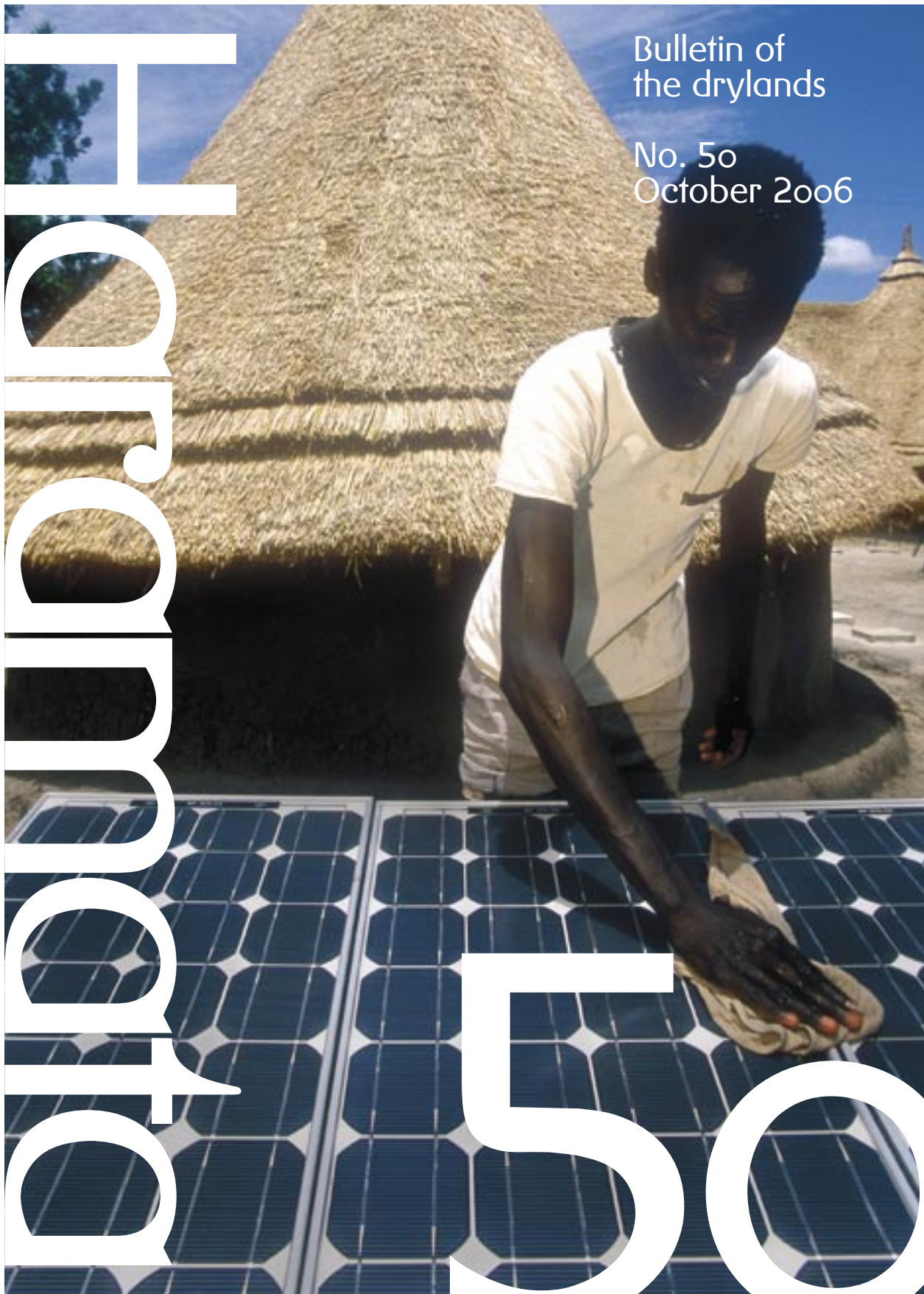


Journal of

Bulletin of
the drylands

No. 50
October 2006



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Food for thought

New challenges and a new look



WELCOME to this special 50th edition of Haramata! When the newsletter first appeared eighteen years ago, for the drylands it was in many ways a different epoch. But in other ways little – too little – has changed.

The year 2006 is a milestone, being the International Year of Deserts and Desertification and almost 30 years since the original UN Conference on Desertification. So it is a good moment to take stock. In this issue we ask, What progress has been achieved by people of the drylands over the past two or three decades, what crises have confronted them, and what are their future prospects?

Depending where one looks, there are grounds for hope or grounds for despair. In some places, where the political situation is peaceful, people have found ways to overcome the recurrent hardship of drought and construct sustainable ways of life, taking advantage when they can of new technologies (front cover). In other places,

though, inter-ethnic conflict and competition for scarce resources – sometimes manipulated by foreign interests – have brought death and human misery (as in Darfur, News, p6) on a monstrous scale. And now there is research predicting that global warming could render huge swathes of marginal land such as the Sahel virtually uninhabitable (Periscope on Climate Change, p22).

Sahelian people face many kinds of stress. The result is that before long the majority of these people will be town-dwellers and, unless more is done, most of those now surviving in the wide open spaces will be driven into urban slums (Periscope on Urbanisation, p20).

There are a lot of challenges ahead, for institutions as well as individuals. Haramata will hope to face the challenges with you. Please write and tell us whether you will welcome the new-look newsletter as your partner on the way.

R.S.

Herders of the world unite around Ethiopian campfires

A TEMPORARY CAMP in the rangelands of southern Ethiopia became the point of convergence in July for more than 350 pastoralists from 60 different groups and 18 countries. They assembled there, near Yabello, about 80 miles from the border with Kenya, to discuss – first of all among themselves and then with some international agency people – the key issues facing their present livelihoods and their future.

The talking took place over eight days. Some issues were discussed at official meetings, including the three main topics on the agenda, which were: 1) Access to markets, 2) Methods of improving animal production, and 3) How governments could or should work with the pastoralists' traditional governing bodies. But many other subjects were discussed around campfires or, even more informally, at meetings in the bush around the camp.

The event was called the Horn of Africa Regional Pastoralist Gathering and the United Nations' Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which organised it, called it unique of its kind. For six days the pastoralists talked among themselves; only then, for the last two days, were officials from the UN, 10 governments and some non-governmental organisations

invited to hear the results of their discussions. According to one observer, many were surprised by what they heard.

The meeting took place against the background of a recent and disastrous three-year drought in the region. In Northeast Kenya this drought has wiped out many of the herds on which people depended for up to 90 per cent of their household income, thus putting in jeopardy the very survival of the pastoral way of life. And yet the prevailing spirit of the meeting was a positive one: a can-do attitude which pervaded the various sessions, whether on trade or governance, production or conflict.

Participants stressed the importance of starting any interventions from the actual situation of the people on the ground. A Kenyan, **Hassan Farah Yusuf**, echoed the general sentiments as he told the official delegates: *"When you are climbing a tree, you don't climb from the top, you climb from the bottom."* Much of the debate was inspired by the recognition that pastoralists themselves held the power to work towards solutions of many issues confronting them.

Haramata No 1 - published in July 1988, carried an article entitled 'Land rights for pastoral groups', which began:

"Throughout the arid and semi-arid zones of Africa, pastoral systems of production have lost their better-watered lands to other uses... Small farmers have been progressively eating into grazing lands in all parts of Africa."

The editors promised that Haramata would pursue these issues. We believe that pledge has been kept, but as the accompanying report from Ethiopia shows, the problems of pastoralists have not gone away and, in many respects, are more serious than ever.

As well as pastoralists from the Horn, the gathering was attended by others from West Africa, Asia and South America. Indians and Mauritians discussed camel cheese; Somalis, Bedouins and Malians shared information on trade – and after 14 years of tribal conflict and thousands of deaths, the Luo and the Jikany Nuer of Kenya began peace talks around a campfire which it is hoped will bring a lasting calm.

Many pastoralists from the Horn called on their governments to do more to facilitate the trans-border movement and sale of livestock, believing that a potentially thriving export trade is blocked by unnecessary obstacles. Saudi Arabia was also criticised for its continuing ban on live imports from the Horn, even though delegates said the outbreak of Rift Valley Fever which prompted it in 1997 was no longer a problem.



Antonio Fiorenze/UN-OCHA

Pastoralist delegates applaud a speaker at the opening ceremony.

A Kenyan MP and pastoralist, **Ali Wario**, criticised governments for not recognising pastoralism as a viable system of land use. “Our laws and policies are dumb, deaf and blind to the needs of pastoralists,” he told the gathering.

i An account of the Gathering is being published by UN-OCHA’s Pastoralist Communication Initiative (PCI) in the form of a magazine entitled ‘Peace, Trade and Unity’. For copies or other information-
email: scottvilliers@un.org
telephone: PCI on +251 (0) 115 444424

Wangari makes a splash to protect watersheds

KENYA’S GREEN BELT MOVEMENT and its founder, Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai, are launching a nationwide programme designed to provide permanent protection for the country’s major watersheds.

Since she won the Nobel in 2004, Wangari and her colleagues have been developing plans for the long-term conservation of Kenya’s largest forested areas - on watersheds that account for 90 per cent of the nation’s water supply.

