

**Dassenetch Integrated Development Program (DIDP)**  
**SNV (Netherlands Development Organization) – ETHIOPIA**

**INTERIM REPORT ON THE RESEARCH PHASE**

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# PART 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 0. Introduction

#### 0.1. Aims of the interim reports

After about one year of research, this report was written in order to:

- provide a presentation of the most relevant research findings;
- start an internal debate on how to continue in the short and long term with the DIDP;
- describe practical activities already started and identify further starter activities;
- identify other activities which may be implemented later on;
- assess further research need;
- using the report for rising awareness of the Dassanetch problems among all organizations and experts dealing with the development of the Omo valley.

#### 0.2. The structure of the Interim report

In the Part 1, "Introduction", the general issues regarding the research phase are discussed.

In paragraph 1 the genesis of the research phase is described. Paragraph 2, instead, deals with the methodologies of research per each subject.

In the Part 2, "Main research finding and potential development activities" the main research findings are presented, trying to provide the reader with a general picture of Dassanetch physical and social environment.

Part 2 is divided in several paragraphs corresponding to the major topics. The implications for development of what is described in each paragraph are discussed in a conclusive sub-paragraph, including a description of the practical activities which would be needed on the base of the research findings.

Paragraph 3 is an introduction to Dassanetch area, which should provide the rider with the basic information needed for understanding more detailed discussions.

Paragraph 4 is a description of the unstable Dassanetch physical environment (the delta of the Omo river and the surrounding area).

In paragraph 5 the production practices of the Dassanetch in relation to the environment are discussed at a macroscopic level, with the aim of identifying feasible technical solutions for improving the viability of the Dassanetch production system.

The rules, the customary practises and social groups which play a role in access and control over cultivable lands and pasturage - that is more specifically land tenure - are instead discussed in paragraph 6. More generally, paragraph 6 deals with the local organizations of Dassanetch, a topic related to both the political and economical spheres of Dassanetch society. In fact people need to organize themselves mostly for the sake of resources exploitation (economical sphere) and with regard to that they also need to take decision (political sphere). Paragraph 6 is an important one, because the information given is

essential for identifying social groups in which development activities may be based and with which linkages may be established.

Paragraphs 7, 8, 9 and 10 are interrelated, because all deals more or less directly with inter-ethnic relations, a key factor for development planning.

Paragraph 7 describe the conflict among the different pastoral groups of similar size and culture and different language inhabiting Southern Omo Region.

Paragraph 8 concerns the inter-relation between the local pastoralists and the Highlanders immigrants, a relation which is strongly affected by international financial choices and development policies. Also this type of inter-ethnic relations implies competition over resources and conflict.

Inter-ethnic relations do not only imply competition and conflict, but also trade and exchange of goods. In turn, the terms of marketing and trade relations are strongly influenced by inter-ethnic conflict. These aspects are discussed in paragraph 9.

Paragraph 10 deals with social service and potential supporter institutions. The existence of ethnic, linguistic and educational barriers between the community and GOs put a serious challenge to the process approach.

Paragraph 11, lastly, deals with gender issues. Research on this subject has started relatively late and it is presently going on. Although more research is still needed, basic information on practical gender needs, labour division, access and control over resources, decision making and women organization are already available ("An outline of the research findings..."), which may allow a first tentative identification of possible activities.

Part 3, "On the implementation of the program", is an attempt to make the point, on the basis of the data presented in Part 2, on how the DIDP should continue its activities.

Paragraph 12, "Starter activities" describes practical activities which have already been performed or which can be implemented in the short term.

In paragraph 13, "Special issues", the general possible set up and strategy of the DIDP is discussed, with special emphasis on the most critical issues regarding Dassanetch development and the process approach.

Paragraph 14 is a summary of other practical activities which should be implemented as soon as the DIDP will be able to organize them. The short and long term research activities still required are also described.

Lastly, paragraph 15 provides the bibliography, divided by subject, on which this report is based.

## 1. Formulation and implementation of the Research Phase

### 1.1. Background of the program

The DIDP (Dassanetch Integrated Development Program) was born after SNV has been long involved with CYFWO in Omoratte area, dealing with the problem of the school. The idea of getting involved in integrated rural development came because no NGO is at present operative in the area and the Dassanetch, a community of at least 18,000 people, appeared to need external assistance.

A proposal for a research phase of one year has been formulated by SNV Ethiopia, in which it is stressed "it is the intention of the project to come to the establishment of grassroot organizations genuinely representing the Dassanetch society" (p. 26).

### 1.2.. Terms of reference

The specifications for the research phase of the Dassanetch Integrated Development Program (DIDP) have been set in the document "Research Phase - Dassanetch Integrated Development Project", written prior the arrival of the Research Coordinator (RC). The main points are summarized in the following sub-paragraphs.

#### *1.2.1. Objectives of the research*

The objectives of the research have been defined as it follows (p. 21-22):

- The creation of a dialogue between the Dassanetch and SNV.
- Identify local organizations of Dassanetch
- Identifying wishes and needs for development activities amongst this transhumant pastoral group
- Analyzing the socioeconomic and cultural setting in which pilot project could take place
- Assessing the institutional environment in which pilot projects could take place

#### *1.2.2. Institutional collaboration*

Addis Ababa University, Departments of Sociology and Anthropology, is indicated as the institution with which SNV Field Office should elaborate a detailed plan of action for one year research in the area (p. 23, 22). It is stated that a research team, consisting of students of Addis Ababa University, will conduct the various research components under the research coordinator (p. 27).

#### *1.2.3. Scope/subjects of the research*

The document defines the scope/subjects of the research as it follows (p. 24):

- A. General aspects, including set up of a dialogue, creation of a network of interested organizations and partners, analysis of other development initiatives in Southern Omo (especially the Ethio-Korean Cotton Project)
- B. Economic aspects, including livestock and crop production systems, income, labour, marketing, etc.
- C. Organizational structures (various aspects of traditional organization)
- D. Social Services including demography, health care (including traditional practises), education and training
- E. Human ecology, including ecosystem, natural resource use, land use rights, grazing rights, tribal relations, land intrusion-reallocation.

According to the paper, a starter activity should take place during the research phase (p. 26)

### 1.2.4. Time frame

The paper defines the demarcation and time-frame (p. 28-29):

- 1 - 1 year of research
- 2 - 3 years of implementation of 3-4 pilot projects
- 3 - 11 years of integrated development project.

## 2.3. Adjusting the research program

### 2.3.1. Before starting field activities

Before starting the research, some adjustments in the structure of the program have been requested by the RC, in a paper entitled "Observations on 'Research Phase - Dassanetch Integrated Development Project'".

The importance of having a body of Dassanetch Representatives, already mentioned in 'Research Phase...' (p. 27) has again been stressed, but a warn was given on the difficulties inherent to this process. In fact, on the basis of the available literature, Dassanetch society did not appear to offer well organized groups. A new social process had, therefore, to be promoted (p. 1-2). The research performed later on, however, shows that organized groups do exist and that the formation of a body of Dassanetch Representatives is theoretically feasible and not too difficult to achieve.

The RC also expresses concern for the dialogue between the DIDP and Dassanetch. He advised a team of young Dassanetch Research Assistants to be established in order to facilitate communication (p. 3).

Lastly, the RC recalls the problems of living in the Ethio-Korean guest house, as mentioned in the PAT document "Research Phase...". In fact, meanwhile, NOVIB had refused to sponsor the renovation of SNV guest house (constructed by World Vision). The RC stresses the necessity of disposing of extra funds for organizing meetings in the countryside (p. 4).

For all the mentioned adjustments (excluding the renovation of World Vision guest house) the RC has sent a funding request to NOVIB, which has approved the budget.

### 2.3.2. From research on inter-ethnic relations to the Peace Making Ceremony

On the basis of the terms of references, the RC has approached Prof. Ivo Strecker of the Department of Sociology. Strecker has underlined the warfare problem in the region and the necessity to undertake research outside Dassanetch society on inter-ethnic relations. Accordingly, the RC has prepared a proposal, entitled "The Inter-ethnic Perspective", in which the establishment of two research teams were planned, one working to the East and one to the North-West of Dassanetchland. Two students of the Master in Anthropology, Ayalew Gebre and Gebre Yntiso, were supposed to combine their Master field-research with SNV requirements on inter-ethnic relations, while Ivo Strecker, their supervisor, committed himself to work side by side with SNV.

Of the two students only Ayalew Gebre made actual research in coordination with SNV. According to his Master research program he had to carry out field-work in Arbore. This ethnic group does have a direct inter-relation with the Dassanetch. The Eastern Research Team was therefore established, consisting in Ayalew Gebre and Horra Sora (an Arbore man able to speak Amharic and several local languages). They stayed permanently on the field for several months, with the advise and supervision of Ivo Strecker and of the RC who went several times to meet them.

The DIDP, instead, did not succeed in establishing the North-Western research team, mainly because of different objectives between Gebre's Ma. research plan and SNV requirements.

The availability of a very good adviser (Prof. Ivo Strecker has about 20 years of research experience in the region) and the establishment of the Eastern Research Team led to a very rapid progress of the research in the field of inter-ethnic relations and in the study of the regional situation. Ayalew's thesis is a valuable source of information on South-Omo lowland inter-ethnic relations (including the Dassanetch).

The deep knowledge of the place and of local cultures by the people involved in the research, the availability in the place of a Team and the good network established with traditional pastoral leaders (grassroot), administrative officers and development operators have also allowed the immediate performances of the first starter activity, the Peace making Ceremony held in Arbore (par. 12.1).



### 2.3.3. Research sectors

On the base of the terms of references, the RC has prepared a paper, "Research Sectors", in which the research topics have been rearranged into 6 research sectors. The aim was to assign each sector, or at least some of them, to different researchers of Addis Ababa University. The paper has therefore been submitted to the Department of Sociology. The sectors are the following:

- 1 - Local Organization of Dassanetch (including a study of the political organization of the Dassanetch)
- 2 - Woman position and needs
- 3 - Production system (various aspects)
- 4 - Marketing and trade (including the inter-ethnic and international dimension)
- 5 - Inter-ethnic relations
- 6 - Health, veterinary and other social services (governmental and traditional).

Unfortunately, not a single researcher from Addis Ababa University was available for conducting research within Dassanetch area. The students had already arranged their Master research program within the Department, and they had no time for extra work.

### 2.3.4. An alternative research strategy: *The Dassanetch Research Team (DRT)*

The availability of consultants and advisers only on inter-ethnic relations has forced the RC to focalize attention on that field in the initial stage of the research.

Within Dassanetch society and territory a new research strategy had to be adopted. Lacking external consultants, major efforts were put in the formation of a Dassanetch Research Team (DRT). Two young men were selected: Meri Armide and Amos Gurite. They were educated respectively in Ethiopia and in Kenya. Meri is able to speak and write good Amharic, Amos to speak and write good English.

Later on a Dassanetch woman research assistant, Kataboi Balowa, has to been added to the DRT, to assist the consultant on gender issues.

The research within Dassanetch community was thus conducted by a combination of personal involvement by the RC with the help and the mediation of the DRT and by giving specific assignments to the DRT. The DRT has been actively working even during the absence of the RC, who was at the same time engaged in the regional overview and in the starter activity.

The DRT has shown a very high performance and a very good attitude towards research, much higher of what could be expected. It was also essential in the establishment of the dialogue with the Dassanetch community. The philosophy and the principles of the DIDP have quickly been understood by the DRT and properly explained to the community.

## 2. Research methodology

Research has been conducted using a wide range of methodologies, different for each subject.

On the physical environment a lot of valuable literature is available (especially Butzer and Carr). The available information has been completed with field surveys and by interviewing the Dassanetch both on the changes occurred in the environment in the last 20 years periods and on the history of the river in general.

Uri Almagor's and Claudia Carr's monographs on the Dassanetch provide the main information on the Dassanetch production system. The available data have been checked by means of specific questions both to groups of elders during meetings and to single individuals. In this way it became clear that a lot of changes have occurred since the time of Uri's and Claudia research, especially with regards to the accessible resources.

In order to get a more detailed information on the agricultural practices, from the sociological point of view, and on the inherent problems the RC has elaborated a questionnaire to be compiled by the DRT during the cultivation period. The farmers have been interviewed during their work on the fields and their plots have been checked by the DRT interviewers.

Personal surveys by the RC in various Dassanetch cultivated fields and pasturages have also been made, combining direct observation with *ad hoc* questions.

The literature also provides the basic information on groups within Dassanetch society. However, when we go to their internal organization and function, therefore to their potential role in development, the information is very scanty. Uri Almagor's monograph, for example, is not a satisfactory source because the subject of the book are networks rather than groups. The investigation into this field requires a specialist knowledge of political anthropology. Although this is the specialization of the RC, the latter has found the investigation extremely difficult for a number of reasons. Firstly, the RC could not engage himself in real full time participatory (in a classical anthropological sense) research, both because of the accommodation problem (physical isolation from Dassanetch community) and because of lack of enough time, being involved in several activities at the same time. Secondly, the Dassanetch were very elusive on this topic when interviewed, probably due to the lack of trust, an element which is again related to the fact that SNVers were living in the Ethio-Korean guest house and, therefore, identified with a project which is judged in very negative terms by them. Progress in this sector was only achieved during and after the Peace Making Ceremony, by direct observation of the political process in action, by making specific questions to the elders right at the time of the political process and, later on, by interviews and informal talks with the Dassanetch who, meanwhile, had changed their attitude towards the DIDP.

Research in the field of inter-pastoralists conflict was done by reading of the abundant literature, by interviews and group discussions with pastoralists, direct observation of defensive actions, direct observation of restrictions in land use. But the corner stones of this research was the collaboration with Addis Ababa University (Dept. of Sociology) senior and junior researchers and the performance of the first starter activity, the Peace Making Ceremony in Arbore.

Regarding highland immigrants research has been carried out mainly by reading reports, by interviews to pastoralists, to representatives of the administration and of the modern farms, by analysis of data collected in the Omoratte town (by the RC and the DRT) and by direct observation of modern farm and conflict.

Literature on marketing and trade in South Omo is hardly available. The issue has been studied by surveying different markets of the region (by the RC), by careful follow up of both Omoratte market and the merchant's activities in their houses (by the RC with the assistance of the DRT and, to a very large extent, by the DRT following the indications of the RC), by occasional observations in the countryside both inside (DRT) and outside (AAU consultants) Dassanetchland and by interviews with pastoralists, local traders and long ray traders (mainly by the RC and by the DRT). The general picture is quite clear.

The analysis of social services and supporter institutions was made by means of formal interviews and informal talks with experts (Addis Ababa), government officers and employees (both at the regional and local levels) and with development workers, by visiting the structures, by following locally day after day the performance of the services, by interviewing the Dassanetch on both government and traditional services, direct observation of the Dassanetch attitude towards the latter.

On gender issues a woman consultant - Helen Amdemikael, holding a Master in Sociology - as been employed and trained. Research has been conducted with a number of different methods.

## PART 2

# MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS AND POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

### 3. A general introduction to Dassanetch area

The Dassanetch live in the delta of the Omo river, in the South-Western corner of Ethiopia, and along the North-Eastern shores of Lake Turkana in Kenya (see alleged map). From the administrative point of view, in Ethiopia they are within Kuraz *wereda*, one of the 5 district of Zone 10, whose administrative *entre* is Jinka. Zone 10 is one of the five zone which presently form Southern Ethiopia Region, whose administrative *entre* is Awasa. Zone 10 is more commonly known with the old name of South Omo Region (The status of region was given to the area during the last period of the Derg; previously it was part of the wider Gamu-Gofa Region).

