

Declining Social Capital and Vulnerability to Livelihood Risks in Turkana District, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper discusses the traditional responses of the Turkana, through the use of social capital, to livelihood insecurity in the context of changed socio-economic conditions using data collected in Turkana district in 2000. The paper focuses on three aspects with regard to livelihood security in Turkana society. First, it examines the extent to which traditional mechanisms of drought and famine management are operational at the community and household level. Second, it discusses how the socio-economic changes have affected traditional mechanisms of survival in Turkana society and the impact of this on the survival of the vulnerable groups. Third, it interrogates the factors that have led to the decline of the traditional mechanism of coping with hardships. The findings indicate that Turkana society is still largely dependent on traditional drought and famine coping mechanisms built on social capital. The present socio-economic situation in Turkana society, however, is such that these mechanisms of support for the vulnerable households have weakened and become inadequate and cannot be relied upon by weak households during periods of hardships leading to increased vulnerability to livelihood risks.

Key words: Social Capital, Vulnerability, Livelihood Risks, Turkana

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Conceptualizing Pastoralism

Contemporary pastoralism in Africa is faced with a myriad of problems. The major problems pastoralists face include encroachment on pastoral rangelands by agricultural neighbours, climatic variability, limited alternative lifestyle options, relative neglect by governments, and inadequate veterinary services among others. The responses to the livelihood crisis have varied depending on government policy, neighbours, relative live-

stock holdings, and the internal organisation of the society. The society is internally depended on its social capital built in customs and practices which are geared towards promotion of mutual self-help between households. Where social capital is high the well being of the entire society including the weak is up lifted (Narayan and Pritchett 1997; World Bank 1998).

Turkana district has a long history of droughts and famines. Studies indicate that mild droughts have a recurrence interval of 3-4 years, while severe droughts occur in intervals of 7-11 years (TDCPU 1992:9; Ministry of Land Reclamation, Regional and Water Development 1995:22). It is observed that the Turkana society is "always either

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recovering from a drought situation, in the middle of a drought or entering into the early period of a drought (Ministry of Land Reclamation, Regional and Water Development 1995:22). Drought is, therefore, part of Turkana district ecology which significantly influences the rhythm of life. A chronology of livelihood disasters of Turkana (see Table 1) vividly captures their vulnerability.

The information in Table 1 is suggestive that for droughts to turn into famines there are contributory secondary factors, such as livestock diseases and raiding, which trigger it. The drought years with a high human mortality and livestock losses are those which

coincide with high raiding incidences and disease epidemics. Although droughts need not necessarily lead on to famine, the situation in Turkana district shows a recent trend in the possibility of droughts turning into famines. The indigenous drought and famine management coping mechanisms that the Turkana have relied on for generations have become overstretched and they seem not to guarantee the vulnerable households food security in the changed socio-economic situation. This paper addresses the problems faced by the Turkana as a result of declining social capital. It is based on data collected in 2000 (Kareithi 2000).

Table 1: Chronology of livelihood disasters in Turkana District

<i>Year</i>	<i>Local Name</i>	<i>Disaster</i>
1925	Ekwakoit	Prolonged severe drought, diseases, human and livestock deaths
1930	Abirikae	Drought and hunger
1942	Lolewo	Animal disease epidemics
1943	Ekwam-Lonyang	Prolonged drought, heavy winds, starvation
1947	Atea Nachok	Animal disease epidemics, starvation
1949	Ngilowi	Animal disease epidemics, starvation
1950	Nawolojom	Hunger, livestock diseases
1952	Lotiira	Prolonged drought, famine
1953	Lokulit	Drought and famine
1960/61	Namator	Drought and famine, widespread deaths of human, livestock and wild animals
1966	Elop	Drought and famine
1970	Kimududu	Severe drought, famine, raiding by Karamajong
1971	Lolewo	Cholera epidemic
1979/81	Lopiar/Loaru	Extended drought, animal diseases, insecurity from raiders
1984	Kilejok	Drought, cattle raids
1990	Akirik	Drought, cattle raids
1992-94	Lobolibolio	Drought, cattle raids

