

THE NEW PHENOMENON OF LAND GRABBING IN AFRICA AND ITS IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS AND ECOSYSTEMS

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A. Global perspective

- Phenomenon widely spread in Africa, South Asia, South America and post-Soviet Eastern Europe. Is it really a new phenomenon or is it a situation of new wine in old bottles? Which ever direction the argument goes putting things in broad historical and contemporary context is important.
- Colonial, post colonial and capitalist development contexts “investment on the so called no man’s land and satisfying the needs of Western markets”using Green Revolution technologies which by and large neglected the peasant sector other than using this sector as cheap labour source.
- Peasant rebellions taking many forms and shapes but mostly land and livelihood threat centred e.g. Brazilian Land movement, rebellions in Indonesia, many Liberation movements in Africa to mention few.

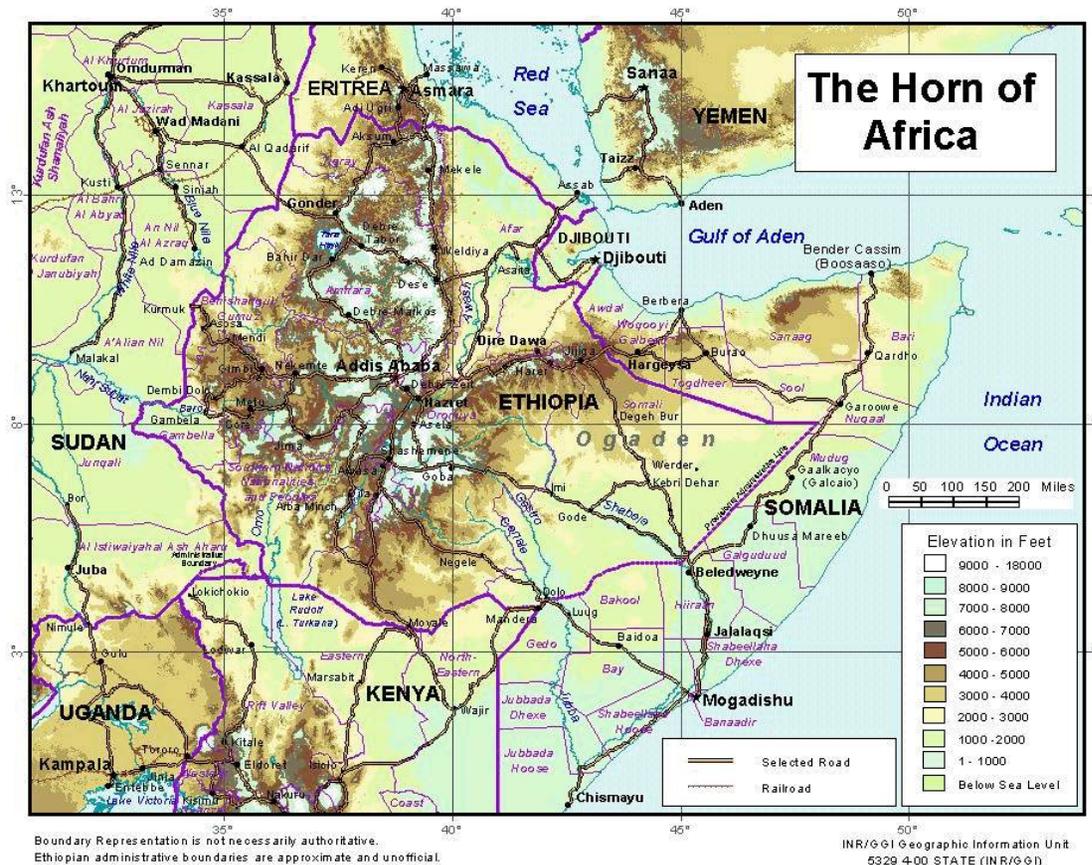
A. Global perspective

- Post independence and post Cold war periods witnessed the destruction of colonial capitalist agriculture infrastructure in some case (e.g. Angola, Mozambique and Eritrea), continuation of the status quo of the colonial land tenure arrangements intact but local/national players playing a major role (e.g. Kenya, South Africa and Brazil) and the creeping expansion of the Arab capital investment on land.
- The post cold war era following the demise of the Soviet Union added Eastern Europe into the equation Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine are good examples of Western capital pouring to invest on land on long term lease basis.
- Post-2007 “food crisis” creating possibilities for investors to speculate on the rapidly growing global food needs and make huge investments on land in developing countries.
- Private investors are not motivated by agricultural investment to reduce poverty, food security or maintaining bio-diversity for the small holder and we may be moving to a new phase a resource based conflict situation over land and water between land users whose production objectives vary greatly:

A. Global perspective

- The following is a perspective of reincarnated capitalism “We are not farmers. We are large company that uses state of the art technology to produce high quality soybean. The same way you have shoemakers and computer manufacturers, we produce agricultural commodities” Laurence Beltrao Gomez SLC Agricola largest farm Company in Brazil quoted in Grain October 2009.
- “Saudi authorities introduced a new legislation to conserve water by not growing crops (like wheat, soybeans and animal feed) which consume too much water but instead grow crops elsewhere and import them. The Kingdom consumes 6.5 million tons of wheat per annum” BBC World Service November 8th 2009. Land grabbing and outsourcing put in mild language
- “Our land is our honour and our forests are our jewels so how can you let any one take this away from you? Nowadays, there too many hyenas wanting to snatch it away from us but we will fight for our land as we have always done” pastoral people from East Sudan 2009.