Due to the geographical isolation, South Omo, especially its lowlands, is, generally speaking, one of the less developed area of the country. The rate of education is one of the lowest in the country. According to RRC data, the lowlands part of the region show a permanent shortage of food, which is not related to exceptional environmental events neither to human induced factors: it is a permanent characteristic of the area. An all-weather road has been constructed only 5-6 years ago in the context of a very ambitious development plan worked out during the Derg. That plan led to the establishment of the Ethio-Korean Cotton Farm and to the growing of Omoratte town.

Dassanetchland differs from most other Ethiopian areas because it is not divided into operative Peasant Associations or *kebele*. The administrators of Geleb (Dassanetch) *wereda* (previously it was called Kuraz *awraja*) base their activities on the division into territorial sections. Similarly, no Service Cooperative has ever been established in Dassanetchland.

The incorporation of the Dassanetch into the Ethiopian state has started at the end of last century, with a number of destructive invasions by Menelik troops. Although the Ethiopian have been involved in a number of battles against the British, their presence in the area was not constant until the post Italian invasion period. The Dassanetch, however, were receiving rifle from the Ethiopians since the beginning of the century. and the British have established a 'no man's land' in the Ilemi Triangle, to the West of Dassanetch area, to protect the Turkana (description based on Carr, 1977:11-3). After the Italian occupation the Ethiopians established a number of small military posts in Dassanetchland and built up a more organized administrative structures in the region. The Highlander newcomers, based in the town, have for long been politically dominant in the whole region.

After the fall of the Derg there seems to be some changes. The post-DERG administrators at the Geleb (Dassanetch) *wereda* (district) level have a very low standard of education, but, on the other side, they are all Dassanetch and they seem to have a good relation with and a good knowledge of the rural communities.

At the zone 10 level the top administrative positions are still held by town people, usually second generation immigrants in the area. They have not a very close relation with farmers and pastoralists, but, on the other side, they have a good degree of education. Rural pastoralists and farmers are anyway represented in the regional administrative bodies.

The local administrators have been very helpful to the DIDP and they seem to appreciate the principles of community based development.

## 4. The Physical environment

### 4.1. An unstable environment

Dassanetch territory is a lowland semi-arid plain immediately north of lake Turkana and including the Omo Delta (see map 1). Mean annual rainfall is about 300 mm., but rainfall varies greatly from year to year in timing, location and amount, making rain cultivation too unreliable. The most critical environmental factor is the annual rise and fall of the Omo river which is controlled by the heavy rains falling over its highland catchment area. It starts to rise in May and usually reaches its highest level in August, when it overflows its banks and inundates the surrounding flats (Almagor 1978: 38). As the river recedes, between September and November, these flats provides both fertile areas for cultivation and good dry season pasturage (description based on Turton, 1991).

It is essential to underline that the Omo delta is a very dynamic environment. This is, in fact, one of the key elements to keep into consideration when planning development in the area. Micro-variations in the inundated flats occur year after year, due to:

- differences in time and quantity of the overflow;
- small changes in the level of the Turkana lake;
- changes of the embankment shape and of the outflow natural canals.

Macro-variations may also occur, both on the short or long term. Butzer (1971), who made his field research in the '60, has theorized a rapid drop in the level of Lake Turkana after the late 1890s, exposing new areas for cultivation and grazing, and a more recent rise during the early '60 (1971: 105-124). The lake level has been changing into a range of about 20 meters. According to Carr, this has in turn allowed a Southern advance of forest and woodland along the Omo including the Southwards migration of tsetse fly (1977: 88, 274). Our own field investigation (based on field surveys and on interviews with Dassanetch) shows that over the last 10 years the lake has retreated by about 30 km. from its North-Western appendix. A dry fish project built on the shore of the lake by the MoA in Bobua, is now some 20 km. far from the lake.

The delta environment is characterized by soft soil easily erodible by the running water. The water of the river contain a vary high amount of dry matter which may quickly lead to intrusion of canals or rise of the embankment, and to quick process of shifting embankment. On top, the changes in the level of the lake very likely do also affect the level of the river. As a consequence the delta hydrological network is subject to easy modification. The Dassanetch mention that there was a second big branch of the Omo river running to the east of the present course. Such a branch was flooding a huge area called Karchis, the place where the Ethio-Korean farm is now located. About 20 years ago that branch dried up, and so did the flooded area. The dead rests of the riverine forest are still there to testify the presence of the old course. New inundated ares came out along the present day course, for example Kifute and Nakure. The new established Ethio-Korean cotton farm is right on Karchis. It is important to stress that all this geographical changes has occurred in a span time of only 20 years.

Oral accounts on the history of the river testify big changes in the course of the river in the far past.

### 4.2. Implications for development

Clearly macro environmental changes do occur even on a limited span time. The consequence is that large scale and expansive irrigation structures should be avoided. In fact large scale structures, like big pumps, big dams, etc, cannot be moved easily and would become completely worthless before its cost will be recovered. As opposite, the flood retreat cultivation practised by the Dassanetch by its extreme flexibility and adaptation to a continuously changing environment seems to be, in the long run, the most viable form of production. Improvement should be thought within the general patterns of the traditional agricultural system. The digging of small diversion canals may be one of such improvements, but a lot of caution should be taken due to the risk of full diversion of the Omo river. A basic general geomorphological and hydrological study of the delta seems therefore necessary (par. 14.2.1.).

Small scale, low investment and transportable irrigation equipments could potentially be compatible with the physical environment, given their proven economical viability in the area under consideration. Solar pumps, for example, do not work due to high content of solid matter in the water of the Omo river, and fuel is very expensive and it has a unreliable supply.

Infrastructures should carefully be located in places which are safe, taking into consideration possible river branches formation, embankments drift, rise of the level of the lake, etc.

Summarizing:

- Large scale and capital intensive irrigation structures should be avoided.
- Small scale, low investment and transportable irrigation equipments may be theoretically compatible with the environment, but for the time being not feasible due to infrastructure constraints.
- Improvements of the existing Dassanetch production system is economically the most viable choice.

## 5. Production practices

### 5.1. The Dassanetch agro-pastoral production system

According to Uri Almagor the Dassanetch production system is based on a balance between agriculture and pastoralism (Uri Almagor 1978:1). Uri estimates the livestock holding of the Dassanetch to 3-4 cattle and 9 small stock per person, which is, according to Turton (1991), less than half of the theoretical minimum herd size for a purely pastoral subsistence. After Uri's field research the Dassanetch have lost some 40% of their wet-pasture due to inter-ethnic conflict (par. 6.1.), an element which led to a further loss of livestock, while at the same time the population has probably increased. We may therefore reasonably conclude that agriculture provides much more than half of Dassanetch food resources. The view of the Dassanetch as a pastoral nomadic or semi-nomadic people (also proposed in the document "Research Phase...") must therefore be rejected. The Dassanetch mode of production is better defined as a 'agro-pastoral production system', even if the Dassanetch system of values and Dassanetch social relations are primarily based on livestock.

The Dassanetch do not practice rain fed cultivation (with the exception of a few depressed marshy areas). They, instead, rely on flood receded agriculture. They cultivate both the more or less narrow strips of floodland along the banks of the river, called *diele*, and the large flooded flats lying lower than the embankment, called *harr*. Part of the shore of the Lake Turkana is also cultivated, following the seasonal decreasing of the lake level. The strips are planted as soon as the river falls, usually in early September, and give a harvest in December-January. The flats retain the water for a while and are therefore planted only in October/November, giving the harvest in February - March. The lake shores are planted even later. Delays in the flooding time may occur.

The flood not only brings moisture, but also nutrients. Therefore the Dassanetch do not need fertilizer. They also do not need ploughing. They simply clear the plot (mostly a men's work) and sow the seeds (men's work). During the 4 months growing period constant work of bird and other animal scaring and intensive weeding is needed (mostly women's work). Harvest also requires intensive work (made both by women and men), for which temporary cooperation across families may occur. Sorghum harvested is piled in the field for drying and later on is stored in big balls of several quintals on elevated wooden made granaries.

The main crop is sorghum, roughly the four-fifths of the total crop yield. Maize, which takes about 3 months to grow, is the second crop and beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris* and *vigna sp.*), which take only two months, make up the other fifths. Tobacco (*Nicotina rustica*) is occasionally cultivated. Each crop is harvested twice. The third growth of sorghum is not harvested and cattle is turned in to graze it when it has reached a height of about 60 centimeters. Cattle also graze the second growth of maize and the third and fourth picking of beans (Uri Almagor 1978: 40-1).

The estimated yields range from very high to complete failure, both between different plots and on the same plot on different years (Claudia Carr 1977:195-198). Recent official sources give from 10 to 24 quintals/ha (but it is probably a very rough estimation). The reason for this range of yields is the great variety of soil types, salinity of soil, the irregular distribution of water over the fields, diseases, etc. In general Carr (1977) describes a highly articulated geological and ecological environment in a continuous process of change.

The size of the plot of a nuclear family (one wife and unmarried sons) may vary between no land to 8 ha, with a majority between 0.5 and 2 ha (see "Survey of cultivated fields in Elelle Territorial Section" for a detailed sample).

Regarding pastoralism Carr has reported a serious degeneration of pastures. The incidence of unpalatable species has greatly increased due to overgrazing. She made research on the Western side of the Omo river and she has indicated political restriction of access to the Ilelmi Appendix (in an area which is officially in Sudan but which is militarily controlled by Kenya), encroaching of tse-tse due to the lowering of the lake level and inter-ethnic conflict (at that time mostly on the Eastern side) as the reason for overgrazing. According to her analysis the whole Dassanetch Environmental/Social system was going to collapse if this trend would not change. Since her field-work more ethnic conflict occurred, with a modern farm encroaching on Dassanetch grazing area and the available pasturage has thus further

decreased. Luckily, the lake retreated uncovering usable land on the Omo delta. Tse-tse fly also seems to have retreated north of Dassanetchland (or simply the Dassanetch don't utilize the infested area due to conflict with Nyangatom). Also, the Dassanetch seem to have applied the diversification strategy suggested by Carr as a solution, especially in direction of a more intensive agricultural activity (but it can also be possible that Carr at that time did not adequately realize the contribution of agriculture to Dassanetch economy). At the end of the system, which perhaps is more flexible of what Carr theorizes, has not collapsed. The pastoral sector, however, is unquestionably under heavy stress and the Dassanetch says that the number of stock available has greatly decreased over the last decades. They indicate lack of pasture and forced concentration of animals due to inter-ethnic conflict has the major problems.

In these conditions the inundated floods constitute an absolutely critical resource for pastoralism as well, because the part which is not cultivated provides excellent pasturage during the driest months of the year, November - March (this aspect has perhaps been underestimated by Carr). According to Uri Almagor this is a time of plenty, when cultivation and pastoralism are carried out together, largely on the east bank of the Omo. With the onset of the main rains, and as the Omo begins to rise, the cattle are taken across to the west bank and are moved progressively westwards, to "dry" grazing areas as far as the international border. However this pattern of movement has now changed, due to inter-ethnic warfare. Cattle is kept very close to the river and have to rely more heavily on the *harr* resource due to rapid degeneration of the accessible grazing areas.

## 5.2. Implications for development

### *5.2.1. Increasing production*

The Dassanetch as a whole have, over the last 20 years, lost at least 40% of their western wet-season pasturage and 10% of their cultivable land due to inter-ethnic conflict and to the encroachment of modern farms. All that happened on top of a situation which was already described as catastrophic by Claudia Carr. There cannot be any doubt on the fact that Dassanetch production system, especially the pastoral sector, is under heavy stress and that external help is really needed.

Production can be increased with some relatively simple and low technology input, most of them suggested by the Dassanetch themselves during the assessment of needs.

The "Survey of cultivated fields in Elelle Territorial Section" also indicates that agricultural yield could substantially be increased by simply using more hand tools, especially for weeding.

For both agriculture and pastoralism it would be extremely good, as the Dassanetch have stressed, to dispose of larger extensions of inundated flats, both by creating new ones by means of river diversion and by improving the running of water on already existing natural canals. The Dassanetch know the places where initiatives can be successful, usually in spots that were previously getting the flood. However, as already discussed, caution should be taken on new diversion spots.

The diffusion of water over existing flooded flats is irregular. This is one of the main reasons for the wide range of yield recorded. The run-off and diffusion of water can be greatly improved with a net of small ditches, to be maintained every year. The Dassanetch have shown a natural attitude in understanding patterns of water run-off, thanks to their direct experience and observation. However, they have never tried to control it, perhaps for both belief reasons and lack of adequate hand tools. Now that their production system is clearly under heavy stress and that their survival is in great danger they have declared themselves ready to undertake all activities which are needed, but they said, they need external advice and support, at least in the initial stage.

The inundated flats play a fundamental role as pastoral food reserve in the driest period for cattle, especially now that most of wet season pasturage cannot be used due to inter-ethnic conflict. It is therefore possible to increase pastoral production or to release intensive use and degradation of other pastures by cultivating proper varieties of fodder, rather than simply leaving part of the flat uncultivated, as it presently happens. Different fodder species have to be tested together with the farmers.

The wide yield range is also due to the variety of soils and salinity. The average yield can therefore be greatly increased simply by using the proper variety of crop on a given terrain. During the "Survey of cultivated fields in Elelle Territorial Section" the DRT has identified 56 different varieties of sorghum, each with a different name. Each of them has different characteristics. The diversity which could allow the above described increment in production is therefore already there. The same survey, however, indicates

that, due to scarce availability of seeds, farmers simply plant the variety which is available to them or which they can borrow from others, without a *ad hoc* selection of the variety. Usually each plot is planted with several variety, but seeds are both kept separately and sown on different sectors of the field. It may therefore be possible to increase production by making a seed bank. Local knowledge should systematically be collected and experiments by the farmers be encouraged.

The Dassanetch water their stock and take water for domestic use at the Omo river. Most villages are very close to the river and some not far from it. That means that stock may have access only to pasture close to the river, except during the rainy season, which, indeed, is very short. By making new water facilities (wells and pond) at a certain distance from the river it would be possible to move some of the villages far away from the river and get access for longer time (or even for the whole year) to less used pastures located far from the Omo river. The Dassanetch know the places where water is available.

Veterinary service, although requested by some the Dassanetch, is not so critical according to other Dassanetch. In fact the limiting stock population factor is not disease, but pasturage shortage. As stressed by the Dassanetch, diseases spread because of stock congestion. After all those disease may greatly contribute to keep equilibrium between stock population and available pastoral resources. Therefore, given the present conditions, veterinary service is not a priority. When the accessible pasturage will increase, veterinary facilities must quickly be introduced.

Further environmental and production gain can be achieved by tree plantation on the embankment. The American Mission during the seventies has promoted the plantation of Mango trees along the river embankment. The community is still taking care of the trees which have survived to the embankment shift and the trees provide highly appreciated fruits (with high vitamin content) and shades. The initiative is mentioned by the Dassanetch as the only successful development initiative by outsiders. Tree varieties to be planted have to be worked out.

### *5.2.2. Possible activities to increase production*

Summarizing, in the present condition of stress, production can be greatly increased by the following technics and initiatives. For the time being social (i.e.. inter-ethnic conflict and land tenure) and political (i.e encroaching of 'modern' farms) factors are not taken into consideration :

Improving the agricultural sector:

- 1 - making hand tools available to the community, especially for weeding;
- 2 - man made ditches in existing flooded flats to improve the diffusion of water; transmitting to Dassanetch the know-how;
- 3 - establishment of seed bank; local knowledge on soil and seed varieties must be collected, experiments with farmers promoted.