The Green Belt Movement (GBM) aims to build up expertise in large-scale conservation planning and the leadership skills of local communities, especially for women. In partnership with the US-based Nature Conservancy and the World Bank, GBM is aiming to bring about a major shift in the way Kenya views and manages the conservation of its most important ecosystems.



Wangari Maathai

i More information should be available soon on Green Belt Movement’s website at: www.greenbeltmovement.org

Dying for oil in Darfur

A HUMAN TRAGEDY of horrific proportions is being played out in the Darfur region of Sudan – and made worse by foreign governments such as the United States, China and others competing to gain control of huge wealth under the feet of some of the most distressed and poverty-stricken people of the Sahel.

Three years of conflict, pitting the Sudanese government and its unofficial militias against an assortment of rebel groups, have resulted in tens of thousands – possibly hundreds of thousands – of deaths and more than two million people left homeless. The violence has got even worse since a peace agreement was signed in May, with the government on one side accused of responsibility for mass slaughter of Darfur's rural population, and on the other the United States allegedly fomenting the rebellion in order to destabilise the pro-China Khartoum regime.

Villages across the region have been bombed or burned to the ground by pro-government militias, and aid agencies trying to help the victims have been attacked. In July, eight Sudanese humanitarian workers were killed and the UN's World Food Programme, working to provide emergency supplies to 2.7 million displaced people forced into camps, says it was unable to reach half a million of them.

By early September, the UN Security Council

had passed a resolution calling for a UN peace-keeping force to replace the under-strength and under-equipped African Union force, which has been unable to restore law and order. But the Sudanese government responded by declaring that any UN intervention would be regarded as a violation of its sovereignty. So although the UN resolution doesn't strictly require Sudan's agreement, Khartoum can be fairly sure that its opposition will prevent any action.

One of the reasons for Sudan's resistance is that it fears losing control of a large chunk of its territory – a chunk which may look like unpromising semi-desert but which could be set to produce great wealth for the government. Because of its oil, Sudan has already become a client state of China, which can wield a veto in the UN Security Council over any international action that would threaten its interests. And China's National Petroleum Company owns one substantial oil concession in Southern Darfur, as well as a share of others elsewhere in the country. According to some industry estimates, Sudan may have oil reserves in the same league as those of Saudi Arabia. But many Darfuris will probably not live to see the benefits.



Watched by a soldier of the Sudan Liberation Army, a woman weeps in Darfur after her village has been burned by a pro-government militia

Jobard/SIPA

In the United States, a public campaign - led by evangelical Christian and Zionist organisations has been calling for government intervention to "stop the genocide in Darfur". This ignores a UN inquiry which rejected claims of genocide, while some observers say the campaign is an attempt to besmirch Islam while covering up America's role in one of Africa's worst conflicts.

Was Valaskakis right?

DOES SEDENTARISATION represent progress in the drylands? This is the question raised in a recent paper by two French researchers, Monique Mainguet and Frédéric Dumay of the University of Rheims, on the basis of their experience in Mauritania.

In this country of a million square kilometres, the authors say a drama is currently unfolding: the slow extinction of pastoralism in favour of sedentary livelihoods. Among strategies for improving the lives of the country's nomadic Bedouins, sedentarisation is favoured by a majority of decision-makers, but "unfortunately this is based on mistaken ideas".

The misconceptions, say Mainguet and Dumay, concern the degradation of rangelands (in fact more accentuated around villages), the idea that nomadism is archaic (whereas it responds to environmental imperatives) and

Haramata No. 6 - December 1989:

In many parts of the Third World, governments and aid agencies have for years pursued a policy of trying to halt the exodus of rural people to towns and cities. But every orthodoxy produces its iconoclast, and for the Sahel one has emerged in the shape of Kimon Valaskakis, president of a Canadian future studies institute. In a recent report for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Valaskakis proposes a massive development programme for the Sahel which would actually encourage the exodus from remote rural areas where the population is very scattered. Rather than spending huge sums trying to take roads and services to hundreds of small, marginal settlements, Valaskakis suggests it would be much better to concentrate on planned urbanisation.

the claim that nomadic productivity is poor compared to sedentary stock-raising (whereas it has been shown that in difficult arid zones the nomadic systems are three to 10 times more productive than sedentary ones).

They acknowledge the various reasons why Mauritanian nomads have been "tempted" by sedentarisation, including access to schools and public services. However, they conclude that the loss of an ancestral knowledge of the most viable system for managing arid lands is something inestimable - and, they add, it is a sustainable system without equal.

Can they both be right? Haramata invites readers' views on the Valaskakis and Mainguet/Dumay prescriptions for Sahelian development.

Desertification (of a kind) arrives in England



© Paul Clendell 2006

A dried-up reservoir in southern England, where lack of rain has brought extreme drought

AFTER A PROLONGED period of drought, the south-east quarter of England has seen rivers dry up and desert-like conditions spreading across its normally green landscape. With a population of 11 million it is already one of the driest areas of Europe and rainfall is declining. In one particular area south of London, the director of a water company says: "We actually have less water available per person per year than The Sudan or Egypt." The difference is that this is one of England's wealthiest regions – its 50 golf courses soak up 7 million litres of water a season, and 2,000 private swimming pools take a lot more. In addition, each person uses almost 170 litres a day, compared with the average of 10 litres for drinking, washing and cooking available in Africa. But few people have responded to publicity campaigns warning them to use less. The problem is that they don't understand there is a problem.

Clean water without the bitter pill of privatisation

A HEARTENING STORY comes from northern Ghana, where the little town of Savelugu, near Tamale, has dramatically improved its water supply and its health without resorting to privatisation.

Countries across the developing world that have problems with their water supply have been pushed into privatisation by the World Bank and other aid donors, often with disastrous results. In some cases, foreign water companies have failed to improve the service but have soaked up huge profits while imposing much higher water prices that people cannot afford.

It shouldn't be such a problem in Africa's arid zones, where arguably there isn't enough

water for foreign privateers to make a fat profit. But the dangers are never far away and alarming cases of exploitation have arisen across the continent, from Ghana to Tanzania.

Only last year, at the risk of a big compensation claim, the government of Tanzania revoked its 10-year, US\$100 million privatisation contract with a British-owned company, alleging that in two years the water supply around Dar es Salaam had deteriorated rather than improved and that the company had failed to make promised investments.

In Savelugu, they've been doing things differently – and setting an excellent example for others. The community now buys its water from the national water company, then sets what it considers a fair price and takes responsibility for collecting payments and making repairs.

The result: unpaid water has fallen to 15 per cent, and the number of households connected to the water supply has increased eight-fold. Even better, the water-borne disease guinea worm which is spreading in the rest of the country has been almost eliminated

Now, Savelugu's 'Public-Community Partnership' is extending to neighbouring communities, despite the heavy water price rises the Ghanaian government is having to impose in the run-up to a privatisation forced on it by the World Bank and the UK government.

In support of Ghana's National Coalition Against Privatisation, the London-based World Development Movement (WDM) says the World Bank and the UK have "failed to even consider" how the lessons of Savelugu could be applied more widely. "By letting privatisation distract them from what works," says WDM, "they have let down the people of Ghana."

 www.wdm.org.uk

One million faces was not enough

THE UNITED STATES (and a few others) refused to bite the bullet. Despite the overwhelming majority of nations ready to vote for tougher controls on the small arms trade, they averted their eyes from the fact that a thousand people around the world are dying every day at gunpoint. And so, after two weeks of negotiation in New York in July, the United Nations' Conference on Small Arms simply collapsed.

Over one million people from 160 countries had put their names to the Million Faces Petition organised by the 'Control Arms Campaign' sponsored by Oxfam and Amnesty International. The petition was presented to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on the first day of the conference by **Julius Arile** from strife-torn northern Kenya.

Arile said afterwards: *"I came to this conference to ask the world's governments to stop guns flooding into the area where I live. I have lost many friends and even my brother to armed violence. I'm deeply disappointed that the world has done nothing to help me and the millions like me."*

Statistics indicate there are some 30 million arms in sub-Saharan Africa, whose governments spend US\$22 billion a year buying more of them. An AK-47 assault rifle can be bought on the street for as little as US\$30 in parts of Africa. An AK-47 can fire 600 bullets a minute.

When does hunger become a famine? - the case of Niger

“Famine” is a word with many layers of meaning, as painfully demonstrated by the food crisis last year in Niger, when malnutrition reached alarming levels. Since food shortages seldom affect everyone in a given area or community, let alone a whole country, the decision on when to declare a famine is based as much on political considerations as on assessments of human need.

Official agencies will tend to define famine according to measurable indicators such as food availability and mortality rates. Non-governmental aid groups, typically from Northern countries, will be guided by the evidence they find on the ground at village level, which may be disastrous for some groups but difficult to quantify overall. On the other hand, the governments of affected countries like Niger will be sensitive to the political and economic forces – some beyond their control – that come into play when a food crisis is categorised as famine.

These different perceptions underlay an intense debate in Niger on how to interpret and act on last year’s crisis, according to **Benedetta Rossi**, a Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, who has conducted research in the Tahoua region of Niger over the past 10 years.

