated. Moreover, the projects associated with national-level
communications work were themselves small islands of activity, their horizons bounded by the local concerns of the communities in which they were based. The WPDP was perhaps the first occasion when a reasonable level of consistency between theory and practice was achieved.

Peter Kisopia closes this chapter by summarising some of the differences between work in pastoral districts of Kenya in the 1980s, and in Wajir in the 1990s. The most significant of these relate to the most appropriate role for an external agency such as Oxfam in the process of social organisation and institutional development. The way in which the Wajir team approached this role is the subject of the next chapter.

In African communities, people are organised around a clan, a family, an age-set, or a purpose (such as going for a raid). What NGOs sometimes term as "communities" are people who have come together around activities – often activities which were not initiated by them, but by outsiders. Wajir began not by us saying what we were going to do, but by facilitating a process of dialogue with communities and other organisations and seeing whether something would emerge. In Wajir, communities defined their method of organisation, whereas in Turkana and Samburu we were actually doing things and were more directive. In Wajir, nobody was promised any individual benefits from communal activities, whereas in Turkana and Samburu people saw the projects as a source of income. They thought that if you did some work for your community then you should be paid, and this led to their poor sustainability. All these mistakes were known at the time, but changing things was difficult. Our past mistakes helped a lot in shaping what was done in Wajir, and in getting things right from the start.

And yet definitions and understanding of good practice change. This book makes no grand claims on behalf of the WPDP, whose inadequacies may in their turn be brought to light. One of the hardest lessons for development workers to learn is how easily they can be proved ‘wrong’ in retrospect, even when they felt (or were told) that they were ‘right’ at the time. Simply, the book tries to show how lessons from the past have been applied, to illustrate Oxfam’s present understanding of good practice in pastoral development, and to indicate what might be possible to achieve when policy makers and practitioners succeed in moving beyond the rhetoric of development and acting in a manner consistent with its most basic principles.
Building community organisations

‘Our borehole had yielded little water for years, but when we learned it could produce more, we went to the District Commissioner to complain, and he asked the Water Department to see to our problem. We had to contribute towards it, but that day we realised that we could get what we wanted if we knew where to get it, if we were organised, and if we were ready to do something about it. When Oxfam first came to us, we never thought that people like us could do anything.’

(Maalim Ronow, Chairman, Hungai Pastoral Association)

At the beginning of this book, pastoralists in Khorof Harar told the story of their association. This chapter describes in more detail the way in which community organisations of this kind were built in Wajir, focusing in particular on the development of pastoral associations. The case study at the end of the chapter then illustrates how the same approaches were applied in the rather different context of work with the urban poor. Common to both sections is the belief that it is the way in which things are done – the process that is followed and the principles which drive it – which is the critical determinant of sustainable, equitable development. The chapter begins by exploring what is meant in the context of the WPDP by the word ‘community’.

**Baadia and bulla**

One criticism levelled at previous pastoral development projects implemented by NGOs in Kenya, including Oxfam, was that they used words such as ‘participation’ and ‘community’ with little definition or rigour. In the case of the WPDP, early project documentation describes the general constituency that Oxfam hoped to serve as including both pastoralist and settled households. Three broad population groups, with differing priorities, were defined. First, pastoralists who were still primarily reliant on livestock keeping, and whose concern was to strengthen and diversify that livelihood. Second, pastoralists who had lost their animals but who, with some assistance, were willing and able to return to a nomadic way of life. And finally, poorer urban families, predominantly women, for whom a return to pastoralism was not possible or desirable, and who therefore needed to find alternative means of support.
The Wajir Pastoral Steering Committee (PSC), an interdepartmental body formed in 1995 to oversee pastoral development in the district, has produced a manual on working with pastoral associations. It describes a community as ‘People in a defined geographical area, sharing the same facilities and a degree of common interests and problems, but recognising that different interests exist within these’. The manual then suggests some factors which may help to define a community, and consequently, in the case of pastoralists, the association which serves it. These factors include the level of cohesion, such as the use of shared dry-season grazing areas, and the size of population: too large, and the association may lack cohesion; too small, and it may have difficulty in forming and sustaining itself.

In the project’s first phase, Oxfam worked with five pastoral associations in one division of the district called Wajir Bor, reaching approximately 40,000 people. In the second, it supported nine more associations in an adjacent geographical area. Each of the associations has its base in one of the small trading centres scattered across the district which act as a source of essential services for the pastoral population, such as water supply and health care. The associations draw their members from that centre, as well as from the population of nomadic pastoralists (those living in the baadia, or rangelands) normally found in its vicinity.

The population of Wajir town is in some ways less cohesive than that based in and around the smaller settlements. For the most part it is made up of people who have lost their animals, often as a result of conflict or drought, and who have come to settle in temporary shelters on the edge of the town in clusters which over time have grown into large villages called bullas. The oldest bulla, Bulla Jogoo, dates from a time of violent conflict during the 1960s, when many pastoralists were made destitute. Each drought or crisis since then has swollen the numbers still further. The drought of 1991/92, for example, which immediately preceded the start of the project, expanded the town’s population from approximately 20,000 to 50,000 people. Ebla Sugule, who worked with Oxfam in Wajir in the early 1990s, remembers her childhood in the town: ‘I was born and brought up in Bulla Hodhan, and I remember a very bad drought when I was six or seven years old. Something was always going on, whether it was clashes, or drought, or people killing people. It was never a peaceful place. One problem would be over, and then another would start.’

Women make up the majority of the residents of the bullas. They survive on petty trade and on the support of family members still living in the baadia. At the time when the WPDP started, many of these women were desperately poor, either as a result of being widowed or abandoned by their husbands, or because of the loss of their livestock to drought or disease. Lack of labour and
Building community organisations

livestock meant that a nomadic way of life was now closed to them, but lack of credit and the loss of traditional networks of social support meant that life in town offered few opportunities. The situation of the most vulnerable women in Wajir town was a central concern for the WPDP.

However, the Oxfam project team recognised that it was also important to address the causes of these women's destitution, which lay within the wider pastoral economy. The populations of the town and of the baadía are closely linked through a network of social and economic relationships which spread risk and provide extra security in times of drought or hardship, thus helping to cement pastoral society as a whole. The two populations, in the settlements and in the baadía, look after each other's interests. Many town dwellers have relatives who are still herding, and who send them traditional gifts of livestock or milk. Pastoralists tend the herds owned by family members in town, and they in return look after the business interests of their nomadic relations. Any development strategy for Wajir needed to recognise and reinforce these social and economic ties.

Two kinds of community-level organisation have grown up as a result of the WPDP. They reflect the different contexts of the baadía and the bullas. The first is the pastoral association, which from the beginning pursued a broad agenda, tackling issues such as water-supply development, livestock health, women's income, and education. The second is a network of women's groups in Wajir town, whose primary purpose was to provide a structure through which women who were no longer directly engaged in the pastoral economy could access credit and training in business skills. Although their forms and purposes vary, and the particular context out of which they have grown differs, both types of organisation have been shaped by a process, facilitated by Oxfam, which was based upon some common principles. The rest of this chapter explains this process by describing how the pastoral associations developed, while the case study at the end tells the story of women's organisation in Wajir town.

**Building links with government ...**

By the end of 1992, Oxfam had three staff in place: Mohamed Elmi, the first project manager, Ebla Sugule, who had been recruited to develop work with women in Wajir town, and Yusuf Muktar, the re-stocking monitor. Their task was to identify options for Oxfam's future work in the district, and to do this in a participatory way, engaging with communities and with government. It was recognised that a larger group than three would be needed to carry out this task effectively, but instead of simply recruiting more staff, the team
decided to bring in people from government departments to take part in the process of planning and design. These government officials participated in training sessions, in the field-work and discussions with communities, and in the workshop which compiled the first project proposal.

This decision was important for three reasons. First, it sent a signal from the very beginning that Oxfam wanted to establish a constructive relationship with the district authorities, a move which at the time was ground-breaking. Many NGOs, Oxfam included, had maintained an ambivalent relationship with the Kenyan government throughout the 1980s. Ebla Sugule recalls the attitudes that were common at the time.

"There used to be a barrier between government people and the NGOs, who thought that government people were corrupt. But the organisation you work for doesn’t dictate whether you are corrupt or not. There are good and honest people working for the government, just as there are corrupt people in NGOs. And you can’t talk about development if you don’t involve the government. If you open that barrier, and work hand in hand, you can achieve much more."

The Wajir project set a new path in Kenya towards a more sophisticated and open relationship between Oxfam and the government. Later chapters will show how this change of approach at the district level was to open up new opportunities for exercising influence at the national level.

Second, the project recognised that line-ministry staff could contribute important technical skills to the project, establishing a collaborative way of working with other professionals which has been maintained ever since. Staff from the departments of health and livestock would assist with the training of daryelles and TBAs (traditional birth attendants), for example, recognising that this was a legitimate part of their responsibilities, rather than an additional task. This made effective use of government staff who were often highly skilled but chronically under-resourced. And, by involving government departments at an early stage, it proved easier to discuss their long-term responsibilities in supporting the pastoral associations after Oxfam’s withdrawal. For Oxfam, this was a more cost-effective strategy than enlarging the team on a permanent basis. It also reinforced the general profile which the organisation wanted to present in the district, which was primarily one of facilitating the efforts of others, rather than delivering solutions by itself.

Third, the project offered opportunities to influence and change the thinking and practice of government staff, who were introduced to new and more participative ways of working and exposed to regular contact with communities. Although there was some initial scepticism about the community-led
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... and with communities

The first discussions with communities were held in Wajir Bor in the east of the district in April 1993. The idea was that pastoralists would discuss the nature of their poverty and identify ways of addressing it. Over the months which followed, further discussions were held in three other centres. These covered a wide range of issues, including social relations, wealth and poverty, livelihood strategies, gender roles, health practices, links with other organisations, natural-resource management, and conflict. Separate sessions were held with women and young people, and in the *baadia* as well as in the settlements.

It would have been common practice in the district at this time for such discussions to be dominated by men, by chiefs, or by the more powerful elders in the settlement. A range of measures was taken to counteract these tendencies, some of which were very practical, such as giving nomadic pastoralists lifts in vehicles to meetings, or making sure that enough time was spent in explaining the purpose of the planning meetings and how they would work. Another way of challenging prevailing assumptions about development was to model different kinds of values. Mohamed Mursal, Project Manager during the second phase of the WPDP, who was at that time working with the Ministry of Health, remembers:

> During the early days, the chief would tell us that the whole community was gathered and that we could begin the meeting. But we would ask where the women were, or where the pastoralists were. And of course once in a while some of the leaders who had reservations would say things like, “These people in the *baadia* don’t understand anything. Why do you waste your time with them?” And so we would use our own way of working as an example, and explain how our whole team takes part in decisions. Slowly, then, you find that people who were traditionally despised, who were never invited to meetings, start to get opportunities to express their opinion and say, “No, we don’t want that, we want that”. We were slowly trying to tilt the balance of power from the ones who dominated towards the majority.

Approach which Oxfam was advocating, on the whole the relationship with government worked well. The next chapter will show how attempts were made to institutionalise these links and responsibilities within district structures.
Community action planning

These planning sessions were not just a means of gathering and analysing information about poverty. Like the strategy of working with government, they sent an important signal about the nature of this project from the very beginning, which was that the responsibility for action lay clearly with each community. All too often, development agencies carry out participatory analysis but then take the information away and use it to prepare their own project documents, in isolation from others. In Wajir, the principle was that the initiative should stay with communities, who were asked to use the analysis to draw up their own action plans. Mohamed Elmi recalls:

"We told them that the plans were theirs, and that they should forget about Oxfam. They should draw columns for the things they wanted to do, who would do them, their priority ranking, and what they expected of outsiders. We used the word "outsiders" to mean people or organisations from whom they would seek help, including us, because we felt that even our support should be given in response to a proposal from them. In other words, they would be asking us to contribute to their plan."

The emphasis given to community action planning was important in three respects. First, it reinforced a key message that the project team was trying to convey, which was that pastoralists had the skills and resources to take responsibility for their own development. Not only was this likely to result in activities which were more relevant to people’s real needs, and therefore stood a stronger chance of success; it was also realistic, since government no longer had the resources to provide even a basic level of services. This was a radical change from past development practice in the district, over which the majority of people were traditionally allowed little influence.

Second, the process through which community plans were developed minimised some of the tensions which can arise when NGOs try to reconcile their organisational mandate and priorities with the conclusions from participatory planning exercises. The most important lesson was to recognise rather than avoid the inevitable tension, and encourage transparency on the part of all who were involved. For example, some centres wanted to pursue improvements in education, which was not a significant focus within Oxfam at that time – at least not in the formal sector – and which had not emerged as a priority in early drafts of internal strategy papers for Wajir. But rather than allow their aims to be deflected by Oxfam’s internal priorities, centres were encouraged to look beyond Oxfam and identify other sources of support. Each pastoral association has carried out work which was not part of the WPDP’s formal agenda, such as building classrooms, or in one case building..."
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a mosque. From the very beginning, the Oxfam team was careful not to let local people assume that the team had the answers and the resources for every problem. And, although the relationship between Oxfam and the associations was intensive in the first phase of the work, it was never exclusive. The primary purpose of participatory planning in Wajir was in effect to determine what the community, not the NGO, would be doing.

That said, however, it should be remembered that Oxfam was still in charge of the process as a whole. It was the Oxfam team who initiated the planning sessions in each location, and who had the upper hand in negotiations, given the imbalance in skills, awareness, and control over resources. Nevertheless, the project team demonstrated an acute level of understanding of the complex dynamics which exist between an external agency and a community (and between elements within the same community), and they anticipated the problems which were likely to arise.

Third, this distinction between community plans and Oxfam’s own planning process helped to establish a more healthy degree of distance between the two. The pastoral associations were not seen simply as instruments through which Oxfam’s plans for Wajir could be implemented. If they were to have any chance of being sustainable, they needed to establish themselves as independent bodies, with their own agenda and organisational integrity. An important principle which the team adopted was to treat the pastoral associations as mature and independent organisations, even when they were still young, by encouraging them to exercise their own judgement. The sustainability of specific project activities was felt to be of less importance than the sustainability of the association itself, on the grounds that the purpose of each association was to equip itself to meet the challenges of the future, as much as those of the present.

The decision to form pastoral associations

One weakness of previous pastoral development projects in Kenya was that they had tended to be designed around a specific activity or intervention, and often one which had been encouraged by an external agency. Projects began with the intention of promoting rainwater harvesting, for example, or livestock health services. Women’s groups were started with the purpose of carrying out a particular business activity. But in Wajir, a less prescriptive approach was tried. From the outset, there was no intention on the part of either Oxfam or communities to form a new organisation. Rather, this emerged as a means through which the objectives set out in the planning sessions might be achieved.
The decision to form associations was taken by pastoralists in response to a challenge raised during the planning sessions. Mohamed Elmi recalls what happened.

One useful tool we found was the chapati diagram, which is generally used to identify the various organisations and institutions which affect people's lives, and the extent to which the people value them. You could easily end the exercise with their analysis and a nice diagram, but I kept thinking it could do more. So after they had finished and criticised all the other organisations, I turned the discussion back to them and asked, "How would you go about sorting out these problems? And how could you organise yourselves to do that?" And that's when they said, "We'll form an organisation of pastoralists - shirkada holadaqatada".

An earlier idea among some communities in Wajir Bor had been to form herders' groups to manage the purchase and sale of livestock drugs. But the thinking behind the concept of the pastoral association was much wider: to establish an organisation with a broader remit, which could potentially address the range of issues which had emerged from the planning discussions. However, the Wajir team was also aware of the emergence of pastoral associations elsewhere in Africa, from literature sent to them during the early stages of the project, and from their own participation in workshops and meetings. Thus the intentions expressed by pastoralists were ones which the team could quickly recognise and find ways to support.

Bridging the old and the new

The Somali people have always had associations built upon a sense of community, the most important of which is the clan and its constituent sub-clans. People belong to the clan of their father, and on marriage a woman joins the clan of her husband, although she retains her own clan identity. The clan traditionally provided security, protection, and support. It also regulated social behaviour and the use of common resources through a set of customary rules which were agreed and enforced by the elders. However, the clan system has been increasingly abused by individuals seeking personal gain, particularly after the introduction of a multi-party political system. It has also been weakened by social changes, which have undermined the position of the elders and the impact of the sanctions that they traditionally exercised.

When the WPDP was established, therefore, the clan was not felt to be a credible model for sustainable development, particularly given the violent inter-clan conflict which erupted in the district during 1993. A new form
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was needed: one which could retain the best of customary organisation while incorporating new skills – such as budgeting, purchasing, monitoring, and lobbying – necessary for pastoralists to engage more effectively with modern institutions. One illustration of this marriage of old and new can be seen in the process through which the pastoral associations reached decisions.

In Somali custom, male elders sit and discuss matters until they reach an agreement, which then becomes law, called *xeer*, and which they enforce within the clan, or between their clan and other clans. This law governs social relations and is enforced not by an individual authority but by the elders as a whole, and by their mutual desire for good relations between them to persist. Once pastoralists had suggested forming a new organisation, practical issues such as membership eligibility and fees, the frequency of meetings, financial procedures and controls, and management structure all needed to be agreed and codified in a constitution which would be legally recognised by the government and other authorities. But rather than use the word ‘constitution’, the Oxfam team asked people to discuss and reach consensus on each of these points, in the same way that they would develop *xeer*. Pastoralists thus used a process of decision-making which was familiar and tested over generations to determine the way in which their new organisation would be managed. Thus it proved possible to apply traditional mechanisms for governing collective behaviour to new purposes.

In other respects, however, the process through which the pastoral associations evolved was deliberately used to challenge accepted practice. There are two examples of this, one of which concerns gender equity. Women in Somali society, and particularly in the *baadia*, do not traditionally participate in clan or community meetings, in which decisions are taken by adult men. The importance of women’s participation in the management and administration of pastoral associations was consistently emphasised by Oxfam, but, in order to pre-empt a counterproductive response, this was done in ways which acknowledged that there were strong cultural attitudes opposed to such a change. Transparency was again important: Oxfam made its views clear, but recognised that there were other views which were equally strongly held. Oxfam staff took a long-term perspective, realising that these views would be slow to change. There is evidence of some impact on this issue, as explained later in the chapter.

The second example of challenges to accepted cultural practice concerns the quality of representation, and specifically the balance between town and *baadia* membership. Town-based elders tended to dominate clan leadership, so, in order to guard against this, the Oxfam team would regularly prompt the associations to consider how genuinely representative they were of pastoralists’
interests as a whole, suggesting strategies to increase the participation of nomadic families in particular. This issue is also discussed later in the chapter.

The pastoral associations take shape

After the initial planning sessions across Wajir Bor, each centre was invited to send five or six representatives to a joint meeting, with the stipulation that they should select a certain number of women and nomadic people. Participants at this meeting shared details of their respective plans, recognising common problems and learning from others' solutions. The idea of forming pastoral associations was discussed further; and participants were asked to brief other community members on their return home and to begin forming the association in their own time. Once a group had registered a sufficient number of members, the project team returned to facilitate a large two-day workshop, in the course of which the constitution was agreed, decisions taken about the role of the association's officials, and people elected to those positions. In all these workshops, nomadic people outnumbered people from the settlements, as a result of the deliberate efforts made by the project team to help them to attend.

Definitions and purpose

The pastoral associations had several objectives. An internal paper summarising the project's work in monitoring and evaluation, written in December 1995, explained the team's intention as being 'to build organisations which have wide membership representative of men and women, town and baadia, and different clans, which meet at regular intervals, initiate actions themselves, provide a forum for the expression of local opinion, and represent the views of pastoralists'. Another paper, reviewing experience in Mali, describes pastoral organisations as 'institutions which are meant to regulate individual and collective actions by pastoralists to safeguard their economic, social, cultural, and political interests'. This definition reflects the broad purpose of the associations in Wajir.

The pastoral associations function at different levels. At their simplest, they serve as a mechanism through which pastoralists can more effectively manage those things that are essential to the welfare of their society and economy. These include resources which are commonly owned, or to which collective access is required, such as boreholes and grazing. They also include services which benefit the group as a whole, such as the provision of livestock drugs or the protection of water sources. In managing these resources and services,
the pastoral associations have also demonstrated that they are a significant source of development financing. An economic-impact assessment of the project, conducted in December 1997, estimated that in one centre the pastoral association’s members had contributed 65 per cent of the cost of capping wells, 35 per cent of the cost of school rehabilitation, and 7 per cent of the cost of re-stocking destitute families.

More strategically, the pastoral associations are channels through which pastoralists can represent their interests to government and to other actors. Although the initial focus of the work in Phase 1 of the WPDP was inevitably centred on the practicalities of service provision and organisational development, the project staff were always clear in their minds that the pastoral associations had the potential to be much more than service-delivery vehicles,
and might grow into representative movements of pastoralists which could rise above the self-interest of the clan. Mohamed Elmi remembers one of the first occasions when they demonstrated this potential.

The Provincial Commissioner (PC) for North Eastern Province, who has huge influence, was touring Wajir and passing through Khorof Harar. The pastoral association drew up a programme for his visit, and during the meeting their chairman said to the PC: “Oxfam’s part in the things you’ve seen was small— the rest we did ourselves, and we want government to support us in that. At the moment, government people come and tell us things; but when their vehicles go, that’s the end of it. We want to be consulted. District Commissioners come here, but only really when they want financial contributions. The road you came on we built by hand. No government grader comes here, and when we ask why not, we’re told that the road has no classification number. But the government vehicles which pass here have registration numbers on them, so why can’t the road have a number?” It dawned on me then that this was the first time the pastoral associations were trying to engage with a group of people who really affect them.

Since then, the associations have challenged various actions by government. They have sent written recommendations against the employment of more chiefs, for example, and against the privatisation of land. They have also stood up to Oxfam, most recently during the 2000 drought, when the Khorof Harar association refused to allow emergency boreholes to be drilled in its area. Abukar Shariff, Oxfam’s Emergency Co-ordinator in Wajir, describes what happened.

We told Khorof Harar that someone had suggested drilling a contingency borehole in a place about six kilometres from the border, but they said that that was where their camels were. They were afraid that if a water point was created there, even temporarily, then their camels would have to move again further away. Camel owners don’t want their animals grazing where cattle and other livestock have been, because of their sensitivity to disease. One of the outputs of this project was that pastoralists would be able to make their own decisions, and by establishing the pastoral associations they could say things like this to development workers. The more pastoral associations we support, the more the views of pastoralists will be heard. Nobody has listened to them until now, but people must realise that if they want to support pastoralism, then they should be asking pastoralists whether this way, this strategy, is better for them than another.
It was at quite an early stage that the pastoral associations recognised that their representative role would be more effective if they acted in a collaborative manner. A meeting of associations from across the district in November 1995 agreed to establish a district-wide association, which became known as the Kulmiye Pastoral Association or District Pastoral Association (DPA). Its objectives were to share experience, co-ordinate activities, and provide a stronger voice for pastoralist issues. The experience of forming the DPA is discussed in the next chapter.

**Characteristics of the associations**

Each pastoral association developed in its own way, and at its own pace. The rate of progress was influenced by several factors, such as levels of social cohesion and trust, and the attitude of chiefs and others in authority. Location also made a difference. Those associations closer to a main road were more socially diverse, for example, and people’s livelihoods were as dependent on the passing trade as they were on any factor that the pastoral association could control.

Members of the associations included both rich and poor (relatively speaking). In one place a small clique tried to make membership more exclusive by setting high membership fees, but this was soon reversed when an open meeting was called. The associations define membership in different ways. The most common is that all adults over 18 are eligible to join. Others state that ‘a member’ means both a man and his wife, while in some cases the *rer* is regarded as the basic unit of membership. These different definitions mean that it is difficult to determine with any accuracy the proportion of the community that has joined them. Membership of the associations in the Phase 2 area, for example, ranges from 70 in Dunto to 206 in Korondille. Membership fees are generally between 200 and 300 shillings.  

