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PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS IN A VULNERABLE ENVIRONMENT (WEST POKOT, KENYA)

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Abstract

Many vulnerable areas in the world have experienced a multitude of external interventions to ‘assist development’, ‘decrease vulnerability’, or ‘change people’s culture and institutions’. There have been many project-specific evaluations of those interventions, but hardly any coherent multi-intervention evaluations. And despite the use of the word ‘participatory’ in many current development programmes evaluations are often top-down ‘professional’ activities, and not at all participatory.

During the last twenty years, West Pokot District in north-western Kenya can be regarded as a typical African example of a vulnerable area with withdrawing (and erratic) government presence, and increasing presence of foreign donor agencies, either with a government, an NGO or a church background. Agencies from the Netherlands played a dominant role, first and foremost the Dutch-sponsored Arid- and Semi-Arid Lands Development Programme (‘ASAL’), which lasted from 1981 until 1999, and which withdrew under a cloud of anger.

Twenty years ago I was involved in a research project to reconstruct past performance of development initiatives until the early 1980s, which resulted in the PhD thesis “Pastoralists in Dire Straits”, by Ton Dietz (1987). In those years Rachel Andieme and Albino Kotomei were my research assistants. Now the same team of researchers has been involved in a participatory assessment of the impact of the development interventions of the last twenty years in the same administrative area, between the early 1980s and 2002. Three workshops have been organised in 2001 and 2002, with about 150 participants from the area. For this paper we restrict ourselves to one of the areas, and to the results of one workshop, in the most remote area: the current Alale and Kasei Divisions in the upper North areas. We report about approach and process, and we will give some results concerning ‘indigenous impact measurement’. And all

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of it will be related to the core question: did those interventions indeed diminish the vulnerability of the inhabitants according to their own judgements?

Key words: Kenya, Pokot, development interventions, impact analysis, participatory evaluation, vulnerability, pastoralism

1 The research area and its vulnerability

The current Alale and Kasei Divisions are located in the most remote, northern area of West Pokot District in north-western Kenya, bordering Turkana District and the Karamoja area in Uganda (see map 1 for the location of West Pokot). From the 1930s until 1970 it was part of the 'Karasuk' or 'Karapokot' area (currently Kacheliba, Alale and Kasei Divisions), which was administered by Uganda, under Upe County of Karamoja. For Uganda, it was a marginal zone of a marginal area. After Uganda's independence in 1962 it became a playground for the Ugandan army, under Field Marshal Idi Amin. When the area was re-joined with Kenya in 1970 (independent since 1963) very little had been done by any government agency, and in the area hardly any foreign churches or non-governmental agencies had started any development activity either. There was virtually no school, and no health dispensary. There were no roads, other than a few forest tracks, made by a small camp of foresters. There were no shops. In 1952 UNICEF had drilled a few boreholes, but their yield was poor. Once there had been a bit of Famine Relief (in 1965-66). The population lived rather autonomous lives as pastoralists, whose existence depended on cattle, goats, sheep and camels, both economically and culturally. They mainly lived in the semi-arid lowlands. Cattle raids and counter raids with the neighbouring Turkana and Karimojong were accepted elements of life, and a source of pride and folk culture. For boys to become men, successful participation in raids was a *rite de passage*, and economically important as a source of bride-price payments. Agriculture was practised as a fall-back strategy for the poor, as the area's hills had a sub-humid climate, allowing sorghum, millet, and (later) maize cultivation during years with sufficient rainfall. However, crop cultivation was equated with poverty, and people told stories about the disastrous period around 1900, after a rinderpest epidemic and a disastrous drought killed most of the animals. Those who survived were forced to flee to the mountains with their remaining animals to survive. This community of survivors consisted of a mixture of three ethnic groups, Pokot, Oropom, and Karimojong, but culturally dominated by the most northern section of the Pokot, one of the Kalenjin-speaking groups. After 1925 they gradually recovered lost territory, and, assisted by British colonial support (see Barber, 1968), people became mobile herders again, pushing rather far into Karimojong territory in the west. They no longer lived in the mountains and foothills, but in mobile camps (*manyattas*) in the plains. For fifty years their existence was not threatened, although insecurity increased after 1950 (Dietz, 1987, pp. 244-246). During the 1950s also a group of religious refugees settled in their midst, starting to practice agriculture in the foothills of the mountains. These were Pokot from the southern area around Kapenguria, who were prosecuted by the British authorities in Kenya for adhering to an indigenous religious movement (*Dini ya Msambwa*), that was regarded as an anti-colonial protest cult.

During the first seven years of Kenyan administration not much changed. In 1970 chiefs had been installed in Alale and Kasei, but communications with the then Divisional headquarters at Kacheliba (110 km away) and District Headquarters in Kapenguria (150 km away) were very difficult, and during the rainy season virtually impossible, because of the impassable Kanyangareng River. In 1977 some changes were in the air: a road was built, a police post

was established and the Roman Catholic Church started a small primary school. By then the area had between 10,000 and 15,000 inhabitants, on 2,900 km², a population density of 3-5 inhabitants per km² (Republic of Kenya, 1981, p. 121), but people freely moved between the neighbouring Upe County in Uganda, and the 'Karapokot' area that had now become Kenyan. Then a sequence of disasters hit the area, and showed the multitude of vulnerabilities.

