

# OXFAM IN KENYA, 1963-2002

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## Abstract

The following thesis examines the role that Oxfam played in Kenyan development between 1963 and 2002. Academic studies of NGOs and their place in the development apparatus have, of course, been numerous and prominent, but to date they have often lacked the historicism and empiricism necessary to fully articulate the variegated functions that NGOs perform in the 'global south'. For this reason, the following thesis concentrates on documenting the shifting mechanisms, dynamics and discourses of Oxfam's work in Kenya. In its first case study chapter, the thesis argues that Oxfam offered its support to the Kenyan state apparatus and its seemingly exclusivist development ideology in the 1960s, but that such support was predicated on the Kenyan government behaving in a way that would reduce exploitation and promote equality. Thus, when such an approach was seen to be ineffective, Oxfam disengaged from the Kenyan state. In its second case study chapter, the thesis shows how Oxfam, emboldened by a shift in ideology towards 'conscientisation', sought instead to empower Kenya's most marginalised citizens. However, Oxfam's commitment to 'conscientisation' was challenged in the 1980s both by the hostility of the Moi regime to 'foreign' ideologies, and by the terrible drought and starvation unfolding in the north of the country. The chapter sheds light on Oxfam's response, which was to use an outwardly technical approach to development to allow for 'transformation by stealth'.

The third case study chapter focuses on the 1990s, by which time Oxfam had come to fear that older political logics would not disappear just because the authoritarian Moi regime was challenged from below. Accordingly, its staff felt that momentum for change needed to be maintained at the highest levels of government. Yet as Oxfam sought to re-engage with the state, Moi was attempting to informalise Kenya's institutions, and thus Oxfam projects and personnel were drawn into the political machinations of the Moi regime. The thesis concludes that historicised in such a way, development interventions take on a much messier appearance than overarching theories of development suppose. As such, the thesis forms part of a wider endeavour to test the predominant theories of social science as regards NGOs and development empirically and, above all, historically.

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Finally, I must thank those who have had a particularly important role throughout the research and writing process. Firstly, my parents and grandparents, who ensured that

I did not become consumed by my work. Secondly, my supervisor, Gerard McCann, who has encouraged me to seek connections where there appear to be none, to express myself with authority and to enjoy the intellectual freedom (and Nairobi) while I can. He also read my over-lengthy drafts without complaint, and, for the last five years or more, he has been absolutely vital in helping me maintain confidence in my own ideas and ability, and thus in helping me to achieve my potential. I will never be able to thank him enough for this. Lastly, my deepest gratitude goes to the woman who will shortly become my wife, Danielle. Her contributions have been too many to list, but include her decision to move to Kenya to support me during my research in Nairobi. Equally important has been her ability to forgive my frequent bouts of self-doubt and/or introversion as I wrestled with ideas. Suffice it to say, without her support I would not have reached the end.

## Author's Declaration

I, James Morris, declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

## Introduction

### THE ORCHESTRA ON THE TITANIC, OR PART FOGHORN, PART LIFE-RAFT?

We seem to have been case in the role of the orchestra on the Titanic – nice but ineffective, whereas we see ourselves as part foghorn, part life-raft!

Brendan Gormley, Africa Desk (North), in a submission to the Africa Committee from Brazzaville, Congo, in September 1986.

Throughout the middle months of 1986, members of Oxfam's Africa Committee debated the past, present and future of the organisation in Africa, the continent that brought Oxfam to the attention of the world more than 20 years previously.<sup>1</sup> The Committee reflected on decades of near unrivalled success in fundraising and small-scale relief and development efforts, but also spoke of the failure of development in Africa, a continent where the poorest were worse off than a decade, and even two decades, earlier. Implicit in much of the discussion was a haunting suspicion that all the time, effort and money invested in Africa by Oxfam and others had failed to ensure lasting improvement in any sense of the word for more than a small number of people. For some, rather like the orchestra on the Titanic – which played on stoically as the ship sank – Oxfam in its contemporary form was doing little more than generating soothing background noise for its Western supporters as Africa hurtled into its own iceberg of debt, structural adjustment and political, economic and social crises.<sup>2</sup> How Oxfam should conceive of its past and future divided the Committee: on one side were individuals such as Brendan Gormley – soon to be Oxfam's Africa Director – who lauded the fact that Oxfam had played, and would continue to play, at best a modest role in African development. On the other were those who concurred with Jeremy Swift, an expert on pastoralists (who were often Africa's most marginalised citizens); together, they lamented Oxfam's modesty and near-sightedness, which, they argued, guaranteed that even successful projects would

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<sup>1</sup> Oxfam was an abbreviation of the organisation's original name: the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, under which it operated until 1965. For ease of reading the name Oxfam is used throughout the thesis to denote the organisation regardless of the date under consideration.