In the early stages there was little attempt to provide benefits exclusive to members; but as time went on, most associations felt the need to differentiate between members and non-members, setting different price lists for drugs, for example. Members would also be given preferential access at boreholes, and would automatically be put on the list for watering when returning in the dry season. Watering would previously have been on a first-come, first-served basis, and it was common for borehole lists to be full.

Different associations had different characteristics and faced different problems. Some had a greater or lesser degree of integrity; others were more or less dynamic. Members in one location were vocal in their opposition to certain association officials, but persisted in electing them, on the grounds that they enjoyed the ensuing debate. Some associations had to resolve
tensions with local chiefs and officials, and for the most part succeeded in doing so. In only one location did the rivalries and disputes persist to such a degree that they impeded the progress of the work. For the Oxfam team, the dilemma was one of determining when and how much to intervene, judging for the most part that if the associations were to stand any chance of long-term sustainability, then they needed to find ways to resolve such problems on their own. One strategy used was to keep raising questions about accountability, and refer back to the principles and values set out in each association's constitution.

**Monitoring and moving on**

About halfway into the first three-year phase, Oxfam agreed a new mode of working with the associations. It meant that Oxfam would in future be engaging with the associations on the basis of formal written proposals. There were two main reasons for this change. First, it was a strategy to strengthen the associations' skills in fundraising and negotiation, which they could test out with Oxfam and then use with other donors. After an association submitted its proposal, the team would visit to discuss it, asking the association to justify its choices. In several cases an association convinced Oxfam to fund something which had originally been rejected, one example being that of labour for well-capping. When these negotiations were most successful, it was because both parties openly expressed their opinions and priorities, and each recognised the other's right to question them.

Second, Oxfam began the process of gradually reducing the level of its direct contact with the associations, as a prelude to its future phased withdrawal from the project. A block of money was agreed, which could be used more flexibly than had been possible in the past. The associations also took over responsibility for purchasing their own supplies in Wajir town, thus exercising a greater degree of choice in managing resources. Even from the earliest stages, the design of the WPDP included strategies to guide its intended closure.

**Developing indicators of success**

The proposal format which the associations were asked to complete included a section on monitoring. It was expected that each association would review its effectiveness as an organisation, as much as the progress that it was making in specific activities. One strategy used by the project team to introduce the idea of monitoring was to refer to the way in which pastoralists monitor the benefits of the shifting patterns in their own nomadic lives. Before a family, or
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A group of families, move to a new area with their animals, they send out scouts to assess it against certain indicators, such as the quality of grazing, the level of water, and the distance from their current place. The information from this assessment is then evaluated, and a decision is taken on whether or not to move. If they shift, the group then monitor the impact of that move against other indicators (such as the level of milk yields), in order to determine whether it was beneficial or not. If they choose not to shift, then the process of scouting and assessment starts all over again. This was one example of many when the team found ways to bring pastoralists’ experience of daily life into discussions about the project.

In order to judge whether or not the associations themselves were effective, the project team agreed five criteria which they felt were important indicators of organisational development. These were the quality of representation, accountability, cohesion, ability to implement development activities, and gender equity. Everything which contributed to an association’s ability to implement its work was drawn together under one criterion, with more qualitative indicators making up the other four. In the early stages the associations tended inevitably to focus on their practical achievements, but Oxfam’s concern was to guard against over-emphasising tangible outputs, on the grounds that it would be the other four qualities which were more likely to determine an association’s success or failure. In Phase 2 of the WPDP, the idea of these criteria was introduced at the very beginning, by asking the new associations how they would know whether or not they had become strong. Although the words they used were different from those used in Phase 1, the essence of the qualities they were looking for was the same.

The two criteria which prompted the greatest debate within the associations and with the Oxfam team were representation and gender equity, largely because these were the ones which posed the strongest challenge to accepted practice.

**Representation**

The level and quality of representation achieved by each pastoral association is important for reasons of financial sustainability and institutional credibility. The guidelines on working with pastoral associations produced by the Pastoral Steering Committee in Wajir explain why:

The rationale for pastoral associations is partly that only through collective action of members can access to water and health services be improved. A critical mass of members – paying membership fees and buying drugs – is therefore needed to achieve this. And without it, pastoral associations cannot
exist without sustained external subsidy. At the same time, only through attracting significant members can pastoral associations reasonably expect to advocate for, and claim to speak on behalf of, pastoralists in their locality.

When used to assess the effectiveness of an association, the concept of 'representation' has two meanings. It refers to the extent to which its membership reflects the composition of the community as a whole, as well as the extent to which community priorities are then reflected in the association's decisions and actions. If both of these are working well, then the association will have a stronger mandate from which to carry out its representative function, i.e. of presenting pastoralists' interests to those in authority. Oxfam's concern was to ensure that the range of views and priorities within each community was adequately reflected in the actions and decisions of each association, in order to guard against their developing into new elites.

As the definition of community used at the beginning of this chapter suggests, a group of people can come together for a common purpose, but still have differing interests and aspirations. One distinction in the context of Wajir is between the populations of the baadia and of the settlements. Although there are close social and economic ties between the two, which mean that the divide is not a simple one, there has also been a long-term trend towards pastoralists in the baadia leaving decision-making to their clansmen in the settlements. The danger was that dominance of the pastoral association by settlement-based members, who would naturally find it easier to attend meetings and participate as officials, might shift the priorities of the association away from those of more direct relevance to herders. In the long term, this trend might also diminish the commitment of baadia members to support an association which they perceived to be increasingly irrelevant to their needs. And in turn, this would undermine the legitimacy of the association to act on behalf of pastoralists' interests. Mohamed Elmi summarises in general terms the characteristics of the two groups.

The divide between baadia and settlement is reducing with increased communication between the two, but there are still some broad differences. For example, baadia people are more forthright in their communication. It's part of their survival strategy that when they meet someone as they are walking, they stop and exchange information, which is why the history books talk about pastoralists as having the best bush telephone. On the other hand, town people have been known to manipulate information. A new bank-note is introduced, for example, and somebody will cheat pastoralists with it because they can't read, and as a result they learn not to trust people. Baadia people
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are less spoilt, more in control of their lives, and see things a bit more straightforwardly.

An illustration of differing priorities was the suggestion by a chief to include an airstrip in one of the community plans. He was over-ruled when pastoralists made it quite clear that nothing which could come by plane was going to improve their lives. Other associations have struggled to balance the interests of various groups. Participatory techniques help to manage these tensions in an open way. In a problem-ranking exercise, for example, everybody — whether chief or herder — has the same number of votes to cast. Another strategy has been to use the association’s constitution or action plan as a reference point, asking members to judge for themselves whether particular ideas or proposals put forward by one party are consistent with what the group had collectively agreed, rather than simply stating that they are necessarily right or wrong.

Interestingly, some of the pastoral associations reflected the characteristics of the two population groups in their choice of officials. The Khorof Harar and Kutulo associations both chose people living in the settlement as their committee members, on the grounds that they would be more easily available for business meetings; and as their auditors they chose baadia-based people, in whom they had a greater degree of trust. In practice this proved difficult to sustain, given the low levels of literacy among the baadia population.

The holistic approach adopted by the associations, addressing a range of concerns facing pastoralists in the baadia and in the settlements, strengthens their credibility in acting as representatives of the community as a whole. Different members may find different parts of the work more or less relevant to their needs. One person may get greatest benefit from the animal-health services, for example, and another from education.

In conclusion, therefore, the wider the range of interests represented in the association, and the more effectively the association manages the diversity of those interests, the stronger it will become and the greater its claim to legitimacy. The mid-term review of Phase I in March 1996 echoed this point and noted: ‘The pre-condition for the effectiveness of the pastoral associations is representivity. This is the value underpinning the project ... and the value to be replicated. A truly representative pastoral association gives legitimacy to the articulation of people’s rights.’

Gender equity

One aspect of representation involves balancing the diverse views and aspirations of women and men. In common with most pastoral societies,
women's position in Wajir is determined by their connections with male relatives, whether fathers, husbands, or sons. In traditional practice, formal decision-making within the community is a male preserve, with a clear distinction drawn between the public and private roles of women and men. Women's participation in the pastoral associations has been a subject of continuous debate between them and Oxfam. On the face of it, the situation looks poor. Very few women are registered as members in their own right (seven out of 130 at one stage in the Eldas association, for example), although many more are effectively members as a consequence of their husbands joining. The lack of standardisation in defining membership, referred to above, makes it harder to determine the number of women who consider themselves to be members. In a few associations, such as Buna, Sarman, and Khorof Harar, one or two women are members of the committee. In Kutulo, where women's groups were already active before the association began, women demanded to be included as officials of the association, and a post was reserved for them on the committee.

Ahmed Muhumed Omar, the chairman of the Mansa association, gives an honest assessment of the issue.

"I know as Somalis we've never valued women's contribution in the way you people feel it should be. Each man will definitely discuss issues with his wife, and many bring their wives' thinking to the meetings. The thing is, he will never say that it is from his wife. These days we invite women to the meetings, but even if they come, they don't contribute much, because they are shy. But then, we don't give them the opportunity or enough encouragement to speak."

In practice, however, the fact that women – however few – are now taking an active role in the business of a pastoral association is a major step forward. Dekha Ibrahim, a community worker in Wajir who has been associated with both the Nomadic Primary Health Care programme and the Wajir Peace and Development Committee, explains:

"Even one woman joining the committee of a pastoral association is a really big step, given traditional Somali culture. And she is often worth five men, because other women will be making their voices heard through her. For some women, the older they get, the more liberating it can be. They feel that they have finished delivering children and can now realise their potential. It is these women who tend to participate in the pastoral associations. Somali men can't challenge women who are past childbearing age. Men who later in life start marrying younger girls as second wives find their economic pressures increasing, while women begin to do things they couldn't do before."
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Some components of the WPDP have clearly had a significant impact on women's economic status, particularly the re-stocking and the urban credit programmes. In Somali culture, women have a right to own property, and in Dekha Ibrahim's words, 'What the project has done is to give back what traditionally women were supposed to have'.

In a traditional setting, the division of responsibilities between women and men would tend to be fairly evenly balanced, with men responsible for drawing deep water from wells, milking the larger stock, taking animals to market, and accompanying the camels, which stay out on the range later at night. When a household is migrating, men and women share the cooking. (However, even in a traditional setting this is by no means a universal state of affairs. For families with little male labour, or in periods of drought stress, the pressures on women and girls increase, in addition to their responsibilities for childcare.) But when a family loses its animals and moves into town, the pattern changes completely. Women have to look for food, firewood, and water, while their husbands have no occupation, unless there is a demand for casual labour, and they provide no support to the household. And for a woman who has moved into town because of the death of her husband, or as a result of being abandoned by him, the pressure and sense of isolation can be acute.

Social changes have also reduced the protection offered to women. Attitudes to women in the baadia, particularly those with only girl children, can be discriminatory and even hostile. Dekha Ibrahim recalls one instance: 'I remember a young woman in Eldas whose husband had died, leaving her with three young girls. Her husband's brother came and took the two older children to provide labour for herding, leaving her with her youngest child of three years. Her children were just taken away from her and she was left with nothing, not even a goat.' The protection which the clan might traditionally have extended to women in such circumstances by imposing sanctions on this kind of behaviour (such as fining the man, or making it impossible for him to marry in future) has also been undermined, given the way in which recent changes in society have weakened both social ties and the clan's authority.

And yet, despite the economic burdens carried by women in town, the more fluid social setting increases their chance to participate in community initiatives. Habiba Osman, Chair of the Bismillahi women's group and of the broader umbrella group in her bulla in Wajir town, tells her story.

I came to Wajir from El Wak in 1992. My husband died in the Wagalla massacre, and his brother then inherited me. But as you know, an inherited wife isn't wanted much – you're like an orphan. My second husband didn't bother with our upkeep, so I was forced to do something for my children's sake.
I began sitting in the market, and then I joined the group. The loan forces us to meet frequently, whereas before we never sat to discuss issues which affected us as women, or which affected the development of our *bullas*. Before, I was someone who didn’t know or care much what was going on, because I left all decisions to my husband. Today, I make decisions, and I find out what is going on around me, because I have to see how it will affect me.

As so often, education in its broadest sense has been the key to change. One strategy which the team has used to promote gender equity has been to work with the sheikhs and an Islamic NGO to educate both women and men about women’s rights. Islam guarantees certain rights to women on matters such as education, property, inheritance, employment, and protection, but in practice these have rarely been respected. By working closely with religious leaders, several female community workers have found that Islam can be a liberating force. Again, education has made this possible. Previously only men read the Koran, but increasing numbers of women are now studying it and are aware of what it offers. Ebla Sugule comments on the impact of education, and on the relative capacities of women in town and in the *baadia* to take advantage of change.

> If I had known before, I would have refused circumcision and said that my religion doesn’t allow it. But I didn’t know until a few years ago, which is why I think that women should be educated, and that we should use the sheikhs to do that. When you educate more people, slowly, slowly change will come. Change is coming faster in town, because women meet each other and are encouraged to do things differently. But a woman living in the *baadia* will not have that chance, and Oxfam needs to target them.

**Perceptions of poverty**

Somali culture is based on the concept of mutual support, and has a variety of traditional mechanisms through which those in need can be helped, either within the extended family or by society in general. *Sadaqa* encourages the giving of alms, while *hersi* refers to the collection of milk from families in one *rer* (or homestead) to be given to travellers or to those who have lost their livestock. *Zakaat* is a mandatory tax of 2.5 per cent that every Muslim is supposed to pay annually to the poor. There are several illustrations of these welfare institutions being used by the pastoral associations. As drought began to worsen in 1996, for example, the association in Riba collected 30 sheep and goats and one bull during that year’s *zakaat* and distributed them to three of the poorest families.
Wealth-ranking was used during the planning sessions, and levels of poverty were clearly a key element of discussions about issues such as re-stocking. But in a society where gradations in poverty can be so small, and where destitution as a result of conflict or disease can happen so quickly and so indiscriminately, it was often hard for people to appreciate the distinctions that they were being asked to make. Rahay Hassan, one of the Project Officers, remembers some of the discussions about selecting re-stockees.

There might be a hundred people wanting to be re-stocked, but we only had resources for five. When you tell them that you need the very poorest, they will all put themselves forward, and you know that all of them are poor. However the levels of poverty are a bit different. There might be one woman who could make a cup of tea that morning, and another who couldn't. So we would tell them, “Be very honest, fear God, and come up with the people who are very poor”. And then, even if they wanted to do otherwise, they would realise that this woman, who maybe has seven children, and her husband has died, and she is very hungry, is worse off than them.

Figure 7: Twelve-year-old Kamila Kunow, watched by her mother at their homestead in Wagberi bulla, takes her sole meal of the day: a cup of maize porridge. The family had to move into the town after losing their livestock in the 1991/92 drought.
Re-stocking

Re-stocking has been one of the interventions most often challenged, both by communities and by visitors to the project. Re-stocking involves the provision of livestock to families who have lost their herds, usually as a result of drought, disease, or conflict. Beneficiary households are selected according to carefully chosen criteria, which include their willingness to return to the baadia and their ability to manage a herd. Women, and particularly female-headed households, have often been targeted as beneficiaries.

On the one hand, re-stocking clearly has a major impact on those who benefit, both economically and in terms of their well-being and status. Monitoring of those re-stocked in 1984 shows that they have been able to educate their children, pay the livestock necessary to marry off their sons, and on occasion start small businesses. An economic-impact assessment conducted towards the end of the first phase of the project noted:

some five hundred former destitute families, which in the absence of the project would not have been re-stocked through traditional means, now derive a livelihood from livestock. Just 24% of surveyed households [re-stockees] still receive food aid, which is substantially lower than the average figures [for households] in project sites (45%) and [even] lower than pastoral households in non-project sites (63%). Importantly, the majority (93%) of re-stocked families have now been re-instated into pastoral society, where social status and dignity is dependent on livestock owned.5

On the other hand, re-stocking is an intensive intervention which in practice can directly benefit only a small proportion of the population. Close to 700 households were eventually re-stocked during the three years of Phase 1; a lower number in Phase 2. The same resources, it might be argued, could be used to benefit a wider number of people through a less cost-intensive intervention. Moreover, people who were not chosen to be re-stocked sometimes felt aggrieved that marginal differences in poverty were being used to justify quite a significant allocation of resources to others – 30 goats and a food ration for nine months.

There were also concerns that people were being re-stocked, but merely to be knocked back again in the next drought. Abdirahman Ali, another of the Project Officers in Wajir, recalls the following exchange. 'I remember a visitor commenting during the mid-term review that re-stocking was not viable. It was in Khorof Harar, and he said, "What is the point in investing so much in re-stocking when all the animals might be wiped out in the next drought?" And an old man told him, "That is like saying that the education you give to a son of yours who reaches
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university and who dies on completion of his course was also wasted." He was trying to say that disasters happen to anyone, and that you don't stop doing something just because you might lose it one day.'

Clearly, drought in an environment such as Wajir is an inevitable and not an occasional risk, which slightly weakens the logic of the argument. Nevertheless, there is a strong justification for re-stocking on the grounds of both equity and efficiency, as long as the underlying factors which are a cause of destitution within the pastoral economy are also being addressed. Two studies have calculated the average rate of return for re-stocked families in Wajir as being 31 per cent and 26 per cent, concluding that these returns justified continued levels of investment. Moreover, recent analysis of those re-stocked in 1984 shows that only three of the thirty households have dropped out of the pastoral economy since that time, and that the initial selection of those three as re-stockees had been anyway questionable. There appears to be a direct correlation between the quality of the selection process and the rate at which re-stockees succeed, which again illustrates the importance of paying careful attention to the process through which any intervention is made. Finally, although the monitoring of re-stockees tends to focus on the impact on them as individuals and households, there is anecdotal evidence that the economic benefits extend well beyond the families concerned. This is partly because of the significant amount of cash being injected into the livestock economy at the time when the animals are being purchased, and partly because of the assumption that re-stocking must to some degree mitigate the cost of destitution, which society in general would otherwise have to meet.

Cost-sharing

Sometimes opinions about relative wealth and poverty needed to be reviewed, as illustrated in the case of well-capping. Shallow wells in Wajir Bor are for the most part owned and maintained by individuals, or by individual rers. Other people may use the wells, subject to agreement, and very occasionally to some form of payment. Capping the wells reduces the amount of work subsequently required to de-silt them, and makes them easier and safer for women and children to use. The agreement within the project was that the well's owner would pay the workmen and provide the materials, with the exception of the cement and the whitewash, which would be donated by Oxfam.

Cost-sharing has been an important principle underpinning the WPDP. In part this reflected the team's determination not to repeat the mistakes of earlier projects in Kenya, which had tended to subsidise the recurrent costs of projects, thereby masking the extent to which they were really viable. Reductions in the quantity and quality of government service provision also
meant that some element of cost-sharing was only realistic, and that there was actually little choice in the short term but to maximise people's contribution. However, in the case of well-capping, the pastoral associations feared that poorer well owners might be losing out, either because of difficulties in paying the workmen or because they had less access to labour. Richer pastoralists had the resources to develop their wells faster. The associations therefore suggested that Oxfam should contribute 1000 shillings towards the workmen's fee on behalf of those who were less able to pay. These they subsequently identified. The workmen also agreed to forego 500 shillings of their fee, as their own contribution. This example illustrates the way in which differing objectives in development are constantly being balanced, and the need for flexibility in judging when one principle (in this case cost-sharing) should be over-ridden by the more urgent demands of another (i.e. helping the poorest and most vulnerable).

Figure 8: Adan Ahmed (13), drawing water from the well near his home in Wagberi bulla on the outskirts of Wajir town. The well was improved, with Oxfam’s help, after the 1991/92 drought.
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Managing project resources
When the WPDP began, some of the activities which had been started during the 1991/92 drought were still being completed, which meant that the team had some resources available for things like digging pans and protecting wells. The WPDP had a long gestation – from the first direct dialogue with communities in April 1993 to the official start of Phase 1 in July 1994. The water projects therefore helped to ensure that the long preparatory period was filled not just with talking and planning, but with practical support. Ebla Sugule remembers trying to keep that balance.

We needed time to explain the process to people, that we were trying to work out their priorities with them in the long term, and that the ideas had to come out from them and not from us. But they kept on saying, “When are you going to come and start the real job?” At the same time, though, we were doing this dam desilting while the participatory planning sessions were taking place. So people knew that something was happening."

That said, however, substantial project resources were not provided until strong foundations had been laid, which included ensuring that the terms under which each input was being given – whether credit, training, tools, or materials – were clearly understood and accepted. Work proceeded at the community’s pace, however slow that might be, and regardless of whether some associations moved faster than others. The level of investment made in the process of planning and consensus-building during the first phase of the project is reflected in the fact that a significant part of the budget was not spent until the third and final year. If this kind of approach is to work, it requires a cool head on the part of the implementing agency, to resist being panicked into action by unspent budgets, and managers must not expect instant evidence of impact. It also requires that the project’s donors understand and support what the implementing agency is trying to do. In this case both DFID (the UK government’s Department for International Development) and Comic Relief (a UK-based funding agency), the principal donors at the time, agreed that outstanding balances could be carried over, as long as these were spent within the relevant three-year phase.

There was sometimes a tension between short-term and long-term goals. Communities understandably wanted to see tangible results, while Oxfam’s primary concern was with building the long-term sustainability of the associations. If they could mobilise resources from among themselves or from others, and if they could sort out their problems independently, then the associations stood a good chance of prospering beyond the lifetime of the
WPDP. This was the logic behind the decision in 1995 that the relationship between Oxfam and the associations should be put on a more formal footing, negotiated through a funding proposal. The concern was less, therefore, that specific project activities should be sustainable in themselves, and more that the structures through which such activities were being designed and managed should be so, and that their members should have the skills and capacity to secure whatever resources were necessary to meet their needs.

In the early stages this caused some inevitable frustration. When participants were invited to state their expectations at the beginning of a district-wide workshop for pastoral associations held in November 1995, one of them commented that his association was unlikely to receive any financial support as a result of the workshop, because ‘Oxfam is like a cow which produces little milk’. However, there is evidence that the associations now share the same view about sustainability. The Vice-Chair of the Khorof Harar association made the following points in a speech to some of the newer pastoral associations in the district in August 2000: ‘At first our idea was simply a business to sell livestock drugs. But what became the most important thing to us over time was the pastoral association itself. While Oxfam was still working with us, they taught us to write proposals, which we sent to them, to government, and to other people. They might have built the foundations of what we have achieved, but we constructed it, so that it became our work, not theirs.’

The WPDP also encouraged a sense of discipline over the management of resources, as a way of developing healthier expectations about NGOs and the development community in general. Mohamed Elmi explains:

› We tried to nurture an understanding that money belongs to them, and will do more for them if used properly. I remember a discussion about wheelbarrows, which were included in the proposal for clearing sand from the pans. A wheelbarrow costs the price of a camel, and when we told people that and asked them whether they still wanted us to buy them, they said, “Of course not – no more wheelbarrows. From today we’ll use gunny bags to get the sand out.”

Bringing external information to help people make judgements is important. There is this notion that NGOs have a lot of money, but it’s good if people know that NGO money is like any other money – that it should be used properly, and that they have the chance to determine how that is done. We were pleased when they called us “the people who were miserly”, even though later on they realised that the level of project inputs was high. But it took them years to realise that. ‹
Ways of working

The more complex the process, the more crucial the need for clarity in the roles and responsibilities of the various parties. This is particularly important when determining how decisions will be made, and where responsibility for those decisions lies. The Oxfam staff assigned to the WPDP had their own unwritten criteria against which they judged their own decisions, and which helped them to resolve issues as they arose. Abdirahman Ali summarises the criteria as follows: 'The most important is how beneficial the outcome will be for the community. Secondly, what it will cost. And thirdly, what impact it will have on our image – will it water down the good things we have achieved? These are the basic criteria we use. We want things to be consistent with our basic values.'