“Donors and aid organisations were divided,” she told *Haramata*. “Against those who

interpreted the crisis as a famine, there were those who argued that it was an outcome of chronic poverty.

“Interpretations are not neutral. Whether a situation is or is not characterised as ‘famine’ influences how much money can be spent, where and how it should be spent, and who should administer relief funds and operations.”

In an interview in August 2005, Niger’s President Mamadou Tandja complained that his country’s situation was being exaggerated by people who had a political and economic interest in treating it as a famine. The real problem, he said, was that Niger was receiving insufficient grant aid to deal with the underlying social issues.

In the end, said Dr Rossi, it came down to money. By triggering a famine appeal for Niger, aid agencies raised large sums in a short time to relieve the people’s immediate needs. Without it, that help would not have been available.

However, she went on, other options could be considered. Given the existence of early warning systems and the predictability of food shortages and price rises, crisis prevention could include timely employment creation programmes, such as public works remunerated in cash or food for work. “Actions such as road and dam building and maintenance would have a development effect, and would be less disruptive of local

livelihood strategies and established trade networks than free food or cash distributions.”

In December 2005, a dossier entitled unequivocally “After the Famine in Niger...” was produced by CILSS, the inter-governmental committee against Sahelian drought, and the French agricultural research group, CIRAD. If there had been no recurrence of region-wide famine since that of 1973-74, it said that was because a lot of progress had been made in the meantime. But poverty was a structural factor in food insecurity and in Niger, 60 per cent of the population have to subsist on less than one dollar a day.

Another evaluation of the 2005 crisis in Niger was undertaken by the French research institute IRAM and co-ordinated by agricultural economist **Johny Egg**. *Haramata* invited Dr Egg to comment on the disputes over use of the term ‘famine’. He responded:

“A strong disagreement certainly arose between the humanitarian aid and the development groups – and the same split was reflected within the NGOs and between the bilateral donors and the World Food Programme. The bilateral ‘development’ donors represented on the government’s National Mechanism for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises found themselves under attack (not least from their own head offices) because the ‘famine’ label was taken to signify the failure of their efforts.”

This clash between aid and development was rendered more acute, Egg continued, because emergency aid operations have become much more standardised in recent years, with procedures that leave no room for development concerns or co-operation with national or local authorities. And emergency aid is increasingly triggered by public opinion in the North (responding to media publicity in which disaster appeals

can have a big influence) rather than by the established early-warning systems in the countries concerned. Thus in this case, “the local actors were in large measure dispossessed of the management of the crisis by the head offices of aid agencies and NGOs.”

IRAM’s evaluation showed there had been some shortcomings in the National Mechanism’s handling of the situation, but far from being caused by a serious food supply shortage last year’s crisis was the result of a cumulative loss of income and chronic malnutrition among vulnerable groups. “From this point of view,” Egg concluded, “one must hope that it will persuade the government and donors to improve the financing of agriculture and health.”



The cover of the CILSS-CIRAD Press dossier entitled ‘After the famine in Niger...’

① For more information visit: www.cilss.bf

What successes and where are efforts still failing?

In 1977 the United Nations called the first international conference of governments and experts to address the problem of desertification. Over three decades much has changed in the way the problem is perceived and treated. This assessment comes from the Sahara-Sahel Observatory (OSS), which has a key role in surveying the performance of international and regional organisations in this area.

By Youba Sokona and Wafa Essahli

THE PHENOMENON of land degradation is as old as the hills. Plato noted the harmful action of agriculture on forest cover back in the fourth century BC, but it wasn't until the 1970s when the whole of Africa – and Sahelian Africa in particular – was stricken by serious drought, that the world woke up to a menace that threatens nearly a billion people and affects 70 per cent of drylands on the Earth's surface. It also became clear that the situation was going to deteriorate and that poor countries could not deal with it on their own.

Combating desertification first became a 'global issue' in the 1970s. At a conference in Nairobi, desertification was defined as the advance of the desert, so moves to combat it centred around reforestation activities and a plethora of measures to prevent inhabited areas from being engulfed by advancing sand dunes: dams, barriers, live hedges and other plantations, initiatives to protect roads, villages, oases, etc. and to stabilise dunes, plus soil and water conservation measures.

The Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) adopted in Paris by the international community in 1994 marked a decisive turning point in recognising the link between poverty and environmental degradation and the global nature of desertification. The Convention also marked a change of paradigm in dealing with this threat. It prompted a massive debate on the definition of desertification to try to get politicians and development actors to understand that deserts do not *advance*, but *form* wherever the growing pressure of humans and unsustainable human activities threaten fragile – and therefore vulnerable – natural resources. Thus, in defining desertification, the first article of the Convention emphasised the role of human activity in soil degradation.

It is therefore essential to involve everyone in the debate in order to change attitudes to environmental issues and stimulate new types of partnership that can make a more effective stand against desertification. One of the main recommendations of the CCD is that measures



Hartmut Schwarzbach/Still Pictures

Clearing land for agriculture in the Sudan – but will there be peace for people to enjoy the fruit of their labour?

to combat desertification should be part of a programmatic vision and thus form an integral element of all the different sectors of development – agriculture, livestock rearing, tourism, industry, energy, etc.

We now need to assess ten years of implementation of the CCD, not just to acknowledge its successes and achievements, but also – above all – to identify and analyse its shortcomings and determine what can be done to improve programmes to combat desertification. Because this is a problem of the utmost gravity: the United Nations predicts that by 2020 nearly 60 million people will have left sub-Saharan dryland areas and headed for Europe as a result of the desertification process.

Although the UN declared 2006 to be the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD), the international community has been very quiet on this issue. It seems that nothing short of an announcement by UN experts warning of 60 million refugees fleeing

the deserts and famines created by the disappearance of hundred of millions of hectares of vegetation is required to mobilise it.

Nevertheless, there is no denying that much has been done in the last 10 years:

- The world is waking up to reality of desertification. However, it is still a largely hidden phenomenon. It may have done much more damage and claimed far more victims than any tsunami or earthquake, but it still attracts much less media attention than these events.
- Member countries that signed up to the CCD have formulated their national programmes to combat desertification. It is not so much the document itself that is interesting but the procedure used to draw it up, in that it allowed regions that are often marginalized by development plans to reflect on development in a participatory process involving all stakeholders, including development partners.
- National institutions and international scientific and technical institutions have invested a lot of effort in work on the indicators, reference



Marcus Watzel/Still Pictures

Migrants from West Africa hoping for a new life in Europe. In the back streets of Tangier, Morocco, they wait for a clandestine crossing to Spain

points, surveillance and monitoring of land degradation in the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas covered by the CCD in order to improve understanding of the mechanisms and effects of degradation.

However, these achievements cannot hide the fact that sustainable development in the areas affected by desertification is still hampered by various factors:

- If we are not careful, there is a danger that rather than being an integral element of sectoral development policies so that they all work towards sustainable development, desertification will become a completely separate sector that has little articulation with other development programmes. In the face of more immediate development concerns like food security, health and education, decision-makers have little relevant information to help them make combating desertification a priority issue. The position

of national co-ordinating bodies vis-à-vis environmental ministries is not helpful in this respect, nor does it allow them to do any real co-ordinating.

- For their part, the sub-regional organisations created to respond to the crises triggered by catastrophic droughts have not evolved enough to get member countries to recognise their added value as instruments in the implementation of national environmental policies. If it happens, this would enable them to secure funding at the national level and end their dependence on international donors.
- Advances on the scientific and technical front have also been disappointing. Despite the efforts expended by various international and regional organisations, work on the reference points and indicators of desertification continues on a global scale because there are no established traditions of longterm data gathering in these countries. As a result,

few indicators are calculated systematically or regularly at the national and local levels, where they would be most useful

- The countries affected by desertification still lack the necessary means to deal with it. Data are only collected in the context of projects with limited lifespans operating in limited areas. Because the data gathering processes are often fragmentary and poorly documented, and follow diverse and varied methodologies, they cannot lead to synchronic or diachronic studies that will help us understand the changes that have occurred or predict possible developments. Similarly, the use of remote sensing techniques is still at the illustrative stage and not been developed into operational processes. Without precise data or appropriate information it is impossible to predict, adjust or reinforce actions to combat land degradation.

- With regard to North-South relations, the growing discrepancy between the expectations of countries affected by desertification and the industrialised countries' failure to increase their development aid or significantly change their co-operation procedures becomes more apparent at every conference for parties to the Convention. Like the Southern countries, those in the North could also be criticised for insufficiently integrating environmental issues into their sectoral aid and development policies.

- Nor has the South-South partnership evolved as anticipated. It is still in its infancy and remains heavily reliant on multi-lateral support rather than being driven by the countries themselves, whose three principal groups of actors (politicians, local people and researchers) show little sign of coming to any real understanding of each other.

Given all these shortcomings, we need to stop and take stock of the situation now, put the problem back under the spotlight and give it lots of media attention to reinvigorate thinking on how the CCD should be implemented.