Improving the pastoral sector:

- 4 - development of water points far from the river, using local knowledge;
- 5 - introduction of cultivation of fodder into inundated flats; proper varieties have to be identified;
- 6 - Veterinary service, especially drug distribution, as soon as larger pasturage will be available

New land resources for the agro-pastoral system:

- 7 - creating new inundated flats (river diversion) by improving existing natural canals, digging new canals; local knowledge has to be used; adequate feasibility studies are necessary.
- 8 - Tree (fruit, fodder, firewood) plantation on the river embankment



## 6. Local Organizations of Dassanetch

### 6.1. Territorial sections (*en*)

The available literature shows that Dassanetch society is organized in 8 territorial sections (see map at the end), *en* in Dassanetch language. The DIDP research has confirmed and even stressed that this subdivision is a critical one both from a political and from an economical point of view. It should be very clear that territorial sections are not clans (in the "Research Phase..." some confusion is made). The Dassanetch are also divided into clans, but the latter do not play any particular political or economical role and are therefore irrelevant to development issues.

Each of the 8 territorial sections are ideally autonomous both from a political (decisional) and economical (control over natural resources) point of view.

In Dassanetch authority is strongly related to the generation system and elective offices within generations class do exist. However, each section has a similar but independent generation system with different class names. At each given time a specific generation class is considered the leader of the territorial section as a whole and, consequently, the leaders of that specific class are considered the leaders of the sections. The result is that each territorial section is politically autonomous from the others. No institution embraces all the sections.

When planning development, the nature of the pastoral political systems must be taken in due account. In East African pastoral societies political authority is never absolute and internal relations can never be compared with a hierarchical state structure, where decision can be imposed in a top-down direction and enforced by a police body controlled from the top. Binding decisions in egalitarian societies are always reached by general consensus in public meetings. Leaders are leaders because they are more influential by means of qualities like social credit and the art of rhetoric and eloquence, not simply because they hold an office. Once decisions are reached, there are not powerful means to enforce them. People do respect a decision mainly because of public pressure, but they can always decide differently, because, after all, terrible punishments usually do not occur. Therefore continuous efforts should be put for keeping the people (or all the people) doing what has been agreed upon. Nevertheless one case registered in the Elelle section seems to indicate that Dassanetch political units (the territorial sections) are quite a compact group:

One day a Dassanetch went to Turmi and he compared the prices of that market with those in Omoratte market (within the Elelle section). He has thus realized that the merchants (who are not Dassanetch) were making a very high profit out of the trade with the Dassanetch. He went back to Elelle section and he discussed the topic with three office holders of the leading generation class of the Elelle section. They have called a meeting where it was agreed that the Dassanetch had to refrain from going to Omoratte market. Despite single families were in need to sell their sorghum, they were able to stop most of the trade for about one week. Only after the mediation of the Dassanetch *wereda* administrator the trade started again, with an adjustment of prices in favour of the Dassanetch.

In short, the Elelle territorial section has been able to manage a market strike and to influence market price by a corporative action. This is a very encouraging sign for promoting further development action using this type of group.

We must, however, consider that structural differences among the territorial sections do exist.

Each territorial section has a specific village or a couple of villages where office holders of the leading generation class tend to live together. It must, however, be considered that the internal structure of the leadership is not exactly the same per each section.

Those villages may be considered a *entre* for the political activity of the section and a perfect reference for the DIDP development activities are, at present, the following (shift of villages may always happen, for example in case of conflict):

Inkoria: Chirairich

Elelle: Omoratte village

Rielle: Diele Riele

Nyarich: Longadda (it was Naikaya)

Randal: Locheber

Kuorro: Loturtur

Inkabelo: Toltalle and Lobeimugat

Orro: Alik Takach, Nyiamomeri

The political autonomy of the sections is also underlined by the fact that different sections are engaged in warfare with different surrounding ethnic groups (par. 7.1.1.) and that when the DIDP went for the peace making ceremony the no-concerned sections did not want to participate in the initiative. Once in Arbore, the elders of the Inkoria and Nyaritch sections did not wanted to accept sleeping in the same house and eating together, again a way to express their autonomy.

When we analyze the economical significance of the territorial sections, we have to say that ideally each section should control a good balance of both pastoral and agricultural resources. However, in practice, this is not true, partly because of the great demographic differences among territorial sections (see figure alleged to the map by Uri Almagor), partly because of historical reasons and partly because the relation between territorial sections and territory has dramatically changed over the last two decades, due to inter-ethnic conflict and encroachment of the state farm.

The 8 territorial sections and their location are indicated in the table 1, where location is given at the time of Uri Almagor's research and in 1992. Please see map at the end of the report, derived from Uri Almagor and the alleged diagram, also from Uri Almagor) showing the demographic proportion among the sections.

Table 1: The location of the territorial sections

| TERRITORIAL SECTION | Location                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     | In the late sixties                                                                                                                                                             | 1992                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Inkabelo            | North of Lake Turkana, extending towards Northwest up to the border, including both sides of the lower Omo river                                                                | They have lost most of the grassland to the west of the river, except the southern strip                                                                                                           |
| Nyaritch            | To the East of Inkabelo, extending from northern shore of the lake to Omo river                                                                                                 | Unchanged                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Inkoria             | To the Northeastern corner of the lake, including Kenyan territory; bordering the Nyaritch to the West                                                                          | Pushed close to lake, due to the fear of the joined Gabbra-Borana forces                                                                                                                           |
| Elelle              | Along the Omo river, from Inkabelo territory to the Nyangatom and Karo areas, extending to the pasture on the West of the river up to Mount Kuraz, bordering Inkabelo grassland | They have lost all of the grassland to the West of the river, more than 1,300 ha. of good rain season pasture now occupied by Ethio-Korean Farm and most of the river embankment North of the farm |
| Rielle              | A village within Inkabelo section, in correspondance of the ramification of the Omo river                                                                                       | Unchanged                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Randal              | To the West and South of Mount Kuraz, between Inkabelo grassland and the International border                                                                                   | They have been completely been displayed: mostly found within Inkabelo section on the shore of the lake                                                                                            |
| Orro                | Scattered, mostly within Inkabelo section                                                                                                                                       | Unchanged, excluding the area lost together with the Inkabelo                                                                                                                                      |
| Kuorro              | Scattered, mainly in the grassland of Inkabelo and Elelle                                                                                                                       | Displaced: mostly found within Inkabelo section on the shore of the lake                                                                                                                           |

It is evident that the territory and the resources controlled by each territorial section greatly varies. In 1992 3 out of 8 sections did not control resources by themselves and had to rely on other sections from this point of view. A fourth one is a single village.

During and after the 1993 rain season the Dassanetch have been able to access again most of the pasturage to the West of the river, because the Ethiopian army is present in force in the area. This new factor makes the Dassanetch feel safer.

On the Eastern side the Peace Making Ceremony held in Arbore has also allowed a more confident behavior both in direction of the Hamar and of the Gabbra.

The main production activities by each section can be summarized as follows:

Inkabelo: reasonable balance of agricultural and pastoral activities. Commercial exchange with Kenyan traders and, to a much lesser extent, direct exchange with Turkana pastoralists of Kenya.

Nyaritch: Mainly pastoral activities; limited exchange with Hammer pastoralists of Ethiopia

Inkoria: Mainly pastoral activities; commercial exchange with Kenyan traders.

Elelle: mainly agricultural activities; strong commercial exchange with Ethiopian traders in Omoratte market e direct exchange with the Hammer pastoralists.

Rielle: Probably a good balance of agricultural, pastoral and fishing activities.

Randal: Probably destitute: limited agricultural and pastoral activity on the shore of Lake Turkana.

Orro: scattered among the Inkabelo and Elelle, they share their activities.

Kuorro: Probably destitute: limited agricultural and pastoral activities on the shore of Lake Turkana

The relation among the territorial sections is a dynamic one. Inter-section marriage, which is very common, allows a long term readjustment of the demographic equilibrium between a territorial section and the available resources in the changing environment. Furthermore, single families and groups can get access to other section's resources, especially if there is no scarcity, by means of both bond friend and affinity relations. After a few generations the newly installed family takes the new territorial section affiliation.

Nevertheless, the inter-relation between territorial sections is not uniform and privileged patterns do exist, as it clearly emerged from the "Survey on cultivated fields in Elelle territorial section (Ratte area)", from various surveys on the Eastern side of the river and from statement of elders of different sections.

The situation can be schematized at follows:

Inkabelo - Orro: very good relation, nearly economical and political integration.

Elelle - Inkabelo/Orro: good interrelation, with Elelle giving the other group access to agricultural resources and Inkabelo/Orro giving Elelle access to pastoral resources.

Nyaritch-Inkoria: Very good relation, with mutual access to pastoral resources

Nyaritch/Inkoria - Elelle/Inkabelo/Orro: very little inter-exchange

Randal: with the highest degree of differences from the others, they have been guested by Inkabelo in the land which has been uncovered by the lake retreat.

Kuorro: with a high degree of differences from the others, have they been guested by Inkabelo in the land which has been uncovered by the lake retreat.

Feuds never occur among Dassanetch, but they never fight as overall unit. The pattern of internal military alliances tends to follow the general pattern of the reciprocal inter-relations (par. 7.1.1.).

## 6.2. Corporative groups: *harr* and *diele*

The Dassanetch production system, like most production systems, does require the cooperation of different families for pastoral activities. However stable labour groups do not exist. Each head of family builds, over time, his network of agnate, in-law and bond friends and he makes with them herding arrangements time by time according to the needs (the same network is utilized for getting access to cultivable spots).

The families having herding arrangements sometimes live in the same village, making up one sector of a big village or the whole of a very small village. However, due to the dynamic characteristic of the

collaboration, such groups are not stables. When cattle is grazed far from the main village, young people may form a shifting herding camp where intensive cooperation occurs, but this practise has declined due to inter-ethnic conflict. We may therefore conclude that stable corporative groups concerning pastoral activities do not exist. Herding arrangement are made season by season on the base of actual needs and of the internal labour allocation of each family.

In the agricultural sector the situation is different. Groups are naturally defined by the physical characteristic of agricultural resources. As already described, the Dassanetch cultivate the river embankment (*diele*) and the inundated flats (*harr*). Each sector of the cultivable strip of river embankment has a 'father'. The concept of 'fatherhood' implies 'control over', but not full ownership of the land. The 'father' is the man who has cleared the land or his heir. The 'father' can decide to who to allocate part of 'his' strip for cultivation, but he cannot sell it (that it to hand over 'fatherhood' rights to others), neither he can utilize more land of what he is able to manage by his family's manpower. He has a moral obligation to allocate the part that he is unable to cultivate to other people. On their side the beneficiaries do not pay anything for that, they simply cultivate and use all of the harvest for their own benefit. The number of families using a strip belonging to a single 'father' varies greatly, but it is generally small.

The second type of cultivable land, *harr*, consists in very large fields, between a few tens and a thousand hectares. The *harr* is subdivided into rectangular plots, each cleared, cleaned, cultivated and harvested by a nuclear family. No collective work seems to occur, with the exception of clearing and harvesting (in any case by small groups). The data collected ("Field survey...") indicate that a family retain the rights over the plot year after year and that right is even inherited. Despite the individual rights, each *harr* has a father, who is said to be the descendant of the man who first went to cultivate the *harr*. The control that the *harr* father can exercise on the land is far more limited than *diele* 'father', in that he can only lead meetings organized after the flood. Unfortunately, the information available on those meetings is only based on oral account rather than on personal observation. The meeting may be attended by all the users of the *harr* and by those who ask for a new plot (the size of the *harr* varies year after year, and a plot may be abounded by a family if one year it doesn't get water). New plots are assigned on bases of certain rules, most of which are unfortunately unknown to us. It said that those who do not keep the plot clean enough can be expelled by the *harr* during one of such meeting. This may well be a way to replace the *harr* user who do not utilize it.

### 6.3. Implications for development

#### *6.3.1. The local organizations of Dassanetch and their potential role*

Before discussing more in details the significance or local organization of Dassanetch for development it is useful to summarize them with their main attributes:

| <u>Institution</u>                  | <u>Main Feature</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Territorial section                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- autonomous political leadership</li> <li>- having a sort of political centre</li> <li>- Ideally each having its own natural resources</li> <li>- Lacking crosscutting institution which may link different territorial sections</li> <li>- Different demographic and territorial size</li> </ul> |
| <i>harr</i> group                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- defined as the people using the same inundated flat (mostly between 40 and 1,000 ha.)</li> <li>- having a 'father' who is considered responsible for the area</li> <li>- annual meetings to decide on land allocation</li> </ul>                                                                 |
| <i>diele</i> group                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- defined as the people cultivating the same small sector of the river embankment</li> <li>- having a 'father' who can decide on land allocation</li> <li>- very small (3 to 10 families)</li> </ul>                                                                                               |
| clans                               | - very loose organization, with limited role in mutual assistance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| individual- <i>entreed</i> networks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- used for mutual help</li> <li>- used for getting access to land - used for getting labour for pastoral activities</li> <li>- conferring prestige which in turn</li> <li>- gives political authority and access to political offices</li> </ul>                                                   |

The territorial sections (*en*) - being the most organized political groups and exercising a control over natural resources - are the ideal local organizations of Dassanetch to establish and to maintain a dialogue concerning the planning of the development activities by the DIDP. They are the natural grassroots political counterpart of the DIDP. Decision concerning Dassanetch development, therefore, should be discussed and agreed with representatives of those groups and institutional linkages can be created with them. I shall come back on this topic in paragraph 13.2.

When we go to more practical or operative matters smaller groups have to be found to coordinate the activity with. The *harr* group, although does not organize cooperative work, seems organized enough for promoting important activities at the *harr* level, such as fodder growing and ditch digging.

*Diele* groups may have a more limited impact, mainly because little improvement is possible on the embankment. It is however, the key group for tree and fruit plantation on the embankment.

The clan organization is so loose that it is of little help for development.

Lastly, individual *entreed* networks, being no a social group, cannot be directly utilized for introducing development, but it must be kept into consideration to understand and monitor the internal social processes.

### 6.3.2. Binding potential activities to the proper group

It is now interesting to take again into consideration one by one the activities which may increase the production (see previous paragraph), linking them to the proper local organization of Dassanetch.

Activity 1, hand tools: modalities to be discussed with territorial sections representatives.

Activity 2, man made ditches: *Harr* group. To be coordinated with the *harr* father and publicly discussed at the formal *harr* meetings.

Activity 3, seed bank: modalities to be discussed with territorial sections representatives.

Activity 4, water points: as groups taking or having responsibility on water points do not exist, new modalities have to be discussed with representatives of the territorial section involved.

Activity 5, introduction of cultivated fodder: *Harr* group.

Activity 6, veterinary service: to be discussed with territorial sections representatives.

Activity 7, river diversion: To be coordinated with representatives of the territorial section involved.

Activity 8, Trees plantation: Diele group

## 7. Inter-pastoralists conflict

### 7.1. Conflict between Dassanetch and neighbouring groups

#### *7.1.1. The state of warfare*

The inter-relation among the ethnic groups of Southern Omo has historically been characterized by an alternation of periods of peace and warfare, but over the last decades war has become prominent. The map of conflicts and alliances changes over time.