Map 1 Location of the research area in the region

During the dry season period in 1978-1979, grazing was very poor. In the Pokot area in Karamoja (Upe County, around Amudat), severe Karimojong raids forced hundreds of women and children to move to the east, to the Alale area. When Idi Amin's regime was toppled, part of his army fled through Karamoja, and, hoping to get support, opened the army stores, where new supplies of many Kalashnikovs had just arrived. The Karimojong were quick to use these arms against their Pokot enemies. To make things worse, the sorghum harvest failed and in June to August most of the goats died because of an epidemic that had killed most of the goats in Upe in May-June. The District Officer urged the chief to organise a famine relief committee, and to stimulate parents to send their children to go to school. Many parents also decided that their children would be better off in schools (food, protection), and with the loss of animals children did not have to do much at home anymore. Next to the small Alale school, which was managed by the government, the Roman Catholics started a boarding school in Amakuriat. The number of pupils grew from 43 boys and 5 girls in 1978 to 154 boys and 11 girls in 1979. In 1980 again the rains failed, and a terrible rinderpest epidemic began to claim the lives of hundreds of cattle. Cholera reached the area and a Finnish Red Cross team started an anti-cholera campaign, and provided famine relief food. Also the Roman Catholic Church and the District Officer provided food, partly through Food-for-Work campaigns (school buildings, water dams, road building). In June 1980 a large Karimojong force attacked the Pokot at a place just west of the growing centre of Alale. Pokot claim that 127 of them were killed, and 11,000 head of cattle raided. Many people fled their houses and flocked near the famine relief centres of Alale and Amakuriat. Later raids intensified, and Karimojong and Turkana forces even went far into the mountains to raid cattle hiding there. In April 1981 the Red Cross was feeding 5,000 people in three famine relief centres. The total population had increased to between 20,000 and 25,000 people. School attendance had risen to 282 boys and 210 girls, many of them under the protection of the Catholic boarding school. Probably 40% of all eligible children now were in schools. The Red Cross had distributed seeds and, with better rains, a good sorghum harvest was produced. In October the Red Cross left the area. People were also making quite a lot of money by gathering miraa leaves and selling those to a few Somali traders. When gold was discovered a major gold rush started, attracting many people to the mountain and with a major increase of the cash economy, and an important role for Somali traders as a result. Cash opportunities also increased by the activities of a new American missionary to the area (of the African Inland Church, connected to the Reformed Church of America). When a peace treaty was arranged between Pokot and Karimojong elders, at the end of 1982, the Pokot of the Alale area had lost most of their animals and were 'pastoralists in dire straits'. They had moved from the plains to their refuge areas in the mountains, and survived through a combination of sorghum cultivation, and selling miraa and gold. Many children had gone to schools, and many of them (and some of their mothers and a few of their fathers) either became Catholics, or AIC-Christians (Dietz, 1987, pp. 246-247).

Summarizing the experience of vulnerability, the people in the research region had to cope with:

- Occasional droughts, resulting in poor grazing, livestock deaths, crop failure, and hunger;
- Livestock diseases (rinderpest, CCPP for goats), resulting in livestock deaths and undermined livelihood security for those partly or wholly depending on livestock for their subsistence and survival;
- Human disease epidemics (e.g., cholera) resulting in health costs and human deaths;
- Raids by neighbouring pastoralists, and counterraids by the Pokot, resulting in human deaths, loss of livestock, occasional no-go areas for herding, and destruction of property; and
- Army actions, resulting in human deaths, livestock confiscation and deaths, and destruction of property.

There is hardly any awareness of ‘climate change’, as a cause of growing vulnerability due to lower and more erratic rainfall, and higher average evapotranspiration. The rainfall data also does not show a clear long-term trend, but data is scarce and unreliable. In people’s perception the most severe drought occurred in the 1979-85 period, but that drought made the people vulnerable to hunger, disease, and death due to its combination with all other causes of vulnerability.

Development interventions: the Dutch-funded ASAL Programme, 1981-1999

In 1981 West Pokot District had also been adopted by the Dutch Development Agency. The Kenyan government had asked a number of donor countries to ‘adopt’ a district in the arid and semi-arid zones of the country. The Netherlands was eager to implement its area-based development philosophy, and choose West Pokot, and another District (Elgeyo Marakwet), later to be followed by two more districts (Kajiado in the southeastern Maasai area, and Laikipia). In 1982 researchers from the University of Amsterdam joined the newly appointed Dutch ASAL programme advisor, and the Dutch medical doctor who was the Medical Officer in charge of District health care². The researchers recruited a staff of local research assistants, and began to make ‘locational development profiles’, and a District Development Atlas (Hendrix, H., M.S. Mwangi & N. de Vos , 1985). Gradually a multi-sectoral development programme developed, first mainly working through government agencies, later trying to involve more local level initiatives and NGO activities. During the early years the remote parts of the districts were not yet reached very much (although one of the first *rapid rural appraisals* - called *sondeo* then - in Kenya had been organised in Alale; see Dietz & Van Haastrecht 1983). From 1986 ever more ASAL projects started in the Alale and Kasei areas as well. Until about 1993 the approach thrived. The ASAL programme had become the ‘oil in the District machinery’, mobilising civil servants in a large variety of sectors to develop and implement projects, and ever more incorporating the ideas ‘from the ground’, as expressed in *Locational Development Committees*, *Divisional Development Committees*, and ultimately the *District Development Committee*. These committees tried to involve indigenous leaders (chiefs, councillors, women group leaders, school teachers, etc) and all the external players in a particular area, mostly foreign church leaders of a multitude of churches, which had come to the District after the 1979-1981 disasters. It was the era of the *District Focus for Rural*

² The team consisted of Annemieke van Haastrecht, Mirjam Schomaker and myself, in collaboration with the ASAL Programme in West Pokot, coordinated by Huup Hendrix. The programme and the research were funded by the Dutch government, with additional support from the Government of Kenya and the University of Amsterdam. Institutionally we were linked to the Institute of Development Studies of the University of Nairobi and the Kerio Valley Development Authority in Eldoret, Kenya.