While the CCD continues to unite member countries despite all these problems, poverty and desertification are continuing to gain ground, especially in Africa. The implementation of initiatives and strategies aimed at protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development is being held back by lack of inter-institutional consultation on the one hand and synergy between the different actors and instruments on the other.

Pre-requisites for success

It is high time to break the vicious circle of marginalizing arid, semi-arid and sub-humid dry zones. This will entail a whole raft of measures. At the political level, decentralisation initiatives and measures to involve the different levels need to be reinforced, from the local to national and national to international levels. In order to succeed, these political measures need appropriate frameworks and legislative and legal instruments to regulate land tenure regimes and mobilise common pool resources, etc. Private investment also needs to be stimulated. At the institutional level, national co-ordinating bodies need to be strengthened. Another key element is the development of knowledge bases that can be used to launch the battle against desertification and put in place systems for observing and evaluating natural resources.

In conclusion, a firm political will is needed to make concerted action between different actors (including development partners) one of the priorities for development actions.

i *This article is adapted from a paper presented by the OSS to 'The Future of Drylands' international scientific conference organised by UNESCO in Tunis, June 2006, as one of the official activities of IYDD. For further information, contact OSS, Blvd du Leader Yasser Arafat, BP 31, 1080 Tunis CEDEX, Tunisia.*

Pressure on people and land, but a stronger regional economy?

by Bara Guèye

FRANCOPHONE WEST AFRICA will undergo some profound changes in the coming decades.

In terms of demography, the total number of people involved in agriculture will continue to rise over the next 20 years, generating increasing pressure on high potential lands and reducing the size of holdings. Farm sizes in the Office du Niger area of Mali have already dropped from 7.5 ha in 1978 to today's average of less than 3 ha. The urban population will also continue to grow, and it is estimated that over half of the population of West Africa will live in cities by 2025. This process of urbanisation will be accompanied by a rise in urban demand for agricultural produce, which could push farmers to adopt new production technologies.

On the ecological front, while it is even harder to predict the full extent of future climate change, many projections emphasise the fact that the continued rise in temperatures will have a negative effect on levels of rainfall, which have fallen by around 20 to 30 per cent over the last 70 years.

The capacity of West African agriculture to deal with the combined effects of population growth and climate change will depend on both national policies and the evolution of the rules of international trade. We know that the prevailing official line on modernisation is based on the idea that West African agriculture has to promote agri-business in

order to develop. Fortunately, this concept is being increasingly undermined in favour of an option that sees family farms as the real engines of agricultural modernisation. As this new vision is clearly endorsed in the common agricultural policy of ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States), we can expect to see a similar evolution in national policies.

At the international level, even if the current blockages in negotiations are resolved, there are a number of obstacles (such as health standards) that West African economies will have to overcome before they can participate in the global economy. So in the short- and medium-term we can expect the problems with major export items to continue, and people's dependence on cheaper imported foodstuffs to increase.

In the meantime, the ongoing changes observed in the structure of family farms will be reinforced, with heads of household becoming younger, extended families fragmenting into smaller units and the use of increasingly individualised risk and crisis management strategies as more and more heads of family disappear and their heirs divide up family land holdings so they can operate autonomously.

Migration will play an increasingly important role in the diversification strategies of these households. However, rather than being



Mark Edwards/Still Pictures

Harvesting sorghum in Burkina Faso: the men cut the plants and the women gather the seeds

seen as a way of dealing with the risks posed by particular economic conditions, as it was in the past, it will come to be used more as an alternative structural strategy. Migrants' remittances already account for 52 per cent of the total income of rural households in the peanut basin of Senegal, and this flow will probably increase across the region.

Despite these challenges, we should be heartened by a number of positive recent developments. One such is the growing power of farmer organisations, which have acquired solid capacities to articulate and negotiate their interests, coupled with a determination to make their voice heard in the formulation and implementation of future agricultural policies.

The next step is to reinforce the process of decentralisation in the region, which should bolster the power of local civil society and enable it to play a greater role in inducing local governments to become more transparent.

What impacts will these developments have on people's well-being? There are many specialists who think that most countries in the sub-region are unlikely to achieve the majority of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In the short-term, certain vulnerable groups, such as women, herders and migrants will continue to suffer various forms of exclusion, especially in terms of their land rights. However, recent successes in calming many sources of conflict, growing demand for greater democracy and the process of sub-regional integration are positive achievements that can give decision-makers a base on which to build a more solid regional economy.

Three critical factors

by the Drylands Development Centre

THE PROSPECTS for the East and Southern African drylands need to be seen in the context of recent history and the changes that have occurred in the realms of policy, economic and social conditions and the environment.

In the arena of public policy, all the countries in East and Southern Africa have developed their National Action Plans to implement the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). However, most have not been implemented due to lack of capacity and resources and a failure to integrate these plans into national budgetary and planning frameworks.

Most countries have developed either Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers or separate Poverty Reduction Strategies that outline their objectives, policies and intended measures. Countries have also committed themselves to developing Millennium Development Strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, but few of these have been incorporated in their National Action Plans to combat desertification.

On the economic front, poverty is still prevalent in these countries. In sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, some 323 million people – almost 30 per cent of the total population – live on less than one dollar a day. According to UNDP's Human Development Index, the conditions of life have worsened in countries

such as Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

As for poverty reduction, the drylands have received low priority in allocation of development resources and have benefited from little or no investment. Their contribution to national economies has often not been properly documented and many mobile herders are unable to use banking facilities, even where they exist, which in turn has led to poor investment.

At family level, the process of social change from 'traditional' to 'modern' is having a direct impact on the roles of both men and women. In general, these changes have meant a greater burden for women in the drylands, with more work and responsibilities.

While people have struggled valiantly to accommodate these changes, the natural environment has not been kind. Over the last 30 years, the incidence of drought in East and Southern Africa has increased both in frequency and severity – and in the past 15-20 years drought has triggered food crises across the region. For example, in 2006 Kenya experienced one of its worst droughts, affecting three and a half million people. The severe human consequences were due in part to low rainfall, but also to a history of under-investment and the absence of government policy for the development of arid and semi-arid areas.



Ron Gilting/Still Pictures

Farmer with basket of grain in the region of Axum, Ethiopia

Challenges ahead

Three of the biggest challenges facing East and Southern Africa in the foreseeable future relate to climate change, land tenure and HIV/AIDS.

With respect to **climate change**, recent analysis indicates that under a high emissions scenario, temperatures will rise by up to 7°C in Southern Africa by the 2080s, compared with a global average rise of 4°C. The poorest, as usual, would be hardest hit by the resultant increase in disease and decline in agricultural production.

As in other parts of Africa, there is a prospect of increasing conflict – notably but not exclusively between pastoralists and sedentary farmers – over **land tenure** issues and access to other natural resources. Separating out the reasons for tenure insecurity may shed light on how best to approach conflict mediation, as well as providing clues as to how powerful interests can be contained in order to achieve wider social benefit.

The grim toll of **HIV/AIDS** means that by 2025 East and Southern Africa will have a working-age population (20-59 years) of only 38 million, compared with the 63.5 million that would have been expected without the disease. Apart from long-term population growth rates, this has major implications for employment, land-to-person ratios in small-holder farming sectors, food production and cropping patterns.

The increasing incidence of AIDS-related illnesses and deaths is already changing the demands for services across sectors and undermining the capacity of households to cope with the consequences of the epidemic.

i *UNDP's Drylands Development Centre, located in Nairobi, assists countries in the world's arid zones to fight poverty and promote development. Founded in 1973 as the UN Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO), it changed its name and moved from New York to Nairobi in 2001.*

For more information visit: ddc@undp.org

Rapid growth of cities and slums is a clarion call for change

by Anna Tibaijuka

THE MYTHICAL AND TIMELESS CITY OF TIMBUKTU, along with Djenné and Koumbi Saleh, boasted some of Africa's most influential civilisations along that narrow band of semi-arid land south of the Sahara that we call the Sahel. This region was once rich with a multitude of semi-nomadic cattle herders and farmers; it has even had its share of gold diggers. But today, it is one of the poorest and most environmentally threatened places on earth.

Over the last century, living conditions in the Sahel have deteriorated. In 1914 poor annual rains caused a large-scale famine. Sixty years later, around one million people died in a widespread famine and over 50 million more were affected.

Whether these disasters were caused by overuse of natural resources or by natural climate change, what is clear is that ecologically unsound development is now jeopardizing the livelihoods of countless thousands of people living in the dry Sahelian zone. As the environment has suffered, the fight for income and survival has intensified among the rural populations, bringing food insecurity and in some places chronic hunger.

The result is that people have been migrating in mass to the cities.

Many of the cities in the Sahel are growing even faster than those in the rest of the continent. Between 1990-2001, the urban

urban growth rate in these countries was the highest in the world, with an annual average increase of 5 per cent - higher than for Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Already 32 per cent of the Sahelian population is urban, and in many countries this is expected to reach 50 per cent within 20 years. Four cities alone – Dakar (Senegal), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Niamey (Niger) and Bamako (Mali) – are now estimated to be home to about 25 per cent of all the Sahel's people.