As a general rule, Oxfam restricted its role in Wajir to that of facilitator, adviser, and monitor. Adam Leach, Country Representative for Kenya in the mid-1990s, remembers: 'I was always struck by how light the project's contact was with communities, both in terms of time and input. The whole project was about galvanising local action, and providing the opportunities for people to take that action on their own or in conjunction with formal institutions.' An important discipline for the team in this whole process of nurturing the associations was to avoid the twin temptations of passing judgement and prescribing solutions. Their approach was generally to ask questions, rather than supply answers, encouraging communities to work out problems for themselves.

The team saw its responsibility as being to agree with an association a clear framework for each part of its work, but then to leave it up to them to decide how they would go about it, challenging them from time to time if they felt that things were moving off course. The re-stocking component is a good example of the practical division of responsibilities. The criteria for determining who will be re-stocked are first agreed jointly between Oxfam and the community (represented, for example, by a pastoral association). The association then uses those criteria to identify prospective beneficiaries, who are assessed and finally approved by both parties. Responsibility for purchasing the animals lies with the community, and the task of providing the additional inputs (livestock drugs and food) is Oxfam's responsibility. Finally, monitoring of the re-stockees' progress is shared between the two.

Two things are important for this kind of approach. First, that there is complete openness and clarity from the beginning about the responsibilities of each party. Second, that the criteria against which key decisions are going to be made – such as who gets re-stocked – are clear and agreed. Moreover, in adopting a facilitative style of working, an agency is not required to suspend critical judgement or refrain from intervening. Rather, there should be prior
agreement between all those involved about the process through which opinions can be offered and action taken. This process should also capitalise on the respective strengths of each party. In the case of an implementing agency, these often include the ability to bring to the discussion external information and experience – such as the fact that a wheelbarrow costs the price of a camel – which complements the knowledge found within the community. 'No help is completely unconditional, but we can be honest about our interests so that they can be negotiated in a relationship between equals ... Part of the outsider's job is to help people make connections between what they know and what is new, unfamiliar, or just a better option in the circumstances. It is the combination of local and non-local knowledge that makes the difference.'

However, all this is simpler to write on paper than to put into practice. Discussions were rarely straightforward. For example, potential re-stockees may be nominated who in the opinion of the Oxfam staff or others are inappropriate, perhaps because they are being proposed because of their political connections or their clan. Their sponsors may insist on their inclusion, and the debate will continue until one party manages to convince the other. Yusuf Muktar describes how the willingness to negotiate is important.

'Flexibility is important. We might make a decision, but the community will say, "No, that can't happen." And sometimes at the end of the day we have to say, "OK, fine, we agree with you." For example, we felt that the re-stockees should get a burden animal from their relatives. But now that the drought is becoming worse, they are telling us that they are having problems watering their animals, so in consensus we agreed that we would provide a burden animal for those who didn't have one.'

And opinions offered can meet with stubborn refusal. Yusuf again:

'Some time back I talked to a grandfather who had a lot of camels, and I asked him, "Why don't you use some of these animals to buy a plot of land in town and build some housing?" And the old man said to me, "If I put a tap on my plot and turn it on, will any milk come out of it?" And when I told him that it wouldn't, he said, "Then your idea is useless."'

One clear exception to this kind of flexibility was if accountability for resources was at stake, and this was an issue on which the team's views changed. The pastoral association in Hungai, for example, developed its own simple accounting system, which effectively separated the powers of the
various people involved. The team’s instinct was to insist that all the other associations adopt the same system, but they refrained from doing so, on the grounds that they wanted to let each association sort things out in their own way. They informed the associations of what Hungai had done, and hoped that they would copy the idea. On reflection, this is an issue on which the staff now feel that a more prescriptive stance would have been better, in order to prevent problems from being stored up. And in fact one association which did not follow this example ran into difficulties when some of its members misappropriated funds. The ability and willingness of development workers to listen and adapt are crucial skills. Equally important, however, is clarity about those issues that are non-negotiable, such as the sound management of project resources, the importance of keeping promises to communities, and the principle of treating everyone within the project area in an equitable manner.

**Shaping attitudes**

The most critical factor in facilitating this process of community organisation in Wajir was the emphasis given by the team to shaping expectations and attitudes. Mohamed Elmi summarises what this meant, in terms of the team’s daily interaction with communities.

- There are several ways in which you want to try and shape people’s attitudes when you go to work in a place. The first is about accountability. If you make a promise to a community that you are coming to see them, then you must do it, unless you can clearly account for why you can’t. Because if you behave inconsistently, then you will lose their trust, and genuine dialogue will suffer.

  The second is about transparency – being clear about the roles of the various people involved, and being open about when and according to what criteria decisions are being made. You need to think very consciously about all these things, because from the very beginning you want people to be able to question you, to answer back and tell you that you are wrong. The only way you can question them is if you have also created the space for them to do the same to you.

  The third is about power. We have enormous power when we have the possibility of directing resources here rather than there, but often people don’t think twice about that kind of responsibility. We need to be very conscious that we don’t overrule people because of our power – even when we think they are wrong. However, a participatory approach isn’t about letting the community do everything it wants, because that distorts things. If you are clear of your grounds, then you can say what you think, and then leave them to try and convince you.

  And the last is about trust. Despite the fact that I come from a nomadic family, there is always a barrier as soon as you do something like wear Western clothes.
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In the early days we slept on mats while we were travelling - it was a year and a half before we bought mattresses. We shared food. And when we arrived in a village we would deliberately stop in an open place where people could come to see us talking or delivering inputs, and could have the chance to take part in the discussion. All these are good ways of demonstrating the principles of trust and respect which lie behind genuine participation, and of showing people that we were serious. I remember Rahay and I once going to a family where, even though we were from the same sub-clan, it took us the whole morning to get through the discussion. And to them it was still nothing. But a few years later that same family said to us, “We never thought you were serious when you first came to us – we never thought it would develop into this. If we had known that you were different, we would have given you a few more ideas to put in your paper.”

Conclusion

The foundation of the WPDP has been the formation of local institutions such as the pastoral associations. They provide a structure through which a range of services – such as daryelle training, drug stores, boreholes, and schools – can be managed, but they also give pastoral communities a vehicle through which they can negotiate and further their interests. In order for this second objective to be achieved, there needs to be a strong connection between the associations at a local level and key institutions at district and national levels, and this is the subject of the next chapter.

The process through which the associations took shape was critical. Important principles were established: encouraging leadership by the community, insisting on their contribution, but moving at their pace. The judgement of project staff was constantly tested: when to hold back and when to intervene; when to accept that another view was correct. The action plans and constitutions became important tools, which were used from time to time as reminders of what had been collectively agreed, while visits by the whole project team to each association every three to four months were an opportunity for an open discussion of progress and problems.

Even though it is too early to test the long-term sustainability of the associations, there are at least positive indications that the right conditions have been established for this to be achieved. Those associations that emerged in Phase I, and with which Oxfam has not worked directly now for more than three years, are still active. Rahay Hassan, one of the WPDP Project Officers, comments:
The pastoral association in Khorof Harar recently wrote a proposal and convinced a donor to give them three million shillings. I don’t think that Oxfam gave them as much as that during the whole time we were with them. Rather than the negative image that people had in the past, which was that you couldn’t do any effective work in pastoralism, we have tried to show that pastoralists are people from whom we can learn, and who can make things change.

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**Case study 1**

**Working with women in Wajir town: savings, credit, and literacy**

The work with communities in Wajir town, and specifically the credit programme with women, started after the work with the pastoral associations. However, the same principles and approaches were applied: the importance of building up adequate understanding and capacity before providing significant inputs; working at a pace which each group felt was comfortable; questioning and challenging, rather than dictating solutions; using familiar examples from daily life in discussions; and promoting a sense of accountability and mutual responsibility.

Progress with women’s groups in and around the smaller settlements has proved to be much slower than with those in Wajir town. Marketing and income-generating opportunities are fewer, and gender roles conform more closely to traditional stereotypes. But in the town, women’s lives are being transformed. This transformation brings both opportunities and costs, increasing the social and economic pressures that women experience, but lifting the constraints which might otherwise have been placed on what they could do in response. Rahay Hassan, the Project Officer who has taken most of the responsibility for developing work in Wajir town, describes here how it was done.

During our first meetings, the women identified a lack of capital as one of the constraints on their businesses. It was clear that they had the capacity to do much more, if only they could get access to credit. There were no financial institutions in Wajir which would support them, because they had no tangible assets as collateral. The only way of accessing a loan was from a money-lender or wholesaler, and this was expensive and possible only for women who knew somebody. The issue for Oxfam was how to help the very poor. A rich person and a poor person are not the same. Any credit scheme needs to be assessed according to the context in which it operates, and the nature of poverty in
that area. The WPDP wanted to develop a credit scheme which was both socially relevant and financially viable.

It's really hard to start a project which you have never done before, but we were keen to learn from the experiences of other organisations in Kenya and elsewhere. I went through books and read about what different countries were doing. I visited a credit scheme in Kariobangi, Nairobi, and I went on a three-month course in the UK to learn about promoting and financing small and medium enterprises. From my findings, credit programmes are complex and management-intensive, and therefore require properly planned and well-established systems to be put in place.

So I decided to hold discussions with all the groups – 87 of them at the beginning – and tried to understand what had made them come together. We also discussed the importance of forming a group, its membership, purpose, and role, and how to identify viable activities by carrying out a feasibility study and developing a marketing strategy. Then finally we talked about providing credit, and we spent a long time explaining that the credit scheme must be owned and managed by the community, and that Oxfam would only facilitate the process.

We encouraged each village to form an umbrella group called a *kulmiye* (meaning “coming together”), which would manage the scheme on behalf of all the primary groups in that village. We did this by asking the women, “If we give you the credit, how will you disburse and manage it?” They said that each of the groups would open a savings account. When we asked them why they needed to operate a separate account for each group, they said that they didn’t trust each other. So we said, “OK, it’s true that you might not trust each other, but think of the work and expense involved. If each group has to open an account, register with Social Services, get photos, signatories, and photocopies of the papers, all of which will cost 3000 shillings for each group, then ten groups in one village will need 30,000 shillings – money which could be used for other activities. It would be much cheaper if all the groups formed an umbrella body and opened a joint account.”

So the groups agreed to form the *kulmiye*, with a joint account, and discussed its objectives. These were to co-ordinate women’s activities, to resolve disputes among members, to facilitate the disbursement and repayment of loans and the collection of savings, to check on defaulters, and to link the groups with ALDEF and Oxfam. The women referred to the *kulmiye* as “the mother of all the groups” and the link between them. There is a Somali proverb which says: “Between the camel going to water and the person leading it is a string which ties them together”. They said that, in the same way, the *kulmiye* would act as a link between the primary groups and Oxfam.
The committee of each kulmiye is elected from its primary groups. The women decided the criterion for choosing people – which was that they should be honest and hardworking – and then elected six officials. After they had chosen their officials, they discussed how to conduct meetings and manage the kulmiye, and how to deal with absentees or with people who might default. We also explained the importance of a service charge, which was intended to cover the scheme’s administrative expenses. This was hard for them to understand, but we used real examples and asked them, “If you were selling an item, and the buying price was 100 shillings, would you sell at 100 shillings or would you ask for more?” They said that of course they would ask for more, to cover their costs and the time spent while selling. In this way they realised that the ten per cent service charge would cover the same. All of these discussions were carried out before we gave them any loan.

A series of meetings and training workshops was conducted in each of the seven bullas. We emphasised the importance of regular meetings for each kulmiye and primary group, in order to encourage the discipline among members to save regularly, repay loans on time, and use the group to discuss progress. We finally disbursed the first loan in April 1996, by which time there were more than 100 groups. The lending level was initially quite small – 10,000 shillings – and it rose with each repayment. Some of the groups have now repaid five or six loans, and the amount of money which has revolved over the past four years has now reached over ten million shillings.

Figure 9: Members of a women’s credit group in Wajir town
At the end of each loan, we meet with each *kulmiye* to assess the impact. At first they find it a hard question to answer, how the loans have changed their lives. They think of change as somebody building a house, for example. So we ask them to describe their daily activities and cost them out. For example, one woman might say that she bought three goats, and that they had all had kids, and that she can now have milk in the morning and in the evening with her tea. So we work out how much milk she has got throughout the period, and calculate its value, and then she can see the gains.

Within the overall credit scheme, there are also smaller amounts of credit revolving among the women. We were told of a woman who goes out in the morning to collect firewood. This is hard work, and by the time she comes back in the afternoon she is tired and has nothing to cook for her children. So she goes to the small shop which some women have started in the village; because they know her, they give her foodstuffs such as sugar, tea leaves, and maize on credit. Maybe this comes to 40 shillings, which they record. In the morning she sells her firewood and repays the 40 shillings. Without the credit scheme and the growth of these small village shops, that mother and her children might have slept hungry.

When you ask women what difference the credit scheme has made, they will say that they have got their own village bank now. They will say that they have been able to buy one or two milking goats, re-thatch their huts, eat more than one meal a day, or pay school fees for their children. They also have the small shops in the villages, which have reduced the distance and the time taken to walk into the town. And they are able to purchase materials at cheaper prices and to accumulate savings. The economy of the town has improved, although the smaller retail shops where the women used to buy have come under pressure. The women have also started other projects. Some of the *kulmiyes* have started pre-primary schools. There are three now, one of which teaches the Koran as well as the primary curriculum. Before, women had to leave their children at home, where no one cared for them. The school is mainly managed by its members (the mothers), who share responsibilities between them. Each child brings a piece of firewood and three litres of water each morning, and the women take turns to cook.

The women also asked for a literacy programme, which began in early 1999 and was run by ALDEF, in collaboration with the Department for Adult Education and Oxfam. The programme was introduced to help the women to acquire functional literacy so that they could improve their businesses through better record-keeping. They used to have to ask people to help them to write, and if someone wasn’t honest, they might be cheated. Being unable to read and write is a real practical problem. For example, some of the milk that
Case study 1

they sell is supplied by family members in the trading centre. It arrives in containers with labels showing the name of the woman and the person who sent it. If a woman can’t read her name, she will try to guess which container is hers, by looking for one of the right colour. Maybe the woman at the other end normally sends it in a yellow container, but one day the yellow container gets burnt, so she sends it in a white container. But the woman in the town doesn’t know this and carries on looking for the yellow one. Now, the women tell us that they can read their names, and they know what belongs to them. We have not achieved very much, but at least women can now sign their names, write the date, and recognise numbers and letters. Some can do simple calculations, and a few can read and write.

Visitors to the programme still question whether the service charge is too low, and therefore whether the scheme is financially sustainable. But we need to remember what the main objective was, which was to give the poorest people access to credit which could then revolve among themselves. People can go for a month here without selling anything, so we had to design a scheme which suits this situation.

Most of the management responsibilities have now been passed over to the kulmiyes, which approve new loan applications, collect the savings, and follow up any defaulters. The women know each other well, and can tell who is genuine, and whose businesses are likely to work. We have tried to help them understand that the scheme is like a village bank — that the money will stay in the village and never leave it. The women already feel that this is a community-owned institution, which is why there have been very few defaulters. If people had been given loans thinking that the money was Oxfam’s, they might have felt less responsible towards it.

The kulmiyes have a repayment record of over 98 per cent. They support 261 groups, made up of women from over 2700 households. There are lots of reasons why the scheme has worked. The loan size was kept small at the beginning, to let women develop confidence in their business abilities, and the procedures were kept simple. We insisted on a group saving something before a loan was approved, and we invested a lot in the process of group formation. We also invested in the leadership skills of the kulmiyes, and then left them to decide the terms of the loan. Collective loan agreements helped to encourage joint accountability, and a combination of mutual support and peer pressure helped to minimise the number of defaulters. We also invited the elders to act as guarantors of the loans, partly to provide another safeguard, but partly also to help to minimise antagonism between women and men, given that women were being specifically targeted through the programme.
But the most important reason for the scheme’s success has been the way we work with people. If we had said, “Do this”, people would probably have resisted. Rather, we ask them, “How do you want to do it?” And when they tell us how they want to do it, we ask them why they want to do it that way. They will tell us the positive reasons behind their choice, but we also help them to think about the other side, the negatives. If, after discussing it, we still think that they have come to the wrong decision, we encourage them to think about it for a little longer. The process is always the most important thing, however long it takes.
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Far keligeed fool madhaqtho
(Somali proverb, meaning: 'One finger alone cannot wash a face').

A discussion paper written in 1992 recommended that three broad principles should guide future donor support for pastoral development in Africa. These were employing participative approaches, influencing the broader policy context, and encouraging collaboration among organisations involved in pastoral development. The previous chapter has shown how the first of these principles was applied in Wajir. The second and third principles are the subject of this one, which describes the network of relationships which the WPDP developed with other organisations. It examines the potential of this collaborative approach for influencing others, but also illustrates the scale of the challenge involved in rebuilding institutional capacity. The previous chapter explored Oxfam's role as facilitator and guide; this one considers its role as catalyst and advocate.

The chapter begins by describing the institutional context in Wajir, and the roles of the various actors who have an impact on pastoral development. It then looks at three strategies which the WPDP has used to bring about changes in the policy or practice of others. First, modelling new ways of working, and in so doing encouraging their adoption and building wider support for the principles which underpin them. Second, investing in the skills and resources of specific organisations - and fostering the growth of new ones where necessary - which will be critical in ensuring that the needs of pastoralists are more effectively addressed in future. And third, advocating specific policy changes which, if achieved, would have a long-term beneficial impact on pastoralism. Although the subject of the chapter is organisational capacity and collaboration, a key theme running through it is the significance of individuals in making change happen, through their patronage, influence, or actions.
Background

The Wajir project was structured in three phases of three years each. Although the first phase was not strictly a pilot, in that it had its own clear outputs and was designed to deliver specific services, it was to some extent regarded as experimental, in that it was trying to test out a different way of working in pastoral areas. One element of this approach was the recognition that sustainable development depends upon the collaborative and mutually supportive action of a range of actors at all levels, in both the public and voluntary sectors. This was clearly not a new idea, but it was a challenge which was particularly acute in the pastoral areas of Kenya, given their relatively weak institutional capacity, compared with other parts of the country. The reasons for this weakness are several: they include historical patterns of under-development in infrastructure, education, and the economy which have never been reversed; an ill-informed, neglectful, and sometimes hostile State; and a government administration whose performance is undermined by the lack of an appropriate policy framework and by ever-decreasing financial and material resources.

Phase 1 of the WPDP tried to lay a solid foundation for meeting this challenge by establishing positive working relationships with a range of organisations in the district, and with government in particular. Although the focus of the work in Phase 1 was largely on selected local communities (albeit implemented in partnership with other district-level actors), the limitations of acting solely at this level were clearly understood. The intention had always been to look for ways in which local-level experience could not only be replicated but might also inform and shape the direction of pastoral development policy. Jim Harvey, Natural Resources Adviser for DFID (then ODA) in Nairobi at the time, remembers: ‘A key aspect of the project was its transformative role – its intention to address policy and institutional change as well as service delivery, and thus have much wider potential impact. Most other proposals by NGOs at that time focused on service delivery, but the key thing which the Wajir project offered was to get a better balance between delivering tangible benefits to poor people and achieving wider-level change.’

From an early stage, then, the team never limited their thinking or their ambition, only the immediate focus of their work, recognising that it was sensible to begin on a manageable scale. But Phase 2 brought a clear expansion (as summarised in Table 1 in Chapter 1). The project’s goal was now to reduce poverty and vulnerability and increase social equity in Wajir district as a whole, rather than exclusively among specific communities in Wajir Bor division and Wajir town (as was the case in Phase 1). An explicit output was to help district bodies to become more responsive to pastoralists’ needs. Capacity-
building activities were planned with the district authorities, as well as with the local NGOs supported during Phase 1. The planning process for Phase 2 also placed greater emphasis on developing further the project's exit strategy, and identifying the roles that various organisations might play as part of that.

It might be useful to explain how the words 'organisation' and 'institution' are being used in this context. A common definition of institutions is that they are 'stable patterns of behaviour that are recognised and valued by society'. These might or might not take on an organisational form, with their own purpose, structure, and role, but what they have in common is that they have developed a degree of stability and serve a collective purpose which is to some degree valued. 'Put simply, organisations are collections of individuals who fulfil roles in order to realise common goals. Organisations can become institutionalised as they acquire social value and stability. Institutional development deals with changes that are meant to occur in social structures, organisational development with changes limited to organisations themselves.'

This chapter assesses the way in which organisations of whatever kind, government or non-government, can start to influence and shape the fundamental values and expectations of society, which are themselves often expressed through the character and behaviour of institutions. Some of the most significant organisations and institutions in Wajir are described below.

Organisational and Institutional analysis of Wajir District

- **Government structures**: A patchwork of committees and sub-committees – each with its own acronym – is responsible for managing the business of government at district level. The District Development Committee (DDC) is the highest decision-making forum in the district on development matters. It is chaired by the District Commissioner, the senior representative of government in the district, and is attended by the heads of government departments and NGOs and by political leaders.

- The DDC has a variety of sub-committees, one of those most relevant to the Wajir project being the Pastoral Steering Committee (PSC), which coordinates the activities of all those working in the pastoral sector, from both government and non-government agencies. In particular, it supports the activities of the District Pastoral Association, a federal body representing more than 20 pastoral associations.
Two important government initiatives promoting pastoral development – the Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP) and the Nomadic Primary Health Care Project (NPHC) – each have their own inter-sectoral steering committee, called the District Steering Group (DSG) and the District Intersectoral Committee (DIC) respectively. These report to the DDC, as does the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC), which was set up to co-ordinate the efforts of a broad range of actors in promoting peace.

Line ministries, such as those responsible for water, health care, and education, play an important role in providing technical support and in promoting regulatory measures. But lack of funding and frequent turnover of staff have had a negative effect on their capacity and effectiveness.

The political representatives in the district include councillors at both local and district levels, and Members of Parliament from the district's four constituencies. In common with most pastoral areas, Wajir has tended to return candidates from the ruling party, although in the most recent elections one MP was elected from an opposition party. Both groups, of MPs and councillors, have proved to be very variable in the level of their understanding of pastoral development issues, and in the quality of their commitment to poverty-reduction initiatives.

Chiefs are recruited through the civil service and are therefore government administrative appointees, but their role has become heavily politicised in recent years. The number of chiefs and sub-chiefs has increased rapidly, linked with a corresponding increase in the number of settlements and administrative sub-divisions. This has caused widespread concern, particularly because of its environmental impact. However, as the number of chiefs increases, so do perceptions that their power is declining. Both government departments and NGOs now place greater emphasis on working through representative structures at a local level, which may in turn lead to a corresponding increase in the influence of elders.

The nature of Somali society is shaped by social divisions based on clans, which trace their descent through named ancestors to a common founder. There are three main clans in Wajir (Ogaden, Ajuran, and Degodia), which in turn are divided into sub-clans and then into sections. The clan traditionally provided protection and support, and regulated the use of customary resources. Inter-clan conflict in the past tended to relate to
competition over water and grazing, but more recently has been linked with political representation.

- Most people in Wajir are practising Muslims. Islam is a powerful force in many people's lives, and the discipline of the prayer cycle central to daily life and work. The annual Islamic tax given to the poor (zakaat) has been used by the pastoral associations to redistribute resources. Somali society also has traditional welfare mechanisms which encourage the sharing of milk and the giving of alms.

- **Non-government agencies**: There is a strong history of voluntary action in Wajir, most notably demonstrated by the Wajir Volunteer Group, which was recently registered as an NGO called ALDEF (Arid Lands Development Focus). One or two international organisations in addition to Oxfam are active in the district, such as World Vision, while religious organisations, both Muslim and Christian, implement a variety of development programmes. Recent years have seen a growth in the number of local organisations, although of varying quality and capacity.