<sup>2</sup> 'Oxfam in Africa', Brendan Gormley's submission to the Africa Committee [hereafter AfCom], September 1986, for discussion at 22 October meeting. Oxfam Archive, Oxford [hereafter OxA], MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986. See chapter three for a full discussion of this debate.

make barely a dent in the crisis enveloping the continent. Influenced by the organisation's foray into operational restocking projects in Northern Kenya in 1984-85,<sup>3</sup> Swift and his allies on the Committee argued that Oxfam needed to scale up – in a period of significant growth in donations – to a size where the organisation might challenge African governments, the World Bank and other development institutions to ensure that the interests of Oxfam's constituents – the poorest and least powerful – were no longer ignored.<sup>4</sup>

The 'Oxfam in Africa' debate is covered in greater detail in chapter three; but it is chosen as a starting point here because it illustrates two important details that must be considered when writing about a non-governmental organisation (NGO) like Oxfam. Firstly, the debate shows how judgement on the success or failure of development is almost always subjective. Of course, there are certain targets that NGO projects hope to meet: the number of goats distributed, the number of wells dug or the number of women attending committee meetings, for example. Nonetheless, judging whether any of these interventions actually constitutes *development* (as opposed to palliative relief work, environmental destruction or simple tokenism) is entirely subjective. Conceptions of development vary enormously, both within and between development institutions (as shown by the 'Oxfam in Africa' debate) and their host nations: for Kenya, in particular, as chapter one shows, development was a politically charged and contested concept amongst the nationalist elite. Other obstacles to any judgement include the lack of data available for assessment. Before the 1990s most NGOs, including Oxfam (though to a lesser extent than others), were better at financial accounting than producing project-based information.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, even project-based reports tended to veer towards the descriptive, focusing on the inputs provided (medicines, goats, boreholes) and outputs achieved (disease reduction, milk production, stock numbers) for each project. Often, such reports concentrated only on the short-term, meaning that the longer-term impact of NGO work on the lives of people from the village, town, region or country (regardless of any judgement on whether it was 'developmental' or not) is nearly impossible to

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<sup>3</sup> Operational projects are those funded, staffed and directed by Oxfam, in contrast to the normal mode of operations for the organisation at the time, which was to fund projects devised and managed by local groups or governments.

<sup>4</sup> 'Oxfam in Africa', Brendan Gormley's submission to AfCom, September 1986, for discussion at 22 October meeting. OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986; 'Oxfam's Future Work in Africa', Jeremy Swift's submission to AfCom, discussed 23 April 1986. OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/12 Folder 1: January 1986 – April 1986.

<sup>5</sup> R. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 265-266.

evaluate.<sup>6</sup> Most NGOs have, in fact, failed to maintain an adequate memory of their own past activities, with much knowledge of previous development efforts destroyed in an effort to make space for an ever increasing volume of files or lying withered and disorganised in unsuitable facilities, including the sheds and garages of expatriate staff guesthouses. As Jennings has written, NGOs 'are by their very nature forward looking' since they attempt to shape the future; however, this can come at the cost of understanding their own past.<sup>7</sup> (Ian Smillie has argued that there are other, more powerful, reasons for NGOs to forget the lessons of their past, including the constant battle for donations and public funding, which means that published histories of project work can tend to be biased towards showing success.<sup>8</sup>) A related difficulty is the need to disentangle an NGO's impact from the myriad other factors (including the work of other NGOs) affecting the development of an area. Even if a particular intervention, such as a borehole, is considered 'developmental' and is successfully installed, and even if the number of people congregating at famine camps decreased around the same time as the borehole was dug, it is difficult to assert with confidence that the borehole *caused* or was even the most significant cause of a drop in numbers at the famine camp.<sup>9</sup> Hence, accurately evaluating an NGO's contribution to even local level development, particularly in the long-term, is fraught with difficulty and is not a task this thesis prioritises.