Development, the Kenyan form of decentralisation. The relative importance of the ASAL programme in the District gave large powers to the Dutch programme advisors, who in fact operated as leaders of a pseudo-NGO. The programme money came directly from the Netherlands Embassy, and gradually the policy changes in 'The Hague', and through the Embassy, caused tensions between a 'bottom-up strategy', based on continuous appraisal of the ideas of the development committees, and 'requests' from 'above', to integrate every whim of the Dutch development bureaucracy. On 'environment' it created major problems. The political problems in the district itself also caused growing tensions. Increasing political ethnicity, which the Kenyan press and foreign donors/embassies perceived to be politically manipulated by the 'King of the Pokot', Member of Parliament Lotodo, resulted in ethnic clashes around 1993, which caused about 30,000 non-Pokot people to flee from the southern part of the District, and which also resulted in a major out-migration of non-Pokot teachers and other civil servants from remote areas, like Alale. Diminishing Kenyan government finance, an increasing (Dutch) ASAL funding, and growing cynicism made it too difficult for many civil servants to resist the temptation to 'eat Europeans'. From 1993 until 1999 corruption became all too visible. Added to the changing opinions in Dutch development circles about the 'lack of impact of area-based development programmes', and a preference for large-scale, nation-wide sector programmes in selected government ministries, it resulted in a decision to stop the ASAL programme in West Pokot in 1999 (see Dietz & De Leeuw, 1999). The other Dutch-supported ASAL programmes would continue for a few more years (renamed 'SARDEP'), but all ended in 2003, as a result of the Dutch decision to get rid of Kenya as a preferential country for Dutch development aid.

From 1982 until 1991 the University of Amsterdam was involved as 'backstopper' of the ASAL programme, a.o. in West Pokot. However, attempts to convince the ASAL programme leadership, and the Kenyan civil servants, of the need to develop a sophisticated longitudinal monitoring and (output, effect and impact) evaluation 'infrastructure' failed ("too academic", but actually too threatening), and the 'backstopping arrangement' came to an end. In the meantime two of the research assistants of the 1980s had been integrated into the ASAL staff, one as the programme's secretary (Rachel Andiemai), and one as the programme's community liaison officer (Albino Kotomei). They would be among the few 'locals' recruited in the staff, to the growing dismay of the local population, who saw the greed of the non-local civil servants and the lack of local accountability as the main reason for ASAL's unwanted withdrawal from the District. When the Programme closed, there was a lot of anger.

Follow-up research

It was decided to do an ex-post impact evaluation study, to do it as a university-driven exercise (a joint venture of the University of Amsterdam, using its own funds, and Moi University's School of Environmental Studies in Eldoret, a long-term research partner) and to take our time. It was also decided to do it as a team of three co-researchers, with a group of local research assistants attached to them. A variety of research activities were carried out, e.g.

- make an update of parts of the District Atlas, covering the 1985-2003 period
- do an analysis of press articles about the District
- study school enrolment, and health care data
- make education and labour histories of all children in certain age groups who had gone to school
- do questionnaire surveys in the same villages as in 1982-86
- construct geographical family genealogies of selected family groups

■ and carry out a study of intervening agencies and their recent history in the district.

But the most important research activity was the organisation of three participatory impact evaluation workshops. The researchers facilitated a local-level assessment of twenty years of 'change', of interventions, and of the impact of interventions. One of those workshops took place in the Alale/Kasei area, in a place called Kiwawa, in June 2002 (Andiema, Dietz & Kotomei, 2002). That used to be the missionary station of a controversial American church group (the Associated Christian Churches of Kenya), who had to leave the country after a scandal.

The participatory impact evaluation workshop in Kiwawa.

More than 60 local leaders gathered for three days in June 2002 to discuss their ideas about the recent history of the study area. Participants came from four different sub-areas (two relatively accessible areas, Alale and Kiwawa, both on the western lowland and foothill site of the region, and two areas that are very difficult to reach, the Lokitanyala-Kalapata-Akoret-Chemorongit area in the northern and northeastern mountains and the Kasei area in the southeastern mountains). Participants were (elected) councillors, (appointed) chiefs and assistant chiefs, local church leaders, women group leaders, and teachers, both men and women. It became a really 'local' gathering, with hardly any civil servants present, and with Pokot as the major language of discussion. Out of those 70+ people 52 actively participated, a.o. by writing a short autobiography. It appeared that 42% of them attained primary school education, 21% secondary school and 27% secondary up to college level, while 12% never went to school. The majority of the participants (54%) were employed in one way or another, and the rest were either unemployed or still in college. Among the participants a few were unmarried, 92% were married. 46% were monogamist men and 15% polygamist men, while 31% were women (all married). The participants had an average of 4 children per household and an average of two brothers and two sisters.

The workshop programme consisted of eight major elements:

1. Introduction and a round of personal life histories, focusing on the importance of the disasters of 1979-81, and of later years for their personal lives.
2. Writing personal life histories (on-going during the workshop, partly assisting one another).
3. Reconstruction of the history since 1979, focusing on 'problem years'.
4. Reconstruction of all development projects in four sub-areas
5. Discussion about poverty and about the changes in 'capabilities' between 1980 and 2002, differentiating between natural, physical, human, economic, cultural, and socio-political capabilities, following Bebbington's approach (1999), and doing it in discussion groups for the four sub-areas, and for men separate from women.
6. Assessment of the impact of projects and activities on each of these six groups of 'capabilities', and on their importance for poverty alleviation.
7. Grading of all projects per sub-area, per subgroup of men and women, and selecting the ten 'best' and the ten 'worst' projects.
8. Final discussion about the development prospects of the area and about the virtues and vices of donor dependence.