Urbanisation is an inevitable part of the process of industrialisation and modernisation – and UN-HABITAT's research shows that Africa is urbanising faster than any other continent. But the process in Africa results more from the 'push' of environmental and agricultural failure rather than from the 'pull' of urban opportunities.

The rural exodus, along with other migrations from neighbouring countries and natural growth, has exacerbated the problem of municipal governance. In fact, urbanization in the Sahelian countries has become virtually synonymous with slum formation, with both growing at a similar annual rate of 5 per cent.

In the past, poverty in this region has been thought of largely as a rural phenomenon – and many aid programmes continue to reflect this. Yet trends show that poverty is becoming increasingly urbanised. In 2001,

8 out of 10 urban residents were living in slum conditions in the Sahel countries, lacking some or all of the following: water and sanitation, solidly-built houses and sufficient living-space. Town and city dwellers have to put up with declining basic services and housing, while they are more vulnerable to environmental health problems, environmental shocks and natural disasters.

Protective measures were implemented in the Sahel after the crises of the '70s, but despite this it is predicted that further crises will be unavoidable. Clearly, this situation calls for new approaches.

This is particularly important considering that cities are engines of economic growth and can contribute to successful rural growth. For example, despite the high levels of poverty in Sahelian cities, urban centres play an increasing role in creating wealth, enhancing social development and attracting investments. The urban one-third of people already generates a disproportionate share of national income, with urban-based economic activities accounting for up to 64 per cent of gross national product.*

Such statistics suggest that we need to integrate rural and urban planning so as to minimize the drift to the cities and restore environmental sustainability. The urbanisation of the Sahel, which is happening faster than many development agencies yet recognise, should be at the heart of any development strategy for the region.

The Commission for Africa, of which I was a member, in their report "Our Common Interest" emphasized the role played by well-managed cities in encouraging rural development. Fortunately, the African Union and NEPAD now officially recognise the problems caused by rapid urbanisation and the need for fully operational cities. AFRICITES has also been at the forefront of the struggle to get better urban governance.

However, despite such encouraging signs,



Jorgen Schyrtte/Still Pictures

Far from the historical grandeur of Timbuktu, a poor urban street scene which is becoming increasingly typical of Sahelian cities

the international community has yet to give priority to investment in urban infrastructure and development. If we fail to recognise the changing reality of this region and fail to invest in the cities and towns of the Sahel, there is no question that we will see a rapid increase in the urbanisation of poverty.

Without the necessary political and economic commitment to the cause of sustainable African urbanisation, Timbuktu, once known as the centre of African cultural and economic creativity, will become infamous for the poverty of its citizens.

* Source: Beyond Economic Growth, An Introduction to Sustainable Development, 2nd Edition, World Bank, 2005. Note: urban contribution to GDP is the combined share of GDP produced in the industry and service sectors relative to agriculture.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification includes 6 countries as part of the Sahel: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. Other sources, such as the Public Broadcasting Service, include as well Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Sudan. Estimations were done taking into account the 9 countries.

Catastrophic drought in store, warns new climate report

by Robin Sharp

A NEW WEATHER FORECAST from leading climate specialists in Britain says the consequences of global warming may turn out to be far worse than scientists have reckoned upto now. Research by the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research suggests that by the end of the present century almost one-third of the world's land surface could be affected by extreme drought, making agriculture virtually impossible. At present only three per cent of the world suffers drought classified as 'extreme'.

A process of desertification of this scale and speed would threaten the lives of many millions of people around the globe. And while the research study does not provide breakdowns for different world regions, one of its authors, Simon Brown, told *Haramata* that Africa would certainly not be immune to the consequences. He said a next phase of the research would be looking at the likely regional impacts of the worldwide trends identified in the present report.

This is one of the most alarming analyses to date of the potential results of rising global temperatures. Announcing their findings at a conference in October, the research team were careful to point out that their study, just like others, was bound to contain some uncertainties. The reason for this is that climate models vary according to the previous research they take as their starting-point

– and because there are potential feedbacks between different elements, which can either lessen or aggravate the overall impact.

The Hadley Centre study examines how a measure of drought called the PDSI (Palmer Drought Severity Index) is likely to be affected by changes in rainfall and heat over the next 100 years. In doing this, the scientists sought to verify their model by applying it to the actual changes of the last 50 years. Their finding, Dr Brown told *Haramata*, was that while it matched well with the historical record at global level, this was not always the case when it was broken down by region. For example, there was a good match for Southern Africa, but for some other parts of the continent "it doesn't get the actual pattern exactly right". So that's one thing they will be working on.

In the meantime, the Hadley Centre report is sure to set alarm bells ringing in governments, aid agencies and NGOs concerned with drylands development. Apart from its calculations on extreme drought, the report shows that 'severe' drought, now covering eight per cent of the earth, will have spread to 40 per cent by 2100, and that 'moderate' drought, now 25 per cent, will have expanded to affect 50 per cent.

However, it is the predicted massive spread of extreme drought – from three to 30 per cent of the world's land area – that



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Global warming brings the prospect of more extreme weather, like this sandstorm over the town of Gao, Mali

is considered the most frightening by some commentators. One British overseas NGO, quoted by London's *Independent* newspaper, said: "This is genuinely terrifying. It will mean migration off the land at levels we have not seen before, and at levels that poor countries cannot cope with." Another climate change expert commented: "There is almost no aspect of life in the developing countries that these predictions don't undermine. For hundreds of millions of people whose daily life is already a struggle, if this is the future it is going to push them over the precipice." And the author of a book on the visible effects of global warming told the newspaper: "We're talking about 30 per cent of the world's land surface becoming essentially uninhabitable in terms of agricultural production in the space of a few decades. These are parts of the world where hundreds of millions of people will no longer be able to feed themselves."

At the same time, without regional or country-specific estimates this study does not

yet provide a detailed basis for governments' policy making. That will have to await the next Assessment Report – the first since 2001 – by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Based on the work of over 1,000 scientists in more than 100 countries, the IPCC report next year will provide the most comprehensive update on global warming. Its analysis will come from three working groups: one looking at the evidence from physical science, the second assessing impacts, adaptation and vulnerability to climate change, and the third on ways to mitigate its effects.

i Hadley Centre, "Modelling the Recent Evolution of Global Drought and Projections for the 21st Century", due for publication October 2006 in *The Journal of Hydrometeorology of the American Meteorological Society*.

For info on the IPCC's 4th Assessment Report visit: www.ipcc.ch

Niger: a distant ray of hope for women

How are Africa's rural women – and specifically those in the fragile drylands – coping with today's forces of change that have brought upheaval to their agricultural systems, uncertain winds of institutional reform and a sudden crumbling of social patterns evolved over generations, even centuries? Some answers emerge from research conducted this year in southern Niger, which focused on profiling women of different ages and circumstances. The authors' introduction is followed by extracts from one such profile.

By Marthe Diarra and Marie Monimart

AS THE POPULATION increases, competition over land in Niger becomes more severe and women are losing out. Access to land in Niger is not governed by a single code of land rights. Customary law, Islamic precepts and government legislation try to manage the situation on a case-by-case basis. Customary law deprived women of land ownership, but they were able to gain access rights; Koranic law, when applied, allows women to inherit land but contains the inequality of allowing them only half as much as men – whereas government law (*le droit positif*), seemingly the most equal in gender terms, in fact risks being the most inequitable since it can lead to the sale of land, which will inevitably be bought up by the wealthy (mostly men) at the expense of the most vulnerable.

Both in the north of the country (pastoral zones) and the south (agricultural), women at

risk are finding themselves excluded from the production system which is the principal source of income. In the southern zones where the de-feminisation of agriculture is most advanced, one is witnessing a progressive decline in the living conditions of women affected by this exclusion from agricultural production. This means:

- Reduction of their mobility by various forms of seclusion [*claustration*]; religion (Islam) seems sometimes to be used as a cover for practices to exclude women from farming and from free expression;
- Restriction of social and economic opportunities;
- Greater food insecurity for the family and impoverishment.

The 'income-generating activities' much promoted by developers to counter these trends are at best palliatives or misery-mufflers.



Délou Wakassou

Decentralisation, through the Rural Code and the system of Land Commissions, is supposed to put particular emphasis on the recognition of property rights for the most vulnerable, but so far local communities play only a limited role in guaranteeing equitable access to land.

One ray of hope in an otherwise dark

picture may be a new role-model of the educated woman, who has a profession and who combines personal achievement with a secure status and a certain well-being. But it is not a model that can be realised at village level and is regarded as something attainable only by the privileged minority.

A Portrait of Délou Wakassou

DELOU WAKASSOU was born 35 years ago in the village of Sherkin Hausa, 700km east of Niamey. The daughter of a grain merchant, she never went to school and learned everything she knows from her mother, from cooking dishes to sell in the market and working in the fields.

Délou was married to 20-year old Issa Jena when she was 15 and is already a grandmother. She has built up a small business and done quite a bit of travelling looking for merchandise, sometimes going as far afield as Nigeria. Délou believes that this mobility gave her the opportunity to learn many things and find out how people live outside her village.

She has had three children, but lost two of them. The sole survivor is her eldest daughter, who attended school for three years and got married three years ago when she was 14. She now has a little boy.