Source: Field notes, TDCPU (1992:9-11)

Erosion of Social Mechanisms of Drought and Famine Management

Crisis anticipation is a central part in the organisation of production in rural communities in which, “disaster preparedness” is built into the production system and exchange relations (Rahmato 1989:16). In particular, pastoral societies who inhabit areas with a long history of food shortages have evolved strategies to mitigate famines in their production organisation. The Turkana for example, have traditionally dealt with livelihood disaster through social mechanisms built into their socio-economic organisation. The efficacious operations of the adopted strategies determine the ability of

the vulnerable groups to survive during hardships.

To get an insight into the mechanisms used by Turkana households to manage drought and famine situations, household heads were asked to indicate the measures they take once they are confronted by livelihood disasters such as drought or famine. Their responses are in Table 2.

The measures taken by households can be grouped broadly under two categories: risk management measures and risk coping strategies (Alderman and Paxson 1992: 1-3). In risk management, the actions taken are meant to reduce the income and food vari

Table 2: Turkana Households’ Preparation and Responses to Drought and Famine

Famine measures	% of HHs (n=231)
Splitting the family	7.4
Seeking help from friends/relatives	4.3
Offering Sacrifices	3.0
Diversification of economic activities	4.8
Sale of animals	3.9
Migration to less affected areas	34.6
Food and fodder Storage	18.6
Engage in irrigation	6.1
Seek relief food from NGOs/government	15.6
Split herds	1.7
Total	100
Drought measures	% of HHs (n=294)
Migration	60.3
Seek NGOs/government assistance	11.4
Food and fodder storage	9.7
Consult rainmakers	3.8
None	4.2
Sell animals	3.4
Economic diversification	5.9
Place animals under care of other households	1.3
Total	100

ability in the households during a livelihood disaster situation. These measures include diversification in the portfolio of household occupations and the strategic migration of family members. Traditionally, households try to engage in both pastoralism and cultivation, while those close to Lake Turkana also undertake fishing. Diversification is made possible by the social organisation in which families are often split into two or more units, located at different points and engaged in a segment of economic undertaking in a complimentary arrangement.

Risk coping strategies fall under two categories, those that smooth consumption intertemporally through saving behaviour, and those which smooth consumption across households through inter-household risk-sharing (Alderman and Paxson 1992:2). The former affords the household the opportunity to spread effects of production shocks on consumption forward through time, while the latter spread the shocks across households at any one point in time. Household intertemporal consumption smoothing among the Turkana is achieved through various ways. Firstly, households store food and fodder for future consumption. Food storage is largely in the form of sorghum. Sorghum surplus is also converted into cash or livestock through exchange, sale, or barter, or invested in sociality through gift exchange. In addition, the splitting up of the family and sending some members to households that are better off is practiced. It is often the women and children who move out. Although this strategy does not directly yield food for the household, it lowers the number of people dependent on the household food sources and, therefore, helps to spread the production shock.

In regards to the splitting up of families during a disaster, child fosterage is practised to alter the household size and this allows the maintenance of a balance between the labour demands and the consumption level of the particular household (Shell-Duncan 1994: 148). The redistribution of children may take several forms. Adoption which, entails the jural transfer of kinship identity and which is more permanent is practised between relatives, especially where one may be barren but in need of children. Children are also loaned temporarily to non-relatives to assist in herding activities and other routine duties undertaken by children. Child fosterage establishes a reciprocal relationship in which the foster parents are indebted to the child's natal parents and are expected to comply with requests for assistance in terms of food or animals during hard times. Thus, the child binds the two households in an alliance for mutual assistance during times of hardship.