Reconstruction of the recent past

The participants of the Kiwawa workshop were able to recall the events (good and bad) the community encountered between the years 1979 to 2002. For many people, stories of raids and other aspects of insecurity dominated their account. The most recalled raids, which the participants can't forget, were when most of their livestock were raided by the Karimojong and Turkana between 1979 to 1982 and this period is now known as the 'dark age'. Life without livestock is no life and has no meaning for the pastoral Pokot and so goes the saying, "a Pochon who has no livestock/cow is as good as a dead one". Their life rotates around their livestock and therefore what threatens cattle (livestock) threatens the Pokot pastoralists as human beings and people with cultural characteristics, which are unique to them.

As raiding is a traditional exercise of the pastoralists, which has been there since time immemorial, it has become part and parcel of their lives. The pastoral Pokot participate in raiding their neighbours who in turn raid the Pokot. In both cases these operations are carried out as actions planned by the elders and executed by their warrior sons. In the past these raids were carried out during the dry season because during this season the herds were usually far from the villages. During those dry periods there was and is often severe competition over water and pasture. In the traditional 'scale of tribal values', the highest one is the ability to increase one's herd through intelligence, force and even cunning. Therefore whoever remains without livestock for a certain time gives a sign of having lost those skills, and is put aside, ignored and even sometimes despised. The pastoralists feel that whoever endangers the safety or existence of livestock automatically becomes an enemy, to be neutralised or eliminated. However, in the period 1979-1981, the community experienced raiding at a much larger scale, and with much more sophisticated weapons. They lost.

In addition there were other calamities as well. Many human lives were lost because of the outbreak of diseases, e.g, cholera, meningitis, dysentery, and malaria, while many workshop attendants also mentioned many cases of death because of premature birth and caesarean operations for women. During the above mentioned years, there were very few health facilities, shortage of drugs and shortage of personnel. The traditional herbalists were not able to treat some of these diseases because they were new to them, e.g, cholera and meningitis. The community lost most of their non-raided livestock from various livestock diseases during the years under review. The worst diseases were rinderpest, and east coast fever and this was because during the period there were insufficient veterinary services in the area. Prolonged droughts were also mentioned among the most disturbing problems to this community as there has been no harvest at all for several years and it had also claimed many lives of their livestock. In the past when there was drought, the community could live on wild fruits and roots but due to the severe and prolonged drought even the fruits and roots could no longer be found. This always forced the community to look for other ways of survival. Because of the above problems some of the community members decided to migrate to some other places, especially to the south (the highlands of southern West Pokot and the large-farm area of Trans Nzoia). This was not an easy decision to make but due the above problems, they didn't have any choice. Nevertheless their problems were not solved because they faced many adversities as they couldn't get a decent place to stay and many were discriminated and exploited, as many were casual labourers. After quite a lot of what was perceived to be 'dehumanising experiences' many of them have gone back to their original homes, with a grudge.

Table 1 A chronology of events 1979-2002

1979-80	insecurity/raids, rinderpest, drought/famine, army operation, cholera, RCM expands activities
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1981	same, Red Cross services, no dowry payments, gold mining (Korpu), ACK and AIC/RCA start activities
1982/83	raids, gold mining (many places), military coup, 'home guns' provided by government for self-defence, peace treaty Pokot-Karimojong
1984/85	raids (Turkana), major army operation, drought/famine, exodus to the South, peace Pokot-Karimojong
1986	major army operation, famine, start Turkwel dam construction, start Kasei dispensary
1987	missionary died
1988	election problems, leaders rejected, political instability, famine (Anglican church intervened)
1989	Pokot massacre during Karimojong raid, big raid in Alale, army assisted the Pokot defenders
1990	Big raid Nasal by Karimojong, meningitis, bush clearing Turkwel catchment, people chased away, first Pokot MP in Upe/Pokot county Uganda
1991	meningitis outbreak, to Turkana for relief food, big raid in Uganda
1992	meningitis, big raid in Kiwawa, policemen died, people fled, multiparty elections, insecurity, famine, assistance World Vision and ACK
1993/94	army worms, Turkana raid, people moved to East Kasei, earth tremor, children drowned in new Turkwel lake, registering of guns on Uganda site by Museveni
1995/96	ruby found in Alale
1997	President Moi visited Alale, 50 Pokot children killed in Uganda raid by Karimojong, successful counter raid by Pokot, elections, harvest failure, torture
1998	construction of new Divisional Headquarters in Alale. El-niño floods, land slides, water sources destroyed, roads damaged, children drowned
1999	drought/famine, POKATUSA formed as an NGO
2000	Pokot leader and MP Lotodo died, famine, peace activities by POKATUSA and Justice & Peace groups
2001	Elections in Uganda, cost sharing started in dispensaries, relief food, late rains and then floods, new Kanyangareng bridge threatened, insecurity problem in Turkwel area.

Perception of change

If we look at the perceived positive and negative changes in the living conditions in the area in the last twenty years, we get the following result. We have organised it according to the six capability domains discussed before, although it is obvious that some changes in one domain also cause changes in another domain, and it is possible (and sometimes perceived as such) that some positively evaluated changes in one domain do impact negatively on another domain.