What's the most important thing that has happened to Délou? Being made a *tambara*: "It was the best!" Nonetheless, she's ambivalent about *tambarci*, the ceremony this entails; on the one hand saying it's the best day in a woman's life, and on the other that it's a wasteful bit of attention-seeking. There are over 100 tambaras in Sherkin Hausa. The "modern" *tambarci* may not call for gourds any more, but the woman is still expected to provide three goats (which have to be cooked), a sack of maize, four litres of oil and 30,000 francs CFA, plus two boxes of sugar for doughnuts. By the time she's presented her husband with around 80,000 to 100,000 francs CFA and paid for a griot and a singer, she can expect to have to find between 250,000 to 300,000 francs CFA (approximately €400) to cover the cost of the festivities.



Délou has had two *tambarci* for her daughter: the first when she was little, and the second when she got married at the age of 14, about five or six years ago. This was the last time one was held in Sherkin Hausa. Délou thinks that women are starting to choose between getting the brides' trousseau organised (this now consists of a wooden or metal bed, a mattress, crockery, lengths of cloth, etc.) and carrying on the tradition of *tambarci*. She reckons that girls and their mothers are starting to opt for the trousseau, which at least gives them some tangible assets. "It's all become too much over the last few years".

Hadja¹ and tambara

When we interviewed a group of women (including Délou), we were surprised to find that five of the seven women were *tambaras*. We asked them what they got out of *tambarci*, and every single one replied, "celebrity!"

This raised the question of how a woman can make her name now that *tambarci* seems to be a thing of the past.

“Hadja. Everyone wants to be a hadja! It may be more expensive than tambara, but it’s more spiritual”. They explained that there’s a big difference between the two: “The tambaras were great women who led others, but the hadja stay at home and accept whatever happens. There are no women leaders like the tambaras in the community any more... and... there’ll never be tambaras again. There won’t be any permanent women leaders either: it’s finished. That’s democracy for you: you come, you go, and that’s it!”

So what are they supposed to do for a role model now? Délou is a councillor in the municipality of Sherkin Hausa, elected after the municipal elections in 2004. She says she didn’t fully understand what a big job it was going to be and doesn’t really know what representation is or what she’s supposed to do... she’s been to three training sessions but finds it hard to remember what they were about because there’s so much to take in and it’s all too complicated.

“Babou gona, babou aiki!”

So how did Délou build up her assets? Farming, like her mother before her: “If it all goes well, you can buy animals, calves, and fatten them up” – that’s how her mother was able to do her tambarci and go to Mecca as well!

What about the young women, what will they do? The women we spoke to thought that only one young woman in ten would have a gamana² in Sherkin Hausa. Délou told us, “...They will be given them by their mother because of the bond between mothers and daughters – mothers will even sell their goats to get a field for their daughter...”

And what about those who don’t have any land? The future looks pretty grim for them. We asked what Délou and the others think the future holds for their daughters and grand-daughters. “Babou gona, babou aiki!”

(No fields, no work!) And if the prospects look bad now, they said, “... it’ll get worse; they’ll either end up begging or having to take their children back to live with their mother. Everyone will go hungry. The future looks very bleak... the men will leave once they’ve had children.”

Behind their clear-headed assessment of the situation you can sense the rising despair of these women. This is a place where few women’s projects last long, and those that do keep going only benefit a very small number of women.

1) Women who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca are known as hadja.

2) These are individual plots on the family holding allocated to married women and young men; girls must work on their mother’s fields.

Progress and pitfalls in women's advance

by Adam Thiam

ALTHOUGH SOCIAL CHANGE may appear to be a slow process, there can be no doubt that Africa has evolved significantly over the last 20 years in terms of the emancipation of women. The statistics speak volumes in this respect.

In the 1970s literacy levels among women were lamentably low. Today, they have doubled or tripled in most African countries, and women are rapidly approaching male levels of literacy. In fact, if the current trend continues there will be more literate African women than African men by 2025.

Encouraging progress has been made in other areas, too. For example, we know that more women are benefiting from antenatal consultations and giving birth in health centres, and that infant and maternal mortality rates have fallen across the continent. Another marker of progress is the fact that women are gaining greater control over their fertility.

There are also a huge number of women who are gradually emerging from the vicious cycle of poverty as a result of thousands of small-scale national and international support projects. Add to this the fact that the condition of women is no longer a taboo subject, and we should indeed be celebrating the progress that has been made. The photo of the first female African Airbus pilot splashed across

the newspapers was a striking indication of how things have changed: a powerful signal and symbol of our times.

The danger of stagnation

However, we need to be careful that the blaze of progress made thus far does not blind us to the plight of the huge number of women who are destitute, abused or have their lives blighted by fistula. It is women who have suffered the most in the fifteen conflicts that have ripped this continent apart over the last decade. Even now, humanitarian organisations report that women are raped with impunity every day in Darfur. And let us not forget that the great majority of the 30 million Africans who are HIV positive are women.

In the face of the huge wealth flaunted in certain parts of the world, it seems reasonable to ask whether the certain death of millions of people from AIDS doesn't actually constitute genocide ... through indifference. And that's not all: every year 60,000 African women die as a result of clandestine abortions and a further 200,000 suffer the consequences of these procedures. A Tanzanian gynaecologist sadly calculated that this is the equivalent of a Boeing 747 full of passengers crashing every single day.

This is unacceptable in this day and age; a shameful reflection on the affluent 21st



century, particularly given that America will spend \$65 billion on the war in Iraq in 2007. What the world needs – owes itself – is greater solidarity and better distribution of its wealth.

But Africa also needs to take hold of itself. It is still a male-dominated society, and it runs the risk of ghettoising women's issues by acting as though they only concern women, who are therefore responsible for changing things in their favour. Only a tiny minority of the 54 member states of the African Union apply the decisions they have taken at AU summits. Equally seriously, only three or four African countries have drawn up a family code that reflects the social breakthroughs contained in the Cairo and Beijing action plans.

And one final point, which is in no way meant to denigrate or deny the important work done by the pioneering women who paved the way for today's huge advances: beware of those who try to appropriate women's causes for their own ends.

We're talking about the *grandes dames* of development, lampooned as 'drianké' in Wolof, who sweep from one platform to the next speaking on behalf of rural women, despite the fact that they often only come into contact with these women because they're working 12 hours a day as their domestic help. Given that these rural women constitute the overwhelming majority of the African population, they have every right to question the credibility of those who claim to speak for them.

However, when all's said and done it has to be stressed that much of what we are witnessing on the African continent would have been unthinkable just a few years ago (discussing excision and polygamy with *imams*, for example), and that certain countries have made commendable efforts to formulate legislation favouring the emancipation of women. This is conclusive proof that real progress has been made – and we should remember that this progress is primarily due to women themselves.

Hear me talkin' to ya!

So what's new in the dusty drylands? What's today's latest gizmo from Zanzibar to Timbuktu? "There's always something new from Africa," as the ancient Greeks (quoted by Pliny) noticed more than two-thousand years ago, so that's the line we're going to follow in this brand-new Haramata column, looking at Africa's own take on information technology. In future issues we'll explore what other new technologies are taking off, how they are being used and whether they are making a difference to people's lives. Interested? Well, just stay on the line!

YEARS AGO, PEOPLE SAID AFRICA's only hope of catching up economically with the rest of the world would be to leapfrog the intermediate stages of development that took the industrialised countries a century or more and embrace instead the most advanced technologies. Today it's happening – and most dramatically in the realm of information and communications technology (ICT).

With satellite links and fast-growing cellphone networks, even pastoralists in remote rural areas and fishermen at sea can find out what they need to know to reach the best markets at the best time. Foreign companies are investing billions of dollars – that's *thousands of millions*, yeah? – in Africa's information revolution, and although still in its infancy the ICT era is already changing people's lives across the continent. On these pages we take a look at some examples.

Even without the built-in cameras and other fancy services available elsewhere,

Africa has been busy re-inventing the mobile phone to suit itself. Already, almost 100 million Africans have a mobile – and nobody will be surprised if that figure tops 200 million within five years.

One innovative scheme in Kenya provides people in a poor district with information about available jobs sent direct to their mobile. Fifteen thousand people have already found work this way. On their phone the subscriber selects what kind of job they are looking for and they then receive regular text messages about vacancies of that type.

The scheme was developed by OneWorld International, which in 2003 began experimenting with ways in which SMS (text messaging) could benefit communities. "Finding a job when you are at the bottom of the social pyramid is completely hit and miss," says OneWorld's Peter Armstrong. "Waiters would travel to hang around all day outside the Nairobi Hilton in case there were jobs on offer. Newspapers carried



“Female cleaner urgently wanted” – receiving job advertisements on your cellphone with Mobile4Good

few blue-collar job advertisements and were relatively expensive to buy.” So OneWorld set up Mobile4Good, now a wholly-owned Kenyan company, under a social franchise which they hope to spread to other countries.

