

**Keekonyokie, SARD Livestock Field School in Olirein, Kenya<sup>1</sup>**

*By Isaac Nemuta and Peninah Sintamei*



*Isaac and Peninah at the entrance to their new field school*

**The Need for a Field School for the Maasai Pastoralists**

The change in the lifestyle of the Maasai pastoralists has led to many challenges. In this area we no longer migrate and so our farming methods have to change from the traditional pastoralist way to a ranching approach. We opened our Livestock Field School in March 2007 and since then we have had 150 pastoralists visiting us for training. We are open every Friday and men and women ranging in age from fifteen and seventy-five have come to discuss our challenges and ways that we can solve them. Many of the pastoralists have not been to school so the best way we have found to stimulate discussion is by using murals. We found an artist in Nairobi and paid him to paint both the challenges we face and some of the solutions we have found successful.

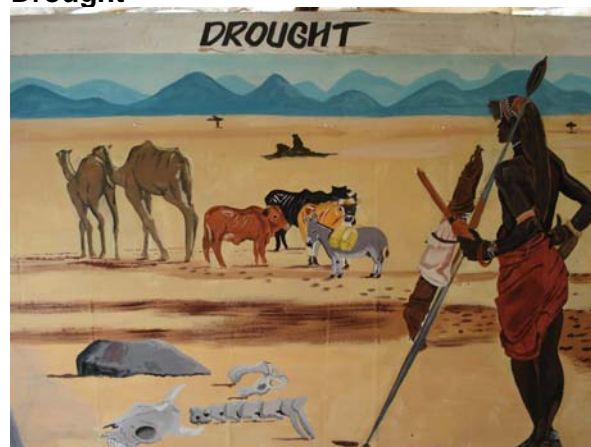
**Three Learning Objectives**

We have three huts which are centres of learning for: 1) natural resource management; 2) animal husbandry and marketing; 3) knowledge management and advocacy.

**Natural Resource Management**

Drought is a real threat to our lives. Our life style has changed; we no longer migrate so we have to learn to adapt our farming to cope with this. Also the climate seems to be changing, in 2000 there was a drought and then again in 2005. We have learned that it is very important to store enough water and fodder for our animals so that we can survive a drought without migrating.

**Drought**



*A painting presenting a challenging discussion for the field school*

At our school we can show the pastoralists practical examples of ways that fodder can be stored. We can show them our barn and how to make silage. These methods of fodder storage have enabled our animals to survive in times of drought. Also we can use the fodder to fatten the cattle before sending them to market.



*Wilfred Odungo outside his barn and silage pit*

By digging deep pits into existing water pools we have been able to increase the amount of stored water to give our cattle throughout the year.



*Keeping a good water supply is essential*

<sup>1</sup> Interviewed by Anne Dennig in September 2007

### Afforestation

Afforestation is another vital learning area. Many trees have been lost through too much cutting for charcoal, fires etc. We want to show our pastoralists both exotic species like eucalyptus which can provide our farmers with wood for building, fencing and fuel, and indigenous trees.



Isaac and Nemuta showing some seedlings of indigenous trees

Learning about breeds of cattle is important. We are planning to cross our traditional Maasai breeds with the exotic breeds so that we can produce animals that are resistant to drought but which are faster growing animals.

### Animal Management

Good animal care is so important; we would like members of our field school to train as community animal health workers. This will help us to keep our animals healthy by inoculation, and provide more knowledge of illnesses such as Rift Valley Fever which affected us badly this year. We need to understand the symptoms of the diseases that affect the animals in our community. With healthy animals reared in a well managed environment, quality milk and meat products can be produced and marketed. Healthy meat gets better prices at the market. The effects of our learning here in the field school will be seen at the abattoir in Kiserian and in the markets.



A circle discussion amongst the field school members



The Keekonyokee Abattoir at Kiserian

### Knowledge Management

Good knowledge management is another main learning area for the field school. We encourage dialogue by women and men on our important challenges, both at our school in our open circle discussion area and at home with family and friends. We want to support our members to attend workshops to gather new information.