B. Pastoralism: a Livelihood seriously threatened by internal and external land grabbing



Map of the Horn within Africa and the middle East context

General



- Population in 6 countries 200 million plus
- 5million square KMs in Area
- Ecological diversity affecting livelihood systems
- Region shares diversities of cultures, religions and different civilisations
- Important strategic significance Red-Sea, Gulf and Indian water ways (Soviet-USA during cold war now China, Middle East and super powers) both military and trade
- Somali piracy drawing negative global attention
- War on terror targeted region (Africom USA)
- Conflict proneness, drought and famine (very high military expenditure by National Governments)

General

- New phenomenon of “Boat people” both economically and politically driven
- Brain drain within Africa, the Middle East and the West
- Growing unplanned urbanisation and high levels of poverty among the urban poor including pastoral peoples
- PENHA operates in one of the most turbulent regions of Africa. Despite this, it has continued to work effectively with some of the most marginalised groups in the countries of the region.
- PENHA has a presence in almost all of the countries of the Horn (with the single exception of Djibouti).
- There are over 25million pastoral people in the region with the proportion of pastoralists varying from a minimum of 5% in Uganda to 55% in Somalia and Somaliland.

Characteristics of pastoral production

- It lacks uniformity and specialization; there is almost no clan which can be referred to as 'purely' pastoralist;
- It cuts across ethnic, cultural and ecological boundaries; communities interact economically and share available range resources;
- It is based on multi-species-based herding (camels, cattle, sheep, goats and equines);
- It contributes significantly to the local, national and regional economy through animal sales at local, regional markets and Middle Eastern markets.

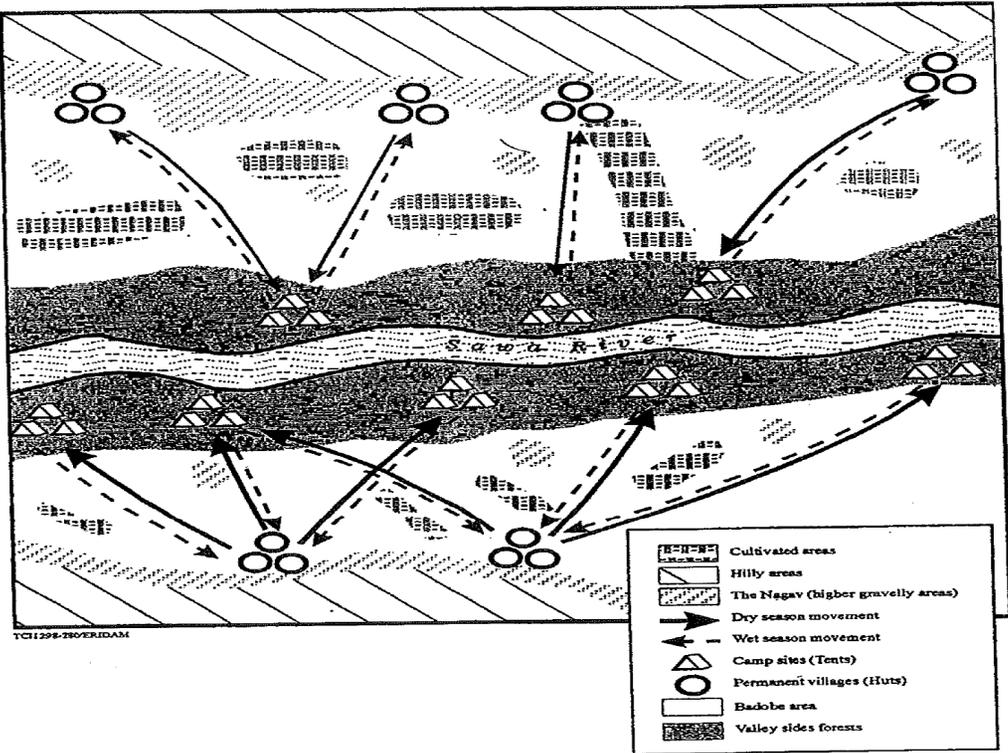
Characteristics of pastoral production



- Similarities of the production systems
- Geographical spread
- Similarity in ecological setting
- Pastoralism and agropastoralism makes an important contribution to economies in the region
- Crossing borders and cross-border affinities
- Highland/urban elite domination
- Suffer similar marginalisation and policy neglect
- Land tenure a major issue to most of them.