Individuals and households who suffer adversity beg for food and animals to cope with the stress. Begging among the Turkana is institutionalised and takes two main forms. First, people beg for food, water and tobacco as a physiological need. This is quite widespread especially in recent years, and has taken the form of begging for money from travellers in the region. Second, people beg to establish friendship. This form of begging is meant to establish a reciprocal relationship for mutual assistance that entails exchange of animals. This initiates more enduring personal relationships in which stock association is formed. A stock association is a partnership between herders that entail mutual aid in a range of social, political and economic aspects and which are largely maintained through exchange of animals.

Table 3: Households with Other Peoples' Livestock

Responses	No. of HHs (n=205)	%
Have other households' animals	53	25.9
Do not have other households' animals	152	74.1

Table 4: Livestock species loaned to other Households

Livestock Species	Quantity of animals				Total
	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	
Ewes	4	8	6	23	41
She-goats	7	4	2	26	40
Rams	14	16	2	7	39
He-goats	13	12	1	12	38
Bulls	16	11	2	7	36
Cows	11	4	3	17	35
Female Camels	7	1	1	5	14
Male Camels	6	3	0	2	11

To gauge the extent to which the exchange of livestock is operational in the sample households, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had animals from other households in their herds. The responses were as shown in Table 3. Table 3 shows that many of the sample households (74.1%) did not have livestock loans. The data is suggestive that livestock loaning although present is not widespread. To get further insight on the dynamics of livestock loaning between households, the sample households were asked to indicate the number and species of livestock loaned to them by others (See Table 4.)

Table 4 shows that livestock exchanges between households involved the small-stock more than cattle and camels. In addition, female animals were loaned out more frequently than the males. This is consistent with the logic of Turkana livestock exchange

which, endeavours to support livestock poor households to derive livestock products especially milk and blood from the loaned animals. Male animals are loaned out to improve the genetic quality of the recipients' herds. This is particularly important in post-drought recovery period when most male animals will either have been sold or exchanged to acquire grains or already castrated to make them more drought tolerant. Hence, males of good progeny are scarce and the exchange system serves as a redistributive mechanism.

To gauge the circumstances under which livestock exchange operate households were asked to indicate the terms under which they keep other people's livestock. Nearly a half of the sample households (49.0%) that took care of other people's livestock did on the basis of stock associateship (Table 5). In this arrangement, the recipient households bene-

fit from the animal products (milk and blood), while the donor takes advantage of the extra household labour to accumulate livestock wealth. The data further shows that some households (8.5%) are contracted to look after other peoples' livestock for a salary paid in cash or in kind. It is also clear that some livestock exchanges have a specified duration of time after which the loaned livestock are recalled. The study indicated that 19.1 percent of the households were to keep the animals for less than one year, while 17 percent had to return the animals after 1-3 years. The animals loaned out for a specified period are probably the males of good progeny meant to improve the genetic quality of the recipient's herds. It is also possibly the case that households are unwilling to loan out animals indefinitely as was the case in the past and, therefore, come to an understanding with the recipients on a specified duration of time to enable the donors to monitor the animals loaned out.

To get information on the geographical dispersal of the livestock exchanges, house-

holds were asked to indicate whether the animals received were from within or outside their region of residence (Table 6). More than a half of the households (58.2%) that were loaned some animals were from within the same region of residence as the donor households, which is contrary to the customary practice and logic of spreading out the loaned animals in a wide flung region. The preference to loan out animals within the same general region of residence is a reflection of the households' attempts to monitor animals loaned out especially due to the increased level of insecurity from raiders. This shows that livestock exchanges are confined to residential groups and relatives in the same region. In sum, livestock exchange between households has become limited and restricted. This is partly a reflection of the overall poor livestock status of the society due to various causes of livestock losses. Consequently, even the relatively well off households have become reluctant to give livestock loans due to uncertainties.