The Dassanetch have maintained peaceful relation since a long time only with the Karo on the Omo valley and with the Arbore in the Weito valley. With the other groups the situation is the following:

**Hamer:** Alternation of war and peace. In 1985 many Hamer came to cultivate in Nyaritch section ('inter-ethnic crisis economy'). At that time a Hamer killed a Dassanetch. The Hamer went back and war lasted until the peace making negotiations of last year. Now the situation is peaceful and mutual exchange has been registered. The peaceful relation has been reinforced by Peace Making Ceremony held in Arbore in May 1993. The Dassanetch sections involved in warfare with the Hamer are Elelle, Nyaritch and Inkoria.

**Nyangatom/Toposa (Ethiopia/Sudan):** nearly 20 years of continuous warfare which has forced the Dassanetch to around 40% of their grazing land to the west of the river and 10% of cultivable areas along the river. The Nyangatom are very well armed. They use to attack the Dassanetch jointly with the Toposa of Sudan. Over the last years the Toposa/Nyangatom forces have been involved at least trice in heavy battles against the Kenyan police/army. The latter, meanwhile, has taken possess of Sudanese territory. All Dassanetch sections, excluding Nyaritch and Inkoria, are engaged in the fight against the Nyangatom. In 1993 many Ethiopian soldier have crossed the Omo river and now the Dassanetch feel secure to exploit again their Western pasturage. This peace, however, is artificially kept and will turn again into warfare as soon as the soldier will leave the area.

**Turkana (Kenya/Sudan):** Alternation of war and peace. Due to the Nyangatom grazing problem the Dassanetch are forced to keep good relations with the Turkana, in order to exploit at least the Southern fringe of the pastures to the west of the river. Very recently Turkana people have been seen cultivating in Southern Inkabelo and the DIDP researcher have found a Turkana family cultivating within Elelle. At the beginning of 1993 the Turkana raided the Dassanetch and killed 3 persons. A peace making meeting has been requested by the Kenyan administration. Meanwhile, as mentioned, Ethiopia soldier have arrived in the area and the Dassanetch felt free to graze their stock close to the border with the rainy season. A clash with Turkana immediately occurred with casualties on both sides. The Turkana form the bulk of the Kenyan police/army in Sudan, and they are therefore heavily engaged in the war against the Toposa/Nyangatom. Among the Dassanetch only the Inkabelo and the incorporated sections use to fight the Turkana.

**Gabbra/Borana (Kenya):** the feud between the Gabbra (Oromo) and the Inkoria section of the Dassanetch (helped by the Nyaritch) has a long history. Over the last two years the Borana (apparently the Borana of Kenya) have been supporting the Gabbra. It seems that in the last years the pastoralists of Kenya have again been armed, re-establishing a fair equilibrium between the pastoralists of Kenya and of Ethiopia. After the Peace Making Ceremony held in Arbore (May 1993) it seems that the Borana have stopped supporting the Gabbra and the Inkoria Dassanetch now feel confident to herd their stock far East on their previous wet season pasturage.

#### *7.1.2. The international dimension*

There is no doubt that the conflict involving the Dassanetch has not only a regional, but also an international dimension, both direct and indirect. Sudan to the West and Somalia to the East are major trouble making factors (see Horra Sora's report on the peace making ceremony). From these two countries automatic arms and ammunitions enter Ethiopia at cheap price. Also, people go directly to raid neighbours from areas where state control does not exist (like the Toposa). It is a fact that conflict all over Southern Ethiopia has dramatically increased over the last two years (that's way the Peace Making



Ceremony in Arbore has been organized) and that this is at present a anvil area in which conflict has not yet escalated into more organized open war. But, given the generalized state of warfare, the danger is always there.

### ***7.1.3. The reasons of inter-ethnic warfare***

Many theories have been elaborated on the causes of inter-pastoralists warfare and studies are presently going on.

Conflict may arise for direct competition over pasture or water resources, or, more often, simply because a small group of young men go to raid the neighboring groups. Scarce resources, however, are the main reason for the raid even when youngsters decide to go raiding, because raiding may be the only way for building the herd necessary for marriage, both for bride-wealth and for self-sustainment.

Each ethnic group is an autonomous political and military unit, each speaking a different language. It is therefore obvious that economical shortage is resolved by inter-ethnic rather than intra-ethnic competition. Being the ethnic groups politically autonomous, there are no easy ways to solve offences when they occur. Revenge is the only possible defence. Once a group has been raided, it is forced to revenge. Failing to revenge, in fact, would show weakness and would expose it to further raiding. Fear of revenge works as a constraint to raiding activity. On the other hand, revenge may bring to escalation of warfare. It is the work of the elders to try to keep escalation under control. When the general economy of the group is seriously endangered, we usually assist to a widespread effort by the elders to bring the situation under control, both by refraining youths from further military activity and by organizing peace making ceremonies, as in the case of the Peace Making Ceremony in Arbore. But, in order to do that, it is necessary to be sure that the elders of the other groups are doing the same and this is not easy when inter-ethnic communication has been broken.

The diffusion of efficient automatic weapons has made escalation more serious and recomposition social mechanisms have become more difficult. This can be one of the reason for the generalized worsening of the situation over the last decades, but this theory has been rejected by some scholars. More likely, lack of balance in armament, or perceived lack of balance, is the real dangerous factor.

We have mentioned that efficient inter-ethnic institutions are lacking. In theory, the state administration should play that role. However Southern Omo history has until recently been characterized by a sharp dichotomy between administrators (based in the town) and the rural people, with the latter being really involved in inter-ethnic conflict. Due to this situation, peace making initiatives by the administration have always been performed in a out of context and top-down fashion (see paper "Comments on the Peace Making Ceremony in Arbore"). It is hoped that the recent political changes in Ethiopia will lead to a different approach by the Regional Administration to the problem.

For our purposes, therefore, we can summarize the reasons of inter-ethnic warfare in the following two main points:

- a - competition over scarce resources
- b - lack of efficient inter-ethnic institutions, both traditional and governmental

## **7.2. Implications for development**

### ***7.2.1. Results of warfare***

There is no doubt that inter-ethnic warfare is the main impediment to development. The results of the warfare state can be summarized as follows:

- 1 - Loss of land resources due to inter-ethnic fear and consequential stress over remaining resources; for the Dassanetch it may be quantified into at least 50% of grazing resources, 15% of cultivable land, and some water points.
- 2 - Families forced to buy arms for self-defence, thus mis-utilizing all available surplus eventually utilizable for development (data in par. 9)
- 3 - Loss of youths' labour due to their engagement in warfare activities

4 - Drop of direct inter-exchange across ethnic boundaries (data in par. 9.1.4.)

5 - Direct loss of both property and structures (par. 10.1.).

### 7.2.2. *What can be done?*

Given the two main reasons for warfare it is obvious that the problem cannot be afforded by working with the Dassanetch only. Inter-ethnic conflict is by definition a regional problem with a international dimension.

In South Omo each aid organization tends to work with a single ethnic group and coordination among them is completely lacking. The only possible answer to this problem is networking at the regional level. Once coordination among aid organizations will be achieved, even partial coordination, then there are a lot of possible initiatives which may reduce inter-ethnic warfare.

Competition over scarce resources is one of the main reasons (but also consequences) of inter-ethnic conflict. Therefore the development of new resources is a critical field in which NGOs may work. However, new resources should be developed with equilibrium among the various groups, otherwise a) even more serious inter-ethnic competition may arise and b) one group may be put in an stronger position to buy arms. New projects, therefore, should be discussed in a network context and their impact on inter-ethnic relations carefully evaluated. In this process elders of different ethnic groups must be directly involved. Commitment by the project beneficiaries to work actively for promoting inter-ethnic peace may also be put as a condition for starting work. Development agencies, for example, should be ready to start similar activities among different tribes.

High priority should be given to proposals which may themselves help to maintain peaceful inter-ethnic relations, for example agricultural schemes jointly used by different ethnic groups (ideally located in areas of conflict) or inter-ethnic schools (as in the case of the school in Dadim, between Borana and Gujji), organization of inter-ethnic cooperative groups for veterinary drugs distribution, etc.

The second critical element for inter-ethnic peace is the ineffectiveness of inter-ethnic institutions. Aid agencies can improve the situation by working both in the traditional and in the modern administrative sector. Ideally, they should, in the long run, be able to fill the gap between the two contexts, by applying the process approach.

In the traditional sector it must be considered that elders are responsible for keeping inter-ethnic conflict within acceptable limits. The problem is often lack of communication between elders of different ethnic groups. As a consequences, aid agencies should bring them together and promote debate among them on any possible occasion. They should, furthermore, provide assistance when specific peace making activities (i.e. peace making ceremony) are requested by the rural communities (see par. 12.1.1.).

On the side of the administration there are two possible actions:

- empowerment of rural people
- involving administrators in all other peace making activities, in order to build the 'know how'.

Summarizing:

Regional networking should be established in order to:

- evaluate the impact of new projects on inter-ethnic conflict;
- start projects which themselves will promote inter-ethnic cooperation (especially project directly involving different ethnic groups);
- develop new resources with equilibrium in the region;
- involve elders in the development planning;
- promote debate among elders of different ethnic groups, especially on the topic of peace related to development;
- assist direct peace making efforts both by rural people and by the Regional administration;
- ask for the assistance of the Regional administration when conflict involves groups of other countries (Kenya and Sudan);
- involve local administrators in all peace making debates.

## 8. The immigrant highlanders

### 8.1. Introduction

As mentioned in par. 3, until very recently immigrated highlanders were politically dominant in South Omo region and were based in the town (traders, teachers, government employees, etc.), with little or no direct interaction with local peoples. Their dominant role can be schematized as it follows:

- 1 - holding most of political offices
- 2 - occupying most of directive employment positions in GOs
- 3 - control of trade
- 4 - encroaching of modern farms into traditional holdings marginality local people, which in turn, led to new waves of immigration from the highlands.

This trend is now changing under the impulse of decentralization. Nevertheless, especially in the Dassanetch case, the local population is often unable to take over the positions of the highlanders, due to lack of education.

Point 4 deserves a special attention because it is a very recent phenomena which took shape during the last period of the DERG under the impulse of impressive foreign financial input. New plans - which may imply further loss of land rights and/or collapse of the very basis of Dassanetch economy (the flood) - are currently being elaborated with international help. The topic will be therefore discussed more in details in a 'land use and land policy' paragraph.

### 8.2. The Ethio-Korean DPRK-PDRE Joint Venture

#### 8.2.1. The farm

The farm is more commonly known as the Ethio-Korean Cotton Project. A detailed appraisal has been made by the National Urban Planning Institute, Economic Research Department in 1989.

Born as an Ethio-Korean join venture about 6 years ago, the project was supposed to irrigate 10,000 ha. Accordingly a big diesel electric powers station has been build, big electric pump stations have been installed, a great numbers of tractor, bulldozer and other machinery have been taking to the area, lorries for the transport of cotton have been bought, offices, guest houses and workshops have been established.

However, out of the has. 10,000, the project was only able to put under irrigation has. 1,300. The main problem was severe crevassing (i.e. formation of very large cracks) caused by tunnelling in the underlying coarse sands which comprise old lake deposits. The result is that the farm structures are by far much more greater of necessary and running costs are extremely high compared to the actual production. There are also other problems:

- the yield is lower than expected, due to the thinness of the strata of fertile soil, which is actually unsuitable for mechanized made ploughing;
- machineries broke down much faster than expected, and maintenance is far more expensive than planned. Spare parts from abroad are hardly available;
- the farm was unable to apply rotation of cultivation as planned, because whenever they try to plant food crop severe armed conflict with the Dassanetch did occur (see below). For the same reason the farm find difficult to provide food to the seasonal workers.

After the fall of the DERG some new elements came in:

- liberalization of market for the cotton produced by the farm and increase of cotton prices, a factor

- which gave some relief to the farm;
- difficult relations with the local and regional Administration, probably related to the cost of maintenance of the long road from Arba Minch to Omoratte and to the impressive seasonal migration;
- probable interruption by the government of subsidies.

Given the described situation, it is very unlikely not only that the venture will recover the investment (let alone the infrastructure cost), but also that they will be able to have a yearly positive earning. In absence of external input the farm is likely to collapse.

### 8.2.2. Side effects

The establishment of the farm had some side effects:

- Construction and maintenance of road Arba Minch - Konso - Arbore - Turmi - Omoratte.
- - Growing of Omoratte town, to about 4,000 individual, plus seasonal workers in surrounding camps
- Strong permanent and seasonal immigration
- Increased trade activity due to the road and to presence of Ethio-Korean lorries.
- Establishment of services in the town)
- complete cut down of the riverine forest on the Eastern side of the Omo river
- Probable increased river pollution downstream Omoratte town and uncontrolled use of pesticides and insecticides

### 8.2.3. The impact on the Dassanetch

When the farm was established Mengistu himself went to explain the Dassanetch how much they would have benefitted by the farm: employment opportunity, market, sanitation, school etc. After many years, the Dassanetch have drawn their conclusion and have evaluated the farm in a very negative way.

Regarding employment possibilities, the Dassanetch have been proved unable to work on (low) salary basis, except in the position of guards. A few workers employed at the beginning at a higher level have been fired later on and only a couple of educated Dassanetch got the employment back with the present pressure of the local administration (decentralization).

Regarding services, we can say that more or less only town people benefit of them (par. 10.). The school seemed to have a reasonable success, but it was destroyed by conflict and only now is again under construction.

Regarding commercial chances, the immigrants only buy stock for their meat consumption. All other food is taken by lorry from outside. The main problem is that immigrants mostly eat *teff* or wheat and they dislike sorghum (the locally produced grain).

Perhaps we can identify a further positive interaction in the mentioned growth of trade by external merchants (see par. 9.1.1.), which mostly involve the Elelle section of the Dassanetch.

To the eyes of the Dassanetch the very little benefit they could possibly get by far does not balance the evident loss of land. Their negative attitude becomes clear when the farm plants maize, both for cultivation rotation and for feeding seasonal immigrant workers. When maize is ready, they regularly go to steal it and regular shooting breaks out. The RC has himself being caught in the middle of a shooting during a visit to the farm. Luckily, the guards employed by the farm are mostly Dassanetch themselves and bloodshed is usually avoided. Casualties, however, have been recorded during the year of research. It is clear, however, that this situation brings conflict within Dassanetch society.

When asked, the Dassanetch justify themselves by saying that is their land, and therefore the maize growing there belongs to them. They are not interested in cotton, because they don't know what to do with it.

It is very interesting to observe that after the peace between the Dassanetch and Hamar even the latter have been reported 'stealing' maize jointly with the Dassanetch. From this point of view the farm is unintentionally positively working for inter-ethnic cooperation.

### 8.3. Omoratte town

The town has developed only in the last 5-7 years, with the cotton farm. A large proportion of the inhabitants are Oromo from the highland, plus Amhara, few Tigreans, several Konso, people from Arba Minch, some Dassanetch and even Borana and Somali. They include the following categories:

- 1 - Workers of the farm (also located in villages more or less near to town and to the farm). Mostly Highlanders, only a great minority Dassanetch. Mostly Coptic Christian.
- 2 - Workers of the Ministry of Education, Health and Agriculture, and of the Coptic Church. Mostly Coptic Christian
- 3 - Some Dassanetch guards. Traditional religion.
- 4 - Hotel keepers, mostly highlanders, Oromo and Amhara, selling alcohol and food. Mostly Coptic Christians.
- 5 - Shop keepers, Oromo, Somali. Nearly all Muslim
- 6 - Merchants without shop, Oromo, Konso, Amhara (minority). Mixed religion
- 7 - A few (little) educated Dassanetch, now employed in administration, kebele, Ethio-Korean farm, etc.
- 8- A great number of soldiers, all lodged outside the town, who come during this last year into the area. The soldiers have their own structures (or use the structure of Ethio-Korean farm), and goes to town only for entertainment. Most of them are Tigreans.