- **Private-sector** activity in the district has been limited in its reach by poor infrastructure and low population density. Some commodities, such as sugar and clothing, penetrate to the most remote locations; but lack of competition inflates the price of essential inputs, such as livestock drugs, which are often of poor quality. The pastoral associations have attempted to address this by providing for their members what is in effect a privatised mechanism for the provision of key services in water and health, over which they can then exercise greater control. Few market outlets for livestock or livestock products exist, and those that do are subject to high levels of government regulation and to exploitation by traders. There is also a lack of financial services, such as credit or insurance, appropriate to the needs of pastoralists or the very poor. It is possible that private-sector activity may grow as the skills and knowledge which help to create demand for items also grow, and as individual traders find it increasingly profitable to intervene and to demonstrate that they can improve on the services currently on offer.

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**Modelling new ways of working**

One of the challenges facing any development agency is to clarify the nature of its role and the extent of its responsibilities in any given context. This is particularly critical for those working in the kind of situation which prevailed
in Wajir when the WPDP began, which was one of declining government capacity and limited activity by other agencies, many of whom had left the district when violent inter-clan conflict broke out in 1993. In such a context, the temptation for an NGO might be to take on a more prominent role, intervening in areas which are normally the preserve of government.

It could be argued that this is indeed what Oxfam has done, and from time to time it has certainly faced accusations of creating structures parallel to those of government. These accusations are voiced particularly by newly arrived district officials unfamiliar with the background to the WPDP's approach. But most of those who have studied the project have noted how the team has tried to apply the same principles in its relationship with the district authorities as it did with community organisations. Transparency, accountability, and collaboration have guided work at both levels. Clarity and consistency in managing resources have also been important. A report from a visiting consultant in September 1996 noted the following: "Oxfam has played a facilitating role with government departments. It has avoided coming with lots of resources and has clarified when it can and can not provide inputs – i.e. only when the activity directly relates to the project's own objectives, and always on a cost-sharing basis."4

Dekha Ibrahim agrees that Oxfam did not take the place of government. In her view, what it did was to experiment with a range of approaches and ideas in areas where the government was unable, for whatever reason, to go. This can often be a particularly fruitful role for non-government organisations to play, given that they are supposed to be less bound by bureaucracy and less constrained by established patterns of behaviour than official bodies tend to be. Within Oxfam GB, there is a risk that the space to do this may become smaller, as organisational growth brings with it the possibility of diminished flexibility. But in the early 1990s in Wajir, the team was able to innovate and experiment with considerable freedom.

The development of the pastoral-association model is one example of an approach which Oxfam and other agencies tested, and which the district authorities are now committed to replicate on a wider scale. But modelling can also concern principles and values, which in turn may lead to changes in behaviour. Dekha remembers an occasion when some of the women's groups in Wajir town achieved a significant improvement in the quality of accountability within the district, simply by demanding a different standard of behaviour.

In about 1996 there was a political fundraising for women, and all the women's groups were asked to donate 10,000 shillings. Other groups just gave the money, while the Oxfam-supported groups in Wajir town said that they
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would contribute, but that they wanted a receipt. The chief was furious and went to the District Commissioner, who called Oxfam and the women to see him. The women explained that all they wanted was to know where their money was going. The District Commissioner was a good person and agreed with them, and from then on this incident changed the whole policy of collecting money from the public. If there is any public fundraising today, people will now ask for receipts.

Thus, individuals can bring about changes in the behaviour of institutions by the example that they set to others.

Another illustration of this is the way in which food aid has been managed in Wajir. Phase 1 of the project coincided with a period of relative stability, although its start was marked by conflict, and its end by the beginnings of drought. Phase 2, however, witnessed a series of emergencies – drought in 1996/7, followed by an unprecedented period of flooding in 1998, followed by another drought in 2000. The same team of staff, albeit periodically increased in size, managed a succession of relief activities in addition to the long-term project, part of which involved the distribution of food aid. During the past decade, Oxfam in East Africa has developed a particular approach to food distribution: one which emphasises accountability to beneficiaries through a simple system of transparent management by the community itself. This same approach was introduced to Wajir in 1996, and when it became clear

Figure 10: Emergency distribution of maize at Leheley, a settlement near Wajir town, following floods which severed road connections in 1998 for six months
that a higher proportion of people in areas where communities were closely involved in food-aid management were receiving the rations to which they were entitled, elders from other areas used the district-wide relief committee to lobby government authorities to adopt the same system.

And yet simply demonstrating alternative ways of doing things will not be sufficient. In the case of the pastoral associations, there may be weaknesses in the model or in its application which need attention, such as whether the various technical solutions to problems of livestock health and water development are necessarily the best ones, or whether the approach used in promoting gender equity is adequate. Moreover, some of the ways of working developed by the WPDP require a high level of investment, particularly in terms of staff time, which may prove difficult for a government body or small local organisation to replicate.

Nevertheless, there are other ways in which development agencies could use their own working practices to bring about wider change. One example discussed in Wajir was increasing the level of financial accountability to communities. In contrast with the first phase of the project, when there was a strong emphasis on helping associations to consider the value of project resources, a review of the second phase noted that few communities knew the cash value of materials supplied to them by the project; it suggested that, if they did, this kind of knowledge might help them manage more effectively both their resources and their expectations of donors. Dekha Ibrahim agrees, and suggests that greater openness about financial information would set helpful precedents which might then influence others.

If Oxfam explains to the community exactly where its money comes from and how it is being spent — how much on overheads, how much to each pastoral association, and so on, line by line — people can then ask questions and challenge them. More importantly, they could then demand that the government's district budget should be accounted to them in the same way. NGOs can show the way, and others can copy. Modelling these kinds of practices would help to bring about better governance.

During the discussion in Wajir, staff were uncertain where the limits to such transparency might lie. Publicising information about salaries and benefits was one example. In seeking to be a responsible and compassionate employer, Oxfam provides reasonable terms and conditions to its staff around the world — modest by the standards of some international organisations, but still generous in the context of an impoverished district such as Wajir. NGOs tend to aspire in general terms to be accountable to their partners and stakeholders, but
do not necessarily think through the detail of what this means, or of where the limits might lie.

**Building capacity in others**

In order to bring about the changes needed to ensure a sustainable reduction in poverty and vulnerability in places such as Wajir, there needs to be sustained investment in the capacities of organisations which can help either to deliver such change or to sustain it. The WPDP documentation refers to this element of the work as ‘capacity building’. As the title of its most recent publication on the subject suggests, Oxfam regards capacity building not as a tangible set of activities designed to bring about a specific outcome, but rather as an approach to development which reflects the organisation’s beliefs: principally that development should be focused on people, and on achieving positive transformation in their lives and societies.

Strengthening people’s capacity to determine their own values and priorities, and to act on these, is the basis of development. It follows, then, that for Oxfam, capacity building is an approach to development rather than a set of discrete or packaged interventions ... A capacity-building approach to development involves identifying the constraints that women and men experience in realising their basic rights, and finding appropriate vehicles through which to strengthen their ability to overcome the causes of their exclusion and suffering.  

‘Capacity building’ in the context of the WPDP is used as a shorthand for a people-centred approach adopted with communities, through the work with pastoral associations and women’s groups, as well as the focused support provided to more formally constituted organisations. Since the project began, Oxfam has chosen to invest time and resources in certain organisations for one of three reasons: that they meet important needs within the district which Oxfam is not able (or not best placed) to address; that they are a means to promote the sustainability of the WPDP’s approach; or that they are essential to creating an environment in which various actors can become more responsive to and protective of pastoralists’ interests. Short profiles of three district-level bodies – the Wajir Peace and Development Committee, the District Pastoral Association, and the Pastoral Steering Committee – illustrate each of these three purposes.
Supporting the work of others: the Wajir Peace and Development Committee

Insecurity has been a part of life in Wajir for many years, exacerbated by clan-based rivalries, pressure on natural resources, and the undermining of customary institutions of conflict management. Since the collapse of Somalia at the beginning of the 1990s, the district has been increasingly vulnerable to the impact of banditry and the influx of arms. Serious inter-clan conflict broke out in 1992, but became significantly more brutal in June 1993. An internal report written in September 1993 describes what happened. ‘Women and children were targeted and brutally murdered, sometimes burnt beyond recognition, which was senseless and culturally unacceptable. Somalis have always spared them in their fighting. The conflict resumed in early September, and in response combined members of the security forces carried out a disarming operation, using excessive brutality against innocent people in Wajir town. There is fear, tension and hopelessness – people don’t understand what is happening, and rumours of all kinds are rife. Before June we viewed insecurity in the district as just a problem to go around – like a roadblock. But now we find ourselves in the middle of organising conflict-resolution meetings with elders and colleagues. This is an area we are increasingly feeling that we need to support.’

In response to the crisis, several groups of people, including women, elders, Members of Parliament, and religious leaders, began their own spontaneous efforts to promote peace. Women were particularly active and effective in building bridges between divided clans. A Council of Elders for peace was formed, which received strong support from the district administration, and played an important role in mediating between warring parties.

Oxfam’s response throughout this period was simply to facilitate and support the efforts of others, with staff often working in a personal capacity rather than in the name of their organisation. When other international agencies left the district in September 1993 after the killing of a UNICEF pilot, Oxfam was the only one that stayed behind, and in so doing, in the words of Dekha Ibrahim, earned ‘moral authority’ for its subsequent work. There is no doubt that the fact that the team consisted entirely of staff from Wajir was highly significant. They were able to judge more easily than externally recruited staff whether they or the organisation were being deliberately targeted, and to determine which threats should be taken seriously and which could be ignored. Offers of evacuation from Nairobi were refused, partly because it was judged that the conflict was not directed at Oxfam, and partly because of concerns about the impact of evacuation on subsequent work. It was a time in which the choices made by individual staff were critical –
those in Wajir demonstrating considerable personal courage, and managers in Nairobi being willing to support them and trust in their judgement.

In 1995 these local efforts for peace received formal recognition, with the creation of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) as a sub-committee of the District Development Committee (DDC). The WPDC brought together the district administration, the security forces, and a wide cross-section of groups within society, including women, elders, businessmen, and young people. What had started as a community-led response to crisis had developed into a systematic and institutionalised mechanism for managing conflict, encompassing all those with an interest in peace and security, including the army, under the leadership of the District Commissioner. It effectively combined traditional approaches to conflict resolution, through the participation of the elders, with the more formal authority of the State, once again demonstrating how customary practices and contemporary institutions of governance can find common ground, and thus reinforce and enrich each other.

The WPDC seeks to change attitudes to peace and conflict among a very catholic cross-section of the community – in the words of Dekha Ibrahim, 'decommissioning people's minds'. It achieves this by harnessing the skills and resources of each element within that broad social coalition, and by working in ways which respect the fact that all these groups have a legitimate stake in building a peaceful future. An illustration of the way in which the WPDC is able to bring together differing perspectives on governance and justice can be seen in this account of a discussion during a WPDC meeting in August 1999, recalled by Dekha.

At the meeting, the elders were reporting back from their investigations into a series of rapes of young women and girls. They described how the institution of *sabeen* had been used. *Sabeen* is a traditional practice whereby the person who has been wronged is paid a symbolic payment which serves as a form of apology, and which thus breaks the cycle of retribution. In one case an amount of 2500 shillings had been paid, but at this an Air Force officer became angry that a child's emotional trauma could be valued at so little. This prompted a debate about when we say that what the elders have done is sufficient, and when the national justice system should be used. Eventually the elders agreed that although *sabeen* would still be paid, they would also use their influence to encourage the community to flush out criminals and take them to court (rather than having the police come in and take them). However, their condition was that they be reassured of a fair trial, because people had no faith in the justice system to act fairly. For their part, the authorities agreed to clean up the system,
and in this way, the discussion began to address issues of public accountability and confidence."

Oxfam with others has funded parts of the WPDC's work on a regular basis, such as paying for fuel for the vehicles of rapid-response teams. It has also supported the efforts of some of the pastoral associations to promote peace, such as visits of elders from one area to another. However, the profile of work on conflict has fluctuated during the course of the WPDP. In the first draft proposal written in June 1994, conflict features significantly in the document's analysis. But in the final draft, approved towards the end of that year, peace building was not an explicit output. Rather, the intention to address the issue was implicit within the broader objective of strengthening the capacity of local organisations to reduce poverty. The reasons for not making it more overt were mixed: in part a reflection of the sensitivity of the subject at that time, when State and civil society did not yet share sufficient common ground, and when there was less space to become openly involved; but also a recognition that peace building was more appropriately left to local rather than external organisations, and that a generously worded project output would leave room to support those organisations as and when they emerged. It was also clear that the approach taken with other project activities, particularly those which involved the management of common resources such as water and grazing, had the potential either to undermine or to promote peaceful co-existence between various groups, and therefore that conflict-reduction outcomes could be achieved through other means.

The work and aspirations of the WPDC are summarised here by its Secretary, Nuria Abdullahi.

"Our main activities are to respond rapidly to conflict, in order to prevent situations from escalating, and to educate the community through workshops which promote peace-building skills. I believe that people in Wajir are ready to transform conflict situations in a non-violent manner, but we have not yet been able to fully integrate our pastoralist neighbours. There is still a big gap between the WPDC and the capacity of peace organisations in other districts. We need to improve the capacity to sustain peace in northern Kenya as a whole, as the districts are inter-dependent. We are also now venturing into things like peace education in schools, and using our oral culture by exploring drama, songs, and Somali proverbs in peace building."

The WPDC continues to set the standard for peace-building work in Kenya, and has made significant efforts to share its experience – for example by producing a video, and by visiting other parts of the country, such as the
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Rift Valley, where also conflict has been common in recent years. Meanwhile, many of the lessons learned in Wajir are now being scaled up and applied through a new conflict-management programme targeted at ten pastoral districts, which is being co-ordinated by Oxfam in Nairobi in collaboration with government, donors, and other agencies active in peace work. The programme provides a vehicle through which some of the ideas and approaches developed and modelled in Wajir by a broad coalition of people might be replicated in other districts and used to influence the policy of national institutions. The fact that such a programme is being implemented at all is a reflection of a greater openness in Kenya’s political environment, and increased commitment within parts of government to the adoption of sustainable peace-building strategies. It also illustrates the way in which initiatives at district level can in turn open up new opportunities for more substantive change at the national level.

Enhancing sustainability: the District Pastoral Association

At a workshop in November 1995, attended by eleven pastoral associations from across Wajir, including the five originally supported by Oxfam, participants decided to form a district-wide Pastoral Association (DPA). Its purpose was to represent pastoralists' interests to government and other actors, and to help its member associations to take collective action in areas where it would make sense to do so, such as the purchase from Nairobi of livestock drugs and spare parts for boreholes. Omar Jibril, the current Chair of the DPA, recalls some of the factors which led to its creation.

"Many people of different ages and thinking came together to discuss the idea. We saw that our people were livestock herders, and that we needed to do something about this. We saw that the Kenyan government did not recognise the camel, which is one of our most important stock, in the way they do sheep and cattle: no one looks at its treatment or marketing. We saw that the weaknesses and strengths of government depend on the personalities in their departments. Government support is dwindling; we depend on support from others. If we cannot find what we need from within ourselves, how can we organise ourselves so that we can ask the right people to assist us?"

Participants at a second workshop in June 1996 drew up a constitution for the DPA and elected its officials. Towards the end of 1998, two government officials, one from the Water Department and one from the District Veterinary Office, were seconded to the DPA to help to strengthen the quality
of service provision by individual associations. In order to qualify for membership, an association has to meet a range of criteria, including agreement to regular monitoring by the DPA and by the Pastoral Steering Committee (PSC). By the middle of 2000, 22 of the 32 pastoral associations in the district had become members.

The WPDP’s role has been to encourage the concept of the DPA, to participate in its activities, and to support particular events, such as planning workshops. It also part-funded a visit to Nairobi in early 1997 of PA and DPA officials to meet senior staff in central government and to make contact with suppliers of livestock drugs and borehole spare parts. Just as with the pastoral associations, an important part of the WPDP’s support to the district association has been to introduce new ways of working. Omar Jibril explains:

“There is something called training that Oxfam has always done with us, which gives you the ability to help people understand and be convinced about what you are doing – for example, by having clear records that can show how the organisation’s money was spent. The other day I took money to purchase drugs, and I got a receipt for those drugs. I put them on the bus, and got a receipt for the bus. So if any member of the DPA or the PAs comes to ask how the money has been spent, there is a clear track.”

Figure 11: ‘The camel ... is one of our most important stock’ (Omar Jibril, Chair of the District Pastoral Association)
However, despite some important practical achievements, the long-term impact of the DPA is as yet unproven. Its officials attend PSC meetings, but have not yet participated in the DDC, which is their aim. There is considerable scope for the DPA to promote consistency across pastoral associations, for example in establishing uniform prices for drug sales, and to negotiate more favourable market terms. But it will achieve stability only when pastoral associations – which after all provide its mandate and legitimacy – are themselves fully functional, and willing and able to pay for its services. However, the size of Wajir and its poor infrastructure increase the difficulties faced by local-level associations trying to meet and act together.

Peter Kisopia, Oxfam's Programme Co-ordinator in Kenya, summarises some of the challenges that the DPA faces. 'The DPA is viable only in as far as it is directed by the associations at community level. It is the pastoral associations that will support the DPA, but the DPA also needs to be formalised and strengthened, so that it can sustain itself and deliver. How long is it going to depend on the staff seconded from government? Should it be a formally registered body, and what does that mean? How are we going to ensure that the DPA continues listening to the pastoral associations?'

A planning workshop in December 1998 took a critical look at the DPA's progress, raising concerns about its management capacity and its potential to become financially sustainable. Omar Jibril also expresses concern about its lack of capital and fears that progress will be slow. But he is critical too of Oxfam's failure to provide the young organisation with sufficient support, in part a consequence of the added burden of emergency work during Phase 2. 'You see, if you plant something, even if it is a tree, it needs to be watered and cared for until it can support itself with its own roots. Oxfam is not so good at watering the tree it planted there.'

In the long term, the key source of guidance and support for the DPA will be the Pastoral Steering Committee. In turn, a strong and representative DPA will ensure that the PSC is kept closely informed by pastoralists' interests and concerns. The two organisations, with their different constituencies but common concerns, could be instrumental in guiding pastoral development policy and practice within the district, and thus changing the lives of many more people than could be reached at a local level alone.

**Developing a vision for pastoralism: the Pastoral Steering Committee**

The Pastoral Steering Committee (PSC) is a sub-committee of the District Development Committee (DDC) established in May 1995 as a co-ordinating body for all those working in the pastoral sector. Oxfam was instrumental in its formation, for reasons which Mohamed Elmi explains.
Changing the attitudes and behaviours of individuals is a big problem in pastoral areas. Some government officers have little understanding of the place, particularly those from agricultural areas of the country, and although a few by nature are very good, others aren’t. Turnover is very high, so by the time the good ones are beginning to understand, they start to leave. There’s no human-resource strategy in government generally, but it’s particularly weak in these areas. There’s no sense of direction, no checks and balances, no accountability. Individuals just do things on a case-by-case basis. What we tried to encourage with the PSC was the development of a three-year vision for pastoral development, towards which everyone would work. At district level it’s really important that you have a core group of people like this who are trying to give some direction.

The members of the PSC are the heads of government departments and NGOs which have an interest in pastoral development. As a sub-committee of the DDC, the PSC is firmly embedded in the government structure, and the relationship between the two committees is important. The purpose of the PSC is to set out its vision for pastoral development, but it needs to do this as part of the district’s broader development strategy. The PSC can provide valuable perspectives on pastoralism for the DDC, some of whose members have less direct contact with the pastoral sector. The influencing role of PSC members in DDC discussions is thus critical.

The PSC’s function is also to support the local and district pastoral associations and to co-ordinate all pastoral development activities. Its remit includes training and curriculum development for extension workers in human and animal health care, as well as research, planning, and advocacy on a range of issues which affect the pastoral economy. It sees itself as a mechanism which adds value to the efforts of its individual members by implementing activities which they would be unable to undertake alone.

At a practical level the PSC has provided technical support to the District Pastoral Association (DPA), through training and extension services, and created greater exposure for pastoral associations outside the district, for example in arranging for some of the daryelles to exhibit their work at the annual show in the neighbouring district of Garissa, and in facilitating the DPA’s Nairobi visit. At a more strategic level it has influenced the direction of district development planning, promoted greater regulation of livestock-health activities, and documented what it considers to be best practice in working with pastoral associations. It has also been able to halt some potentially negative actions by private individuals, such as inappropriate water development or land allocation.
Oxfam was a founder member of the PSC, and has funded and facilitated such activities as planning workshops and monitoring visits. It has also ensured that its own plans are consistent with those of the PSC, making an explicit commitment to support certain parts of the PSC's first three-year strategy. The danger of external NGOs taking over responsibilities which rightly belong with government is all too evident in impoverished districts such as Wajir. But a mechanism such as the PSC helps to ensure that the development agenda remains firmly led by government, and that NGOs then find the most appropriate ways of influencing and contributing to that.

The role of individuals
One factor which has influenced the PSC's capacity and effectiveness has been the role played by its individual members. A small group of key people was instrumental in getting the PSC established and recognised: the District Veterinary Officer, the District Development Officer, the head of the government's Arid Lands programme in Wajir, the co-ordinators of the Nomadic Primary Health Care programme, and the Oxfam project manager. Mohamed Elmi explains how working informally with other colleagues can help to push an idea along.

"You need to identify and cultivate - sometimes outside the formal meetings - a core group of people who have a similar vision and who are open to different ways of doing things. It helps to build momentum and to deal with the politics in a place, so that when you come to the formal meeting, there are already other people who know where you are thinking of going, rather than opening the box with your ideas inside it there and then."

There were certainly occasions when the strategy of building alliances with colleagues inside and outside government protected the new experimental approaches from attack, particularly from people seeking personal gain. Simple actions such as respecting the district structures for decision-making, and being open about project plans and resources in those meetings, do much to build the mutual trust which is essential to effective working relationships. Once again, the obligations and benefits of transparency - this time with government authorities - are clear.

Individuals can thus be highly instrumental in the development of institutions such as the PSC, but there are risks if a system becomes over-reliant on them. Many of those who had been the main agents in the PSC's formation had left the district within two years. Their departure coincided with the arrival of other individuals who did not share the same
approach, and the PSC started to lose direction. However, it succeeded in regaining a clear sense of direction during a subsequent review workshop, and since then has made stronger progress.

Respecting institutions
An outstanding concern remains the extent to which the broader policy framework governing district development is in tune with the approach being promoted by the Pastoral Steering Committee. The PSC reports to the more powerful District Development Committee, which has a much wider remit and far less awareness of the impact of its decisions on pastoralists. There are concerns, therefore, about the degree to which the PSC can have much effect, given that it has to operate within an environment which is largely unreceptive to the issues that it is trying to raise. An evaluation of the Wajir project, conducted as part of DFID's review of its sustainable agriculture programme in Kenya in 2000, noted the following: 'The successful operation of the Pastoral Steering Committee highlights the poor engagement of the "mainstream" governmental structure: the Locational Development Committees, the County Council and the DDC for example. According to the PSC, the DDC is not pro-pastoral and thinks in terms of sedentarisation and physical structures. Hence the mainstream continues to make decisions that are contrary to the advice of the pastoralists' representatives ... Project staff and most local interviewees maintained that it will be impossible to change the district political structure without broader national change.'