Table 5: Terms of Care of Loaned Livestock

Terms of animal care	No. of HHs (n=47)
As a stock associate	23 (49.0%)
A specified period of less than one year	9 (19.1%)
A specified period of 1-3 years	8 (17.0%)
For a salary	4 (8.5%)
Unspecified	3 (6.4%)
Total	47 (100%)

Table 6: Origin of the Loaned Animals

Area of origin	No. of HHs (n=43)
Within region of Residence	25 (58.2%)
Outside region of Residence	18 (41.8%)

In the foregoing it is evident that mutual support between households in Turkana society has significantly declined. This is partly a reflection of an overall weakened economy, such that households even when willing to assist the less endowed, find their weak property status a great handicap. It is equally the case that changes in the socio-economic organisation of the society has produced the current situation making it increasingly difficult for the vulnerable households to depend on sociality as a mechanism for survival during a crisis.

Factors in the Decline of Turkana Traditional Mechanisms of Survival

Destitution and social isolation

A notable source of socio-economic change in Turkana society is the phenomenon of drought and famine. Indeed, over the years droughts have been an engine of change in the society, which has produced both winners and losers. Droughts have led to socio-economic differentiation and created a new and distinct class in Turkana society, the destitute. In this regard, it has recently been observed that, although "ten years ago, pastoralists made up 80 per cent of the Turkana population, now almost 50 per cent of the population is regarded as destitute" (Daily Nation Newspaper 25/5 1994: I).

The emergence of the destitute marks a new social sub-group within the Turkana society, 'herdsmen without herds' (Schwartz et al. 1985:12). This is a population that has lost the main means of subsistence and chances of their survival lie in activities outside pastoralism such as petty trade, handcraft making, begging, charcoal sales, irrigated and rain-fed agriculture (where possible) famine relief, or out-migration. All these options offer unreliable food security.

Destitution through livestock loss among pastoralists carries with it a social stigma which diminishes the levels of social networks of mutual support available to them. This is an inevitable result of destitution since livestock constitutes the main item of exchange and the bond that binds people in the society. In general, socio-economic exchanges in any society presuppose that participants enter the relationship with resources to exchange. Thus, "when people become completely destitute they are unable to participate in society, they become outcasts they violate the conventions of society and become dependent" (De Waal 1989:74).

Blau (1964:98) a theorist of social exchange notes that "the establishment of exchange relations involves making investments that constitute commitments to the other party. Since social exchange requires trusting others to reciprocate, the initial problem is to prove one-self trustworthy." Since the destitute have lost livestock, an important exchange item, they lack the capacity to prove themselves "trustworthy" in reciprocal relationships. Their poverty implies an inability to meet their social obligations to the wider social units including, age-sets, clans, stock associates etc, which strains relationships with other groups and individuals. Destitute families, therefore, suffer isolation in social intercourse hence they have limited networks to look up to for assistance. Indeed a stockless pastoralist does not only lose an economic means of livelihood, but also suffers other cultural ramifications including loss of self-identity (Baxter 1991:14). In addition, destitution alters relationships between people in the society. Since livestock constitute the main bride wealth goods which formalises a marriage, stockless households have either to delay the

marriage of their sons or the sons have to settle in an informal union. An informal marriage (in which bride wealth has not been paid and the marriage bull has not been speared) although recognised in the society, produces unstable families. In this case the man loses control as the woman is regarded as a concubine (*apese angabus*) and the children of the union legally belong to the woman's lineage.

A long period of destitution creates circumstances in which survival and recovery process through the use of reciprocal mutual assistance between households become difficult to activate. For example, the customary practice of giving stock loans (*akijok*) operating in Turkana society is selective. Exchange partners are sought among those who already have at least some livestock and a reputation for good husbandry. The recipient of the livestock loan benefits through the use of livestock products (milk and blood) and eventually a reward of some animal(s) (*nakinyir*) from the offspring of the loaned animals. The livestock giver takes advantage of the available labour in the recipient's household to accumulate livestock wealth and to hide their true livestock wealth.