Category 1 and most of 3 is obviously directly related to the cotton farm. Category 6 is also directly related to it, because they depend on the Ethio-Korean transportation for their activity. The presence of the farm has also induced a strong grow of category 2. Again, the clients of category 4 are in majority employees of the farm, plus Dassanetch coming to buy local brewers and, recently, soldiers. Also the client of category 5, the only category which sometimes may have independent transportation by renting lorries, are mainly farm employees. When they combine such activity with sorghum-coffee trade they are engaged directly with Dassanetch.

We may conclude that the existence of the town is strongly dependent on the existence of the farm.

### 8.4. Land policy

During the Derg the encroachment of modern farms into Dassanetchland took the form of joint ventures (Ethio-Korean). The Dassanetch of the Elelle territorial section feel this event as a strong threat and, in fact, they are right.

Dassanetchland can potentially be irrigated by using the water of the river. According to many studies irrigation by gravity is not suitable to modern farming systems. The alternative is the use of various types of pump. The Dassanetch, however, at present are unable to manage such technical means. It can be worth mentioning that after more than 10 years activities Philadelphia Mission as not yet handed over the management of the farms to the Nyangatom - the northern neighbors of the Dassanetch - who have quite a number of well educated people.

For the time being the Transactional Government of Ethiopia has not taken any official position on the issue of land tenure, but, on the base of the experience of other African countries (see, for example, The Tanzanian case reported on Haramata, p. 16), it is very unlikely that the state will leave the control of land which is considered potentially very productive to people who are, in the dominant view, unable to maximize production (the Ethio-Korean farm is an impressive living example of this attitude). It will therefore be very likely that, in absence of balancing initiatives, the Dassanetch will slowly lose their resources to privatization and that they will be marginalized to a role of guards or urban and semi-urban under-proletariat, probably surviving on humanitarians reliefs.

There is a long story of studies and reports on the potentiality of the lower Omo river. The first identification of possible spots was made by Halcrow ULG Ltd (1978). They identified 6,000 has. to be irrigated with diesel pump. Protection works against floods have been considered extremely necessary.

Later on UNDP/FAO/VADA (1982) in an appraisal of the lower Omo proposal states: "The Lower Omo Project will not as viable economically as the Weito Project" (p. 62), whose efficiency rate has been estimated in 45%.

In 1983 a WRDA report identified 83,000 has of land potentially irrigable in Omoratte and 20,000 has. in Tringole (further studies on Tringole led to the establishment of Ethio-Korean Join Venture). It is evident that such a huge area is a real danger for the Dassanetch.

Many of the reports underline the economical unviability of modern farming systems. However, the latter is mainly related to the infrastructure problem, especially road construction/maintenance and availability of electric power to draw the water from the river.

The sponsoring and the implementation of the infrastructure set up may become possible under the impulse of the Ethiopian still dominant myth of the 'immense' resources available in the South and, especially, the river valleys. The Ethiopian Valleys Development Studies Authorities has recently promoted a new wave of studies for the development of the Omo valley.

International organizations may be willing to concede big credits for intensive investments on the Omo valley. However, we should learn from past experiences. The same myth gave impulse to the establishment of the Ethio-Korean farm: all specific studies have 'forgotten' or underestimated the recommendations of previous reports and too optimistic economical projections have been done.

If the infrastructure problem will actually be solved, but with a high cost, modern farming may apparently become productive and the Dassanetch will, if they will not have yet developed the necessary skills, lose their land resources. There are rumors of several applications for land assignment being already submitted to the competent authorities and more and more people use to come to Omoratte to 'choose' 'their' piece of land.

However, all reports have greatly underestimated the most important factor of Dassanetch environment: physical variability. Enormous investment, like the 227 millions birr (at that time about US\$ 110) of the Ethio-Korean farm - without considering infrastructure costs - may suddenly become completely useless for a change in the course of the river. Dassanetch traditional land tenure system therefore may, in the long run, prove to be economically the most viable.

We should, therefore, avoid the risk of establishing the following succession of events:

- The international community will concede big loans for infrastructure development or will directly engage in it.
- High investment works will be made on the Omo valley
- The investment will never be recovered and Ethiopia will find itself with a bigger international debt that will increase its political and economical dependence on the Western community
- The above mentioned works may erode the basis of Dassanetch economy and, with it, the most viable production system.

It must be made clear that if the damming of the Omo river and the utilization of its water for large scale irrigation farms will stop the regular flooding of the Omo delta not only 20,000 Dassanetch (not to mention the other people of the valley) will completely be destitute, but also the surrounding pastoralists, who regularly benefit of Dassanetch produced sorghum (par. 9), will find themselves in a much more difficult position with regard to food security, in a region that already shows a permanent shortage of food.

The alternative is, of course, a real community based development, with a growing investment patterns both by national and international agencies.

## 8.5. Implications for development

The loss of title over land resources has been recognized as a key problem for African dryland people. It is also recognized that it is possible to check this type of problem by a multilevel activity, raising the awareness on the problem the locally, nationally and internationally.

### International level:

At the international level it is possible to raise the awareness of both the social and economical risks involved in capital intensive initiatives in the Omo valleys. This is possible by

- 1 - To produce high standard documentation to be published in existing international networks on dryland (i.e. by ODI, IIED, etc.)

- 2 - To produce high standard publications and also high standard documentary films on the Dassanetch production system and their consuetudinary rights. This documentation will be used later on when the debate on land tenure will come to the public attention.

National level:

- 3 - Making the same documentation available in Ethiopia to national and international development agencies, government institutions, development researchers and workers and, particularly, to the Ethiopian Valleys Development Studies Authority and to the people involved in the ongoing studies.
- 4 - Participate in the ongoing national debate on land tenure in pastoral areas and on the legal status of local organizations of pastoral, for example by participating in the activities promoted by Ford Foundations (particularly seminars and workshops) (Bruce and Hoben, nd).

Local level:

- 5 - Bringing the national debate into the local context, by discussing the same themes as in point 4 with pastoralists, local administrators, local development workers/agencies, private enterprises, etc.
- 6 - Upgrading Dassanetch capacity to defend their own interests facing local, national and international entities (see par. 13.2. for a possible choice).
- 7 - In the long term, upgrading Dassanetch capacity to deal with small scale irrigation systems. This can perhaps be achieved by integrating standard education with practical training, as it is planned by CYFWO (par. 10.2.).

## 9. Marketing and trade

### 9.1. Marketing and trade

We may identify 3 different ways in which the Dassanetch are involved in exchange with the outside:

- Omoratte market, Omoratte town and the Ethio-Korean Farm
- Markets towards Kenya: Ileret (Kenya, Eastern side of the lake), Tolognan (Western side of the lake), Toltelle.
- Diffused exchange in the villages

A fourth interesting subject is the unbalance between outgoing goods and declared incoming goods, a gap which is actually filled with weapons expenses

#### 9.1.1. Omoratte

The market of Omoratte is not well developed. It has no fixed days, probably because the Dassanetch do not use the week in their time reckoning. There is no special place for stock and the stock sold there are actually extremely a few. This is because long distance cattle trade has not developed in the area. Omoratte itself absorbs quite a number of stock, for the consume of town people, workers of the Ethio-Korean farm and, over the last few months, soldiers. Therefore the Dassanetch either take their stock directly to the buyers or the buyers go the villages. Only weak animals goes to the market and they are sold at an extremely low price. Prices of stock in direct transaction are not fixed, but anyway far below prices in Jinka market.

The main goods traded in Omoratte are sorghum, bought from the Dassanetch and sold to other pastoralists, and coffee shells, bought from the highlands and sold to the Dassanetch. In the market only coffee shells are usually found. Sorghum is directly sold to the merchants in their own houses, several in the town. The uniformity of prices seems to indicate that traders are organized in a corporation. In December 1992 they were buying at a price of 1 birr per *kalle* (a can containing 2,270 gr. of powered milk), but the price increased to birr 1.20 after the Dassanetch marketing strike (see par. 6.1.). By a survey in one of the merchant's house it was clear that in one day he was able to buy nearly 10 big sacks (80 Kg. per sack). There are several of these houses (not less than 15), and therefore we can estimate a minimum of 120 quintals of sorghum sold every day in this way. The same quantity was registered during the whole duration of the market survey, from December 1992 to April 1993. Occasional data recorded later on indicate that the amount of sorghum sold even increased in May and June. No data are available after June 1993.

No one of these merchants owns a vehicle. They mostly use Ethio-Korean transportation. The DRT (Dassanetch Research Team of the DIDP) have engaged themselves in this trade to check costs and profits, trading two sacks of about 90 Kg. to Turmi, in Hamer country (before the Dassanetch strike). Each sack of 90 Kg. of sorghum was bought per ETB 38. The transport and manpower has cost ETB 10 per sack. Each sack was sold in Turmi market to the Hamer per 138 ETB, with a net profit of more than 60 %.

#### 9.1.2. Markets towards Kenya

Regarding the markets towards Kenya information were taken by Amos, the Dassanetch Research Assistant, and from some Somali traders encountered in Omoratte. Ileret and Tolognan are two important cattle trade *entres*. Cattle are usually exchanged with blankets and bed-sheet coming from Kenya. Merchants with lorry regularly go to buy bulls and oxen. According to the Somali traders, in Tolognan (their operative place) oxen are always available and an average of 10 are sold every day. By selling the blankets in Omoratte market (from there they are traded by merchants to all Southern Omo markets and even to Merkato in Addis Ababa) a Dassanetch is able to make more than 800 ETB for a big ox, which is more or less the price of the same animal in the well developed and well integrated markets of Borana area. This alone explains why a long range cattle trade has not developed on the Ethiopian side.

Toltelle is a large traditional village where organized traders buy sorghum to sell to the Turkana



pastoralists. Again, it is available in large quantities. The Somali use to rent a lorry for this trade. They pay with blankets at an equivalent price of about 20-35 birr per sack (80 kg.). We can observe that the price is well below prices in Omoratte, especially after the market strike. This trade involves the Dassanetch of Inkabelo and associated territorial sections who cultivate too far from Omoratte. The occasional data recorded in Omoratte show that in May June many people from Inkabelo and associated sections used to come to sell sorghum in Omoratte, probably because of the higher price. This initiative, however, led to a new fall of the price in Omoratte and a new market strike was organized by the Dassanetch. In that occasion leaders of several territorial sections went to Omoratte.

### 9.1.3. *Diffused exchange in the villages*

The third type of exchange is very difficult to quantify, because it occurs all over the territory. We can again distinguish among direct trans-pastoralists exchange and trade made by immigrated merchants in the villages. The first one may only take place when peaceful inter-relation between the two groups exists. At present, it only applies to the Hamar and Turkana. Members of both groups have been seen by the DRT in Elelle villages. They bring small stock and take sorghum back. When they go to Dassanetch territory, the other pastoralists need to have a bond-friend (inter-ethnic bond friendships) or they need to go along with somebody who has a bond friend. This type of relation is likely to decrease if warfare often breaks out, and in any case the degree of involvement in direct exchange is directly related to relation of peace or war between the two groups.

The second type of trade may also be quantitatively relevant, because traders owning a vehicle can get a cheaper price by acquiring in the villages rather than in town (the Dassanetch spare the transport by donkey). Lorries both from Kenya and Ethiopia and even vehicles of NGOs have been seen acquiring sorghum in the countryside.

### 9.1.4. *Incoming goods and weapons*

The general picture drawn by our market and trade data show that the Dassanetch produce a surplus of sorghum which is either sold or given outside Dassanetch. Given reasonable prices, they also sell stock (see Illet and Tolognam). But why do they engage in trade and good exchange? According to them it is mainly because they need cash in order to buy coffee shell and small stock (direct exchange with other pastoralists) for ceremonial reasons. Claudia Carr, on the basis of her data collected in the sixties, says that Dassanetch, even if their production is far below subsistence needs, for social and cultural reasons look for what she calls 'luxury' items. (Carr, 1977: 221 and sgg.). The Dassanetch have now confirmed that they would sell sorghum for ceremonial reasons even if they would have to go starving for the rest of the year.

Our own data have been collected before and during the ceremonial season and it is possible that the quantitatively indications have been influenced by such a recurrence. They cannot, therefore, be projected on the whole course of the year. Also, 1992 was characterized by a good flood which has allowed a good harvest. Nevertheless it cannot be questioned that the Dassanetch are market oriented and that the amount of outgoing goods is relevant.

There is a strong unbalance between the amount of goods sold and the amount bought. The Dassanetch buy the following items:

- coffee shells
- drugs for animal (only a few sections)
- various local brews (only around towns)
- beads (limited, very cheap)
- local shoes (very cheap)
- bed-sheet and blanket (limited, as cloth, in exchange with cattle).

Among all these items, coffee shells is the only relevant expense item. In any case the expense is very far from the income obtained by selling stock and, especially, sorghum. As the Dassanetch do not accumulate cash, neither they convert it in other safety goods, the gap between recorded income and expense can only be filled with automatic arms and ammunition which are hidden to the researcher.

Kalashnikov are bought both in Omoratte town from traders (using vehicles) or in the countryside as far as Arbore. In both cases weapons bought by the Dassanetch come from Somalia (the Nyangatom buy from Sudan via Toposa). The cost is about ETB 2,600 in the town for a old type kalashnikov, or 5-6 bulls in the countryside. Exchange of kalashnikov for bulls in the town (absorbed by the local meat market) are

also reported to occur.

It is of course difficult to quantify the expense in such items, but it definitely tend to absorb the whole of Dassanetch surplus, excluding what is needed for ceremonial purposes.

## 9.2. Implications for development

### *9.2.1. Evaluation of data*

The most relevant research finding is that the Dassanetch are much more involved in trade and exchange of what is normally assumed. Especially they are able to produce a relevant surplus of sorghum which covers part of the grain needs both in the Southern Omo lowlands (especially Hamer) and in Kenya/Sudan (especially Turkana). They also sell stock, but mostly to Kenyan traders.

Production of surplus and a relatively market oriented-economy are positive pre-conditions for development. However, there is the great obstacle of inter-ethnic warfare. It would be enough to bring peaceful conditions in the area, thus reducing the demand for arms, for having an immediately available surplus to invest in developing oriented activity, such as education, training, tools or improvement of natural resources.

There is a second extremely negative effect of inter-ethnic warfare on trade relations. The Dassanetch are known for the high ceremonial requirements (coffee shell, stock to slaughter at rite of passage, etc.) and for the large amount of cattle and small stock that a man has to give as bride-wealth. It is very likely that those requirements have always forced the Dassanetch to involve themselves in external exchange by selling the surplus sorghum to the neighboring more or less pure pastoralists. With the growing of inter-ethnic conflict, however external traders (immigrants) took the role of mediators, with a very high profit. Inter-ethnic conflict, therefore, by penalizing the pastoralists, gives a high profit to immigrants. By promoting peaceful inter-ethnic relations the pastoralists may greatly benefit in terms of trade.

Another important consideration is that the real motivation for being market oriented, thus contributing to the regional economy, is the ritual demand (ceremonies, bride-wealth, etc.). Consequently, if we want the Dassanetch to remain integrate in the market, development activities should not directly interfere with the traditional system of belief and inherent practices (change in this field is of course unavoidable, but it should be the result of a slow process of internal readjustment). Inputs to NGOs which aim to change the system of belief of the Dassanetch as their primary purpose should be avoided.