This may not be the central issue, however. All the PSC members are also members of the DDC, and if they are strong in putting their case, they can exercise considerable influence. Evidence of this can be seen in a comparison of the district development plan for 1994–96 with that for 1997–2001, which was written after the PSC had been established, and which shows significant differences. The earlier plan worries about issues of over-stocking, migration, and inappropriate management of natural resources. Its general tone and language reinforce negative perceptions of pastoralism. For example, the 'migratory nature of the people' is highlighted as being 'one of the major constraining factor [sic] to development in the district'. However, the later plan is markedly different. It emphasises the need for action in areas such as drought management, human capacity, insecurity, and credit – making the interesting point that the main asset of pastoralists (livestock) is not generally accepted as security for a loan. Elsewhere it expresses concern that irrigation of the Lorian swamp in the south of the district may conflict with pastoralists' interests; it refers to the importance of ecologically sustainable use of the rangelands when considering the options available for water development;
it describes the way in which insecurity interferes with the migration cycles of pastoral households; and it states that ‘the creation of permanent settlements will be monitored and controlled to ensure that it does [not] destroy [the] current basis of pastoralism’. The problem is rather one which affects many institutions in Kenya and elsewhere, namely that powerful individuals may try to exercise influence behind the scenes to ensure that what they want goes ahead. A recent example of this has been boreholes drilled by other agencies in the west and south of the district. The district authorities had originally refused to let them proceed, on the grounds of their damaging environmental impact, but MPs by-passed the district system by putting pressure on the Provincial office, which ordered that they should go ahead.

So the critical issue is perhaps the failure to respect institutions, which in part results from a lack of informed debate. Within the district and outside it, there are genuinely held views that settlement provides the ‘solution’ to pastoralist poverty. The weak link at present is the political authorities, which the WPDP has not yet made any significant effort to influence. Dekha Ibrahim explains the problem.

The project has really done well in working with government at district level, but the big gap is the relationship with the political authorities – both the councillors at locational level, and the Wajir County Council. The County Council is a crucial institution in terms of the financial sustainability of the district. It’s a bit like a district parliament, with elected representatives and a development mandate covering things like education, taxation, and town planning. But it has major problems, which may be why people are nervous of investing in it. A few years ago there were 34 councillors, and now there are over 100, which is unsustainable. Most of these have little education and are causing problems for pastoralists by their support for things like the creation of more sub-locations, which is damaging the pastoral economy. But the more the councillors are left out, the more harm they may create.

The same argument applies to the district’s four Members of Parliament. MPs now have greater influence in Kenya, given the more mixed composition of the national parliament, and District Commissioners are consequently more ready to listen to them. In theory this could make government structures more accountable; in practice, MPs have shown their willingness to engage with Oxfam and other actors. However, their influence has not yet been used to deliver positive gains for pastoralism, and the space within which they can manoeuvre is curtailed by the pressures of a political system still driven by
patronage. At the start of the project, the political climate in Kenya was very different. Now there is more opportunity to debate issues of poverty and development with political leaders, and to create the forums at district level within which these issues can be addressed.

**Getting the policy environment right**

One issue which has exposed the differing viewpoints of the PSC and the political authorities is the recent rise in administrative sub-divisions in the district and in the corresponding numbers of chiefs and sub-chiefs. The pattern of settlement in previous decades was typically that a water source such as a borehole, or a few wells, would be created in a certain place, in order to provide water through the dry season. Traders would establish themselves at that point, which would subsequently be demarcated as an administrative location or sub-location. A chief or sub-chief would then be appointed, and a small settlement would start to develop. (Settlements vary in size, but typically consist of a group of simple but permanent buildings: family homes, a few businesses, and perhaps some kind of government office, clinic, or school.)

In the 1990s, however, areas of land were demarcated as locations/sub-locations, and chiefs/sub-chiefs were appointed, prior to anyone settling in them. Clans would compete to secure the appointment of their own candidate as chief, who would then secure their access to the surrounding grazing land. This shift was connected with the introduction of a multi-party political system in the 1990s. The ruling party needed to find ways of recruiting and rewarding its supporters; in pastoral districts such as Wajir, employment as a chief or sub-chief, with the space to establish a power base in a particular centre, was one strategy which was used.

The pace of settlement, as well as its pattern, has also changed. In 1940 there were four settlements in the district, at Gurar, Buna, Habaswein, and Wajir. By 1996 there were 45. The number of locations and sub-locations rose three-fold between 1992 and 1996, such that there are now almost 190, in about 50 of which small trading centres have developed. These changes in the pace and pattern of settlement have had a negative impact on grazing, on the productivity of livestock, on herd composition, and on herding practices. As the PSC suggests in its guidelines on working with pastoral associations: 'While this [i.e. settlement, and the infrastructural development which accompanies it] has brought clear benefits to nomadic and settled populations, it also carries risks of reducing the mobility of the pastoral population and, therefore, their capacity to use range resources effectively under conditions of low and erratic rainfall.'
The issue is one which was well understood before the WPDP began, as illustrated in a report prepared by Peter Kisopia, Oxfam's Programme Co-ordinator in Kenya, in June 1993. ‘Pastoralists in the rangelands feel strongly that water points have to be developed according to the migration patterns, and should be temporary to avoid settlement leading to environmental destruction. It should be noted that a number of new sub-locations have been formed, and that the newly appointed assistant chiefs are planning to have their own centres, which will become permanent settlements. Care should be taken to avoid being caught up in the trap of concentrating development activities around the chief's camp and market centres, completely neglecting the pastoralists in the rangelands. It is encouraging to note that people are aware of such a danger.’

The first phase of the WPDP coincided with this rapid expansion in the number of locations. Pastoral associations began expressing their concern. At the inter-association workshop in November 1995, the consensus was that the advantages of this trend were clearly outweighed by the disadvantages. These were felt to be increased insecurity, increased financial demands on people, and reductions in the amount and quality of grazing available for livestock. Participants agreed to begin raising the issue with their councillors and MPs.

In order to gather more evidence of what was happening, Oxfam and the Department of Livestock Production in Wajir carried out some joint research. The findings proved to be very powerful, demonstrating that the problem was worse than most people thought. However, the production of the report coincided with an election year, and the issues that it raised were politically sensitive. Further action on the report's recommendations was therefore postponed until the climate was more conducive.

Until this point, Oxfam's approach to policy change had largely been focused on single issues, such as animal health or education, and reliant on promoting changes in practice which it was hoped would then be codified in policy. The approach was less systematic than it subsequently became, and involved seeking out and cultivating individuals or institutions which it was felt might exercise particular influence. The ALRMP, for example, was singled out as a strategic institution, and deliberate efforts made to build a strong relationship with its staff.

By the end of Phase 1, however, it was becoming clear that the more important challenge was the absence of an overall framework within which specific sectoral issues could be raised. A national pastoral development policy seemed to be the solution, rather than each sector trying to push its own agenda. This thinking derived in large part from discussions in the Wajir
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PSC, whose members made it clear that they could achieve only so much at district level, without parallel changes being introduced in the national environment. The third and final phase of the WPDP will therefore be closely linked with work in Nairobi to support the development of this national policy, in collaboration with the ALRMP.

The policy will be integrated within the process of national development planning, so that it is central to government direction and resource allocation. It will cover a range of practical issues, including recognition of community animal-health workers, community management of natural resources, conflict management, integration of mobile education with the formal system, management of water sources, and recognition of pastoral institutions. And it will set the benchmark for ways of working in pastoral areas, making explicit the value of pastoral production to the national economy, and affirming the rights of pastoral communities to equitable development. The process of developing it will be as important as its content, in the sense that it will be used as a means to develop greater understanding and consensus about the direction for pastoralism in Kenya. A clear framework at national level should in turn inform the priorities of district structures such as the DDCs, and provide a benchmark against which individuals can be held accountable. Once again, the close links between district and national level policy are clear.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ways in which a variety of organisations in Wajir have sought to bring about more strategic change in the interests of pastoral communities. Individuals have played an important role within their organisations in helping this change to happen – whether as enlightened government officials or as community activists. However, individuals can also block change and subvert agreed ways of working, and therefore checks and balances are required which will ensure that the priorities on which the majority have reached consensus are not undermined by the personal aspirations of the few. This is the logic behind institutions such as the Pastoral Steering Committee, which encourage collective judgements to be made about pastoral development policy and practice, thus guarding against individual bias.

An important lesson from Wajir is the value of building alliances with people and organisations who share the same concerns, establishing some common ground and expanding this as others get involved. Certain key individuals and departments, such as some of the line ministries and the ALRMP, have proved to be valuable allies in promoting changes in government
thinking from within, particularly when they have a presence at both district and national level. Recent changes to national drought-management policy, for example, and to the management of food aid across Kenya, have been introduced as a direct result of the influence exercised by a combination of government and non-government actors.

However, the district's experience of conflict management has also shown that alliances need to be built not only with the apparently like-minded, but with anyone who has a legitimate stake in the outcome. The army and security forces, and traders and the private sector have not tended to be natural allies for development agencies. But by incorporating them in the peace-building process, the district established a mechanism through which a wide spectrum of society could make a contribution and find common ground. The work of the WPDC illustrated the importance of being as creative and open-minded as possible in defining who might be an ally.

The fundamental logic behind all this work is the assumption that a sustainable reduction in poverty in pastoral areas can come about only through changes in the policies which govern national development planning and resource allocation, and changes in the perceptions and beliefs of key individuals responsible for that process. The changes themselves need to be driven by the concerns of those most directly affected, hence the significance of institutions such as the District Pastoral Association, which in theory can provide a channel into government decision-making, whether directly, through their participation in government structures, or indirectly, through the influence that the DPA and similar bodies can exercise on processes such as the national pastoral-development and poverty-reduction strategies. In practice, however, the DPA is still very weak, and despite some successes by pastoral associations and the PSC in reversing some potentially damaging decisions over land allocation, the capacity of pastoralists to exercise significant influence on policy is as yet unproven.

In keeping with the holistic approach adopted by the WPDP as a whole, an important characteristic of the policy-influencing work in Wajir has been that it is seen as integral to the rest of the project, and carried out by the same staff, whose knowledge, experience, and contacts give them a base from which to speak out with credibility.

Mohamed Mursal, Project Manager during the second phase of the WPDP, closes this chapter by summarising some of the issues which have been raised.

"A community is like a school, which is always there, but whose students, teachers, and administrators come and go. The communities would like someone to be with them as a technician, who will help them to develop their
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focus, and today Oxfam is seen as that technician. But Oxfam is only temporary here – it is the government that will last. We want the government to be as responsive as possible, to ensure that all these things which communities have started are supported. It can, however, be very difficult to maintain consistency, because government officials are constantly changing faces. Every individual who comes into the administration has his own views, his own ways of thinking. If you invest well within the community, then a new official will learn things from them before anyone else. And as long as you don’t leave them in the cold, government people will move with you. Every step of yours should be open to scrutiny, at district forums and at community forums. If you don’t spread your ideas well enough, then people will always view them as strange. Change is starting to come, and although the process is slow, we feel we are making headway. But three, four, five years is hardly anything. You may need a hundred years to change a whole community, a whole society’s thinking.

Case study 2

Building local capacity: the growth of ALDEF

As earlier chapters have described, ALDEF grew out of the Wajir Volunteer Group. ALDEF has been a key partner for Oxfam in managing the credit programme with women in Wajir town, and is one of the local organisations whose capacity the WPDP has tried to develop. During Phase 2, handover of the credit programme to ALDEF was complete. Two of its staff, Abdi Tulo and Suli Abdi, discuss ALDEF’s work and aspirations.

ALDEF was formerly known as the Wajir Volunteer Group, a group of volunteers who came together in 1989. There was a Catholic sister from Italy working in Wajir who continued doing voluntary work in the town after she retired. A few of us then asked ourselves: if she can come all the way from Italy to help our children, don’t we also have some responsibility towards them? So five of us from NGOs and government departments joined her as volunteers, and did things like help the elderly in their homes.

Then the 1991 drought began, and we tried to help by asking people in the community to provide food, which we could cook as porridge for malnourished children. But the drought worsened, and international agencies took over the relief activities. We implemented other projects with support from Oxfam –
such as a revolving fund to provide donkeys for women who were collecting firewood, and a shelter project in which women made traditional mats (duffuls) to earn income, which were then sold or distributed among the poor. We also began a campaign to protect the Orahey wells in the centre of Wajir town which were threatened by encroachment, working with the well owners to form a management committee in order to secure access for the animals. And in recent years we have done things like organising town cleaning during floods, and re-stocking the victims of conflict.

At the moment we are also carrying out a de-stocking project. As a drought worsens, pastoralists tend to sell their stronger animals, leaving only the weak ones at home in the boma, where they will live for only a month or two. So instead, we purchase the weak animals, which leaves pastoralists with their stronger animals and also gives them money for school fees and other things. The meat is then given to the poor. In discussion with the headmasters, we have also used the meat as payment of school fees for 24 children.

The other component of our work is education. It is the best asset one can have in the world. We purchase learning resources, and have built a primary school. Oxfam has also funded us to train parent–teacher associations and
school-management committees in Wajir town – helping them to get more involved in education, to understand what their school is and how to plan for it, and to know where to turn when there is a problem. We have also implemented a literacy project with the women’s groups who participate in the credit scheme. The women bought the lamps and writing materials, while we bought the boards and chalk.

Even though we are now registered as an NGO, we are still mostly volunteers. We have three staff who are employed, one of whom is the credit-project officer who supports the scheme in Wajir town. Oxfam knew that they might not be here for long, so they looked for a local organisation to take part in the credit scheme to which they could eventually hand over. We think a lot about our own sustainability. Two of us were sponsored to go through training in organisational assessment and change, and we have developed a finance and personnel policy and a three-year plan. This support to our own capacity as an organisation has given us the confidence to stand on our own feet and to register as an NGO.

But Oxfam is not our only donor. We have been able to get funds from donors in Italy, the UK, and Canada. We want to build our own office and conference centre, maybe even a hostel, in order to generate more income.

Oxfam works hand in hand with others – it doesn’t work alone. But there is still a danger of us being swallowed by the giant. People tend to think that we are from Oxfam, so we have to keep making it clear that we are from ALDEF. Oxfam is also very mean in its funding. We would like to be given a big sum of money, and because they are an international organisation our expectations are very high, but it doesn’t happen. Expectations from the community are also high. We are located in a central area of town, and get many people dropping in looking for help.

But what we like about Oxfam is that for them the community comes first. When we write a proposal to them, they check to see how much it will benefit the community, and the more it will benefit them, the more likely they are to fund it. We also like their transparency and honesty, which makes us become as open as them and gives a good environment to work together. They really assess you to your roots, and have to know your reasons for doing something. Is it just to enrich yourself, or do you have the community at heart? That is why other local organisations, some of which exist only in name, have a problem with them, because they’re not getting funding. But we give credit to them in this, because they’re free from corruption and have the community at heart.

Before, people were used to top-down approaches. But it’s not for outsiders to decide. In our new approach the community state their problems and prioritise them, and then we all work with that. Ownership is then high, because people have been involved from the word go, and the project becomes
Case study 2

sustainable because of the process which has been followed. Even the government has taken up the same approach, and the community now expects it.

For example, as part of the de-stocking project, we went to the market the other day to see the prices of animals, so that we could set a ceiling, because we can't ask people to buy animals at any price. We then called the buyers together to inform them of the price, but one of them, a woman, said, "How can you decide the prices alone and then impose them on us?" She wanted to be involved from the word go, so we discussed again and then agreed the ceiling between us. This showed the impact which has been achieved here in terms of empowerment, because an illiterate mother now has the confidence to speak her mind in public and ask for her rights, and this is most likely due to the groundwork that has been laid through the credit scheme.

Our dream is that we will be sustainable and self-sufficient as an NGO. We don't want only to look outside for resources – we want to tap what is available locally. We are giving our time and energy free to serve the community. But if we had not been given the chances we had, we would not be where we are today. We didn't have the capacity to carry out the re-stocking which was planned in 1992, but Oxfam felt that, if they built that capacity, we could do it. So what we value most in our relationship is their trust in us. And when we see that trust they have, it makes us want to do even more for our community.
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Agool xuma ayaa abaar kataran
(Somali proverb, meaning ‘Poor management is more disastrous than drought’)

This chapter considers key aspects of the design and management of the WPDP. First, it describes the way in which a holistic approach to poverty reduction has led to the logical embedding of drought management within the project’s design and working practices. Second, it looks at the issue of operationality, analysing the potential risks and benefits of an approach in which Oxfam takes direct responsibility for project management, and the way in which the WPDP has dealt with both of these. Finally, it considers the quality of the project’s accountability, and the way in which this is enhanced by open dialogue with stakeholders, and by systematic attempts to monitor, learn from, and communicate the work. One noteworthy aspect of the WPDP, on which visitors to the project often comment, is its high degree of internal consistency, in that the team has tried to apply to its management practice the same principles that have informed its fieldwork. The chapter therefore also considers the quality of accountability between members of the project team, and the impact of the style of management that was employed in Wajir.

First, however, there is a brief description of how the WPDP is managed, noting particularly the significance of three aspects of this: staffing, autonomy, and funding.

Management profile

Oxfam employs a small team of staff in Wajir, all of whom are of Somali origin and have a detailed understanding of the project’s context. During the first and second phases, the Project Manager was supported by five project staff, two of whom were women. The Project Officers had specialist skills in, and nominal responsibilities for, health care, education, microfinance, re-stocking, and monitoring and evaluation. In practice, however, the team shared tasks in a more collective manner. Most of them were recruited from government service, and therefore had a good understanding of how the administration
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worked, as well as professional contacts within the various line ministries. A small group of staff provided administrative support, but also took part regularly in project discussions and activities. There has been a high degree of continuity of staffing, at least until the end of Phase 2, with only one change at senior level, when the first Project Manager moved to Nairobi. In his new position he was able to continue backing up the project, particularly by expanding national-level policy work. While the first and second phases were managed with similar levels of resources and staffing, the third phase will have only two Project Officers employed directly by Oxfam, thus shifting the balance still further towards working through other organisations.

The Project Manager reports to the Oxfam country office in Nairobi, but has a significant degree of autonomy. He also has responsibility for any emergency interventions in the district, several of which have been implemented since the drought of 1996. Additional staff are recruited on a temporary basis to carry out relief work, but their line management is integrated with that of the long-term project. Extra equipment may be needed, but again is managed as a common resource. Normal practice would be for one of the project staff to be seconded to manage a particular emergency, thus ensuring consistency of approach between short-term and long-term goals.

The project’s primary donor is the British government, which contributed approximately 75 per cent of the costs in Phase 1 and 90 per cent in Phase 2, the balance being met by Comic Relief and by Oxfam. A project proposal and logical framework are drawn up for each phase, progress towards which is reviewed at both its mid-point and its end. A range of participatory monitoring systems has also been developed. Towards the end of Phase 1, an additional economic-impact assessment was carried out, while in Phase 2 the Pastoral Steering Committee drew up guidelines on working with pastoral associations. Other thematic studies have been conducted since the project began, on topics such as water development, education, and re-stocking.

**The nature of the project team**

The special attributes and skills of a locally recruited team of staff, particularly in situations of insecurity, were highlighted in the previous chapter. More generally, however, good-quality development work at any level depends on staff having a sound understanding of the social and political dynamics at work. Rahay Hassan explains:

> For any project like this to be successful, staff must understand the language, the people, the culture, and the norms. An outsider would take a year or two to understand the community. But by recruiting people who live in the area,
who know the problems, and who share the same things with the people, work moves at a faster pace, and the deeper things going on within the community are better understood. Moreover, one of the reasons why we work the way we do is that we are from this place. We can see the levels of poverty and marginalisation, and we can see what role we can play in making Oxfam's work successful.

The employment of two women among the team of Project Officers has been significant, particularly given the constraints on girls' education in pastoral societies. Employment of women staff is essential if a project is to work effectively in societies which are sharply segregated along gender lines. Moreover, it sets an example to others. The work of a small group of able and experienced women within various development organisations in Wajir has been particularly influential. Dekha Ibrahim comments on the way in which female development workers have been able to change perceptions about women's public roles, and recalls the comment of an elder who had seen what women had achieved in working for peace.

He said, "If we had known what we know now, we would have given women the peace process to manage much earlier on. We never knew what our daughters could do." NGOs have given women that opportunity to demonstrate their skills. From my experience in the civil service, very few women had ever had employment at senior levels. But NGOs have changed that and have created those possibilities.

The continuity of staffing over time has been unusual and important. Again, this tends to be easier to achieve with a locally recruited team. Similarly, the continuity of management between the long-term project and periodic short-term relief work has helped to ensure that all Oxfam staff in Wajir behave consistently with communities and with government, thus promoting coherence between modes of operation which are still sometimes presented as incompatible. This issue is explored in more detail later in the chapter.

**Management autonomy**

The Wajir project was a significant departure for Oxfam in Kenya. Before 1994, development projects had tended to operate on a much smaller scale, implemented either by organisations registered in Kenya or, in the pastoral areas, by community groups with one or two Oxfam staff working alongside them. The Nairobi office retained considerable authority over all this work. While some staff were anxious to retain this level of control, others quickly recognised that it would not be possible to manage a project of the scale and complexity of the WPDP at a distance. Peter Kisopia remembers the discussions:
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The level of autonomy for a project is important, because if people don’t have the space to make decisions on the ground as they see fit, there is a danger that the project will lose its relevance and be diverted by the priorities of people at a distance. Of course, complete autonomy would be wrong. There needs to be consistency in the principles, procedures, and ways of working which cut across any organisation. But I could clearly see that my role in Nairobi was not to get involved in day-to-day activities in Wajir, but rather to participate at key moments when we were discussing the project’s future direction.

In a place such as Wajir, where a significant level of direction over development planning has already been delegated to the district by government, and where new opportunities to bring about change can unexpectedly arise, representatives of development agencies in the district need to have a level of management authority which allows them to take advantage of these opportunities and to play an effective leadership role among their peers. District-level forums whose purpose is to establish some kind of vision and direction, such as the Pastoral Steering Committee, can work only if their members are empowered to act and participate to a comparable degree.

Moreover, a strong sense of leadership from project teams helps to maintain direction. Managers who are over-dependent on guidance and support from elsewhere can quickly find that they lose the ability to maintain their original focus as the project becomes swayed by changing development fashions and priorities. The ability to keep sight of a long-term goal, while also knowing when and how to adapt flexibly to changing needs and circumstances, is critical. This is a particular challenge for a project such as the WPDP, which has a longer than average timeframe, and which is being implemented in a context made periodically unstable by the impact of drought and conflict.

However, the fact that a project team enjoys significant management autonomy does not also mean that it operates entirely independently of the organisation as a whole. In the early stages of the WPDP, the Nairobi office played a crucial role in guiding the project’s development and in supporting the project team with materials and ideas. Moreover, if a project operating at this level seeks also to exercise influence at national levels and beyond, then it will depend upon the complementary skills of an informed and supportive country office to pursue its goals.

Funding

The acceptance by both Oxfam and DFID that a long-term commitment was needed in Wajir was unusual, but should in practice be the norm for projects of this kind. Although neither party was able to make firm financial agreements...
for the full nine years, both recognised that the process which had been started would take longer than the average project’s lifespan, and that, if things progressed well, further funds would then be forthcoming. Documentation on pastoral development produced at that time was critical of the limited horizons of pastoral-development planners, and clear that objectives relating to human-resource development, popular participation, and institution building could not be achieved without making a longer-term commitment. The Oxfam team pushed to secure a commitment in principle for the nine years, rather than assuming that only the usual two-to-three-year funding cycle would be considered.

Equally unusual was the decision by Oxfam to support more than a year of participatory planning and discussion with communities prior to the project’s formal start date. The first Project Manager was given a one-year job description whose purpose was solely to investigate the options for a long-term programme. NGO rhetoric, including Oxfam’s, tends to make great play of the fact that genuine change in the lives of the poor is a long-term process. But the demands of managers for neatly packaged projects and demonstrable impact mean that the implications of this are rarely translated into practice. Patience, and the ability to play the long game, are essential skills for development workers. Flexibility, and the willingness to resource programmes over a much longer timeframe than has tended to be the case, are essential attributes in donors.