The stock loaning system of the Turkana is not entirely rooted on the welfare of the weak in society. It is also designed to cater for the needs of the wealthy to hide and disguise their true livestock wealth, and thereby, forestall begging from others without strains on relationships. In such an arrangement, the destitute make poor partners, as their weak economic circumstances lead to their 'predation' on the loaned animals' in order to survive. Destitution, therefore, erodes a family's credit worthiness and the trust by others in the exchange relationships.

Other social avenues through which im-

poverished persons can hope to acquire a nuclear herd to re-enter pastoralism includes 'best friend' relationship (*lopei*), and through bride wealth. A 'best friend' (*lopei*) is a person with whom one has at one time or another exchanged stock and continue to do so (Gulliver 1951:104). This relationship depends on mutual convenience and involves reciprocal exchanges of livestock. For the destitute, such a relationship may temporarily be held in abeyance as they are not in a position to make counter gifts to their partners and are more likely to exhibit dependence rather than participate as equals, thereby constraining and breaking the relationship. In this regard, Renfrew (1990:8) found that some people in Turkana district lost their 'best friends' once they lost animals through raids.

Bridewealth among the Turkana is high, being on average 60-80 animals (Gulliver 1951) and is, therefore, a potential social avenue for impoverished families with marriageable daughters to acquire herds. However, marriages are at the same time a channel of forming alliances for future mutual assistance beyond the bride wealth transfer (Dombrowski 1993:46). Hence, households will seek alliances through marriage networks with families that are relatively stable in livestock wealth. This disadvantages destitute families. Even in situations where such families do receive bride wealth in terms of livestock, customarily they are obligated to share them widely with kinsmen, which leave the bride's family with only a few.

There are situations where the destitute household can, however, maintain some active exchange networks even when they no longer have adequate herds to engage in gift exchange. Some households to maintain and consolidate their social networks in society

have effectively used relief food rations. Bush (1995:256-257) found that up to 70 percent of her sample households in northern Turkana used relief food as gifts to non-recipient households. The extent, to which this can work, however, depends on the rations provided and targeted relief in which some households are not entitled. However, in Turkana district when relief food is offered the distribution often uses a blanket coverage in which almost all the households are entitled regardless of their economic status. In such a context the extent to which relief food can be used as a gift to maintain social networks is limited.

In sum, widespread destitution has contributed to the erosion of the customary mechanisms of self-help within the society. Presently, these channels have little impact on the situation of the poorest of the poor, and cannot salvage them back to a pastoral livelihood. This category of people finds themselves heavily dependent on external famine relief as their social networks in society weaken.

Dual economy and decline of community cohesion

The government and donors in attempts to rehabilitate destitute former pastoralists in Turkana district have often turned to sedentary irrigation settlements. The selection criterion for allocation of tenancy in the settlements has been destitution. This brings in people from all parts of the district together in an artificial community with no resemblance to the traditional neighbourhood (Broche-Due, 1987; Brown, 1980). The result is that residents in these settlements lack a sense of solidarity, sharing and co-operation that create cohesion in a traditional neighbourhood. In addition, the cultivation

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activities are not well integrated to livestock husbandry as traditionally practised by the Turkana.

Cultivation among the Turkana has always been closely intertwined with livestock keeping in a harmonious manner. The organisation of production spatially and socially is coordinated to allow cultivation and pastoralism to go on simultaneously in a complimentary way. The Sorghum gardens revert to rangelands after harvest, and back to gardens in the next planting season. Family members oscillate between farming and herding activities smoothly depending on the seasons. The creation of permanent sedentary irrigation settlements interferes and disturbs this rhythm in a number of ways.

First, the settlements create a dual economy through a spatial and social truncation of herding and farming activities. These two activities are made incompatible and unable to co-exist. For example, the irrigation scheme by-laws forbid keeping of livestock within the region. This effectively demarcates and defines the gardens and the rangelands, a situation that did not exist before. Socially, at the community level the society is forced to redefine itself in terms of farmers and herders. The nature of the two undertakings in the long run invariably produces a social distance between the two populations. Thus, 'development' created fragmentation in Turkana society, with negative consequences on the community spirit.