Instead, the thesis examines the *role* that Oxfam played in Kenyan development. As discussed in greater detail in the following section, although academic studies of NGOs and their place in the development apparatus have been numerous and prominent, to date they have often lacked the historicism and empiricism necessary to fully articulate the variegated functions that NGOs perform in the 'global south'. Instead, they have either focused on providing a descriptive overview of NGO numbers, NGO types and NGO financial contributions,<sup>10</sup> or they have approached the work of NGOs in an ideological

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<sup>6</sup> Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, p. 271.

<sup>7</sup> M. Jennings, 'Surrogates of the State: Oxfam and Development in Tanzania, 1961-79', Ph.D. thesis, SOAS, 1998, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> I. Smillie, *The Alms Bazaar: Altruism under Fire – Non-Profit Organizations and International Development* (London, Intermediate Technology Publications, 1995), pp. 158-159; Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, p. 267. See 'Oxfam Annual Report & Accounts, 2013/14', [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/~media/Files/OGB/What%20we%20do/About%20us/Plans%20reports%20and%20policies/6182\\_Oxfam\\_ARA\\_web\\_final.ashx](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/~media/Files/OGB/What%20we%20do/About%20us/Plans%20reports%20and%20policies/6182_Oxfam_ARA_web_final.ashx) [accessed 5 March 2015].

<sup>9</sup> When organisations move onto terrain with less observable outputs, such as 'empowerment' or capacity building of local organisations and institutions, the difficulty increases since the markers of success are less than clear. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, p. 266.

<sup>10</sup> See for instance J. Semboja and O. Therkildsen, *Service Provision under Stress: The State, NGOs & People's Organizations in Kenya, Tanzania & Uganda* (London, J. Currey, 1995). This edited collection is one of the better discussions of NGO work in East Africa, but even so talks about NGOs in a general sense.

fashion, arguing from pre-formed judgements and theories that development interventions are, for instance, an extension of Western and US (neo-) imperialism in which NGOs are complicit.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, such studies do not always interrogate how institutions like NGOs actually operate; more often than not, NGOs are treated in generic terms, and their varied ideologies, organisational forms and relations to state mechanisms remain underexplored.<sup>12</sup> Such an approach is particularly problematic since even individual NGOs cannot be considered as monolithic or static: for instance, there was – and is – no such thing as a single ‘Oxfam’, except in an institutional sense.<sup>13</sup> Tony Vaux, a member of the organisation for more than 28 years, describes the 1980s as an era when ‘Oxfam was scarcely an entity at all but a group of free-moving individuals’ working in a variety of contexts across the world.<sup>14</sup> The ‘Oxfam in Africa’ debate opens a window onto this ‘age of the individual’, documenting one stage in the incessant tug-of-war between different interpretations of Oxfam’s mandate held by a number of prominent staff, whose own interests were shaped by their previous experience ‘on the ground’ in Kenya and elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> Michael Jennings has asserted more recently that the earlier one goes back into Oxfam history the more accurate Vaux’s assessment is: before ‘Oxfam’s direction had solidified into bureaucratic mechanisms’, he suggests, ‘the Field Director and the periphery were able to shape Oxfam policy’ both in Oxford and at the local level.<sup>16</sup> The role that Oxfam fulfilled in Kenya cannot, therefore, be predicted based on our (limited) knowledge of NGO work in other spatial and temporal contexts; nor can it be predicted based on Hegelian, Weberian or other social science theories that oversimplify

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<sup>11</sup> A. Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, Princeton University Press 1994); F. Manji and C. O’Coill, ‘The Missionary Position: NGOs and Development in Africa’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (2002), pp. 567-583.

<sup>12</sup> Even when monographs engage at a deeper level with NGO activities, their authors’ ideological proclivities often shine through: thus Mahmood Mamdani’s work on Darfur alleges that the Save Darfur lobby in the US masked a big power agenda to recolonise Africa, and was an extension of the Bush-era ‘war on terror’. Scarred by the Iraq war and fixated on US imperial designs, Mamdani reads far more into Save Darfur’s actions than is justified by the evidence, and overestimates their lobbying power. M. Mamdani, *Saviours and Survivors: Dafur, Politics and the War on Terror* (Three Rivers Press, 2010). See also F. Cooper and R. M. Packard (eds.), *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (University of California Press, 1997), p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> Of course, in a literal sense, there are other Oxfams established in other Western nations (Canada, the US and Belgium for instance), but the thesis focuses on Oxfam GB and its non-homogeneity.