### *9.2.2. Development activities*

On the base of what has been discussed in the previous paragraph, development activities should point primarily to the establishment of inter-ethnic peaceful relation as a means of:

- a- creating economic pre-condition for development
- b- cut out the role of trade mediators (immigrants) in favour of direct exchange by pastoralists, with a direct economical benefit by the latter and with a secondary effect of promoting inter-ethnic integration.

The large profit on sorghum - coffee shells trade by immigrated merchants gives large room for the establishment of a cooperative commercial *entre* managed by Dassanetch. It can be also used for providing hand tools (mainly to solve the problem of weeding) and, later on, veterinary drugs. It should ideally be connected to analogous *entres* run by neighboring pastoralists and highlanders producers of coffee shells. It is important to stress that the commercial sector is highly felt by the Dassanetch, who have organized 2 market strikes because they felt exploited in terms of trade. This is the only motivation which could bring together leaders of different sections.

The last point is that there should not be deliberate attempt to change the Dassanetch system of belief. Such a system will obviously change, but this should be the result of a slow internal cultural elaboration, a change that will give them the time to re-assess their society.

Summarizing, activities should be following:

- 1 - Promotion of inter-ethnic peaceful relations
- 2 - Establishment of a commercial *entre* managed by the Dassanetch

## 10. Social services and supporter institutions

### 10.1. Introduction

With the establishment of the Ethio-Korean Cotton Farm the town has grown and several public services have been provided. A primary school, a modern and well equipped clinic and a *entre* for the Ministry of Agriculture have been constructed on the Western side of the Omo river. Unfortunately, during the last year the Nyangatom have attacked Omoratte, killing more than 100 Dassanetch and stealing their cattle. The battle touched the urban *entre* and, consequently, all people moved on the Eastern side. All the mentioned structures are presently destroyed and all the mentioned services are presently provided on the Eastern side.

### 10.2. Education

Education into the Ethiopian Dassanetch area is a very recent phenomena. It has only started with the coming of the Ethio-Korean farm and the more advanced Dassanetch student are now at grade 5. Very a few young Dassanetch have previously been educated in other places, but, to my knowledge, no one, or perhaps one, has reached grade 12. The result is that the Dassanetch are to a very large extent unable to speak the Amharic language, that is the official language.

There are, instead, quite a number of well educated Dassanetch boys in Kenya, where educational service has been provided mainly by missions much earlier. They speak a very good English, whereas no Ethiopian Dassanetch can. One Dassanetch holds a University degree in physical anthropology.

As mentioned, the school built on the Western side of the river was abandoned due to inter-ethnic conflict. Presently the school and the hostel are made out of corrugated iron sheet, making conditions of life nearly impossible due to the heat. Despite the terrible life conditions in the school of Omoratte, a reasonable number of Dassanetch students are still attending. All Nyangatom students have also left due to fear of revenge.

A new school and hostel are now in construction under the initiatives of CYFWO. A committee has been established in Omoratte to take care of the problems of the school, logistic, food, etc.

CYFWO is also planning to establish a farm for practical training of the students.

### 10.3. Health

The Ministry of Health has its headquarter in Zone 10 administrative *entre*, Jinka.

In Omoratte they have a health *entre* from which other 3 clinics in the region (2 in Hamar country and one in Arbore) are administered.

In Omoratte there is a clinic and an anti-malaria *entre*. After having abandoned the modern construction on the Western part of the river, these two services are now located in a relatively good constructions temporarily assigned to the Ministry of Health by the administration of the Ethio-Korean Cotton project.

The personnel in Omoratte is numerous: 1 doctor, 12 health assistants. The anti-malaria *entre* dispose of microscope, and most parasites and protozoa can also be identify. No other laboratory equipments are available, nor x-ray equipment. There is no running water. Fridges are adequate. The staff is waiting for a car in a short time, with which they intend to start a vaccination program. 4 beds are available. A new clinic is also expected to be built. Patients are estimated in 21 a day.

This extremely low figure confirm informations collected among the Dassanetch and confirmed by the Health Centre personnel that mostly town people benefit of the service. Among the Dassanetch, only those living around Omoratte (Elle territorial section) occasionally go to the clinic only for certain type of

problems. No one of the workers is a Dassanetch and only 3 health assistants speak a little of Dassanetch languages (as mentioned, the very great majority of Dassanetch are unable to speak Dassanetch).

Occasionally, when a transportation means is available per initiative of the *wereda* administrator, or, recently, by SNV, the doctor provides drugs in the countryside. No real check up actually takes place and the drugs are simply given. Large quantities of human drugs are also occasionally provided to the Inkoria territorial section by a missionary coming by airplane from Kenya.

The doctor of Omoratte Health Centre has explained that the Dassanetch are unable to use drugs properly: they even do not follow the health assistants' instructions.

According to the doctor the health assistants are highly demotivated, because they feel frustrated to work in such a remote, hot and uncomfortable area. The very great majority wish to leave as soon as possible.

Most of the times the Dassanetch treat themselves following traditional practices. They use a relatively wide range of herbs (those available in their environment), but many of those herbs are not easy to find and some are in places where people cannot go for fear of neighboring ethnic groups in conflict with the Dassanetch (all the upper Western territory of the Dassanetch).

Sometimes they consult traditional physicians and they pay about one goat for the check-up.

Between the two spheres, traditional and western, there is no connection at all and they are perceived as competing fields, both conceptually and economically. It seems that the Dassanetch are ready to use western treatments only if they are provided freely or very cheap, anyway far below actual costs, or for certain types of diseases. In one case the DIDP staff has offered transport and payment of fees for a sick child of a far village, but the mother refused to accept, showing a more radical negative attitude towards western medicine (because of the bad service?). Nevertheless, the Dassanetch always ask for human health assistance, probably because they are used to free or semi-free distribution of drugs.

The Ministry of Health at the Zone 10 level has already provided community based training to other pastoral groups of the Region. However the results, according to development workers, have not always been very encouraging.

#### 10.4. Ministry of Agriculture and veterinary service

The Ministry of Agriculture has an office in Omoratte in a local house. A modern building on the Western side was destroyed after the clash with the Nyangatom. The office depends from the Zone 10 *entre* in Jinka.

The MoA in Jinka is divided into two branches, veterinary service and agriculture proper.

The veterinary branch disposes of 1 veterinary doctor and 2 assistants. No vehicle is available, and drugs are not available most of the time. The personnel, therefore, is unable to provide service to the Dassanetch community.

The agricultural branch basically runs a demonstration farm irrigated by means of diesel pump. They grow fruits (banana, papaya), cash crops and food crops. The technology used, however, is not manageable by the Dassanetch. In practice, there is no any relation between this branch of the Ministry of agriculture and the Dassanetch farmers.

In the veterinary field the Dassanetch seems more oriented towards western drugs. They recognize that traditional medicine is often ineffective and sometimes private shops in Omoratte sell antibiotics. Their price, however, are too expensive for a proper use (they inject low dosages which, by creating germs resistance, are more harmful than useful). Drugs sold in the shops, also, are only available to the community closer to either the Ethiopian or Kenyan towns. In one case, closely followed up by the DIDP, a Dassanetch elder - who could manage to get the governmental veterinary service thanks to the mediation of the DIDP - refused to pay the necessary second round of treatments, even if price was far below free market cost. All of his goats, more than 30, have died later on.

The training of paravets has already been organized with other pastoral groups of South Omo with the joined efforts of NGOs and MoA (Zone 10 level). According to development workers the response by the community was better than the one achieved in the health sector.

## 10.5. NGOs and other potential supporter institutions

At present in Dassanetchland no NGO is active in development. Orthodox Church and Mekane Yesus are establishing themselves, mainly by building churches. Mekane Yesus is also seriously taking into consideration the opportunity to start activity in the health sector

The Ethio-Korean Cotton Farm is an enterprise whose aim is profit rather than to development of the area. Therefore they cannot run any development project. Nevertheless they may provide, on rental basis, machineries eventually needed for specific projects and technical assistance.

There are other NGOs active in the surrounding places. They are:

- *Redd Barna in Turmi*: good experience in wells digging and maintenance, irrigation on the Weito, construction, training and institutional collaboration with Ministries. They are planning to phase out.
- *Catholic Church in Dimeka*: good experience in training and education
- *Philadelphia Mission in Nyangatom area*: good experience in irrigation, health and education

All these NGOs may provide support or technical input for specific projects in Dassanetchland, but they will not take long term responsibilities over the projects.

## 10.6. The ethnic, linguistic and educational problem

It is clear that services are not actually provided to Dassanetch, except for those living closer to the town.

Part of the problem is of course logistic. But the main one seems to be the cultural and linguistic barrier between GOs workers and the Dassanetch. First of all they cannot communicate, secondly, the very great majority of GOs workers comes from the more developed highlands. In Ethiopia nomadism has always been associated with primitive people and those living in the Omo Valley are still, in the dominant view, considered people with inferior culture.

The theme of the ethnocentric attitude by highlanders runs throughout Helen Amdemikael's report on gender issues. In one passage she reports the opinion of Ministry of Health representative that Dassanetch traditional values are the biggest barrier for improvement in the health sector.

Concerning experiences with women organizations during the Derg (R.E.W.A.), Helen reports Dassanetch women's opinion on how those organizations became 'harsh and abusive towards the Dassanetch way of life'.

But, perhaps, the most interesting observation regards education. As Helen reports, Dassanetch women don't want their children to go to school, because 'if a girl gets educated, she would get urbanized and change their attitude towards Dassanetch culture'.

This is an absolute key issue. If on one side the school gives the Dassanetch the chance to compete with highlanders, on the other side it is a powerful instrument of acculturation: it is used as a tool to change Dassanetch identity into Ethiopian (read highland) culture. The Dassanetch are thus given a chance only as far as they reject their own cultural values, as far as they become Christian and so on. The psychological and social disruption made by this situation is terrible. Nevertheless, the Dassanetch have no other chance but joining the standard educational system.

Said or unsaid, in the dominant view of GO's workers is that development of Dassanetch is subordinated to changes in their values and behaviors. However, this view is only based on a cultural ethnocentric attitude of a dominant culture. It is not by chance that Helen, talking about Dassanetch cultural factors which may inhibit development, felt the necessity to write 'the Researcher has not observed factors which stood as obstacles or difficulties for development', a view which is fully shared by the RC, as long as the Dassanetch are concerned.

Under the impulse of decentralization of the GOs the Dassanetch could have the potentiality to enter themselves into the GO, thus reducing the cultural and linguistic barrier dividing GOs from the community. However the educational delay of the Dassanetch make this process unworkable. People of the highlands of South Omo have rather the possibility to replace immigrants from other regions.

A negative side effect of decentralization is that the few motivated and experienced people who were working in the GOs at Zone 10 level may be fired as well.

## 10.7. Implications for development

In analyzing the consequences for development planning of what has been discussed in this paragraph we should distinguish between things that should be done, and consideration regarding the general set up of the program. The ethnic, linguistic and educational problem, in fact poses serious questions in the field of development policies. The program cannot go on with blue-print strategies and methodologies, but *ad hoc* solutions have to be studied. We shall discuss the first item here below and the second in the Third Part of this report.

### *10.7.1. Health*

Given the general attitude of the Dassanetch towards western medicine and being already accustomed to either cheap or free treatment it is very doubtful that they would pay actual costs for health services and, therefore, sustainable health development by means of western medicine is very unlikely to be reached. Nevertheless, because western human drugs are actually distributed, it is necessary at least to try to provide a community based train in Dassanetch language on the proper use of the basic drugs and on their side effects. The Ministry of Health in Jinka has already provided community based training to other ethnic groups of the region, but it is not sure that the experienced staff will be able to maintain their position. Because Mekane Yesus has a plan to start in the health sector, it would be wise not to take any direct action in (western) health care. SNV should simply put at their disposal its knowledge of the area and try to advise Mekane Yesus to coordinate their activities with the Ministry of Health. Duplication of structures should be avoided. Ideally, Mekane Yesus should provide logistic inputs that are not available to the Ministry of Health, perhaps transportation on the western side of the river and a motor boat.

On the other hand SNV should have a long term commitment in creating bridges between the western and traditional health sector. It requires long term research, ideally by attaching a SNV researcher to the Ministry of Health.

### *10.7.2. Veterinary*

The training of paravets by Ministry of agriculture has been working reasonably well with other pastoral groups. It is therefore advisable to engage in the same activity also in Dassanetchland. Economical input (*per diem*, food, etc.) should be provided to the Ministry of Agriculture. The place of training should be Omoratte instead of Jinka.

But the real problem is price and availability of veterinary drugs. Given past and present experience in pastoral areas and present policies, there is no hope that the Ministry of Agriculture will, even in the long run, provide enough drugs to such a peripheral area. The common *modus operandi* is NGOs providing drugs to peripheral branches of Ministry of Agriculture. This setting will work only as long as the NGO will continue to provide drugs.

The alternative is private distribution. There is actually a national policy of privatization in course. The exact national set up is, however, not still clear and planning is therefore not still possible. Ideally, the Dassanetch should be able to create a cooperative which would buy drugs from importers in Addis Ababa or Kenya and would distribute them in Dassanetchland. The already discussed commercial *entre* could be a good basis for such an activity. Sustainability would be guaranteed by Dassanetch judgment of price/benefit relation of each drug.

Due attention should be paid for the logistic problem inherent drug distribution or vaccination programs. The availability of the car by itself does not allow to reach all communities, starting from with Dassanetch living on the Western side of the Omo (it is very difficult to cross the car on the other side). The ideal complementary means of transportation is, instead, a boat to be used in the river. Health and veterinary service should be combining, as they are subjected to the same logistic constraints.

### *10.7.3. Education*

Given the problem in the educational, and the key role played by the school in the development of the area, it is advisable to give some extra Inputs to the school:

- adequate teaching of English (this in the long run can give the Dassanetch the possibility to defend their own interests facing the international community, without the necessary mediation of the dominant Amhara speaking people)

- Bringing Dassanetch teachers of Dassanetch culture into the school, mainly elders (this has not the aim of teaching Dassanetch culture, but it is rather a very important symbolic message to students on the value of their own roots); student should also be trained on Dassanetch farms as well as on the modern CYFWO demonstration farm.
- The students living in the hostel should be fed with locally produced food, rather than aid food. Food is, in fact, a key element of ethnic identity.

## 11. Gender issues

### 11.1. Main findings

Up to now only the first phase of field research has been concluded. More information is expected at the end of the ongoing second phase of field work by the consultant on gender issues.

According to the finding of the first phase of research, although the burden of daily work and, especially, agricultural work is very high, Dassanetch women do not present it as a main problem. The first phase of the research however, was conducted around Omoratte town, close to the river, where fetching water is relatively easy and some firewood available. Women living in pastoral camps, especially Nyaritch and Inkoria territorial sections, may face more serious problems with fetching water, especially in the season when camps are moved far from the river.

The agricultural work is made jointly by husband and wife on each plot. If a man has more than one wife, each should be allocated a different plot. Each plot is regarded as belonging to both the wife and the husband. However, woman can only get access to new plots with the mediation of a man. The harvested sorghum also belong to both. Each wife manages it independently, but the husband has a good amount of decisional power on stored sorghum. The husband own the cattle. Female heads of cattle should be allocated equally among the wives for milking. Each wife owns the milk produced by cattle allocated to them.

If divorce occurs, the woman loses milking rights and the plot she was cultivating, unless the plot was allocated to the family by her own father or family.