Table 2 Perceived positive and negative changes in six capability domains

Capability domain	Perceived positive change	Perceived negative change
Natural	Permanent settlement is found in more fertile areas where more land is used for agriculture; by the use of fertiliser and manure the land has improved. There is also enough pasture, improved afforestation, sufficient water supply (boreholes and gravity). Land is still communally owned. Because of the	Water catchments have dried due to deforestation in some areas, soil erosion because of population pressure, soil infertility, overgrazing, loss of lives and displacement of the people, e.g. at the man made lake, Turkwel Gorge and the mining areas. Spread of diseases increased in mining areas because of the interaction with

	improved availability of drugs for livestock, their numbers increased.	outsiders. The topography of the land was destroyed because of mining, climate has changed rapidly due to the prolonged drought. Insecurity of wildlife because of poaching, scarcity of wild fruits due to persistent drought and no more shifting cultivation.
Physical	Improved infrastructure. More roads have been constructed. Communication devices introduced, improved road network, houses, farming technology, cattle dips, more guns were bought between 1981-2001 for defence.	The roads are poor and at time causes accidents. There is no electricity from the Turkwel Gorge. There are shortages of drugs in the GOK dispensaries, building materials are expensive and management of boreholes is also expensive. People were shocked that they were forced to surrender guns to the Uganda government.
Economic/ financial	Many more businesses. Some income through miraa and mining of gold and ruby and this has brought interaction with other communities from Kenya and even beyond. Increased possibility of transacting business because of employment of teachers, nurses, chiefs, etc. More organisations and donors have come to assist the people. Money is an accepted media by everybody now and it is durable, people feel superior when they have it, it improves one's living standard and as such one becomes a role model to the community. Availability and exchange of commodities improved the development of the area.	Low employment and lack of job opportunities, poor production of both livestock and crops and inflation of prices of commodities, no financial bodies to give sufficient loans to local businessmen/ women, money is not traceable and can easily be stolen; creates poverty & envy, civil servants who are employed far from home can easily divorce, spread of diseases and use of drugs by youth and loans without proper planning leads to stress.
Human	Population increased. Improved health facilities, more schools and increased school enrolment. Pokot are courageous by nature and have improved their skills to defend themselves against attacks from their neighbours, increase of population because of reduced mortality rate.	There are new diseases, e.g, AIDS, cancer, etc.
Social Political	"Since independence the government and their elected leaders have done very little to help them as a community". This community hopes that there might be positive changes in this multi-party era. More Pokot became national leaders. More local people in local leadership positions. More organisations (like women groups, youth groups).	Little has been done by the elected leaders and the government, the community feels they are neglected for many years by their elected leaders because of their greed and corruption. The government has been also corrupt by imposing leaders on them. The elected leaders live far away from the people. Nepotism and tribalism.
Cultural	Increased Christianity and Islam, many more churches, more proper dresses, increased language abilities, better food diets, reduced 'evil practices', increased Pokot pride.	Spoiled ethnicity, and eroding of cultural traditions. Traditional religion kept people together. Cultural dress style lost. New 'modern' clothes are expensive. Vernacular language skills lost. Lack of differentiation between married and unmarried. Immorality and increase of crimes, no payment of dowry due to the diminishing numbers of livestock among the poor.

The perception about 'the government'

During the participatory evaluation workshop people discussed the roles of the various external agencies in contributing to change. It became very clear that many had a ‘grudge’ against ‘The Government’. Due to the continuous raids between the Pokot and their neighbouring communities, the government decided to disarm them a few times and this was not an easy task. The Pokot resisted and the government decided to use power. In the process many lives of both livestock and humans were lost. Everyone remembers the military operations of 1984 and 1986, and for many years ‘the government’ will be equated with the army, which killed their people and animals. The ‘government’ was also negatively connected with the way a large-scale hydro-electricity project (Turkwel Gorge, under KVDA, the pseudo-government Kerio Valley Development Authority) was taking shape without any compensation for the Pokot, whose land was taken. The ‘government’ was active in the area through the Provincial Administration (each ‘Division’ was headed by a District Officer; from 1970-1985 the Alale area was under Kacheliba Division; in 1985 a new Alale Division was formed, and in 1996 this was split in Alale and Kasei Divisions). The District Officer was responsible for the (appointed) Chiefs of Locations and Sub- or assistant Chiefs for Sub-Locations, but -mostly coming from among the local people - these Chiefs were often caught between two fires. The local people also elected local Councillors for the West Pokot District Council, but their powers (and money) were very limited. The Council was responsible, though, for granting trade licences (although most of the trade in the area ‘went beyond those licences’: the trade in livestock, gold, ruby, miraa, and arms; Somali traders played an important role, but Pokot traders gradually increased their importance).

The District Officer was supposed to co-ordinate the various representatives of line ministries in the area, but the Kenyan government did not provide those civil servants with a lot of project money, or facilities, and non-donor money, and purchasing power of their salaries, dwindled to very little in the course of time. However, teachers were increasing rapidly in numbers, and their salaries (both for trained and un-trained teachers) were paid by the government’s Ministry of Education. The District Officer was also responsible for co-ordinating famine relief operations in the area and for supporting and co-ordinating ‘harambee’ fund raising activities for ‘development projects’.

The perception about non-governmental agencies

People were much more positive about the many non-governmental agencies, which had come to their area. They easily mention all the churches, with their abbreviations: The Roman Catholic RCM, the Reformed AIC/RCA, the Anglican AIC, the Pentecostal FGCK, the evangelical ACK, the Lutheran ELCK, and others (KAG, ACK, BCFC, NCK, Baptists). Connected to Christian donors were NGOs like CCF (Christian Children’s Fund) and World Vision. But also non-Christian foreign donor agencies became visible entities in the area: the Red Cross, the World Food Programme, UNICEF, the Netherlands Development Organization SNV, the Dutch-funded Netherlands Harambee Foundation for Health, and another one for Water. All NGOs active in the area were involved in ‘development projects’ as well, some in only one or two sectors (often education), others playing a role as ‘pseudo government’ in particular areas, with projects in many sectors (as far as ‘peace keeping’, and - in the case of ACK before they were kicked out - arms maintenance).