At the household level similar fragmentation occurred. The design of the tenancy in the schemes was planned for nuclear families, while in practice a significant number of Turkana households are polygynous. To fit into the design of the irrigation settlements, the sub-units that constitute a polygynous household had to split up into the various

houses (*ekols*) and settle separately. In some cases only one house (*ekol*) settled in the scheme, while the rest remained in the rangelands with the few remaining animals. Over the year's contact between former household members has weakened to a point where they have completely separated into autonomous households. Thus, sedentarisation has blunted the sense of identity of some households and has actually weakened the point of contact between the herding unit and its sub-units (Broche-Due, 1987:154). Traditionally, Turkana polygynous households maintain two homesteads, the chief homestead (*awi napolon*) and a secondary homestead (*awi abor* or *epero*). Members of both identify themselves as one unity with a great deal of interaction. However, in the context of irrigation settlements, where a household split up, interaction is much less and eventually the identity is lost.

Second, marital relationships for those settled in the schemes are quite unstable (Njeru, 1984; Broche-Due and Storas, 1983:134; Broche-Due, 1980:33). This results because marriages in the schemes due to scarcity of livestock are not formalized through the payment of bride wealth and the spearing of a marriage bull. Such unions remain informal and superficial, in which the women involved are regarded as concubines (*apese angabus*) rather than bona fide wives. Formal marriages (where bride wealth has been paid and a marriage bull speared) are significant in the well-being of the family, through the alliances formed.

An informal marriage curtails a family's social networks, and limits the circle of people to turn to for social, economic and political support. Informal marriages in the settlements give women freedom, and they enjoy more equality and a higher status than

the traditional woman in the pastoral sector does (Njeru, 1984:105). This is tied to their ability to contribute to household income and production equally with the men. However, the freedom and high status come with a big price. Such women are disadvantaged during hardships such as droughts and famines since the men lack a commitment and easily abandon them, with no penalty from the wider society.

The relationships between the sedentary and the pastoral populations are tenuous and tense. A differentiation of values have occurred which affects interaction between the two. The sedentary population has acquired knowledge and a taste for the consumption of modern goods such as bicycles, radios, watches and western style clothes (Njeru, 1984), which gives them a new outlook of life. They look down upon those in the traditional sector as old fashioned, while those still in the nomadic sector view the sedentary with their modern ways as having been alienated from Turkana culture. This inhibits social interaction including intermarriages between the two population groups (Njeru, 1984:50). The nomadic population looks at the sedentary cultivators as unattractive associates and marriage partners due to their livestock shortage. The nomadic men view the sedentary women as lazy and unskilled in the demanding livestock husbandry, due to their long alienation from pastoral activities.

Third, economic exchanges across the pastoral and sedentary cultivators have been curtailed by the limited and tense social intercourse between them. Each of these categories concentrates their stock associates and related exchanges within their own group, which they understand better and where they can easily monitor their investments. The sedentary population, for example, keep their

few small-stocks within the vicinity of the schemes, and judiciously use them to cultivate narrower but stronger economic ties within the area (Broche-Due, 1987:156). The nomads, on their part, are uncomfortable with the settlers as stock associates. The general shortage of livestock among the settlers makes them low return exchange partners, while their prolonged social separation from pastoralism has eroded their livestock husbandry skills.

Commercialisation and economic differentiation

The analysis of the internal dynamics of pastoral societies in the 1970's largely ignored the issue of economic differentiation and inequalities. In the 1980's, the analysis of the impacts of drought and famines in these societies revealed entrenched economic differentiation, which affected the ability of households to cope with the hardships. Since the 1980's analysis has documented the process of socio-economic transformation in pastoral societies in Kenya (Ensminger, 1992; Little, 1985, 1992; Kituyi, 1990, 1998; Rutten, 1992). The transformations are generally attributed to commercialisation, state policies and the penetration of capitalism in the pre-capitalist pastoral societies, which has altered the pre-existing socio-economic organisation.