Widows are 'inherited' by the husband's brother (levirate) and they can thus, in theory, maintain the plot they were cultivating on. However, due to the dynamic character of Dassanetch physical environment, their plot may easily soon or later become unproductive. In this case widows may face serious difficulties to get access to a new plot.

Widows and divorced have, therefore, been identified as a potential beneficiary category. Many of them, in fact, are landless.

The researcher has identified some traditional informal women meetings, called *bilafu*.

### 11.2. Implications for development

Practical gender needs may not be a priority area, at least in Omoratte area. However, more information is expected regarding other territorial sections. Digging and maintenance of well far from the river might be a very felt need by other Dassanetch women communities.

The burden of woman agricultural work may greatly be reduced simply by making available weeding tools with a long handle.

Given the common destiny of husband and wives regarding resources, helping landless man also means helping their landless wives. The development of more cultivable land is, therefore, an help for Dassanetch women as well. However, divorced and widows, being more exposed to the landless phenomena, should receive a greater attention. Mediation may be necessary to have them getting a share of new developed cultivable land.

The *bilafu* meetings can be taken as a base for debates on gender issues.

It seems that there are all the premises for improving the woman position working in the frame of the activities proposed in other chapters. Particularly:

- Better hand tools may be provide in the frame of the commercial centre
- Landless man and their wife can get land when new agricultural areas will be opened.
- Gender issues will be discussed in *bilafu* meetings as a start and the issues will also be taken to the attention of the elders



- Widows and divorced will then get land when new agricultural areas will be opened.

A clearer planning, however, will only be possible after termination of the research on gender issues by Helen Amdemikael.

## PART 3

### ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM

#### 12. Starter activities

Starter activities have already been performed in the program area. Priority has been given according to the following criteria:

- activities manageable by the DIDP staff.
- activities addressing problem which were felt very important by the community;
- activities addressing problem which were felt very important by the DIDP staff as well;
- activities to which the pastoralists themselves should have given the major contribution;
- activities which would allow a test of both the pastoralists and the general human environment of the region;

The selected activities, therefore, were mainly the outcome of a very close dialogue with the pastoralists and the expression of their most felt needs. I will first discuss the activity already performed or started and I will then discuss how the DIDP could continue in the immediate future with further starter activities.

#### 12.1. Peace Making Ceremony, Arbore, 6-9 March 1993

Extensive internal documentation is available on the subject. I summarize here the main points.

##### *12.1.1. Background*

The initiative of promoting the ceremony was taken by some traditional leaders of the Arbore people. The Arbore are a small ethnic group (about 3.000 people), living in a strategical position in the lower Weito valley. Their territory is a geographical *entre* for all the other people directly involved in the ceremony, that is the Borana, the Hamar, the Konso, the Tsemai, and the Dassanetch.

During the last two years in most of the pastoral lands of Southern Ethiopia great extensions of excellent pastures were simply unused because of inter-ethnic fear, while at the same time the drought has hit the region, with a generalized loss of stock. The Dassanetch have lost more than 40% of their grazing land due to inter-ethnic conflict, and the two territorial sections living to the East of the Omo river were involved in warfare with the Borana and Gabbra

##### *12.1.2. The ceremony*

In the request of the Arbore there are at least three new elements in comparison with the long established peace making initiatives promoted by the regional and local administrations:

- the strong community-based character of the initiative;
- the dimension of the ceremony;
- the direct call of the international community into peace making activities.

In practice the ceremony, which was attended by more of 500 people, overturned the typical top-down approach by the administration by making the pastoralists themselves the protagonists of peace making activities, following procedures and rituals which are deeply rooted into the traditions of the

pastoralists. In order to achieve this, the pastoralists needed the assistance of the international agencies, which in practice, have empowered the local communities in the process of their own development.

### 12.1.3. SNV/NOVIB contribution

The request of assistance by the Arbore elders was submitted to the SNV Research Team working to the East of Dassenatchland. SNV/NOVIB did assist the pastoralists in several ways:

The RC tried to involve NGOs and other agencies/enterprises in the ceremony, in order to create a widespread consciousness among NGOs of the need and possibility to work actively in the field of peace making; lastly, substantial help with transportation was obtained, especially from CARE-Borana and Ethiopian Rift Valley Safari. The RC and PC coordinated the external assistance to the people of Arbore

Assuring political support at the national level: letters of support were obtained from the Vice Chairman of the Council of Representatives and from members of Council of Representatives of the OPDO party

Assuring adequate documentation by external observers, at a international standard: Addis Ababa University participated in the ceremony with two foreign professors and several Ethiopian Master students as observers; they also took a video of the ceremony.

Provision of cash for buying food and other commodities needed to feed the people (NOVIB)

Selection and transportation of elders and representatives of the pastoralists, with the assistance of both traditional leaders and local administrators.

### 12.1.4. Main results

The positive outcome of the Peace Making Ceremony in Arbore as a starter activity were:

- Improved dialog between DIDP and Dassenatch: on one side, thanks to the passage from talk to action, the Dassenatch have now an idea of our aims and on the ways we want to achieve them, that is through community based action and by empowering them. On the other side the preparation of the ceremony and the improvement of the reciprocal understanding has allowed a fast progress into the research, especially into the knowledge of the political organization of the Dassenatch.
- Better understanding of the regional situation: this includes both horizontal inter-ethnic relations and the knowledge of Southern Omo political environment.
- Starting of regional networking: as mentioned, the problem of inter-ethnic warfare, which is the main constraint in the region to development, can only be afforded through networking. Since the start the coordination of external assistance to the local community as been organized and provided on the basis of networking. It was a good start for future activity.
- Empowerment of local population: increased consciousness by local community on the possibility to manage their own development.
- Inter-ethnic Peace: The monitoring set-up of 4 months established by the RC gave the following result: All previously unused pasture have been utilized. Borana traders have been reported to trade as far as Hammer country. Only two casualties have occurred after the ceremony, but revenge did not took place and elders are presently trying to solve the problem peacefully. The rain has come abundant (which, according to the pastoralists, is a consequence of the re-establishment of Peace).
- Process Approach; Increased consciousness by NGOs, private enterprises, politicians to engage in peace making activities: Attended by pastoralists, by the regional and local administrators and by representatives of NGOs and enterprises active in South Omo, the ceremony was in itself a lesson for everybody. Philadelphia mission is now ready to promote a new peace making ceremony and we were told that even Redd Barna, which had refused any help in occasion of the Arbore ceremony, is now providing some assistance to the regional administration. Some politicians at the Zone 10 level have committed themselves to take the lead for a new community based peace making ceremony on the Omo valley. However, some problems still seem to exist. A report with more explicit suggestions has therefore been sent to both administrators and NGOs ("Observations on the Peace..." by RC and "Report" by Ayalew Gebre).

## 12.2. Canal digging in Alikatakatch, in progress

### *12.2.1. Background*

The excavation of a river diversion canal for flood retreat agriculture within the Elelle territorial section was at first considered the ideal starter activity. However, after informal talks with experts, it became clear that such an intervention requires a very careful study, due the environmental risk of full diversion of the Omo river.

Later on, when the Inkabelo territorial section was approached, a new request for the digging of another canal came up during a formal meeting in Nyamomeri. The elders have explained that by digging a simple diversion canal it would be possible to flood a very huge (several hundred hectares) and very fertile area, called Alikatakatch. Until ten years ago the area was regularly flooded. Now the level of the river seems to have decreased and the water doesn't reach the depressed area. According to the elders, it would be enough to dig by hands a 100 meters long to create an adequate corridor for the water. However, they are unable to dig because of lack of tools.

After a survey in the place by the DIDP staff and the some Field Officers it seemed that the elders were right. The elders stressed that the environmental risk of full diversion of the Omo river is not there because the depressed area does not have any outflow spot lower than the river embankment. In any case the fact that ten years ago the place was regularly flooded seems to be a sufficient guarantee against such a risk.

The DIDP has therefore committed itself in providing some tools and teaching their use to the Dassanetch.

### *12.2.2. Progress of the activity*

The elders in Nyamomeri held a special meeting to organize the digging work. The DRT have attended the meeting and have taped the debate. The tape is available with an English translation (made by Amos Gurite on a second tape) as a documentation. The elders have selected the senior organizers of the work and have selected the youngsters who were supposed to do the actual digging work.

Later on, when the tools were actually available, a new problem came out: due the reassuring presence of the Ethiopian army on the Western side of the river, the Dassanetch have in this year of 1993 tried to use again the pastures which were unused for so many years due to inter-ethnic fear. However, right on the first day a clash broke out with the Turkana with a few casualties on both sides. The elders have consequently been forced to protect their cattle grazing in far places by sending all their young warriors. No people was left in Nyamomery for the digging work. As very a few months were left before next flood, the elders have decided to postpone the digging to the next year.

All this was explained by the elders of Nyamomery to the PC. Nevertheless the work of digging took the start with town people and without the active involvement of the Dassanetch. Progress work forms, prepared by the RC have not been filled. Later on the story was explained by the same elders to the RC. Consequently, a meeting was held among the DIDP staff in which it was agreed that no further digging should take place without the participation of the Dassanetch.

No information is as far available on further progress of the work.

## 12.3. Further starter activities

### *12.3.1. Dialogue and identification of needs*

It is the conviction of the RC that the DIDP should continue to work, as starter activities, on the problems which are mostly felt by the community, on the basis of the work of dialogue building and need identification carried out by the DIDP staff as a primary objective through the whole course of the research as far performed.

Dialogue as been established by holding meetings, following traditional procedures and rituals and by implementing the Peace Making Ceremony in Arbore. The DRT has made an excellent work of mediation between the RC and the local communities.

At first the Elelle territorial section was approached (Omoratte).

During the implementation of the Peace Making Ceremony the Inkoria and Nyaritch territorial section were approached.

Later on the Northern Inkabelo and the Orro were approached.

Due to difficult access, and logistic problems, the following territorial sections have not been contacted:

- Southern Inkabelo,
- Kuorro
- Rielle
- Randal

At the beginning the quality of the dialogue was bad. The Dassanetch, in fact, had already be approached with a lot of promises in occasion of the installation of the Ethio-Korean farm. The experience was negative and therefore they don't trust anybody any longer. The peace making ceremony in Arbore, however, has allowed a great improvement in the quality of the dialogue.

The identification of problems and needs was made by conversations, interviews and formal debates in public meeting, by personal observation, by questionnaire, by surveys and by cross-checking data of different subject of investigation.

The priority needs outspoken by the Dassanetch can be classified in the two main fields:

1. Peace making activities (shared by all sections approached )
2. Expansion and/or improvement of the productive land resources (each territorial section approached has a different project in their own territory)

### 12.3.2. Peace making activity

From the Dassanetch point of view the most immediate action which can be taken against inter-ethnic conflict are peace making ceremony of the type in Arbore.

That ceremony was addressing to the problem to the East of Dassanetchland into Ethiopian territory, involving the Inkoria and Nyaritch territorial sections only. Now the situation to the East (only Ethiopia) is O.K. However the Dassanetch are facing serious problem on all the other sides. Each side has a particular set of relations and motivation, and should therefore taken as block problem.

- 1 - Dassanetch - Nyangatom - Toposa peace making ceremony. The problem seriously involves the Toposa of Sudan, allied of Nyangatom. The Nyangatom are also in serious conflict with the Karo, allied of the Dassanetch and Hamar. All these groups, and other minor, should be called together. Community-based debate has already been promoted by the Zone 10 administration and several NGOs (especially Philadelphia Mission) are ready to give all the necessary assistance.
- 2 - Dassanetch - Turkana. After recent peace making efforts by Kenyan and Ethiopian administrations conflict broke out again over the last few weeks. New international activities are necessary, in a more community based fashion. The debate has already started.
- 3 - Dassanetch - Gabbra/Borana of Kenya peace making ceremony. this ceremony has an international dimension and it requires a longer preparation.

When ready, the DIDP should systematically engage in regional networking (par. 7.2.2. and 13.4.)

### 12.3.3. Expanding land resources

All Dassanetch sections formally approached by the DIDP staff have asked for same kind of activity which implies an expansion of the land resources available to that section. The RC feel that those activities should be given a priority and therefore classified as 'starter activities'.

Because the territorial sections are politically autonomous from each other and independently control land resources, the DIDP should try as much as possible start activities with equilibrium among the different territorial sections, in order to avoid inter-section and section-DIDP resentment and competition.

The requested projects are up to now the following:

- 1 - Canal of river diversion in Alika Takatch, Inkabelo section. Also requested by the Orro who share resources with Inkabelo. It would create a great number of new cultivable plots. Very little economical

input. This activity has already started (par. 12.2.)

- 2 - Canal of river diversion in Kifute-Kabasuye, Elelle section. It would secure flood even in bad years, thus largely improving food and trade security of a very big number of farmers. Some environmental risk of full river diversion exists.
- 3 - Re-opening of river branch feeding fields in Inkoria sections. It would create a unknown number of new plots in a section which mostly rely on pastoralism and whose grazing area is very limited due to inter-ethnic conflict. The site has not been seen by the DIDP for difficult access. Geo-morphological studies are necessary.
- 3a- Digging of a well in Inkoria section. It would allow the Inkoria to move the village far from the lake shores with a much more even, therefore much more efficient, exploitation of the pastures. It would greatly relief Inkoria women from a very heavy burden in fetching water during the season when villages are anyhow moved far from the river.
- 4 - Well digging in Nyaritch section. Benefit as in project 3a. Debate has already started with the Dassanetch community and technical input may be given by Redd Barna (Turmi). However, a new well design is recommended, because hand pumps have already been put by Redd Barna without great success. It is advised by the RC to introduce Borana well style, adopting Borana forms of management and control. In this case Redd Barna technology would be useless.

The Rielle, Kuorro, Randal and southern Inkabelo have not been formally approached by the DIDP as far. The Rielle section, being a small group more engaged in fishing than other, may be interested in fishing and fish marketing development.

Among the requested activities, only 1, 3a and 4 can be immediately implemented. Attention should be drawn on the studies required for project 2 and 3. On-spot surveys should be preceded by a more general geo-morphological and hydrological study of the area and adequate maps should be available (par. 14.2.1.).

## 13. Special issues

### 13.1. A challenge to the process approach

Before trying to summarize and describe in a more systematic way all possible activities which have been suggested in the Part 2 of this report it is better to discuss the possible set-up and strategy of the DIDP. Dassanetchland, in fact, poses some special problems to development that, perhaps, cannot be afforded by simply applying solutions that have been elaborated on the basis of experiences made in different socio-cultural contexts. Particularly, it seems no possible to perform all required activities by immediately using organizations of Dassanetch or intermediary organizations. We are therefore right in one of those extreme circumstances where the intermediary body cannot be found and SNV should assist in its formation ('On the right track', p. 9-10).

The main constraints are:

- a - inter-ethnic conflict and competition (par. 7)
- b - potential loss of land rights (par. 8.4.)
- c - low educational level (par 10.6.)
- d - cultural and linguistic barrier between GOs (excluding the district administrators) and Dassanetch community (par. 10.6.).

Point a) is an impediment to development itself. However, at this stage, it cannot be afforded through existing organizations.

Regarding point b), I would simply recall a sentence found on Haramata: "local initiatives may prove hopelessly inadequate when pastoralists are dispossessed of their land" (p. 13). Again, there are no existing organizations or institutions that can adequately support Dassanetch rights at the regional, national and international levels as it would be needed.

Point c) and d) simply mean that there is no guarantee that, even in 15 years time, the gap between GOs and Dassanetch community can be actually filled. In other words there is no guarantee that the Dassanetch can be empowered *within* the GOs.