Issac and Peninah at a marketing workshop

Finally we want to make our members aware of getting into dialogue with the government and carefully analysing new livestock policies so that we can advocate our own positions. There has been a very good reaction to our field school. Most of the pastoralists attending have not been to school and were a little anxious at first but enjoy the practical, visual approach that we take. Through the LLL we have already had interest from another group in Tanzania who would like to learn from our experience and we have plans to continue to develop our school.

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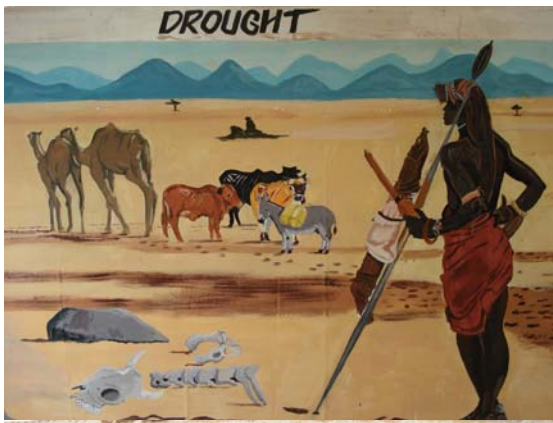
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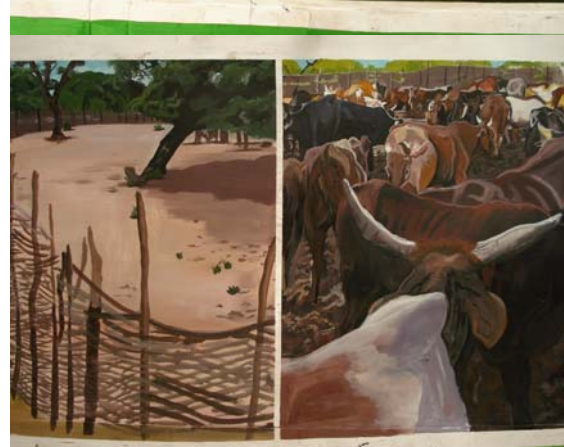
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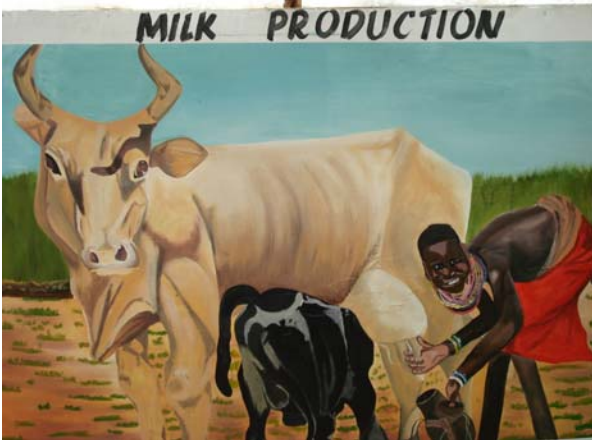
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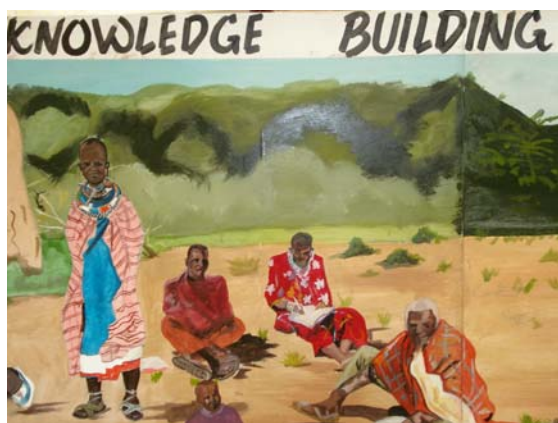
GATTLE GRAZING



Pictures for Learning on Natural Resource Management



**Pictures for Learning on Animal Husbandry and Marketing**



**Pictures for Learning on Knowledge Management and Advocacy**