The broad currents that have led to socio-economic transformations in other pastoral societies in Kenya have had a number of impacts within Turkana society as well. Encapsulation of the society into the wider economic system has opened up opportunities for conversion of livestock wealth into other forms of property. This has given individuals more options to accumulate material wealth. Successful herders can through livestock

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markets keep their wealth in the form of bank accounts, or convert it into real estates or other forms of business enterprises. This process of investment has brought in forms of wealth that are not directly affected by drought hazards. The options of alternative investment avenues have led to changes in the value system and transformed some of the traditional non-monetary forms of exchange centred on sociality towards market-oriented transactions.

Households which have successfully diversified their economic activities to include forms that are less vulnerable to climatic hazards, such as retail shops, rental buildings, transport businesses, secure employment among others, can confidently maintain reasonable subsistence levels even if their herds are to be affected by a drought. This is especially notable among the Turkana elites. Through diversification they have created hedges against the impacts of drought and famine. This group therefore has less need to maintain the traditional exchange system, which are based on self-insurance ethos.

New livestock management strategies have emerged whereby the wealthy are in a position to hire labour, hence precluding the necessity for alliances with the less fortunate households for labour acquisition. There are fewer premiums for the wealthy to use the traditional mechanisms of social exchange to accumulate wealth and for survival. Commercialisation has encouraged material accumulation of wealth as a form of self-insurance against future uncertainties. This is a shift away from the old value system, where surplus livestock wealth is invested in sociality through gift exchange as a form of self-insurance.

The availability of alternative non-pastoral investment channels have led to a

shift away from social esteem and livestock as a measure of wealth and power towards fixed assets (Kituyi, 1998:40). Consequently, there has occurred erosion of the traditional prestige gained through social involvement towards a new system that depends on exclusivity and shedding away the costly social exchanges. Presently, people do not necessarily earn respect by being sociable or by their good livestock husbandry, but due to their capacity to accumulate the new forms of property and their networks with political and economic elites within and outside the pastoral societies. These changes are tied to the politics of development in which the idea is to influence and attract favourable allocation of resources for the region from the state, through the use of networks.

The goal of individuals is now to accumulate personalised material wealth. The pursuit of this objective militates against the former generalised exchanges between poor and rich households, which are replaced by narrower and intensified circumscribed networks between the better off households. As a consequence poor households have limited opportunities to reduce risk through involvement in social relations of exchange with better-off household which increases the risks at the household level by reduction of herd investment strategies. The poor households, however, still maintain stock exchanges among themselves as a form of self-insurance. What lacks is the benefit of linkages between the poor and the wealthy, which operated to cushion the poor households.

Conclusion

The discussion in this paper indicates that Turkana society is still traditional in its coping strategies against drought and famine

disasters. However, the social mechanisms are expensive to maintain for the economically weak households. For the economically successful households, the need for the maintenance of traditional survival strategies have been negated by the emergence of alternative investment options which being relatively safe preclude the need for crisis insurance.

Social survival mechanisms are predicated on a premise of reciprocity rather than generalised charity to the weak. The exchanges are therefore based on logic of self-insurance ethos, which has significant implications on their maintenance when the socio-economic circumstances that favour their operations change. Presently, some Turkana households as a result of their destitution have suffered isolation from reciprocal exchanges as they are evaluated as untrustworthy to reciprocate in the foreseeable future. In addition, commercialisation in the economy has led to individualism and a commercial ethos, which has edged out non-market forms of assistance traditionally, practiced between households. Availability of external relief has made those who are better off in society to feel no obligation to assist the less fortunate. They relax in the confidence that external sources will cater for the needs of the vulnerable. Consequently, the customary distributive practices and institutions are falling into decay, forcing the poor to become heavily inclined to seek assistance from external donors.

The present situation in Turkana society indicates that the traditional mechanisms of support for the vulnerable households are inadequate and cannot be relied upon by weak households during periods of hardship.

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