Table 3 Development projects by NGOs, including churches

Sector	Projects
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Agriculture	tractors for ploughing, provision of seeds, pesticides, horticulture in field demonstration plots, provision of farm tools.
Livestock/veterinary	provision of drugs, training of paravets, mobile treatment services, disease identification and vaccination, supply of hand spray pumps, mobilisation of peace keeping, introduction of community based animal health workers (CBAHW) who later sold animal drugs to the community.
Forestry	provision of tree seedlings to the farmers, planting trees in water catchment areas, schools, homes, introduction of tree nurseries and conservation of natural resources (forests).
Education	construction of primary and pre-schools, providing boarding facilities, sponsoring poor children right from primary to higher education level, employment of PTA teachers, provision of food, clothing, books, training and employment of pre-school teachers, payment of subordinate staff.
Health	construction and renovation of dispensaries, primary health care, provision of drugs, employment of nurses, mobile clinics (flying clinics), sponsoring nurses in training colleges.
Water	drilling and renovation of boreholes, construction of sub-surface dams and ponds, piped gravity water, purchase of solar panels.
Religion	building churches, employing evangelists, and employing patrons in schools.
Famine relief	supplying food to the people when there was famine, at times there was food for work, the community comes to work together on a communal project, e.g. mudding a classroom, doing some road work, putting up a church, etc.
Social services	assisting women groups in income generating activities, registration certificates for women and youth groups, fund raising for women and youth groups, establishment of youth workshop and hardware, employment of social workers.
Public works/roads	churches and NGOs also had a role in maintenance of some roads, constructing air strips.
Energy	provision of solar panels in schools and health facilities.

Development activities of the ASAL programme

The local people also regarded 'ASAL' (the Dutch-funded ASAL programme) as an NGO, although most of its work was carried out as part of the District government apparatus, the so-called 'line ministries' (agriculture, livestock/veterinary, forestry, education, social services, etc.). With a bit of exaggeration we may say that the perception of the Pokot was that anything 'bad' was connected to the government, and anything 'good' to NGOs, so even projects that were regarded as 'good', but came from the government, could not be seen as 'government', and were perceived as related to foreign donors and their 'NGO-like' approach. The ASAL programme was a typical 'area-development programme', with lots of small-scale projects in a variety of fields. For donor-internal reasons (activities in the Ministry of Health were already supported through another Dutch development programme) health projects were excluded.

Table 4 ASAL projects

Sector	Projects
Agriculture	staff houses, demonstration plots, supply of seeds, introduction of animal traction, tours, seminars/workshops for farmers.
Livestock/veterinary	provision of drugs, purchase of solar panels and fridges, vaccination and branding, construction of crushes and dips and growing Napier grass.
Forestry	Planting of trees in various areas, e.,g schools, provisions of tree seedlings to the community, installation of water tanks for the tree nurseries, tree demonstration plots, provision of water cans, community training on conservation of the forest (environment) and provision of soil conservation

	tools.
Education	Construction of classrooms, dormitories, water tanks, toilets, kitchen, provision of desks, text books, in-service for primary school teachers, workshops and seminars for primary school teachers, provision of material for mother tongue booklets, school atlas, Pokot/English dictionary, sponsorship for needy secondary and college female students and for both male and female university students, training of PTA.
Water	sub-surface dams, rehabilitated boreholes, drilling boreholes, training of water committees and borehole attendants, water committees tours to other districts.
Social services	constructing roof catchments, water jars, construction of rental houses for women groups, supporting income generating activities for women, training women groups on management, tours, support for youth groups, e.g. buying tools.
Public works/roads	construction of the Kanyangareng Bridge, repair and maintenance of the road between Konyao and Alale.
Energy	introduction of energy-saving cooking stoves (<i>jikos</i>) through women groups

Assessing status and impact on capability domains

Four geographical sub-groups started to make an inventory of all ‘development projects’ in their area, since 1979, in all relevant sectors, and with attention for the period the project lasted, the ‘sponsor’ (government, ASAL, churches, other NGOs) and a first assessment of the project’s status, and the type of ‘capability’ they thought the project would enhance. In total these four groups listed 294 different ‘projects’. Men and women did a separate assessment (hence: a minimum of 584 project scores). Here we present a summary of the assessments about the status and capability domains of all projects together. Projects could get more than one score (in total: 839 scores on status and 1265 on capability). On ‘status’ that meant that members in a group had different opinions and could not agree. On ‘capabilities’ it meant that a project was perceived to have an impact on more than one capability.

Table 5 Status assessment of development projects in Northwest Pokot, according to type of ‘donor’

Donor	Nr of projects	Nr of project scores	Nr of on-going projects scores	Nr of finished projects	Nr of finished projects, percentages per status category*			
			(‘3’)		1	2	4	5
Gov.	72	203	76	127	47	19	17	17
ASAL	43	121	15	106	42	10	40	8
Church	123	339	161	178	48	8	35	9
NGO	56	176	58	118	47	27	22	3
Total	294	839	310	529	47	15	29	9

- *Status: 1 project never really started, or was negligible
2 project existed, but had no lasting impact, ‘nothing to be seen on the ground’, unsustainable
3 project is still on-going, no impact to be decided yet
4 project was finished and had an impact that is perceived to be positive
5 project was finished and had an impact that is perceived to be negative

Many projects were still on-going in the area (310 scores out of 839), and the workshop members decided that they could not give an impact assessment of these projects yet. Of the ‘finished projects’, quite a lot of projects were regarded as so small that their impact was seen as negligible (47%), and there were also a number of past projects that were seen as ‘a waste of time and effort’, as nothing substantial remained (15%). For an impact assessment exercise, those projects that were ready, and that were perceived to have had an impact are most interesting: 29% of the status assessment scores were positive and 9% negative. It is interesting to note that indeed men judged differently from women, and in the ‘most developed’ areas (Alale, and Kiwawa), there were major differences of opinion: in Alale particularly among the men, and in Kiwawa both among the men and among the women. It is remarkable that the men in Alale and in Kiwawa had outspoken negative opinions about a considerable number of projects, while the women in those areas did not give any ‘negative impact’ score at all.