On the other side, the Dassanetch have shown a very high concern for self-development and a good organizational capacity. Different types of local organizations of Dassanetch have been identified in which it is possible to base different types of development activities. Even though, the DIDP must be aware that local organizations of Dassanetch are not ready made organizations with an internal hierarchical structure, nor they have any legal status within Ethiopian law. Furthermore, by utilizing them for development, the DIDP requires them to involve in an innovative social process. As a consequence there are no ready made ways to work with them. The collaboration with such organizations will be a slow learning and adaptation process on both sides. The DIDP must be ready to provide inputs and incentives when needed.

The only possible consequence of these considerations is that, lacking adequate supporting institutions, the DIDP must necessarily take a role bigger than intermediary organization. Whenever possible, SNV will involve both GOs and NGOs in the development activities, but it is too risky to assign them a key or leading role.

In some cases, for example activities at the national and international levels, SNV has to take a direct action. In other cases SNV has to guide and assist the process of empowerment and of self-organized development of the Dassanetch. It can do it by means of two bodies, the Dassanetch Advisory Council (DAC) and the Dassanetch Research Team (DRT). With time, the Dassanetch involved in this new process, both those forming the two bodies and the wider community, will learn the skills necessary for any further step. During the implementation of the program the behavior of the GOs and NGOs will be monitored, as well as the behavior of the Dassanetch. Ideally the capacities built within of through the DIDP will be transferred to other organizations. But, if this will not be possible, due to the already discussed constraints, the two bodies may be transformed into a local NGOs of Dassanetch with SNV phasing out.

By following this strategy the DIDP will gain in flexibility: it will try to fill the gap between community and GOs, but it will always be able to go for a different solution if the socio-political environment will not allow it.

### 13.2. Empowerment: Dassanetch Advisory Council

As discussed in paragraph 6.4, the territorial sections (*en*) are the ideal local organizations of Dassanetch to establish and to maintain a dialogue concerning the planning of the development activities by the DIDP. Decision concerning Dassanetch development, should be discussed and agreed with representatives of those groups. However, in order to establish an institutional linkage, it is necessary to formalize them by creating a special body. The establishment of a body of Dassanetch representative was already suggested in the "Research phase...".

The Dassanetch Advisory Council should therefore be formed by representatives of each territorial section, selected by the Dassanetch themselves on the base of their own decisional process. At any time the section should have the right to replace its representative. Because of demographic and resources differences among the territorial sections the exact number of representatives per each section has to be discussed at the community level in the preparatory phase.

The formation of a single body for all territorial sections is necessary in order :

- a - to avoid internal conflict;
- b - to empower the Dassanetch facing the outside world.

Regarding point a) it must be stressed that the Omo delta is a single environmental system. If water is taken from one site by diversion, a *harr* located downstream may not get enough water any longer. If this process occur naturally, as it regularly does, no one can be blamed. But if it is human-induced, then inter-section conflict may arise. That is why a inter-section body is necessary to approve projects and to solve conflicts which may arise.

Regarding empowerment, the establishment of the DAC will provide the Dassanetch with an instrument for dealing with the external society. They will learn to do it first facing the DIDP (empowerment within the DIDP) and then they will eventually be able to transfer the same capacity in their relation with local, regional, national and international entities (empowerment within the world). It is crucial to create a body which could represent the Dassanetch all, that means all their sections.

The DAC may also play a fundamental monitoring role. A certain number of representatives (example 3) will be sent to Addis Ababa once or twice a year to give comments on the project and its staff directly to the field-officers and PAT team (or the latter will contact the DAC in Omoratte). In this way it will be possible to control ethnocentric behaviors which may arise even among the DIDP staff.

In short, the functions of the DAC will be:

- To discuss all development initiative with the DIDP staff. New initiative must be approved by the council, including the employment of new Dassanetch.
- To improve the dialogue with the Dassanetch, by empowering them in the decisional process within the DIDP
- To facilitate the DIDP-local groups communication: the representatives of each section can communicate the decision and mobilize the section, for example in selecting youths for training programs.
- A train for the empowerment a Dassanetch facing the outside world
- To set up a powerful community-based monitoring instrument

It is evident that the establishment of the DAC would be a key initiative for fulfilling two of the most important SNV objectives: empowerment ('On the right track', p. 7, 8) and monitoring in cooperation with the beneficiary group ('On the right track', p. 16)

The establishment of the DAC requires, at least at beginning, economical incentives. When working for the DIDP, by coming to the office for meetings, they will be unable to follow their own business and this must be compensated (that is why a pan Dassanetch institutional body at present does not exist). Also, they should be refunded of their travelling expenses and/or assisted in travelling.

### 13.3. The DRT, an executive body

During the research the Dassanetch Research Team, made of young educated male and female Dassanetch, has proven to be very efficient. The discussion, follow up and monitoring of any activity can be performed by young educated Dassanetch, who should be regularly employed by the DIDP. The



number of DRT members will change according to the needs.

The DIDP may require long term research on several fields, especially agriculture, and eventually the evolution of specific technics, such as the planning of ditches excavation to improve the diffusion of water on flooded flats. It is crucial that these skills will be learnt and evolved by Dassanetch rather than no-Dassanetch members of the MoA.

Later on, before SNV phasing out, these experienced people may either be incorporated into the GOs, or, if this will be impossible, may organize themselves in a local NGO of Dassanetch.

#### 13.4. Peace Making activities

Having identified inter-ethnic conflict as the main constraint to development, there is no choice but to work in this field.

I must again stress the international dimension of the problem. Major destabilizing factors are Somalia and Sudan. Due to that, South Omo and Borana are particularly exposed to conflict escalation. Once this has happened, the whole area from the Red Sea to Southern Sudan will run completely out of control with terrible human, political and economical consequences not only for the pastoralists, but for the whole of the Horn. The impressive moves or refugees that are presently taking place in the Horn are only a little warn of what may happen, and, perhaps, a cause of further conflict.

Regarding SNV possible initiatives, there is no way to afford the problem by pointing to the Dassanetch only. The proper instrument, is the coordination at the regional level of NGOs and enterprises, Regional and district administrators. In short, regional - in a broad rather than administrative meaning, implying, for example, also cross board activities - networking (see par. 7.2.2. for details).

The Peace Making ceremony in Arbore, the first starter activity, has already open the path. The experience, however, has also shown that at present no NGO or GO in the place is capable to manage such an activity. Somebody who knows the pastoralists of the area and the general context, and who is able to manage the situation must be engaged in networking peace making activities more or less full time. Therefore there are two possibilities:

a) SNV directly employees such an expert;

or, if this is judged impossible,

b) SNV involves another organization to do that, for example Oxfam, the Dutch cooperation or any other national or international organization.

The expert will be necessary until the regional administration, NGOs, GOs will show the capacity to deal with the problem.

#### 13.5. Land policy: a multi-faceted strategy

The problem of the Dassanetch risking to lose the rights to use their land requires a multi-level strategy, as described in details in paragraph 8.5., implying a local, regional and international level action. SNV recognizes the necessity to work with such a multi-faceted strategy ('On the right track', p. 9), but we may have here a problem analogous to inter-ethnic conflict. In fact adequate expertise is necessary and, at present, no organization has any reason to strife for the Dassanetch. Therefore SNV has to take a direct role. Adequate expertise would ideally be required (the same person could cover both inter-ethnic conflict and land rights) to perform all activities described in par. 8.5, or, as a less efficient alternative, the DIDP and SNV will participate as much as possible in the multi-level activities with the available capabilities and data.

## 14. Other activities

In this paragraph I will try to present a summarized framework including all the potential activities which have emerged in the Part 2 of the report and which have not been discussed as starter activities in paragraph 12 or as special issues in par. 13. I will start with the more pressing proposals. The activities can be implemented by the DIDP with a progressive approach rather than following the pilot project model.

Many of the activities described need to be based on further research or should be combined with long term research. Further research needs are also discussed in this paragraph.

### 14.1. Practical activities

#### *14.1.1. Commercial Centre*

A commercial *entre* can be established either on private or cooperative basis. Modality have to be agreed with DAC. Activity will start by buying sorghum from Dassanetch and selling it both in neighboring markets and to NGO (there is a great demand for grain from NGO working all over Southern Ethiopia). In the opposite directions, the *entre* will buy coffee shells and hand tools from the highlands and sell to Dassanetch. By providing hand tools agricultural production can greatly will increased and woman will be partly relieved from the heavy burden of weeding work (now they have to do it on all fours).

The *entre* may commercially be used to break the price policy made by the corporation of traders.

Later, the *entre* may take over the distribution of veterinary drugs.

The *entre* may also control a seed bank.

SNV input: 1) simple house to start with, 2) Regularly putting SNV means of transportations at disposal of the *entre*.

More details in paragraphs 9.2.2, 5.2., 6.3., 10.7.2., 11.2.

#### *14.1.2. Creating new inundated flats*

New cultivable land and very critical dry season fodder can be produced by opening or improving canals of river diversions, as in starter activities. Work to be approved by DAC and to be coordinated with representatives of the territorial section involved.

Negotiations for land allocation to widows and divorced women should take place, by promoting debate both among women (*bilafo* meeting) and between them and elders.

SNV input: 1) hand tools and local (Konso) advisers on their use for canal digging; 2) expertise on feasibility studies, 3) eventually machinery and technical input by NGOs or Ethio-Korean Cotton Project. Ministry of Agriculture should take the responsibility of monitoring salinity.

More details in par. 5.2., 6.3., 11.2., 12.3.3 and par. 14.2.1. for further studies required.

#### *14.1.3. Water points*

The exploitation of pastures can be improved and the women's burden of fetching water can be reduced by developing water points far from the river, as in starter activities

To be coordinated with territorial section leaders.

SNV inputs: 1) expertise if needed, 2) hand tools, 3) machinery, equipment and technical input if needed, 4) promoting the internal process of selection of a Dassanetch responsible 'father' for the well (this practise is presently not used in Dassanetch).

The MoA can perform test of water samples.

More details in par. 5.2., 6.3., 11.2., 12.3.3.

#### *14.1.4. Introduction of fodder*

The pastoral sector can benefit by introducing cultivated fodder on inundated flats. Proper varieties have to be identified with the help of a ILCA consultant. Community based tests have to be conducted by

*harr* groups and followed up jointly by SNV (DRT) and MoA. SNV inputs: 1) seeds, 2) data collection during testing, 3) elaboration of computerized data-bank.

More details in par. 5.2. and 6.3.

#### **14.1.5. Diffusion of water on inundated flats**

Man made ditches in existing flooded flats (*harr*) can improve the diffusion of water and therefore, the average yield. To work has to be coordinated with the *harr* father and publicly discussed at the formal *harr* meetings.

SNV Inputs: 1) hand tools, 2) data collection before, during and after implementation, 3) elaboration of computerized data bank.

More details in par. 5.2. and 6.3.

#### **14.1.6. Trees plantation**

Tree (fruit, fodder, firewood) plantation can be promoted on the river embankment. To be entrusted to *diele* groups. Seedling should be sold by MoA which may run the nursery.

SNV input: 1) identification of most suitable species with Dassanetch; mediation between MoA and *diele* groups.

More details in par. 5.2. and 6.3.

#### **14.1.7. Education**

Inputs in education as discussed in par. 10.7.3.

#### **14.1.8. Veterinary service**

The overall setting of veterinary service has to be discussed with the DAC.

Anyway, Dassanetch paravets can be trained by Ministry of Agriculture, Veterinary branch. The DAC will provide for the selection of the people to be trained, who will be chosen by each territorial section.

SNV's role: 1) mediation between MoA and territorial sections. 2) Economical input to MoA eventually needed, 4) Food and accommodation in Omoratte town 4) adequate translation to Dassanetch, 3) monitoring.

More details in par. 5.2., 6.3., and 10.7.2.

#### **14.1.9. Health**

Primary health care to be left to Mekane Yesus.

On the other hand SNV should have a long term commitment in creating bridges between the western and traditional health sector, possible by attaching a SNVer research to the MoH.

Details in par. 10.7.1.

### **14.2. Further research needs**

#### **14.2.1. Maps and geo-morphological and hydrological study**

During the research work it was clear that the available maps are not adequate. Part of Dassanetchland is not covered at all by maps at adequate scale. Dassanetch physical environment is subjected to continuous change, and thus even the areas covered by maps have drastically changed since the time they were drawn. For example it is even difficult to have a precise idea of where the canal of Alikatakatch is presently under implementation.

Secondly, the most critical activity requested by the Dassanetch, that is canals of diversion for expanding the flooded areas to increase production both in the pastoral and in the agricultural sectors, present a very high environmental risk of full river diversion. Each specific spot should, therefore, be adequately surveyed. However, in order to predict the overall run-off, behavior and speed of diverted water it is necessary to have an idea of terrain level and slope from the selected spot to the lake.

The availability of adequate maps with special emphasis on levels and slopes and of a more general geo-morphological and hydrological study of the whole delta area is therefore a necessary pre-requisite for full engagement activities in the area.

The drawing of maps by means of field surveys is extremely expensive, time consuming and anyway approximate. It is instead advisable to proceed with computer elaboration of satellite images. Some type of image are nowadays available at a very cheap rate, and images of the same area taken at different times may give valuable information of morphological and hydrological trends of the delta.

The MSS images can be available at a price of about US\$ 350 each. No more than 5 images will be necessary for a baseline study.

The images need to be elaborated with adequate computer system. These are available in Addis Ababa University (Italian Cooperation or Dept of Geology).

The image should remain in the property of the DIDP, because in the long run it may be worth to dispose of such computer equipment in Dassanetchland, to be used mainly as a data bank on river branches, canals, ditches, etc and for a year after year planning of canal and ditches digging.

#### *14.2.2. Before closing the research phase*

Some research activities need to be fulfilled before further steps into implementation and should therefore be concluded before the closing of this first research phase. They are:

- gender issue (in progress);
- establishing a dialogue with representatives of the territorial sections which have not been approached up to now due to logistic problems;
- setting up the Dassanetch Advisory Council (par. 13.2.), in order to discuss and coordinate further development planning;
- assessing with MoA, veterinary branch, possibilities for paravet training;
- assessing with Ministry of Health the possibilities to start a long term research in the field of traditional medicine, eventually with SNV input;
- working out a list of fodder species to be tested in the coming years by the Dassanetch in their inundated flats (ILCA consultant);
- assessing possible set up for veterinary drugs distribution and discussing it with DAC;
- during cultivation period, collecting systematic information on sorghum varieties;
- assessing institutions in Ethiopia which could work out satellite images (Especially Addis Ababa University, Dept. of Geology or Mapping Authority);
- on spot surveys on the feasibility of the river diversion works on the sites of Kifute-Kabusiye and Inkoria, already requested by the community, and of others that may eventually come out when dialogue and need identification will be completed with all territorial sections;
- research reporting and project formulation.

#### *14.2.3. Long term research*

The following are the longer term research needs:

- 1 - to continue collection of information on the different species of sorghum (growing cycle, test, color, yield, terrain needs, etc.) and to elaborate an emic classification Dassanetch soil types (fertility, humidity, level, etc.). The work should be done in close collaboration with MoA.
- 2 - To study with the Dassanetch patterns of water movement on existing inundated flats and experimenting with them ditch digging.
- 3 - Keeping computer data banks of 1 and 2 and of other knowledge that will be produced during the implementation of the DIDP.
- 4 - Continuing on spot surveys according to new needs.
- 5 - Follow up of all activities for progressive revision of DIDP strategy.

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