Access to additional donor support meant that Oxfam could work on a more significant scale than was possible with its own resources alone. It meant that the project could achieve a critical mass of funding, and inject over a three-year period into one part of the district the equivalent of what might once have been allocated to a far smaller population over a much longer time. Although the UK government and other donors had provided large-scale funding for Oxfam’s emergency projects prior to 1994, the WPDP was the first occasion on which the Nairobi office approached a donor for substantial resources for its long-term work. At the time when the project was taking shape, DFID (then known as the Overseas Development Administration) was just establishing what became known as the Direct Funding Initiative (DFI), whose purpose was to provide direct support to NGOs in East Africa. DFID wanted the DFI to be more than a funding mechanism, and to establish a model of working with NGOs in which the quality of the partnership itself was valued, particularly its potential for mutual learning.

The relationship with DFID, specifically its appraisal and planning requirements, prompted a more rigorous approach to project design than Oxfam in Kenya had previously demanded of itself. This was challenging at the time, and in some ways mirrored the dynamics at play in the relationship
between Oxfam and the pastoral associations discussed in Chapter 3 – i.e. a process of negotiation between parties, which is inevitably coloured by the fact that financial resources are involved, but through which both seek to reach consensus on the direction of the project, without undermining their respective institutional integrity. In the event, the new demands proved to be of benefit not only in Wajir, but also by setting management standards for the rest of the Oxfam programme to match.

Jim Harvey, Natural Resources Adviser for DFID (then ODA) in Nairobi at the time, recalls the process of project development: ‘One groundbreaking thing about Wajir was the way in which the project was grown in open dialogue between Oxfam and DFID. In the past, project proposals would be submitted for funding, DFID would appraise and comment on them, and you would get into a cycle of commenting and response with the NGO. In the case of Wajir, however, the team knew what they wanted and gave strong direction. Although there was a certain amount of positioning in the early stages, the relationship started well and got better.’

This dialogue was sustained as the project developed, particularly through the participation of DFID staff in project reviews and discussions. What has kept the relationship healthy has been the way in which the WPDP team has maintained a clear sense of its own direction and purpose, while being open to challenges and new ideas. For its part, DFID (and Comic Relief, another key donor) was prepared to be flexible in the management of funds – a critical asset for projects which genuinely seek to move at the community’s pace – and to invest in staff training in the long term. DFID has also made significant resources available for emergency work, which has helped in building coherence between short-term and long-term activities in the district.

**Drought management**

In an arid environment such as Wajir, drought is an inevitable occurrence – but almost the only predictable thing about it is that it will happen. Both pastoralists and development planners have to find ways of managing all the other uncertainties – how long it will last, with what degree of severity, and how soon it will be before it returns. Droughts have no neat boundaries. They evolve and die away at varying speeds, affecting different populations in different ways and to different degrees. Pastoralists have developed sophisticated ways of managing drought, which include migration to alternative sources of pasture and water, division of the herd, and reliance on members of the extended family with access to alternative sources of income. However, they become more vulnerable when those options are closed off to them, for example when conflict prevents access to valuable grazing areas.
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But drought of itself is not the problem. There is a Somali saying: ‘Aqool xuma ayaa abaar kataran’, which means ‘Poor management is more disastrous than drought’. The damage to health and livelihoods, and ultimately the destitution and even death seen too often in pastoral districts are caused by the failure of government and non-government agencies to manage drought effectively in ways which support the adaptive strategies of pastoralists.

The most important first step in addressing this failure is the recognition that drought is an integral part of life in arid areas, and should therefore be a central part of long-term development planning, not simply a crisis in which short-term help is offered. Kenya has a long tradition of planning for drought, and the district drought-contingency plans which have now been developed in several of Kenya’s ASAL districts ‘arise from a perception that in arid and semi-arid districts, life revolves around the threat of drought and, as a result, the district development plan should in large part be a drought management plan’.2

Effective drought management requires four key components:

• First, an early warning system which is relevant, transparent, trusted, and able to trigger timely action.
• Second, a package of flexible responses appropriate to each stage of the drought as it evolves. These responses may include support for activities like marketing and livestock off-take, water development, livestock health, public-works schemes, cereal stocks, food aid, and initiatives to promote post-drought recovery.
• Third, the resources and political will to put all of the above into practice.
• And finally, the mechanisms which can hold those in authority accountable for their actions, such as independent media or district-level representative structures.

Non-government agencies need to adopt the same holistic approach. But all too often the structures, budgets, personnel, and working styles of the so-called ‘relief’ and ‘development’ activities of NGOs are separate. Such distinctions are meaningless in the more fluid and complex environment of places such as Wajir. Adam Leach, Country Representative during the mid-1990s, explains:

We were interested in achieving for pastoralists a progressively better, not a static, level of well-being over time. The two critical conditions are their access to livelihood opportunities and their access to services and security. In pastoral areas, people oscillate around a norm, moving into and out of periods of greater or lesser stress, depending on the nature of these two conditions. The quality of your relationship with communities, your analysis of circumstance, and your

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knowledge of trend data can help you to act to prevent people slipping below the norm and even into complete destitution. But you need to look at it over time as well, so that people are not just returning to where they were before conditions worsened.

**Drought management and the WPDP**

The WPDP has helped to promote effective drought management in three ways. First, it has supported the independent efforts of the pastoral associations to mitigate drought stress. In mid-1996, as drought began to worsen, two pastoral associations (Riba and Hungai) requested funding for small-scale food-for-work activities. One person from each of the poorest families was nominated to work on communal activities, such as constructing water pans or school classrooms. In addition, livestock donated during that year’s *zakaat* was distributed by the Riba association among some of the poorest families. The following year, in 1997, the five associations in the Phase 1 area re-stocked a total of 59 families with the resources collected through *zakaat*.

Second, WPDP has supported drought-monitoring activities across the district, working closely with government institutions such as the ALRMP, which has responsibility for the national drought-monitoring system, and at a local level with the pastoral associations. The Khorof Harar association began their own drought-monitoring system in mid-1995, which they then presented at an inter-association meeting in November that year. At the end of each month, the elders assess three broad variables – the condition of livestock, people, and the environment – and then agree an overall warning stage for that month from one of four: normal, alert, alarm, and emergency. The three variables and the four warning stages are the same as those used by the ALRMP. In addition, the Khorof Harar system asks the community to monitor conflict, and to give information about the respondents – their sex, their position in the association, the type of stock they hold, and its current location. The use of symbols, such as ticks or arrows to indicate the severity of a situation and whether it is improving or worsening, makes the system easier to use in places where literacy levels are low.

The inter-association meeting in 1995 discussed the possible roles for a pastoral association both before and during drought. Their ideas included the storage of grain, alerting the government and public to the emerging problem, ensuring that borehole spare parts were on hand, encouraging livestock sales, helping to target resources to those most in need, ferrying water to those in the *baadia*, and reading the Koran in a public place. (At times of drought stress, an additional prayer may be added to the regular prayers in the
mosque. After a three-day period of fasting, people are then called together in an open place, and further prayers are offered to ask for rain.)

The inter-association workshop resolved to increase drought-monitoring capacity, and a few months later the Khorof Harar association carried out training of other associations in Wajir Bor. Although drought monitoring by community groups may be said to duplicate that which is currently carried out by the ALRMP, the associations say that its value to them lies in the fact that it forces their own discussion of the issue. Moreover, there is currently a debate in Kenya about the cost of drought-monitoring systems, and about ways in which community-level monitoring of this kind might be given greater prominence within a national system.

Third, the purpose of the WPDP as a whole is to reduce the vulnerability of pastoralist households. Those worst affected by a drought will be pastoralists with smaller or weaker herds, families with little male labour, and those with less cushioning provided by social networks. In order to maintain viable livelihoods, pastoralists need mobility, secure access to pasture and water, an equitable and accessible marketing structure, and the ability to diversify and spread financial risks. Therefore the work of the pastoral associations in developing systems to manage boreholes and livestock-health services more effectively, or in promoting peace, or in representing their concerns to decision-makers, should in theory have some direct impact on people's resilience in the face of drought.

The economic-impact assessment of the project which was conducted at the end of 1997 judged that this had indeed happened. Two hundred households, interviewed in both project and non-project sites, were asked to give a score out of 10 to indicate what they felt about their capacity to withstand drought, when compared with the situation ten years before. The average score of those in the project area was 7, compared with 3 a decade earlier, while the score of those in non-project areas was the exact reverse. The timing of this assessment at the end of a drought period meant that it was also possible to calculate the relative dependence on food aid of households in project and non-project sites. Sixty-three per cent of households in non-project sites were still receiving food aid, compared with 45 per cent in project sites. More significantly, 56 per cent of households in non-project sites had moved to one of the settlements to obtain food aid and other support, while only 7 per cent of those in project sites had done the same.

However, although projects such as the WPDP can do much to mitigate the impact of drought, the district remains highly vulnerable. The crises which have afflicted it during the past few years—drought, floods, and conflict—have been excessive and cumulative in their impact. And, while there is anecdotal
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evidence that communities in project areas are more aware of these problems and more prepared to do things to address them, in other parts of the district, where borehole management and social ties are weaker, for example, people are more vulnerable.

Practical ways of integrating emergency response

Between September 1996 and October 1998 the Oxfam team in Wajir was directly involved in continuous district-wide relief activities. Every effort was made to integrate this within long-term programming. For example, the analysis and contacts built up in the course of the WPDP were used to shape the design of the emergency response. Pastoral associations were asked to register beneficiaries, and their secretaries were employed as food monitors. Participatory social mapping was used prior to registration, the success of which is largely determined by how transparent and inclusive is its methodology. Relief activities were designed in a way consistent with pastoralists' livelihood strategies. For example, food distributions were widely dispersed across the district with minimal targeting (excluding only salaried people), partly on the grounds that customary networks of social support and redistribution would anyway have undermined any attempt to target more tightly. Food aid was used with a clear understanding of its impact on pastoralists' purchasing power – i.e. its ability to stabilise food prices and reduce distress sales of livestock, and thus to shift the balance in the terms of trade between livestock and maize (a key indicator used to monitor drought stress) in pastoralists' favour. Finally, livelihood analysis was used to distinguish between parts of the district where recovery was proceeding more quickly, or in different ways, and strategies developed accordingly.

Practical measures were also taken to ensure coherence between the emergency work and the long-term project. Relief activities were managed by the same team of staff and with the same resources – albeit expanded – operating out of the same office and reporting to the same manager in Nairobi. The WPDP's normal recruitment and procurement procedures were also followed. All of this helped to guard against a distortion of the values which the WPDP had sought to establish. There is no evidence, either, that taking the time to think through these issues and put them into practice had a negative impact on the quality of the work. The evaluation of the drought and flood response noted: 'In an emergency context these [systematic procedures] are frequently put aside on the justification that they are too slow and therefore inappropriate. It is noticeable that Oxfam stuck to its ... procedures ... And it is not apparent that this caused any undue delays.'

The level of expenditure during the emergency period was very high. More than £4.6 million was spent in these two years. Average annual
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expenditure on relief projects was more than five times the average of planned expenditure for the second phase of the WPDP. The evaluation noted anecdotal evidence from respondents that Oxfam was now seen as a resource-rich agency, contrasting sharply with the modest demand for resources which the WPDP had tried to cultivate during Phase 1. There was some evidence that this was more marked in non-WPDP project areas, and that communities in project sites were more realistic about what they could expect in future. However, there is a legitimate debate about how much longer large-scale food distributions of this kind can be appropriate, and whether those resources might be more efficiently used in other ways. Financial analysis of four interventions during the recovery period suggested that cash-for-work activities were the most cost-effective. The per capita cost of delivering one month's food-relief ration was KSh 525, while the cost of providing the equivalent through the distribution of pregnant or lactating animals or through cash-for-work schemes was KSh 712 and KSh 450 respectively. The cash-for-work activities were shown to have helped households to clear debts, buy essential items, and invest in small business. In general, more investment in a wider range of strategies to support (and if necessary subsidise) the livestock economy during periods of drought stress – for example through livestock-marketing structures or insurance schemes – may in the long term be a more cost-effective and appropriate response, giving pastoralists the mechanisms with which to manage drought on their own terms.

Livestock marketing, through which pastoralists can more readily de-stock and re-stock their herds, has been an area relatively neglected during the first and second phases of the WPDP, with the exception of support at national level for a new livestock-marketing association, which emerged out of a series of discussions with the principal livestock traders in the area – another example of the project reaching out to build alliances beyond the customary constituency of NGOs. Marketing is likely to be a more significant part of the project in its third and final phase, particularly at national level. National and district drought-management policy remains the responsibility of the ALRMP, with whom the WPDP has worked closely at both levels. This relationship will also be strengthened during Phase 3, and efforts made to embed the principles of drought management within the proposed national policy.

**Operationality**

One of the myths in development is that a long-term operational presence in a particular place happens almost by default, as a consequence of failing to develop an appropriate exit strategy for work in emergencies. In some cases
this has been true. But Wajir was the exact opposite, in that the decision to implement a long-term project in an operational way was taken before the 1991/92 emergency. The WPDP was not a reflex reaction to post-emergency needs, but rather a deliberate attempt to position Oxfam in a district which had already been identified as being particularly vulnerable to the impact of drought and conflict. Managing both of these thus became a central part of operational planning, design, and delivery, not an occasional hazard to which attention and resources were temporarily diverted. Often, this 'management' was carried out quietly and informally. A large part of the project manager's time in mid-2000, for example, was taken up in persuading key actors to support a major peace conference, organised to address the worsening conflict in the north of the district.

The term 'operational project' is shorthand for one in which Oxfam employs its own staff directly. The degree to which those staff then become involved in the implementation of project activities varies from place to place and over time. In Wajir, a significant amount of day-to-day project work was carried out and managed by the pastoral associations, who, towards the end of Phase 1, were also preparing and submitting proposals and budgets to Oxfam for funding, in the same way that a 'partner' organisation would do in a 'non-operational' context.

Oxfam deliberately chose an operational approach in Wajir in the early 1990s, because the capacity of local organisations was so low. One of the project's objectives was therefore to build up that capacity, in the ways described in Chapters 3 and 4. By the end of Phase 2, the credit scheme in Wajir town had been handed over to ALDEF, while support for the pastoral associations in the Phase 1 and Phase 2 geographical areas had become the responsibility of the DPA and the PSC. All of these organisations are still weak, and therefore the priority for Phase 3 will be to continue strengthening them.

Benefits and risks
For an external agency, the benefits of an operational approach are that it provides much closer direct contact with the beneficiaries of its programmes than is normally possible when working through local partners; that it provides opportunities for testing out ideas and for direct learning about poverty reduction which can then be applied elsewhere in the organisation; and that it establishes strong local relationships which can enrich policy and communications work and can also, in areas susceptible to emergencies, guide relief interventions. Some of the risks of an operational approach are that an external agency may impose its own agenda on others; that skilled staff
are attracted out of government or local agencies; that its employment and purchasing policies distort the local economy; and that it makes others dependent upon its leadership and resources.

There were several ways in which the WPDP tried to mitigate these risks. First, the principle that Oxfam's direct intervention was only temporary was established from the very beginning, in all discussions with communities and district authorities and in project documentation. The proposal for Phase 1 states clearly that at the end of the nine years Oxfam hoped to see a district-wide umbrella organisation of pastoral associations, as well as other local organisations which could plan and implement their own work. Local groups were encouraged at every step to think about how they could meet their aspirations in the long term, and constantly reminded that dependence on Oxfam was not a viable option.

Second, a genuine commitment to participatory approaches helped to guard against the project team imposing its priorities on others. As explained in Chapter 3, community plans were developed, regardless of what Oxfam might or might not fund. And collaborative ways of working were adopted with government and other organisations in the district, negotiated through structures such as the PSC, which were designed to prevent individuals or particular agencies from dominating the agenda. Third, although several project staff were recruited from government, the size of the core project team was kept small, with extra technical capacity drawn in on an occasional basis from line ministries, as required.

Finally, care was taken to be modest with resources, using locally available materials wherever possible, for example. A locally recruited team tends not to display the financial excesses sometimes found among expatriate-dominated programmes in Africa. Inevitably, however, the resources available to an international organisation which it justifies on grounds of efficiency or security, such as vehicles and radios, only emphasise the disparities with local organisations. The most significant resource is perhaps that of internal capacity. The level of investment which the Oxfam team was able to make in community consultation and planning, particularly in terms of staff time, is something which local organisations and government – which do not yet tend to enjoy the same level of financial cushioning – may find hard to replicate.

NGOs tend to agonise about whether operationality is appropriate or not. In practice, the choice is usually a pragmatic one, determined by the context prevailing at the time, and the particular objectives of the project. Whether that choice was the correct one or not can be determined and re-evaluated in the course of monitoring and review. However, an operational approach can perhaps be justified only if the implementing agency is responsible enough to
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make the most of the benefits outlined above: in other words, if it uses the rich knowledge that it gains from such close contact with communities to guide policy work and to inform the organisation’s understanding of best practice. The influence of the Wajir project on the policy and practice of others was explored in the previous chapter. Internally, the project has shaped the design of a more extensive regional pastoral programme for Oxfam, covering the Horn and East Africa, much of which will build on the kinds of approach developed in Wajir. Externally, a willingness to host a long line of visitors from other agencies has also helped to share learning and ideas.

A final lesson from Wajir is the importance of constantly questioning whether an operational approach is valid, and reviewing whether an alternative might be better. This should be part of the on-going process of reflection and re-design which is discussed in the section which follows. Mohamed Elmi remembers these debates within the team.

It's very easy to get lost in the way things are normally organised in development. Could the money which was spent on employing us have been used differently? Although I'm not sure that that has been resolved in my mind up to today, I can clearly see that the value of the staff was more than just their cost. They were actively shaping the community. It's their skills that are important, and their ability to draw out the community's knowledge. During the 1991/2 emergency, the WVG implemented a shelter project with very low running costs. But what that money couldn't do is to train the women in the way that Rahay has trained them through the credit scheme. And when you look at what the staff are supporting, it's not just project activities, but the whole process of institution building and district development.

Accountability

The concept of accountability is one that is fundamental to the legitimacy of any development organisation. Most agencies juggle with multiple accountabilities — to funders, management boards, governing authorities in countries of operation, and the people whose lives they seek to change. The critical questions which development organisations must be able to answer are whether their intervention made a difference (impact), whether they could have made more of a difference with the resources available (cost-effectiveness), and whether they can prove either of these to the satisfaction of the range of their stakeholders. The quality of an agency's investment in systems of impact monitoring, documentation, and public communication is therefore critical in supporting its attempts to improve accountability.
Three strategies used in Wajir are discussed below. First, maintaining regular dialogue with the project’s stakeholders, particularly the communities with which it worked. Second, developing effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms which were capable of judging and communicating impact. And third, embedding a system of reflection, learning, and re-planning within the project’s design, and a culture of critical questioning within the project team. Important to all three was a commitment to make public, and to subject to external verification and debate, the experience of the project as a whole.

In line with the claim that Oxfam’s work in Wajir demonstrated a high level of internal consistency, the fourth aspect that will be explored is the quality of accountability within the project team. The management style of the WPDP was one which placed a high value on transparency and trust, on the quality of relationships between staff, and on effective team working.

Maintaining dialogue
The quality of the WPDP’s work with communities was discussed in Chapter 3. On balance, the team worked hard to develop a strong relationship with the pastoral associations and the women’s groups, recognising that principles of accountability and transparency could be promoted through their own behaviour. Abukar Shariff explains why a sense of integrity was so important in building trust.

> When you first go to a community, people will listen to you but say nothing. They might say a few things just to tell you that they’ve heard you, and then you leave. This may continue for some while, during which time they will be checking things about you, one of which is the level of consistency in what you say and do. In effect, you are under observation. If they find that you try to do whatever you have agreed with them, and that you resist doing things which weren’t agreed, then they will start to trust you. Not everyone works like that. There are people who say they will do things when they know that they won’t. But if you do what you say you will do, and come and explain things when necessary, and take their advice, then this is how trust and transparency are built. And in turn communities will behave in the same way.

An important tool in encouraging mutual accountability was the community action plan. The WPDP’s contribution to this had been openly negotiated with each pastoral association in the original planning meetings, and it served as the benchmark for subsequent discussions between the two parties. The Oxfam team would visit each pastoral association every three or four months and the action plan would be used as the basis for reviewing each other’s progress. It was also important that communities were clear about the process through
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which important decisions would be made. It was mutually understood that these would be taken when the whole team visited, and not when one or two staff – even if one were the Project Manager – visited alone.

Genuine dialogue depends on both parties feeling able to question each other, and where appropriate to adapt their views. It requires formal opportunities for this kind of exchange, such as the three-monthly reviews, as well as a more informal culture of openness and critical reflection. Donor organisations are always perceived to have the upper hand in any discussion in which resources are involved. But the WPDP team were unusual in the extent to which they tried to engage on a more equal footing. Mohamed Elmi notes:

"There was no doubt in our mind that communities could question anything which they thought was wrong. They would say if something wasn’t possible, and then we would listen and find ways of sorting it out. We had to allow ourselves to be challenged, although usually these turned out to be small things, like negotiating the precise level of community contribution."

Dialogue with government and other organisations in the district was equally important, and this took place in both formal and informal ways. Formally, the various co-ordination mechanisms at district level, such as the DDC and the PSC, were used to present plans and provide feedback to the authorities,
and there is anecdotal evidence that government staff valued this effort. The reviews of each phase, at their mid-point and end, were another opportunity through which government and donors could engage in a structured debate about the project. DFID would be represented on the review team, and the review's terms of reference and findings would be discussed with government. Peter Kisopia comments: 'Reviews are moments when you all sit together and jointly share ideas and concerns about the project's direction. They help to bring stakeholders together and cement the relationships between them, increasing understanding between the donor, the project, and the community.'

Informally, WPDP staff also participate in a range of district-level committees, groups, and workshops, responding to requests for advice where possible. The number of these can be a significant burden on staff time, but they are an important way of demonstrating commitment to wider development efforts in the district, beyond the specific objectives of the project.

Monitoring and reporting

At the time of the first planning discussions in 1993, there was growing concern at the apparent decline in donor interest in pastoral development. Staff had participated in various international workshops which were questioning the viability of economic investment in pastoral areas, using past failures as justification for doubting the likelihood of any future success. An unwritten objective behind the WPDP was thus to prove that high-quality development work was possible in pastoral areas, and to reverse the trend of declining interest on the part of donors. In addition, staff in Wajir were well aware that one of the weaknesses of previous pastoral development projects in Kenya had been the lack of systems through which their impact could be measured. For both these reasons, monitoring and evaluation was given particular priority within the WPDP from the very beginning.

A post within the project team which had been originally planned as a communications role was therefore redesigned with a stronger emphasis on monitoring. The first project document also highlighted the responsibility of the team as a whole to document learning which might be replicable in other pastoral areas. In addition, an extra post was seconded to the project from DFID for 18 months, to provide support in monitoring and evaluation. Impact monitoring and assessment was a specific output within the logical framework of all three phases, which thus forced the allocation of resources and time, and the responsibility of the team to report against it. The introduction of the logical framework as a planning tool also encouraged a more explicit and open discussion about what the project was trying to achieve, and the means by which it would verify that.
The approach to monitoring adopted by the WPDP was driven by several factors. First, the need to accommodate the unpredictability of the project environment, particularly as it affected livestock and human health. An internal project document noted: ‘Rainfall is highly variable, which in turn means fodder availability, and thus livestock health and productivity, and ultimately human health, vary widely from year to year ... The main challenge was how to separate [the effects of the external environment] from the project’s effects when measuring impact.’ One-off mid-point and final assessments of impact against an initial baseline might fail to pick up short-term fluctuations in livestock and human health. Moreover, indicators established in such a baseline might become less relevant as the project’s context, and pastoralists’ response to it, both change. For these reasons, much greater emphasis was placed on continuous monitoring throughout the life of the project. (However, much of the information gathered in the course of early participatory planning was subsequently gathered together into a background document, which in effect summarised the conditions prevailing in the project area, as well as pastoralists’ perceptions about poverty and development, at the time when the WPDP began.)