We differentiated four types of donors. In terms of numbers of projects the churches have been most active (123 projects, with 339 project scores), followed by the Government (72 with 203 scores), non-Church NGOs (56 with 176 scores) and finally by the ASAL programme (43 projects with 121 scores). If we look at the status assessment data between the four types of ‘donors’, there are interesting differences. Projects that had been organised by ‘the government’ (including the ‘Administration’, the County Council, the KANU Party, the Kerio Valley Development Authority and the Rural Development Fund) had a higher than average score on projects without sustainability, a much lower than average score on ‘positive impact’, and a remarkably high score on ‘negative impact’. Projects that were a result of the ASAL programme had a remarkably high score on ‘positive impact’, and much lower than average scores on ‘negative impact’ and ‘unsustainable impact’. The same is true for projects organised by churches. Finally, non-church NGOs had a remarkably high score on unsustainable projects, but a remarkably low score on negative impact.

Table 6 Capability assessment of development projects in northwestern Pokot

Donor	Capability scores nr	Nat	Phy	Eco	Hum	Cul	SoPol
		%					
Gov.	281	7	16	23	28	9	16
ASAL	217	15	31	16	21	6	11
Churches	515	7	21	17	30	10	14
NGOs	252	5	23	20	26	8	18
Total	1265	8	22	19	28	9	15

Capability domains:

- 1 Natural
- 2 Physical
- 3 Economic and financial
- 4 Human
- 5 Cultural
- 6 Social and political

The workshop members regarded the impact of all projects combined on the ‘human capability’ (their skills, knowledge level, health) most pronounced. But also the impact on their physical, economic/financial and social/political capability was perceived as

considerable. Less impact was noted on the natural capability and on cultural capabilities. In all groups women were much more inclusive than men: many projects were regarded as having an impact on more than one capability. Women were showing a much more 'holistic' approach in discussing the impact of projects. If we compare the impact assessment scores for the four different types of donors, there is a striking overall resemblance, in which all four types of donor agencies, including the churches, were in fact active in all domains, and had a perceived impact on all capabilities. But there are a few interesting differences. The government had a higher than average score on economic capabilities and a lower than average score on physical capabilities. The ASAL programme had a higher than average impact on natural capabilities ('the environment') and on physical capabilities, and a lower than average impact on the other four capabilities. The churches had a slightly higher than average impact on human and cultural capabilities, and a slightly lower than average impact on economic capabilities. Finally the non-Church NGOs had a lower than average impact on natural capabilities and a higher than average impact on social and political capabilities.

Assessment of the most positive and most negative impacts

Finally, in each of the area groups, men and women separately (with one exception), the workshop members were asked to choose ten projects, which they regarded as the best ones for their area (with most positive impact) and ten projects, which they regarded as the worst ones for their area (with most negative impact, or the largest difference between expectations and outcome).

Table 7 Overview of development projects with the most positively perceived impact

N = Northern area, A = Alale, K = Kasei, W = Kiwawa, m = men, w = women

Provision of tree seedlings and water cans (Km), training farmers to make terraces (Kw), provision of veterinary drugs (Kw), livestock vaccination (Wm, Ww), construction of roads (Km), drilling of boreholes (N, Am, Aw, Wm, Ww), construction of piped gravity water (Aw), construction of sub-surface dams (Kw), construction of primary and pre-primary schools (Am, Aw, Km, Ww), construction of dispensary (Am, Aw, Km, Kw, Wm, Ww), new road building (Ww), building of churches (Wm), vaccination of children (Am, Aw, Km), medical treatment (Am), provision of medicines (N, Aw, Wm, Ww), cost-sharing of drugs (Wm), mobile clinics (N, Am, Aw, Km) 'flying' mobile clinics ('Helimission mobile') (N, Am, Aw), building of schools (N, Wm), provision of teachers (Kw), feeding and paying nursery school teachers (Kw), lessons about dress making (N), extension about growing of crops (N), sponsoring students (Wm, Ww), registration of women and youth groups (Wm), evangelisation (N, Kw), relief food (Km, Ww), school feeding programme (Wm), providing security (Kw), peace keeping mobilisation (Wm).

Table 8 Overview of development projects with the most negatively perceived impact

N = Northeastern area, A = Alale, K = Kasei, W = Kiwawa, m = men, w = women

Provision of forestry personnel (N), tree planting (Am), provision of seedlings and water cans (Kw), provision of tree seeds (Wm, Ww), training to make terraces (Km), provision of soil conservation tools (Wm), soil conservation (Ww), provision of seeds (Am, Km, Kw, Ww), provision of fertilisers and pesticides (Ww), extension to grow napier grass (Wm, Ww), provision of livestock pasture and hay (Wm), provision of crop seeds and new varieties (Wm), building agricultural extension office (Km), supplying oxen ploughs (Km), animal vaccination (Am), training for forest conservation (Km), training 'timing of rains' (Wm), provision of engines for grinding of maize (N), provision of energy-saving jikos (Wm), maintenance/gravelling of the main road (N, Am, Aw, Wm, Ww), construction of Turkwel Gorge dam (Km, Kw), renovation of boreholes (Kw), construction of water dams (Ww), provision of school building materials (Aw, Kw), provision of school desks (Kw), construction of a dispensary (N), improving the buying and selling of livestock and goods (Km), provision of loans (N, Am, Aw), sponsoring of nursing students (N), provision of school milk (N, Aw), provision of books at schools (N, Ww), sponsoring of education for poor children (N), training of pre-school teachers (N), providing

extra-curriculum activities at schools (Ww), women awareness training (Aw), harambee for women groups (Aw, Ww), harambee for youth groups (Aw), employment of nursery-school teachers (Am), employment of party youth wingers (Am, Aw), peace initiative (Am), Relief food supply (Am, Aw), school feeding programme (Kw), enforcement of law and order (Aw, Km, Kw), registration of party membership (Wm).