Another novel scheme, so far available in South Africa and a few other places, seems sure to spread. This allows people to transfer airtime credit from one mobile phone to another – so it can work just like money. In South Africa the concept of cellphone banking was launched last year by one of the country’s biggest mobile networks and a major bank. They hope it will allow millions of poor people who’ve never had a bank account to participate in the formal economy for the first time – and allow grandmother in the village to receive money very simply from her son working in the city.

In Kenya, at the moment it’s more informal. When you buy something, you pay the vendor with a transfer of airtime, and at the end of the day the vendor finds a dealer who’ll buy his airtime for cash. Simple but effective.

Intended for wider use in East Africa is the Livestock Information Network and Knowledge System, LINKS. (Sounds like they invented the name to fit the acronym!) LINKS trains market monitors, who gather daily information from livestock markets according to breed of animal, class and grade, and this can be accessed by herders or traders scattered around the country by mobile phone or text message. Some herders say this knowledge of prices in different markets has helped them become independent of middlemen and improved their income.

Computer-literate kids

Turning to computers, progress is less dramatic, with costs – especially the sky-high price of internet use – being a major constraint. The best news is the rapid increase, at least in some countries, of the number of children with access to computers for learning. Two-thirds of Egyptian children can now get their fingers on a keyboard and SchoolNet Africa is linking pupils in a number of countries. In Namibia, SchoolNet has offered free computer hardware and training to hundreds of schools and made internet access available to remote areas lacking even mains electricity.

Internet costs are maintained at levels prohibitive for most people because of the monopoly held by governments’ public telecom operators (PTOs). But cracks are appearing. WiFi (Wireless Fidelity) and WiMax (Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access) will allow many to access the Web without the need for costly landlines. Bamako (Mali) and Maputo (Mozambique) are already WiMax zones and cities in several other countries are ready to follow suit. Low-cost do-it-yourself WiFi antennas have been developed by some enterprising ‘techies’ in Mali, using easily available materials such as plastic



water bottles and motorcycle spare parts.

One of the big contests now underway is for the potentially huge African market for computer software. On one side, the commercial giants such as Microsoft, which holds an overwhelming global share of computer operating systems; on the other, the free 'open source' providers led by Linux, which can now offer similar packages without tying their customers into expensive software deals. Following the introduction of a Linux operating system in Swahili, another big step will be to make computing available in more African languages to enable wide public access.

In 2002, with an eye to future sales, Microsoft offered to provide free software for all South Africa's 32,000 government schools. But President Thabo Mbeki's acceptance went against his National Advisory Council on Innovation, which had previously declared strong support for open-source because of "its potential to empower people in ways that proprietary software (such as Microsoft's) simply does not allow".

Another technology of the future, VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) permits phonecalls over the internet at extremely low cost. But VoIP remains illegal in most African countries because governments are not prepared to give up the income

they receive from conventional telephone use. But it may not make sense for them to continue resisting the tide much longer: a World Bank study claims that for every 1% increase in the number of a country's internet users, that country's export earnings rise by 4.3%.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is not without its hazards. Cellphones have proved a valuable tool for cattle rustlers in the Horn of Africa and doubtless for criminals in other parts of the continent. But on the plus side, it is providing thousands of jobs in the call centre industry (remote telephone information and service centres).

Not many New Yorkers would know that the bill for their parking ticket is generated by people working in an office in Accra. Not many Frenchmen would know that their phone inquiry to an organisation in Paris is being answered by an office in Senegal or the Maghreb countries.

Technology itself may not be the answer to all of Africa's problems, but if answers exist it can go a long way towards finding them.

i For Mobile4Good, go to www.mobile4good
 email -m4g@oneworld.net
 For Links, <http://www.lmiske.net>

What our supporters say

Over its first eighteen years of publication Haramata has received support from half a dozen development agencies with a particular concern for dryland issues. They have included the UN Sudano-Sahelian Office (now the Drylands Development Centre), NORAD (Norway), the UN Environment Programme, Sida (Sweden), CIDA (Canada) and DANIDA (Denmark) and we are happy here to acknowledge their invaluable role. Three have responded to our invitation to expound (briefly!) their own approach and priorities in their drylands work.

CANADA

Responding to drylands: A snapshot of Canada

*by Christopher Braeuel and Paul Samson,
Canadian International Development Agency*

Canada has a proud tradition of helping developing countries combat land degradation. As a strong supporter of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) since its inception in 1995, Canada has played a dual role in the implementation of the Convention, both as a country impacted by desertification and, particularly, as a donor country assisting the developing world in helping meeting the Convention's objectives.

Through the leadership of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada's holistic approach to combating desertification over the years rests on three key pillars: poverty reduction, capacity development and participatory initiatives.

In addition to promoting effective bilateral and multilateral aid initiatives, Canada has also supported over 100 partners in the private sector, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on numerous projects dedicated to minimizing the adverse effects of desertification. Canada, through CIDA, also continues to support a wide range of community-based initiatives.

While Canada is committed to combating desertification globally, the Sahel and West Africa have become particular areas of focus in the recent past. With respect to the implementation of the UNCCD, this has involved a close involvement with the National Action Plan (NAP) processes in several regional countries. Canada has also been involved in a range of other initiatives, as evidenced by the important number of sustainable development projects in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger, and Senegal.

In response to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Canada also established in 2002 the Canada Fund for Africa, which supports specific initiatives to address the challenges of desertification.

Global Policy for the Drylands: a challenge to be met

by Ambassador Carsten Staur, State Secretary,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark

Denmark is pleased to contribute to the celebration of *Haramata's* 50th edition. Denmark has been supporting *Haramata* as part of the support to IIED and the Drylands Programme for more than 10 years, and has seen its growing importance in Africa's drylands areas. There is no doubt that *Haramata* has contributed significantly to the increased awareness of sustainable land management, and not least to development of an international network around this important issue and challenge.

With the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) the scene has been set for a renewed focus on the challenges of development. With goals on hunger, gender equality and environmental sustainability, the link to land degradation is clear. To meet these MDGs in time for 2015, the challenges in the drylands and on sustainable land management have to be addressed – and addressed with more vigour than is the case today.

The challenges are immense. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) estimated in 2003 that land degradation adversely affects 23 per cent of the land under human use and places under stress the livelihoods of more than one billion people in developing countries.

For many years Denmark has been a strong supporter of development in the drylands and is engaged in the international debate on desertification, supporting and their work in the area. Financial support is given to a number of drylands initiatives and

is also being channelled through bilateral development assistance to countries such as Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Kenya, Tanzania and Southern Africa.

To strengthen this engagement, a global approach is being developed, emphasising a number of important areas:

- *The international agenda.* To stimulate interest and efforts to address the complex challenges of sustainable land management this issue has to move higher on the international agenda.
- *Development of a toolbox.* To strengthen the implementation of sustainable land management a toolbox of best practices, lessons learnt, guidance and methods should be developed.
- *Cross-cutting issues.* Many cross-cutting issues have significant effect on sustainable land management. They include issues such as gender mainstreaming, the legal systems, ownership of natural resources including land tenure, access to markets for drylands products, decentralisation, etc. We need to develop best practices in addressing these issues.
- *Mainstreaming and country-owned processes.* With focus on country-owned processes and the Paris declaration on harmonisation and alignment, international actors need to be fine-tuned to promote and support this move.

An important window of opportunity to put the drylands and sustainable land management higher on the international agenda is the forthcoming cycle in the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 16 and 17 in 2008 and 09). The CSD provides a unique platform for creating momentum on sustainable land management – a platform Denmark will contribute to filling out.

 UNEP

The United Nations Environment Programme: 30 Years of Drylands Stewardship

by Gemma Shepherd,
Division of Environmental Conventions, UNEP

Dryland populations already lag far behind the rest of the world on human well-being and development indicators; and yet the ecosystem services on which dryland livelihoods depend (such as food, forage, fuel, and water) are being threatened by pressures of increasing populations, economic growth and climate change.¹ Almost one third of the world's population lives in dryland developing countries, and addressing desertification is critical for meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has been strongly engaged in dryland environmental issues for over 30 years. UNEP was primarily responsible for preparing the United Nations Conference on Desertification, which was held in Nairobi in 1977, and subsequently played a major role in the negotiating process leading to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), which entered into force in 1996. UNEP has supported the implementation of the Convention since its inception and was a member of the advisory board for the recently published Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which has provided a number of important recommendations for better understanding the significance of desertification.²

Three critical issues are highlighted here.

First, coherent policy and action on desertification is constrained by many uncertainties regarding the relationships among

desertification, climate change, biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being. These uncertainties can only be resolved through rigorous assessment. Integrated use of satellite-based remote sensing coupled with ground-based observations can provide consistent, repeatable, cost-effective data and such baselines must now be established.

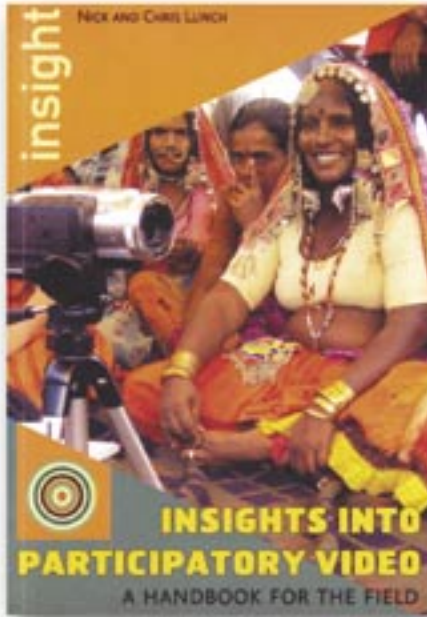
Second, studies are required to understand the impacts of desertification on human well-being, for instance on the links between ecosystem services and health outcomes of households. Long-term monitoring of indicators of human well-being and ecosystem services is needed to build this understanding.