The second factor which shaped the WPDP’s approach to monitoring was the need to root monitoring systems as deeply as possible within the lives of the project’s beneficiaries. One of the tools used to do this was a system of cohort monitoring, through which a random selection of households was visited at regular intervals in order to gain deeper insights into the general health of their family members and livestock, their perceptions of well-being, and the extent to which any change could be attributed to the project’s activities. The results of cohort monitoring were then fed back to the community as a whole for review. In the early stages, this process of feedback also helped pastoral association officials to find out whether the purpose and benefits of the association were really understood by its members or not. In several cases, the level of understanding remained low.

Third, the team sought to develop monitoring systems which were participatory, practical, and empowering, and which avoided one-way extraction of information by encouraging communities to carry out monitoring themselves, in a manner which built their own skills and understanding. One aspect of this was the introduction of the project-proposal format discussed in Chapter 3, and the requirement that pastoral associations should monitor their work against the five key criteria. Efforts were made to simplify activity monitoring by introducing pictorial tools for the TBAs’ and the daryelles’ record keeping, and by experimenting with blackboards in each pastoral association centre (usually the drug store), on which key information about the association’s work and its progress could
be publicised. In October 1995 the project team met with all five associations in the Phase 1 area, inviting them to draw up their own indicators of impact against each component of their work. The indicators that they chose were a mixture of quantitative and qualitative, of activity and impact. (In the second phase this was done during the planning stage, as part of the process of developing community action plans.) The choice of indicators reflected the challenge of finding the right balance between monitoring the practical progress of each project component, and being able to make a judgement about the quality and long-term impact of the project as a whole.

One of the questions asked of the project team has been whether the systems which have been put in place will be able to support these broader judgements. A recent DFID evaluation noted that most monitoring mechanisms concern the specific households or communities with which the WPDP is directly engaged, even though the project purpose seeks to make broader changes in levels of poverty and vulnerability across the district. It also commented that the logical framework lacked indicators of the changes in behaviour required by those outside the project’s direct control (such as district institutions), which were essential if the project were to achieve its purpose and goal. The mid-term review of Phase 2 also recommended consideration of whether the monitoring systems as currently designed would be able to assess the impact of the full nine years of the project, rather than simply the impact of each of the three three-year phases. As projects become more complex, in that they seek to effect changes beyond the lives of specific households or communities, they set new challenges for the design of monitoring systems. One of the new features of the third phase of the WPDP will be to support the district’s Development Planning Unit in the design, implementation, and monitoring of poverty-focused approaches.

Finally, an important part of the WPDP’s approach to monitoring was a belief that its importance lay not merely in what it indicated about the project, but in the way it encouraged a habit of critical questioning, of constantly asking whether there might be different and more effective ways of doing something. This search for continuous improvement extended also to the management of resources, and to finding the most cost-effective ways of working. Pastoral associations were encouraged to assess different options, as part of the process of building their skills in managing resources. An illustration of this was the process of consultation about the size and composition of the herd for re-stockees. In the first phase the associations were asked to consider whether to give a larger-sized herd to fewer households, or a smaller herd to more, and what the combination of stock should be. In the second phase each association was left to make the most appropriate choice within the resources
allocated. Some opted to re-stock households with cattle, for example, rather
than with goats. The key point was to encourage the discipline of thinking
through the likely impacts of various alternative ways of using project resources.

On the whole, however, the project team lacked any formal tools with
which to carry out more sophisticated cost-effectiveness analysis. In Wajir,
individual staff were motivated by a sense of personal responsibility for the
use of resources, prompted by a feeling of close identification with Oxfam’s
core values, and some knowledge of how publicly donated funds were raised.
But there were no specific safeguards at that time to ensure that such
behaviours were consistently applied across all projects. The project-appraisal
process required staff to make a judgement about cost-effectiveness, which
was largely presented in terms of the project’s potential impact in preventing
the need for significant emergency operations. But no analytical tools were
made available to support them in this, or in assessing different options.
The economic-impact assessment carried out at the end of Phase 1, and the
cost-effectiveness analysis conducted during the emergency evaluation in
1999, were important attempts to develop a greater degree of rigour in this
area. But there remains a general lack of experience and tools in this area,
which is now being more widely addressed within Oxfam.

**Reflection, learning, and re-planning**

The formal structure of the project in three three-year cycles, each of which
includes a mid-term review and a final evaluation, provides a framework for
learning and reflection and a series of landmarks in the life of the project
towards which progress can be measured. Before each review, the team produced
a status report, which gave a quantitative assessment of progress but also raised
more significant issues for discussion with the review team. There were three
main benefits of these reviews. First, as Peter Kisopia mentioned above, they
helped to strengthen contact between the project’s stakeholders, all of whom
were involved in the process in different ways.

Second, the reviews provided opportunities to take stock, to look at the bigger
picture, and to document progress and lessons in a form which could be publicly
shared beyond those most closely associated with the project. This might not have
happened so regularly without the prompts that were an integral feature of the
project’s design. It was rare that a review team raised an issue which was not
already in the minds of the project team, but they often presented a different
perspective on it, or helped to analyse the various options for addressing it.
Production and distribution of the review report was also a way of capturing the
essence of the project at that stage in its development, and of openly sharing some
of the lessons with a wider constituency.
The third benefit was the fact that the reviews invited the team to begin thinking about the next phase of the project well in advance of the conclusion of the current phase. In this way they avoided gaps in funding, and kept the focus on the future as much as on the past.

There were several informal opportunities for reflection and review. These included three-monthly team planning sessions, and regular visits to the project by people internal and external to Oxfam. Again, a culture of questioning and challenging was important. Visits were regarded by the team as opportunities to test out ideas and invite feedback. There were also attempts in partnership with government to document project experience, on issues such as animal-health training and the impact of water-source development and settlement. Attendance at external workshops was another way of sharing project experience and subjecting this to public scrutiny by other practitioners. And the regular provision of books and resources, which exposed the team to alternative ideas, particularly during the planning stage, was another important way of encouraging critical reflection.

**Internal accountability**

One of the most striking characteristics noted by almost all visitors to the Wajir project is the quality of the team's interaction — not only with communities, but with each other. Successive reviews have commented on the high level of cohesion and commitment among staff. The way in which the team worked together was to some extent a deliberate modelling of the kinds of value that they hoped to foster within communities: values such as trust, transparency, collaboration, and mutual respect.

A firm belief in the value of strong team-based working had three positive effects. First, it helped to ensure a high degree of consensus between team members about what they were doing. Team discussions before and after field visits were used to develop collective positions on key issues and to keep everyone up to date with progress in each place. But team working also helped to move the work along more quickly. Joint plans were agreed on a three-monthly basis, and then implemented. A feeling among individual staff of being valued for their contribution to the team served to increase their motivation and sense of initiative. Abdirahman Ali describes the style of working:

> Ours is not the kind of management where someone directs, but rather where the manager shares his views, and those under him feel that they have a responsibility and a role to play. We try to build consensus between us, and it’s that which we take to the community. It’s a style of working which also makes us
more productive, because once things are agreed together we can implement them faster, as opposed to a system which has lots of procedures for getting things approved.

But this level of consensus was also crucial in protecting staff from the pressures brought by clan tensions or competing political interests. Mohamed Elmi explains:

*In a place like Wajir, it can really be a problem if one person goes and says this, and another says that. All the staff, from different clans, would go to different corners of the town with the same message, making it clear that everyone had agreed to a certain decision. It made a big difference, and protected us in a very hostile environment.*

Second, a supportive team provided a forum within which critical debate could flourish, which in turn increased the quality of the choices being made. Although it was important to present a consistent face externally, there was constant questioning internally about whether or not a particular approach or idea was correct. Abdirahman again:

*Many minds are better than one. As an individual, I may be going in the wrong direction, or be biased. So we tried to build a culture in which we all commit to something as long as it is beneficial to the project. We can all think of examples when we changed our minds about something, based on what a colleague managed to convince us.*

Each Project Officer brought his or her own technical expertise to the project, and individual areas of strength were exploited in team planning, but the priority was to build a team of people with complementary skills, in which the whole was bigger than the sum of its parts.

Third, team working reinforced similar practices within communities. A hierarchical management style would have been inconsistent in a group of people who were trying to promote the belief that everyone’s views should be listened to, regardless of their status. Apart from maintaining a sense of integrity, the logic was that if people saw the project team behaving in a way which valued each person’s contribution, then they might act in the same way. The care that was taken over little things – such as giving lifts in vehicles to the first people who asked, regardless of who they were – helped to reinforce these values. ‘*Follow how they work*’, the Vice-Chair of the Khorof Harar association advised other pastoral associations at a district workshop in mid-2000.
However, a commitment to team working does not imply a lack of management rigour. The project has been able to demonstrate in successive reviews and audits that this could be combined with systematic procedures and clear decision-making. The WPDP demonstrates how critical the quality of individual people is to any project's success, and therefore how important it is to invest adequately in their recruitment, induction, and development. And yet at the same time it also cautions against an individualistic style of management, which is becoming increasingly common in development agencies, including Oxfam. Mohamed Elmi notes: 'I think that if individuals started trying to shine, instead of shining collectively, it would have destroyed a project like Wajir.' Whatever the skills and abilities of individual staff, they were put to greatest effect when combined to serve a clear collective end.

**Conclusion**

One of the challenges for development workers is finding the right language to capture the complexity of their work. Shorthand is often used – phrases which become common currency but which trigger a range of assumptions or prejudices in the minds of those who use or hear them. One of the striking things about the WPDP is the way in which it tried to move beyond the labels. It is an 'operational' project, for example, and yet one which works closely with key partners at all levels and invests significantly in their skills and capacity. It is a long-term 'development' project, and yet one which has responded to the unpredictability of the environment in which it is working, and accommodated 'emergency' activities whenever necessary.

It is critically important to share the experience learned by a project, in order to ensure that those who have a legitimate stake in its future have an opportunity to engage in informed debate. Effective systems of monitoring and learning, and a willingness to disseminate their findings openly, are a key part of informing such a debate. They are also a way of demonstrating accountability, and of helping a project to adapt to changing needs and demands. The skills of individual staff in managing these processes are important; but, in common with any project activity, they are most effectively deployed as part of a team which has a strong collective understanding about the project's direction and purpose, and shared identification with the values which drive it.

What shines out in Wajir is the calibre of leadership demonstrated by the project team in so many ways, and the impact that this has had on people's attitudes and values at a very fundamental level. Project staff were able to convince people that something better for them was possible.
Ahmed Muhumed Omar, the Chair of the Mansa association, comments: ‘Oxfam has helped to broaden our minds. Before, we didn’t know what benefits we could get from forming an association. But now we are able to clearly say that this is good for us and will benefit us, and this will not.’ The case study which follows shows a similar kind of impact on the perceptions of women in Wajir town.

Case study 3

Changing women’s roles in Wajir town

Habiba Hudhow is the Chair of the umbrella kulmiye in Wajir town. Here she tells her story and describes the way in which the women’s engagement with the credit programme has changed the quality of their relationships with their husbands, with other organisations, and with each other.

The reasons why people are poor in Wajir are drought and conflict. Another is that we are not at a border point like other towns, where we could benefit in terms of business. Here in Wajir you can find a family that doesn’t eat for more than three days, while in border towns the poor may not be able to save, but they won’t starve.

We came straight from the baadia [rangelands], with no idea about business. If you saw some of the pictures that were taken of us at that time, you would not believe that we are the same people. We were wearing poor clothes, with babies on our backs and looking miserable, and when Oxfam’s vehicle came we would rush out of the house without remembering what we looked like. We never used to know what happened to our next-door neighbour, because everyone was too busy looking out for her own livelihood. And when we started our businesses, the men were sarcastic and used to mock us. They used to say that they couldn’t handle women in their own homes, and so couldn’t imagine having so many in one place, planning and working together.

But now we are very different. Our children have uniforms for school and several changes of clothing, and so do we. I can comfortably say that there is no woman in the credit scheme who is not able to light her fire for cooking each day. We have become very close: we know who is sick or who has had a death in the family, and we visit and help each other. I remember this mother called Zeynab who was in our savings group and had a son going to secondary school at the time we received our first loan. I tell you she never spent a cent of that money on herself. It all went towards his school fees. That boy completed his schooling and joined the police, and has helped his mother to finish building their house, which his father started before he died. He bought a proper bed and mattress for
Figure 14: Habiba Hudhow, the Chair of the women's kulmiye in Wajir town, with members of the group.

his mum, and some dresses too. We were so happy for her, and so proud of him as if he was our own son.

And the men are surprised at what we have done. There are so many committees in the village which are basically led and attended by men which seem to end in uproar. They never seem to be able to end their meetings amicably – while we, on the other hand, make tea and laugh as we discuss and make important decisions. Men have realised that we manage things better than they do, and now request us to handle other village issues.
Today when I left home to come here, my baby was unwell. Before, you could never leave a healthy child at home, let alone a sick one, because you would be divorced and labelled as a bad wife, as a woman who loiters around. The men would leave home in the morning, and if they didn’t find food by the end of the day it would be us to whom our children would cry when they were hungry. But the world of today forces us out of our homes. After breakfast we both leave, and I come back before lunch with things to cook. We discuss our business with our husbands, who advise and assist us, which reduces problems and jealousy in the home or outside. They are even ready to babysit our children.

We are also helping in emergencies. For example, we are involved with a de-stocking project that ALDEF is carrying out. We buy the stock, return the skin, divide up the meat, and distribute it to the very poor, or to those who haven’t cooked a meal in two or three days. We could also register beneficiaries and distribute relief food, and would definitely be better at this than the chiefs and elders. Once ALDEF came to us with four donkeys to distribute among the whole village. So we sat down, and with no problem we came up with four women who were very poor and could make good use of the donkeys. There were no problems with our choice, even though there were several clans in the village. And when the chiefs and elders saw our selection, they said, “Do you mean that the women are cleverer than us?”
Perspectives on Pastoral Development

When you have something is when you remember others. The numbers of poor people are declining, but new groups still come into town after each drought. With the little we have, we help our relatives, both in the baadia and here. It's not as though we have folded our arms and are just watching. I remember what it was like. I remember fearing the town and its people. I was especially afraid of the soldiers sitting outside the bank, because people had told me that at the bank they take your thumb-print and you can be sent to jail. I was scared when people chose me as Chair of my group. I didn't think that I could manage the responsibility. But they insisted, and said they trusted me and would help me, and that's how it started.

We were given training. Although while we were having it we complained a lot, later we saw the benefit. Before, none of us could write, but now we have been given classes and can sign our names and read the amounts on a cheque. Just because we are from the baadia, it does not mean that our rights should be trampled upon. My brains are God-given, and I will use them to tackle injustice. If we had gone to school, we would have taken more people to task about the things that are wrong.

I've tried to do my best - it's been fun, and I have learned a lot. The work has contributed to making me what I have become today: a very confident person who is optimistic about the future.
Looking to the future

Habiba Hudhow's feelings of confidence and optimism about the future, recorded in the preceding case study, represent arguably the single most important impact achieved by the WPDP as a whole. A study at the end of Phase 1 found that households in project sites believed that their quality of life had improved, when compared with ten years before; while a key local partner responded that its sense of legitimacy, following its participation in an organisational development programme, had more than doubled. The mid-term review of Phase 2 also remarked upon the growing awareness among communities that they were now agents of their own lives and futures, and commented on the way in which this awareness was critical to the project's goal of reducing vulnerability: 'People's sense of capacity and competence constitutes a basis for any attempt to overcome disasters and to build better and stronger economic and social systems.'

These changes in levels of optimism and capacity have been achieved by working closely with a variety of people and institutions at various levels - pastoral associations, women's groups, local NGOs, and government bodies. Institution building has been central to the WPDP's approach, and this closing chapter will begin by summarising its significance in terms of the quality of leadership in the district. It will then highlight three particular challenges which the WPDP has faced, and which may still require attention if the gains made during the past six or seven years are to be sustained. Finally, the chapter will close by considering the future, and give a summary of what the third and final stage of the WPDP is likely to involve.

Institutional development

At a local level, the aim of building representative community organisations was to provide a mechanism through which resources could be managed and services delivered. More strategically, however, the organisations were an opportunity for people to come together and start to define the kind of future they wanted for themselves. Mohamed Elmi explains:

"The cells of any form of organisation, whether they are pastoral associations or women's groups, help to define more clearly the space within which people can..."
come together and say, “This is what we want”. The values of institutions are not constant: for example, what people want out of marriage, or out of education, or out of the justice system, will change. So what you need is a system which allows people greater control to choose the things which are good for them, and to reject those which are not. People have always managed these changes through some kind of organised forum, but problems arise when those organisations become dysfunctional.

For pastoralists, the traditional form of social organisation is the clan, but its power has been gradually weakened. It can now exercise little authority over those who have more independent means of income and redress, and its integrity has been repeatedly undermined by leaders who have used it as the basis for building political power. What is important about the pastoral associations is that, while they have adopted some traditional methods of decision making and management, they provide a forum within which people can act together beyond the boundaries of the clan. The clan composition of each association varies. The Wajir Bor association, for example, has members from two main clans – the Degodia and the Ogaden – and that in Kutulo is also mixed. Membership of the Riba association is dominated by one particular sub-clan, while the chief is from another. Potential tensions between members of different clans, or between the pastoral association and the chief, are illustrated in this example from Khorof Harar. One of its members, Abdi Omar, explains some of their initial difficulties in managing access to water.

The chief felt that he was responsible for the lives of both the livestock and the people in his jurisdiction. The pastoral association management, on the other hand, felt responsible for its members. And since it was the members’ payments that kept the borehole running, the PA felt that they should get priority. The chief argued that by refusing to water some animals, the PA was causing clan conflict. But the PA argued that members got priority regardless of the clan they belonged to. In the end the issue was resolved by sitting with the chief at the beginning of the season, when registration for the watering was being carried out. This was very helpful, and for a long time now we have avoided confrontation. People still go to the chief every once in a while crying for help, but he now consults the PA, and they discuss how to resolve the problem together... In my opinion, PA officials can be a model for desirable changes. By this I mean that some cultures within the pastoral community, such as retrogressive clan values, are incompatible with a modern lifestyle.

This is exactly the kind of leadership which the Oxfam team hoped would emerge. Mohamed Elmi again:
Looking to the future

People need a reason to rally around other than their ties of blood. Through the pastoral association, people will realise that if you have good people elected, things will go well; that in order to get justice, for example, you don’t have to have recourse to your clan. The association is in effect a forum for testing out new forms of leadership. Traditionally, pastoralists determined their leaders by whether they were honest, or brave when they went to fight. But now we want to know other things about them. Can they manage meetings? Will they be sympathetic to an old woman? If a family came for water, would they chase them away, or would they try to come up with a solution that worked for everybody? One of the Chairs of the most successful associations in the district is not from the dominant clan, but he keeps being elected, because of his qualities. That’s the kind of leadership which I was hoping would come through.

So the significance of the associations lies in their emphasis on what unites pastoralists as a group, rather than on what divides them. Maalim Ronow, Chair of the Hungai association, describes the divisive impact of the rapid increase in settlements, and the importance of rising above that. ‘This [i.e.increased settlement] was an issue on which our ideas were not asked. It is a government policy which has brought about clan conflicts. But one of the behaviours which we have learned from Oxfam is that of working together without looking at the different clans or sub-clans, and rather addressing issues that affect the group as a whole.’

The project’s commitment to institution building extends to the district level, where the WPDP has sought to ‘institutionalise’ its approach to pastoral development as part of its exit strategy. Chapter 4 highlighted the significance of four such institutions: the Wajir Peace and Development Committee, the District Pastoral Association, the Pastoral Steering Committee, and ALDEF. The decision to embed new ideas and approaches within organisations with clearly defined mandates and structures was prompted in part by the rapid turnover of government officials at district level, and the need to avoid the abrupt changes of direction which sometimes follow changes in key personnel. It was also a way of guarding against individual bias in district development policy and ensuring that the leadership for this was set through a more collective process. The PSC’s decision to produce guidelines governing work with pastoral associations was another initiative whose objective was to promote continuity as various individuals came into and left the district.

The WPDP has been described throughout this book as a ‘project’. It does indeed have all the characteristics of what is commonly understood by the term: it is a time-bound intervention, with a particular management and funding structure, and clearly defined purpose and outputs. The term ‘project’
is used as a kind of shorthand to capture the entirety of what the team is trying to achieve. And yet in many ways the WPDP is much more than just a project. In its efforts with others to build strong institutions which are intended to have a purpose and role well beyond the lifetime of the project, the team has been engaged in supporting a much broader and more fundamental process of change and development. An earlier chapter mentioned the way in which project staff took part in activities beyond the boundaries of their specific roles, contributing to development efforts in the district as a whole. Moreover, a consistent theme of this book has been the significance of changing attitudes and beliefs, which, if successful, may have an impact well beyond the objectives of any single project.

The WPDP has tried to demonstrate first that pastoralists have the skills and resources to manage development on their own terms. Second, that pastoralism is a system of production and social organisation in which donors may invest with confidence and to which government should demonstrate its commitment. And third, that alternative ways of working with pastoralists are possible and may be replicated elsewhere. At its simplest, an exclusively project-focused approach would have restricted evidence of impact to the changes in the lives of specific individuals or communities.

Key challenges

In trying to achieve all these ambitious results, significant challenges remain.

Influencing the wider environment for pastoral development

The links between poverty in pastoral communities and the actions (or inaction) of institutions at other levels are clear. Pastoralists' livelihood security, for example, is determined by the strength of their links with the external environment, and affected by their dependence on markets and exchange mechanisms over which they have little control. Their personal security is determined by the seriousness with which government and other bodies take their responsibilities for promoting peace. Development practitioners are becoming more ambitious in their aims, in seeking to exercise influence over the more fundamental causes of poverty. But trying to change relationships of this kind is a complex task, given the range of (often conflicting) influences at play.

Sustainable change will come about only when the institutional links between these different levels – from the pastoral associations to the DPA, for example, or from the DDC to senior administrative levels in Nairobi – are strong and functioning in the interests of pastoralists. Moreover, agencies
such as Oxfam will not be able to tell whether or not they have played a part in contributing to any change unless they develop different kinds of monitoring and impact-assessment tools, which are sufficiently sophisticated to help them to make such judgements.

A major challenge for development workers in Kenya is how to support those in authority to make the informed and conscious choices which will enhance rather than undermine pastoral livelihoods. As Peter Kisopia puts it: ‘Our concern is how to help policy makers understand that the environment in these areas is fragile, and therefore that it needs a deliberate policy to protect it, so that it’s not damaged by what they would call “development”, but which in practice is destroying a whole livelihood.’ Recent changes in Kenya mean that the possibility of significant policy change is now more likely than it was; but even so, the process of pastoral organisation and capacity building in districts such as Wajir is still at an early stage.

**Gender equity**

The economic and social benefits of the re-stocking, credit, and literacy initiatives, which have been targeted at women and which have been evaluated as part of various project reviews, have been described in earlier chapters. Beyond this, however, there appears to have been less consideration of the wider impact of the project on gender relations, and no structured analysis of any changes in the balance of control over the benefits of project activities. In the absence of such analysis, any assessment of what has happened with respect to gender relations more generally in Wajir is largely a matter of individual judgement.