There are major differences between the groups, and also between men and women from the same area. In some cases projects, which were regarded as a very positive contribution to capability development in one area, or by the women, were regarded as a very bad contribution to capability development, and having a major negative impact in other areas, or by the men.

We compared the ‘best’ and ‘worst’ project scores for the four different types of donors. The results are presented in table 8.

Table 8: ‘Best’ and ‘worst’ projects for four types of project donors, separate assessments by men and women (all research areas combined)

Donor	Men		Women	
	Best	Worst	Best	Worst
Gov.	7	21	6	24
ASAL	2	6	2	2
Churches	24	6	21	5
NGOs	5	4	4	8
Total	38	37	33	39

Conclusions about impact assessment

Both the men and the women regarded the churches as the best ‘development agency’, and “the government” as the worst one.

‘Impact assessment’ does not only depend on reaching the targeted result of a project, but very much also on the way a project started and was implemented.

Projects, which raised major expectations and which could only fulfil a minor part of those, were often evaluated negatively, even if they accomplished something.

Projects, which did not treat the local population with respect, were also valued negatively.

Projects, which created (or increased) tensions in the local community were often seen as very negative, especially if ‘outsiders’ created these tensions, and were no longer there to assist in restoring peace.

The activities of some of the missionaries, who had stayed in the area for a long time, and who had shared the area’s problems, were generally evaluated very positively, also by those who did not belong to the particular church group of the missionary.

The long-term commitment to providing water, health care, veterinary care and education was valued most positively, and hence the overall positive judgement of church-based NGOs, which provided those services in a bottom-up way, and with a very long-term commitment.

Development agencies were particularly valued positively if they were flexible enough to change timing, 'spacing', and content to the major fluctuations in the area's environment, and if they provided some form of 'counselling' to discuss the challenges which the population faced (including harsh government/army behaviour).

Where ASAL (and some other government) projects had the same 'style' of flexibility and counselling they were also valued positively. Where projects were perceived as 'hit-and-run', top-down implemented hobbies of some external donors the overall assessment was often very negative.

Conclusions about mitigating vulnerability

In an area like northern West Pokot mitigating vulnerability means preparing for drought- and epidemic related crises, preventing war and violence, and assisting the people to defend themselves. In the first domain various interventions were regarded as useful. The most important one is the provision of sustainable water infrastructure, preferably those which do not have high maintenance costs, and which do not make people dependent on an untrustworthy public water agency. Down-to-earth provision of veterinary care and accessible and dependable health care are important as well, as are fall-back options support for drought-resistant crops and animals, and fast recovery support after a crisis. The provision of education is favoured as well, as it provides a long-term escape route, which also functions as a means to geographically and sectorally widen the support structure. This is both true for remittance support to livelihoods, and for political support as educated people can become advocates for the plight of their 'home area', both in government circles, but also in NGO and church circles, in human rights agencies and in their communication with potential donors. Gradually the focus among donors and among the local population has shifted to the second domain: providing basic security against violence, including the violence of government agencies. Human rights groups and churches do provide important support to form a potential 'cordon sanitaire' against outbreaks of violence (e.g., peace building conferences; confronting army and police atrocities), but the people's own defence forces are important as well, in cases where the 'state monopoly of violence' does not work (when armies do not provide security), or works counterproductive (where army and police agencies are part of a predatory and rent-seeking force). In a situation where state violence does create havoc once in a while, other state agencies, government agencies "bringing development" are often treated with caution, or downright disrespect. Particularly non-governmental agencies which have become rooted in local institutional life, and which have shown long-term commitment, are seen as much more useful. In the research area mainly churches are regarded as allies. But also churches, and the many local and international non-governmental agencies, which become 'swarms of support', particularly in the aftermath of crises, are often treated with caution, as it is never clear from the outset if they can be trusted, or if they also form part of a rent-seeking and distortive external threat to long-term survival. The people's perception is not a simple matter of 'bad government' versus 'good NGOs'. It is a matter of building and maintaining mutual trust and providing long-term commitment. These ingredients can be available in both government and non-government agencies, but they are often not.

Conclusions about bridging science and practice in vulnerability research

In our long-term research project we started as was usual during the 1970s and early 1980s among many ‘development researchers’. We received research money from a donor agency, allied ourselves with a local development programme, and with local research institutions, and soon found out that a lot of the ‘development initiatives’ were rather donor driven, and part of perceived wisdom in the government-donor nexus, with its rapidly changing donor speak and ever-changing prevailing approaches. Despite the fact that the ASAL programme for which we did research started with a ‘process approach’, and despite the fact that we soon initiated various participatory research approaches, the orientation in the beginning was very much on strengthening the government machinery. Only gradually the approach shifted to include more NGOs and to take local initiatives more serious. And only recently the importance of combining development initiatives with security and peace initiatives becomes more evident, as well as the research importance to find and work together with local peace and development brokers. In the early years of our research work we spent considerable time and energy to understand the ‘institutional logic’ of the intervening agencies, and particularly of the government machinery on the ground. We should have spent more energy to understand the ‘institutional logic’ of people’s behaviour and its rootedness in culture. Bridging the evident gap between researchers/practitioners focusing on culture (and often standing with their back to the ‘development industry’) and researchers/practitioners focusing on ‘development’ (and often standing with their back to ‘culture’) is one of the major challenges in vulnerability research and practice.

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