Riverine areas are the most important for pastoral peoples in the Arid and semi-arid environments of the Horn. These are areas most sought by land grabbers

Figure 1: Dammar Hagay / Dammar Kerem Systems (Forto Area)



Source Fre and Dinucci 2003

Some key challenges



- **Disaster proneness:** Wars, droughts, famines tend to affect pastoral areas more than sedentary areas.
 - There seems to be more insecurity in pastoral areas (due to insurgencies of one kind or another),
 - Wetlands (riverine areas) in pastoral areas are under the greatest pressure, from expanding agriculture
 - Famines tend to have their worst effects in pastoral areas.
 - Land grabbing by local elites, the State, international companies and powerful countries now a major growing phenomenon.

Some key challenges

- **Neglect in terms of development interventions:**

Most development interventions in the pastoral areas are either imposed from the top by government and/or inappropriate, and are not tailored to the needs and aspirations of pastoral people.

- **Land tenure issues:** In most of the countries of the Horn of Africa, legislation regarding land-use does not accommodate or guarantee pastoral land rights and access. In some cases this has led to violent conflict between the state and pastoralists.

- **The expansion of Prosopis** invading high potential grazing areas and not utilized properly.

Opportunities

- **Some new thinking and positive developments over the last two decades:**

These include:

- ▣ Greater recognition by the state of the positive economic contribution pastoralists make to the national economies.
- ▣ A greater knowledge base based on sound research on the pastoral way of life, and the overcoming of old stereotypes.
- ▣ The World Bank, UN agencies and international NGOs recognize pastoralism as an important form of land use, that makes an important contribution to the national economy, and are willing to support it.

Opportunities

- There are a number of local NGOs/CBOS, created and managed by pastoral groups, representing their interests.
- More regional-international NGOs, research institutions doing more serious work on pastoralism and creating global alliances.
- More and more pastoralist associations and unions are emerging as pressure groups in each country region-wide.
- Some governments, e.g. in Uganda and Kenya, have allowed the formation of parliamentary pastoralist groups (PPGs) bringing together MPs representing pastoralist constituencies. For example The Federal constitution in Ethiopia (1996) recognizes pastoral land rights and the need to protect such rights.
- The idea of better services through mobile clinics, mobile schools, and mobile para-vets is now being introduced in some of the countries.

C. Country specific examples

Sudan (internal and external land grabbing but Government remaining custodian of the land)

- Major irrigated and mechanized schemes along the Nile and other river basin areas leading to in some cases to major environmental degradation because of clearing the natural vegetation and intense over cultivation. An example:
- Ghezira Scheme Size: Started in 1911 with 250 feddans and the area increased to 2.1 million feddans by the end of 1962 because of sennar Dam):Crops grown include cotton, sorghum wheat, groundnuts,vegetables, fruits, and fodder. State owned.
- Scheme Export oriented and intended to feed urban population. Local population including refugees and migrant workers from neighbouring countries main source of labour and not real beneficiaries in terms of food security.
- The land grabbing has official support and there are very strong alliances between the Sudanese big farmers and investors/international companies.

C. Country specific examples

- Neglect of other forms of livelihoods i.e. pastoralists, small farmers and hunter gather groups are major losers. Intrusion in such schemes for example for grazing is highly punishable .Fines can be heavy and police do regularly arrest such poor people.
- The Gulf States heavily invested and continue to invest on agriculture(both irrigated and rain fed)and import livestock cheaply from Sudan
- With the involvement of Korea, China as well Gulf States acquiring long term lessees the land grabbing is getting worse ever pushing the communities into the periphery.
- The same areas are the source of charcoal production for the cities leading to further devastation of ecology.
- Major resource based conflict may be inevitable if the situation continues like it is.
- The invasion of Prosopis Juliflora of such areas also totally undermining the ecological balance of the affected areas

C. Country specific examples

Eritrea(Government is the main custodian of the land but main focus on national food security)

- Commercial agriculture based on land grabbing in the high potential areas during the Italian colonial times(1889-1950 and the Federal period 1951-1961) targeting European and Italian markets
- During the 30 year war(1961-1991) much of the commercial infrastructure was destroyed as the result of intense war.
- Post independence 1993 to-date riverine areas in the Western lowlands have been heavily encroached and in some cases destroyed by incoming horticulturalists ,charcoal makers, returnees from Sudan ,settlers from the highlands and the army. A small pocket of commercial investors are also involved. Resource competition in such areas is intense with some occasional conflicts but not to the degree such conflicts occur in Sudan.
- There is a dilemma for the government of Eritrea on how to secure food and protect the environment at the same time as the above statement indicates. Nation wide there are intense efforts to rehabilitate the highly degraded environment through soil and water conservation
- The invasion of *Prosopis Juliflora* of such areas also totally undermining the ecological balance of the affected areas

D. Conclusion



- The biggest challenge for the Region is lack of peace and stability i.e. national security takes precedence over environmental and food security.
- A great deal more can be done to protect the rights of the communities by strengthening their capacities to fight for their rights.
- Stronger knowledge base is needed to serve as a tool for advocacy by like minded organisations at national and international levels.

E. Discussion points



1. How can land grabbing be realistically contained when stakeholders both internal and external) are so powerful while local communities are far less powerful?. Positive examples from elsewhere.
2. What role should national governments play to control the situation?.
3. How can academic institutions and NGOs/CBOs/Social movements work together to help secure land rights for the most vulnerable communities in Africa

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