Third, a key area for further exploration is how to incorporate the role of ecosystem services into poverty reduction policies and programmes, taking a broader perspective on the constituents of human well-being than has been considered until now. Sustainable management of drylands will also require development of opportunities for alternative livelihoods that depend less on the natural resource base, such as solar power, tourism, and innovative water-use technologies.

UNEP has a key role to play in fostering efforts for integrated assessment of ecosystems and human well-being in drylands, designing mechanisms for incorporating ecosystem services into development policy, and building capacity in these areas.

References

1. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Volume 1 Current State and Trends*. Island Press, Washington D.C. (2005a).
2. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Desertification Synthesis*. Island Press, Washington D.C. (2005b).



Participatory video

A new handbook provides detailed guidance and tips on how to use video to encourage people's participation in a lively, democratic process.

The handbook, with an accompanying CD-ROM including a training film and samples of participatory videos, explains all the stages of setting up and running a project. There are insights for facilitators, games and activities and technical tips in its 125 pages.

① *Nick and Chris Lurch, Insights into Participatory Video: a handbook for the field. Copies at £15 sterling (incl. p&g worldwide) or a free pdf download can be obtained online from www.insightshare.org/training_book.html*

Eight desert documentaries

“Villages on the Frontline” is a series of eight half-hour television documentaries from around the world produced to coincide with the United Nations’ International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD).

The series features villages in three African countries - Tanzania, Morocco and Niger - plus Jordan, China, Brazil, the Caribbean (Haiti and Costa Rica) and Spain. It is unusual in that each programme will be presented by a journalist or expert of the country or region concerned.



Produced by OnePlanet Pictures under renowned environmental film-maker Robert Lamb, “Villages on the Frontline” will be launched as a weekly series on BBC World starting at 20.30 GMT on Friday 10th November, with repeats for some regions in the following days.

A number of organisations have collaborated in the preparation of these programmes, including IIED, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the UN Environment Programme, the US-based International Resources Group and the UN Desertification Convention’s Global Mechanism.

① <http://www.oneplanetpictures.co.uk/>

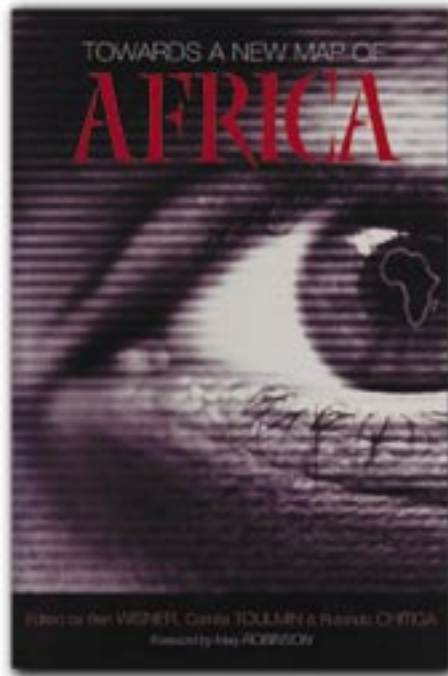
Africa 20 years on

Towards a New Map of Africa is a weighty volume of 350 pages, which was first conceived as a needed replacement for Lloyd Timberlake's *Africa in Crisis* of 20 years earlier. The book brings together a wealth of experience from 24 contributors including well-respected names such as Thandika Mkandawire, Mahmood Mamdani, Firoze Manji, Alex de Waal, Ann Seidman et al.

In their introduction, the editors stress that positive things are happening today in many parts of Africa, which need to be given a higher profile and act as a source of inspiration. Where there are reasonable stability and new economic opportunities, people show great effectiveness in applying their skills and assets to improve their living conditions.

On the other hand, there are also "terrifying challenges from conflict, disease and breakdown of social structure and organisation," which demand global attention. During the 1990s, the number of violent conflicts in Africa doubled from 11 to 22, and by 2004 "it was clear that for most African countries the Millennium Development Goals will not be fulfilled and that Africa's decline has not been arrested".

The book concludes with a detailed Agenda for Action, with some general recommendations and others directed specifically to African civil society, African governments, donors and international organisations and NGOs.



① *Camilla Toulmin, Ben Wisner and Rutendo Chitiga (Eds) - Towards a New Map of Africa, Earthscan, London, 2005. £16.99 from Earthscan, 8-12 Camden High St., London NW1 0JH, UK or visit: www.earthscan.co.uk*



Youba Sokona is Executive Secretary of the Sahara-Sahel Observatory (OSS), based in Tunis. He is also a member of the Technical Advisory Group of the joint UNDP/World Bank Energy Sector Management Assistance Programme. Before joining the OSS, Sokona was director of the Energy Programme of ENDA-Tiers Monde in Dakar and professor at the National Engineering School in Bamako. He is also on the Board of IIED, London.



Bara Guèye is Director of Innovations, Environnement et Développement en Afrique (IED Afrique), since 2005 an independent organisation which grew out of the IIED Sahel Programme. A rural economist, his work has mainly focused on promoting participatory methods in West Africa and recently on decentralised natural resource management and local governance.



Marie Monimart has worked extensively on the challenges facing women in countries of the Sahel. Among her numerous published works is *Femmes du Sahel: la désertification au quotidien*, OECD/Club du Sahel, Paris, 1989.



Wafa Essahli is Coordinator of the Development Research Programme at the Sahara-Sahel Observatory.



Anna Tibajuka is Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, having been appointed to the post in 2000. A Tanzanian national, she is the highest-ranking African woman in the UN system. Previously she was Special Co-ordinator for the Least-Developed Countries at the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and before that Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Dar es Salaam.



Marthe Diarra works in Niger as an independent consultant on sustainable rural development issues, with a special interest in gender and natural resource management.



Adam Thiam is currently Director of Communications and Advocacy for the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Nairobi. He was previously official spokesman for the African Union.



Robin Sharp, who is the Guest Editor of this special issue, was one of the founding editors of *Haramata* in 1988. He has produced development newsletters for a number of organisations and has worked on several acclaimed publications with Studio ii, the designers of *Haramata*'s sparkling new look.

Haramata Cartoons



by Damien Glez (Pages 8, 29, 32)



by Alan Hesse (Pages 39)



Haramata

is published twice yearly by
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 for Environment and Development (IIED)
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Design: Studio ii

Printed by Russell Press, Nottingham. United Kingdom

ISSN 0964-6973

Haramata gratefully acknowledges the financial
 support of the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



IIED is an international policy research institute based
 in London focusing on Natural Resources, Climate Change,
 Human Settlements, Sustainable Markets and Governance.
 IIED works with partners and communities to help
 vulnerable groups find their voice and ensure their interests
 are heard in decision-making.



IIED is a registered Charity No. 800066

The Haramata takeaway

A year or two back, on the road outside St Louis, Senegal, there was a snack bar with a sign saying 'Fast Foot Restaurant'. Did that mean Goat Hoof Soup - or just a speedy home delivery? We never did find out. Anyway, the idea of The Haramata Takeaway is to give you a few bite-sized reminders of the golden nuggets of information and comment in this issue: food for thought that you may like more time to chew on. Also, a couple of spicy items we're planning to put on the menu in future issues and on which we'd welcome your thoughts - or, should we say, feedback?

* For starters, Youba Sokona and Wafa Essahli say desertification risks ending up on the back burner, hardly at all integrated with other policies and programmes in the development kitchen (page 12).

* Wisdom from Kenya on where democracy begins: "To climb a tree you don't start at the top, you start at the bottom." News, p.4.

* Governments in West Africa consider large-scale, high-input agriculture as essential for rural development (*You want a hamburger?*), but many others now recognise that family farms are the real engines of modernisation (*No, I'll have the fish with rice*). See what Bara Guèye says, p.16.

* And make sure you don't omit key ingredients. The urbanisation of the Sahel is happening faster than many development agencies have yet realised – and it should be at the heart of any future development recipe. So get cooking, says Anna Tibaijuka (p.20).

Next up on the Haramata stove:

> Pursuing Bara Guèye's point (above), What is the future for family farming? Is it backward and inefficient? Or is it the best way to reduce poverty? What do you think? Can traditional and modern farming live side by side in the same country? It's an important debate, so give us your views.

> How to protect the commons in drylands? It's a question exercising many governments and development people as they look for ways to defend common land such as pastures and woods against further encroachment. Some argue for clearly demarcated boundaries, backed up by tough laws, but others say this isn't appropriate because dryland resources vary from year to year and local people should decide. Do you know something about protecting common property resources?

If so, tell us about it, write to:
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email: drylands@iied.org