Some observers of the project believe that important gains have been made in certain pastoral associations with respect to women’s status, and that, on the whole, women’s participation in the peace process and more generally in development activities across the district has transformed men’s perceptions of their skills and abilities. Efforts have certainly been made at the level of each project activity to consider issues of access and control for both women and men. Early in Phase 1, for example, the team looked at ways of conducting daryelle training in the rer, in order to increase the opportunities for women to train. In the second phase, discussions began about providing skills/training and business opportunities to men similar to that already made available to women through the credit scheme, as a means of promoting further diversification of the livestock economy. And in the education programme there has been research into the gender gap between the enrolment and completion rates of girls and boys, and analysis of possible strategies to close it.
However, there is also a sense that some of the pastoral associations and senior male leaders in the district do little more than tolerate Oxfam's concerns on this issue. Moreover, the agenda of the pastoral associations has (perhaps understandably) been focused until now on issues which concern the pastoral community as a whole, with less attempt to consider in greater depth the more specific and strategic interests of various social groups. A clearer gender strategy for the project as a whole, which analyses the connections between women's economic gains and their social and political status, and which presents a more disaggregated picture of the project's achievements, would help to establish with more confidence what the WPDP's impact in this area has been.

**Technical Issues**

The focus of this book to a large extent matches the focus of the project as a whole. In general, primary importance is attached to the way in which things are done (attitude, approach, and process), above the technicalities of what is done. There have been of course significant technical interventions, such as the health programmes implemented by the daryelles and the traditional birth attendants, the efforts to strengthen borehole management, the support for parent–teacher associations, and the links with the education work of the Nomadic Primary Health Care project. In particular, the WPDP has attempted to show that the nature of nomadic pastoralism requires an alternative approach to service delivery, and to demonstrate what that might look like. However, the primary concern of the team has been the process through which such interventions are designed and implemented.

Two important lessons have been learned from previous pastoral development projects. These are that isolated technical interventions in one sector often ignore the range of threats undermining people's livelihoods, and that technical assistance is too often divorced from a broader social and economic understanding of pastoral societies. The initial discussions with communities reinforced these views, and showed that pastoralists themselves had a range of concerns which they wanted to address. The deployment of team members has reflected the same bias, in that each Project Officer has brought his or her particular expertise to the project — in health, livestock development, education, and so on — but what is emphasised above all is the process through which technical support should be provided. In a similar way, the daryelles became more effective when their work was brought under the umbrella of the broader pastoral association, where their priorities could be influenced by members' demands, than when they had been part of the earlier, more focused, intersectoral government initiative (Nomadic Primary Health Care).
However, successive project reviews have highlighted some outstanding concerns about technical quality. These include the lack of technical supervision for the daryelles, and the lack of recognition at the national level of their skills and status. The project was designed on the assumption that technical and regulatory support – such as daryelle supervision, the development of training curricula, and monitoring of drug quality – would be provided by government. As such, the project avoided creating a parallel body of technical specialists. However, low levels of government capacity have meant that this support has been variable, and the institutions through which it could be enhanced (such as the PSC) are themselves still young. Moreover, to a certain extent the project has relied on technologies with which pastoralists already feel comfortable, rather than looking externally for alternatives. It has also given pastoral associations the latitude to develop their own solutions and procedures, as part of the process of building their capacity, but at the cost of a lack of standardisation across the district.

The proposed national policy on pastoralism will address some of these inconsistencies, by developing sector-specific policies within its overall framework. These may help to clarify the status of the daryelles, for example, or the responsibilities for borehole management. In addition, an effective national policy could create a more supportive environment within which to follow up other technical concerns, such as the impact of settlement and permanent water sources on range management. These developments at the national level need to be complemented by further work at the district level to strengthen key institutions such as the PSC and the DPA, which have a role in providing technical supervision and support to local pastoral associations.

The technical challenges still faced by the project would not justify questioning the basic emphasis of the first two phases. But they illustrate the challenge of balancing social and technical support, and the need for the project to keep innovating and remain open to alternative sources of expertise. Moreover, technical support is often easier to provide once a strong institutional foundation has been laid. As Mohamed Elmi suggests: ‘I don’t think projects which at the beginning go down the route of concentrating on a particular sector or technology can achieve this mass movement of people on the ground. It’s easier now, six years down the road, to develop specialisms or sectoral consistency. It would have been much harder if people hadn’t had a basic level of organisational capacity.’

The third phase of the WPDP

The third and final phase of the WPDP has been designed as one component of a broader national pastoral development programme for Oxfam in Kenya.
In effect, this seeks to build upon experience in Wajir both vertically (by addressing issues of national policy, and by co-ordinating the national conflict-reduction programme, referred to in Chapter 4) and horizontally (by seeking to replicate the approach in other pastoral districts, specifically Marsabit, Moyale, and Turkana). The WPDP is now also part of a wider regional pastoral programme within Oxfam, covering the Horn and East Africa, which it has done much to shape.

The main focus of the third phase will be to ensure that new ways of working are shared and institutionalised as much as possible. For example, the project will be supporting ten more pastoral associations in the south and west of the district, but through two local NGOs, rather than by using Oxfam staff. The District Development Planning Unit, which has responsibility for district planning and for maintaining poverty-related monitoring information, will be a new partner. And in Nairobi, the work to develop a national policy on pastoralism in collaboration with the ALRMP will be linked with efforts to implement the National Poverty Eradication Plan, for which Wajir is a pilot district.

What is the future of pastoralism in Wajir? In some ways the outlook appears gloomy. Successive droughts and periodic conflict have cumulatively depleted people’s assets. The spread of settlements has increased the number of permanent water sources and significantly altered the pattern of nomadic pastoralism. And current conflicts, if not adequately resolved, may deteriorate still further. And yet there are also positive signs. Increasing political liberalisation has brought with it greater openness, and an increase in civil-society activity, albeit of variable quality. There is now a forum at national level within which policy concerns affecting pastoralists can be raised, and some mechanisms (such as the poverty-reduction process and local government reform) through which development strategies can be pursued. And the prospect of peace in Somalia is an optimistic sign in a corner of Africa which has suffered greatly in recent decades.

Pastoralism is changing. But what is still needed in Kenya is for policy-makers, guided by the views and experiences of pastoralists themselves, to try to manage those changes, rather than simply reacting to them. Deliberate policy choices need to be made, for example, about the balance of responsibility in service provision between the State, local communities, and the private sector, or about how best to plan for the pastoral economy as a whole, so that there are more equitable opportunities for a range of social groups who are themselves trying to adapt to change.

But regardless of the extent of such change, pastoralism remains, for those living now in districts such as Wajir, the backbone of their economy and a way
Looking to the future

of life which for them represents a rational choice. Dekha Ibrahim ends this story by reminding us of people's right to make that choice, and of society's obligation to tolerate diversity and to recognise the richness which it brings.

Pastoralism is both an economic system and a way of life. It's people's choice to remain that way. My father is one of 20 children, and he is the only one living in town. The other 19, plus their children, still live in the baadia. So where are you going to put your resources, in the one or in the 19? Societies change and are dynamic. Pastoralism is in transformation, but it's here to stay. In Kenya there have been 35 years since independence of people saying that pastoralism has no future. Oxfam and others are working against that tide, but with the political process changing, the flow can turn. It's a question of tolerance. People have the right to be who they are, and to develop in their own way.

Figure 16: A woman of the Murule clan, milking goats at dawn in a homestead in the bush near Dambas

Geoff Sayer/Oxfam
Summary of lessons learned

Project conception and design

- **Long-term commitment.** The WPDP is a nine-year project. The length of this commitment, with funding approved in three blocks of three years, has given more stability (for example, removing the need to worry about staffing and budgets every year) and a longer timeframe within which to make investments of the depth and scale necessary to achieve impact. Donors and NGOs need to plan on this kind of scale.

- **Proof of commitment.** Before the nine years began, there was a one-year period of planning and consultation. This was important in building up good relationships with communities and other actors in the district, including government, and in designing a high-quality project. However, some limited funds were available during this period for direct work with communities (in water development, for example), which helped to establish credibility. Talking and planning alone would have been hard to sustain.

- **Exit strategy.** The project’s end was planned at the very beginning. Discussions about how best to phase out the work took place at a very early stage, and clear signals were given that Oxfam’s operational engagement in the district would last for a fixed period.

- **Capacity building.** An operational approach was chosen, because of the lack of local partners with adequate capacity. A key objective of the project has therefore been to build that capacity by investing directly in the management skills (including planning, budgeting, monitoring, fundraising, and reporting) of local NGOs and government. The risks and benefits of an operational approach were thought through from the beginning, and measures put in place to reduce the risks and to maximise the benefits.
• **Working with government.** Despite being operational, the project has worked closely with government, for example by using technical staff from line ministries for training and extension, and by contributing to district development planning. Care was taken to avoid developing parallel structures, although in some respects this increased the reliance of the project on others for its technical quality.

• **Scaling up in stages.** The scale of the project is significant: it worked in the first phase with 40,000 beneficiaries, and in the second with 100,000, while also scaling up to address policy issues at district and national levels, thus in theory reaching a greater number of indirect beneficiaries. Operating on this kind of scale increases impact (in terms of the numbers of people reached) and increases the profile and credibility that are necessary to promote debate on policy issues. However, the first phase of the project was focused on a tightly defined geographical area, allowing the team to experiment with new approaches.

• **Strengthening accountability.** The project's design sought to strengthen accountability – to communities, donors, and other actors. This meant incorporating formal and informal opportunities for genuine dialogue, for monitoring, learning and reporting, and for testing out project experience in public forums (workshops, publications, etc).

• **Opportunities for structured learning.** Formal opportunities were built in to the design of the project for structured reflection and learning, with all those involved (communities, donors, government, and partner NGOs) taking part. Each three-year phase has a logical framework and project document, a mid-term review, and an end-of-phase review, all of which are documented and made publicly available. This helps to develop consensus about the project's direction and to promote accountability. Mid-term reviews in particular provide moments of stability in the life of a long project. They also prompt a discussion about the next phase of the work well in advance, thus minimising gaps in funding and encouraging strategic thinking.

• **Continuous monitoring.** Systems were developed for continuous monitoring, which is particularly important in an unpredictable environment such as Wajir, where the quality of pasture, water, and security, and consequently health and well-being, vary so widely from year to year. Pictorial and diagrammatic tools are helpful with illiterate communities. Monitoring is seen not just as a way of assessing the effectiveness of the project and its impact, but as a way of building the skills of communities to judge the quality of their work and to re-plan accordingly. Both practical activities and strategic impact are monitored against indicators chosen by communities.
However, the WPDP monitoring systems have tended to focus on changes in the lives of specific households and communities. So far they are less well equipped to deliver judgements about the broader impact on factors such as the strength of the district economy or the quality of institutional relationships.

- **A multi-sectoral approach.** A multi-sectoral approach makes sense in terms of people’s real lives. It can also be more cost-effective in places where economic activity is very minimal, and where the management costs of any single intervention might not be covered by its rate of return. The individual components of a wider range of activities, managed as a package, may effectively subsidise each other. The broad agenda of the pastoral associations (including animal and human health care, water, credit, education, land, and security) increases the likelihood that they will have a wider appeal to different parts of any one community, and therefore may also increase their claims to be representative.

- **Anticipating conflict.** Words like ‘community’ were carefully defined as part of the project’s social and gender analysis – i.e. thinking through which people the project should be working with, and why, and according to what criteria a ‘community’ could be said to exist. However, any process of community development involves conflict and confrontation between people with differing perspectives and aspirations. None of the pastoral associations and community groups in Wajir is immune from these tensions, but most find strategies to manage them reasonably well. In one association, the level of conflict was such that it had a significant impact on progress.

- **Local operational autonomy** plus national policy initiatives. Project staff are given a high degree of autonomy by the country office. In places like Wajir, where government development planning is already decentralised, and which are remote from the capital, staff on the ground need the space and the authority to capitalise on opportunities as they arise, and to play a leadership role among their peers. A strong sense of direction from the project team also helps to protect the long-term goals of the project from the influence of changing development fashions. However, autonomy over project direction has been balanced in recent years by complementary support from the country office on policy work, which has been essential in pursuing pastoral development issues at a national level.

- **Cost sharing.** Care is taken not to fund recurrent costs, which can increase dependency on an implementing agency. Cost sharing is an important principle within the project (and also a practical matter, since the government is
Summary of lessons learned

withdrawing from service provision). The project team has been sufficiently disciplined to think through the consequences of each funding decision. The issue of government withdrawal from service provision is tackled in other ways and at other levels, through policy work.

- **Flexible funding.** Donors have given long-term flexible funding. Funds were agreed only for each three-year phase, but there was an unwritten agreement that if progress were good, then subsequent phases would be funded. Unspent funds may be reallocated from year to year within each phase, which is important for a project seeking to work at the pace set by each community. Additional donor funding gives the opportunity to work at a larger scale, and thus potentially achieve greater influence on others and a stronger impact on poverty. A key lesson in working with donors is to keep a clear sense of direction, to retain control of the agenda, and to push for the flexibility of funding outlined above.

- **Flexible, participatory planning.** The logical framework ('logframe') has been an important tool in helping the project team to think through what can be achieved within the project period and what cannot. It has also been a useful route map, guiding the project's direction. However, it may be difficult to combine the rigour of a formal planning tool with the flexibility demanded by participatory approaches. In Wajir, the logframe was not separated from the participatory planning process, but was built up from the conclusions emerging out of community discussions. In Phase 1 it was also taken back to communities with the project proposal. Adjustments were made to the logframe as the project developed, in order to accommodate changing priorities (although this caused some confusion when it was not clear which version of the logframe was correct). The tension between participatory planning and the internal demands and priorities of an implementing agency was recognised and discussed openly with communities. However, despite the skill of the project team in managing these tensions, it should be remembered that Oxfam has always had the stronger hand and a much greater degree of influence over the process, given its control over resources.

- **Developing sustainable institutions.** The most strategic element within the project is its investment in institutions — both government and non-government — through which development activities can be managed, and more fundamental issues can be raised about people's rights and entitlements. The key concern for the project team is to develop the sustainability of these institutions; the sustainability of the specific activities that they happen to be managing is less important.
Ways of working

- **Employing local staff.** Local staff with local knowledge are vital in situations of insecurity, where careful judgements have to be made when assessing risk. High levels of local knowledge also help to move work along faster, because less time is needed to learn. Continuity of staffing helps to sustain commitment to long-term goals. And women staff in societies sharply segregated along gender lines play a crucial role.

- **Using familiar concepts.** Working with what people know is important, such as their understanding of poverty, or the measures which they would use to judge project costs. In Wajir, a wheelbarrow costs the price of a camel, and once pastoral associations realised the financial value of wheelbarrows, they looked for more cost-effective solutions. A wheelbarrow by itself may have little meaning, until its value is placed in a familiar context.

- **Drawing on external expertise.** ‘Outsiders’ bring important knowledge. Participatory development does not mean letting communities do everything their own way, because this may mask inequities. External agencies can contribute useful knowledge about more effective ways of doing things. The skill lies in mixing local and external knowledge, to get the best possible solutions in each context.

- **Explicit decision making.** Openness and transparency about roles and responsibilities helps to avoid confusion and misinterpretation. The detail of who will do what, and when, should be agreed before work begins. The criteria against which key decisions will be made should also be made clear.

- **Devolved responsibility.** On the whole, the members of the project team have avoided being prescriptive about solutions, preferring to let people work things out for themselves, and asking critical questions to guide their thinking. Commonly agreed action plans and constitutions are used as benchmarks against which a range of opinions and options can be openly judged. Each community is allowed to retain responsibility for the direction and pace of activities, even if this means moving more slowly than the team would have liked. However, there must be clarity about the issues on which compromise is impossible, such as the management of donated funds. An implementing agency is entitled to have its own opinions, but it must make them explicit.

- **Identifying allies.** A critical mass of people and organisations who share the same concerns is important in making change happen, at any level. Policy work is dependent upon identifying and cultivating the structures through
which change might be brought about. However, it is important to keep an open mind about who or what may constitute an ‘ally’. For example, in Wajir, the peace-building mechanism brought together the army and the security services alongside businessmen, women, religious and political leaders, and young people. They each had a stake in peace, but would not normally have been ‘natural’ allies.

- **Practising what you preach.** Communities must be allowed to challenge the staff of an implementing agency. If not, the agency loses its legitimacy to challenge others. Project staff must expect of themselves what they expect of others, and this has implications for the nature of the recruitment process. For example, if communities are being encouraged to pay less attention to their own social hierarchies, then any form of hierarchical behaviour within a project team would be judged to be inconsistent. The personal behaviour of team members sends important signals to other people. If staff behave consistently, are transparent, and keep their promises, there is evidence that others will do the same. Modelling good practice is an important strategy in Wajir.

- **Encouraging self-criticism.** An important factor in developing quality is to maintain a critical approach: constantly questioning whether another way of working might be more effective or might achieve greater impact. Visitors to the project, or the advisory resources that the wider organisation can provide, can encourage challenge and criticism.

### Pastoral development

- **Integrate pastoral development with national development.** A clear sense of vision and direction for pastoral development is crucial – particularly in a marginal area, and particularly given that the issue has been subject to so much misunderstanding and prejudice. Pastoral development cannot be pursued in isolation from national development. One of the problems in Kenya in the past has been the isolation of pastoral areas from national economic development. The broader policy framework must be ‘right’ and supportive, which means complementary work at national level and beyond. Opportunities such as national poverty-reduction strategies can be used to pursue issues of concern to specific population groups, such as pastoralists.

- **Invest in institutions.** Pastoral regions of Kenya have very weak institutional capacity. They are considered to be ‘difficult’ areas by some government
personnel (hot, dry, insecure, and remote), and suffer from decades of historical neglect and marginalisation. The baseline from which to start strengthening government capacity is therefore very low, in comparison with other parts of the country which have more resources, higher educational levels, closer ties to business and to the capital, and so on. Thus the level of investment needed to build effective working relationships and institutional capacity is much greater and harder to sustain.

- **Balance the power of individuals and institutions.** Individuals can make change happen as a result of their skills and quality, or their patronage, or their influence. Yet this needs ‘institutionalising’ – embedding in structures which will outlive staff movements or civil-service deployments, particularly in pastoral districts, where capacity is so low. Clear structures also help to prevent powerful individuals circumventing the system.

- **Build strong, representative institutions.** Institutions vary in their purposes, such as delivering services, or fostering mutual support among their members, or acting as a channel for representation. The most strategic aim of local-level institutions in Wajir is to help people to unite around common concerns (such as needing secure access to grazing) and thereby rise above divisive factors (such as clan tensions). Strong, representative institutions are a mechanism through which communities can resolve differences and find common ground, and begin to influence debates about poverty and development on their own terms.

- **Invest in local skills to influence official policy.** Change in policy and practice is critical at several levels – local, district, national, and regional. The connections between all these levels are important – for example, if pastoral associations act together, through a district association, they have a better chance of influencing higher-level structures. This process of building representative structures cannot take place from the top down. However, the challenge of bringing about change is considerable, and the process through which this is done is a dynamic and complex one. These structures and relationships in Wajir are still very weak. Significant investment in skills and capacity is still required, if the pastoral associations are to achieve sustained impact on policy.

- **Address sectoral concerns within a wider policy framework.** Policy-influencing work in Wajir has become more systematic and strategic as the project has developed. In the early years, there was no clear way of influencing the national agenda, and issues were pursued at the sectoral level. More recently, the approach has been to concentrate on the overall framework for pastoral
development, working in partnership with central government, within which specific sectoral issues can then be addressed. Do project staff have the necessary skills to carry out lobbying and advocacy work? If not, how will the gaps be filled? There is evidence from Wajir to suggest that it is the credibility and authority built up at the district level that have given staff the opportunity to engage at the national level.

- **Promote gender equity in a culturally appropriate manner.** Pastoral areas tend to be sharply segregated along gender lines. Apparently minor gains (such as one or two women joining the committee of a pastoral association) can actually be highly significant. It is important to keep raising issues of gender equity, but in ways which acknowledge customary practice, so that key individuals are not alienated. In Wajir, male elders were asked to act as guarantors for the loans given to women, in part to keep them engaged with what was happening. There was thus no compromise on the principles that women should be targeted within the programme, and that gender inequity with respect to control over assets should be addressed, but at the same time there was realism about the space available for manoeuvre. There may also be more creative ways to raise gender issues. For example, the WPDP has worked with the sheikhs and Islamic NGOs to restore women's rights to education and property, which cultural practice has tended to deny.

- **Incorporate drought management into long-term development work.** Drought management and emergency relief should be integrated within long-term work, in order to mirror the realities of people's lives. Drought management must not be a short-term concern in arid areas, but rather embedded within long-term strategies for reducing livelihood vulnerability.

- **Define the primary purpose of income-support measures.** Which is more important in any particular context: the financial sustainability of income-support measures such as re-stocking and credit services, or their capacity to benefit the poorest? Ideally a project should achieve both aims, but in certain circumstances, where income levels and organisational capacity are very low, reducing poverty may for a period take priority. In Wajir, these measures brought social and economic benefits for the families involved, and there has been anecdotal evidence of indirect positive impact on extended families and on the livestock economy. Although financial sustainability was an important consideration, the primary concern of the project was to reach the most vulnerable households, particularly women.
Common to all of the above is the conclusion that the primary determinant of project quality is the quality of project staff: their skills, judgement, and experience, and the personal values which guide their actions.
Notes

Introduction

Chapter 1
4 E.M.N. Wekesa (1999), 'WPDP Phase 2, Output to Purpose (Mid-Term) Review', unpublished report, BDDEA/Oxfam, Nairobi.

Chapter 2
1 J. Swift (1988), 'Major Issues in Pastoral Development with special emphasis on selected African countries', Rome: FAO.
4 For an overview of the context in Wajir at the time when the WPDP began, see the WPDP 'Background Document', January 1996, which summarises data and information gathered during participatory discussions with communities.
6 See, for example, J.R. Moris (1988), Oxfam's Kenya Re-stocking Projects, Pastoral Development Network Paper 26c, London: Overseas Development
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7 See note 6.
8 R. Hogg (1992), 'NGOs, pastoralists and the myth of community: three case studies of pastoral development from East Africa', Nomadic Peoples, 30: 122-46.
13 Weight for Height (WFH) is a measurement of malnutrition, taken by comparing a child's weight against the weight of a 'normal' child of the same height (i.e. a child in a common reference group).

Chapter 3

1 A division is an administrative sub-division of a district.
2 Particularly A. Bonfiglioli op. cit. 1992, which drew together experience of pastoral development from across Africa, and was published just at the time when the WPDP began.
3 The first meeting of the District Pastoral Association suggested that each association should include a minimum of 100 households.
5 The average exchange rate during the project period was 110 Kenya shillings to the pound.
7 Ibid.
8 M.F. O'Leary and E.M.S. Wekesa (2000), 'WPDP End Project Review', Oxfam/DFID, based on data provided in the unpublished draft report, 'WPDP Re-stocking Experience'.
Chapter 4


3. Ibid.

4. C. Hesse, project memorandum, 30 September 1996.


Chapter 5

1. See, for example, Bonfiglioli op. cit. 1992.


4. Ibid.

5. Interview with Farah Siyad Tube, District Agricultural and Livestock Officer, Wajir, and also a member of the PSC. November 2000.


8. See the annex to the WPDP ‘Mid-Term Review Status Report, Phase 1’, January 1996.

Chapter 6

2 Wekesa op. cit. 1999.
3 Interviews with Peter Kisopia (26 July 2000) and Dekha Ibrahim (17 October 2000).
Further reading


Useful websites

http://www.iied.org/drylands Resources from the Drylands Programme of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). These include the bulletin Haramata, and a new series of working papers, Securing the Commons, discussing the shared management of common property resources.


http://www.ids.ac.uk/eldis/pastoralism/htm New internet resource focusing on pastoralism. (Currently a six-month prototype, but expected to become a long-term resource.)

http://www.ossrea.org Website of the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa, whose research activities include issues relating to drylands.
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