<sup>14</sup> Africa, where the Field Director system took shape (see chapter one), absorbed around 50 per cent of Oxfam’s overseas aid at this time. But the organisation’s interest in India – where Oxfam made its first effort to respond to a natural disaster in a ‘developing country’ – and Central and Southern America was expanding: each received around one fifth of Oxfam aid from the mid-1970s. T. Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and War* (London, Earthscan Publications, 2001), p. 68; M. Black, *A Cause for Our Times: Oxfam: The First 50 Years* (Oxfam, Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 184.

<sup>15</sup> The outcome of this debate is discussed in chapter three.

<sup>16</sup> M. Jennings, ‘“Almost an Oxfam in Itself”: Oxfam, Ujamaa and Development in Tanzania’, *African Affairs*, Vol. 101 (2002), p. 517.

the role of civil society and the place of NGOs in the 'development apparatus'. As one former Oxfam staff member recalled, Oxfam has always been a vastly different organisation depending on where and when one looks at it: thus in Central Africa it has been known as '*plombiers sans frontieres*' for its water and sanitation work over recent years, while in Arusha and Dar es Salaam it was at the same time mobilising radical youth to protest government policies.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, even attempts to write institutional histories of particular NGOs such as Oxfam (though informative) are restricted because of their need to adopt a rather broad-brush approach, an approach which lacks (for want of space) enough engagement with each NGO's work in specific contexts and the influence of such work on the organisation itself.<sup>18</sup>

Though the somewhat enigmatic nature of NGOs may seem to question the very utility of the following study, in fact it only makes it more incumbent on researchers interested in the history of development to look more closely at particular NGOs and their role in different contexts. Narrowness as regards location and/or time-period should not, therefore, be mistaken for methodological error; on the contrary, a generalising or broad-brush approach to the study of NGOs is truly problematic because it comes at the expense of a nuanced understanding of NGOs in all their specificity and violates the historicism necessary to gain a proper understanding of the development apparatus in its full complexity. The way forward is best illustrated by the dynamic perspective adopted by Christy Cannon Lorgen, who has published work on Oxfam's health work in Malawi, Uganda and Zambia. Lorgen suggests that NGOs such as Oxfam formulate policy and take action based on the unique interaction of 'pragmatism' and 'values' in particular locations and time periods.<sup>19</sup> 'Pragmatism', in this sense, includes the survival needs of the organisation, its financial situation and its rapport with the host government. 'Values', on the other hand, includes the organisation's mandate, its approach to development and its perception of its role in the host country.

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October 2014.

<sup>18</sup> For Oxfam, Maggie Black's *A Cause for Our Times: Oxfam: The First 50 Years* and Ben Whitaker's *A Bridge of People: A Personal View of Oxfam's First Forty Years* serve this purpose, documenting in a general and wide-ranging sense the history of the organisation from its inception in 1942. Black, *A Cause for Our Times*; B. Whitaker, *A Bridge of People: A Personal View of Oxfam's First Forty Years* (London, Heinemann, 1983). Examples of histories of NGOs other than Oxfam include D. Mickelwait, C. Sweet and E. Morss, *New Directions in Development: A Study of U.S. AID* (Boulder, Colo., Westview Press, 1979); S. Ross, *The World Food Programme in Global Politics* (Boulder, Colo., Lynne Rienner, 2011); D. Shaw, *The World's Largest Humanitarian Agency: The Transformation of the UN World Food Programme and of Food Aid* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); L. Mahood, 'Feminists, Politics and Children's Charity: The Formation of Save the Children Fund', *The Journal of the Institute of Volunteering Research*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2002), pp. 71-88.

<sup>19</sup> C. C. Lorgen, 'Dancing with the State: The Role of NGOs in Health Care and Health Policy', *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 10 (1998), pp. 323-339.

Such a dynamic perspective acknowledges that NGO interventions are the outcome of an unpredictable and unique interaction between organisational ideals and the realities of working 'on the ground'. This reflexive interaction (between ideal and reality, between centre and periphery), the outcomes it produced and the roles that NGOs like Oxfam adopted in particular contexts demands detailed historical analysis: the conceptual framework by which an NGO operates is rooted in the outcomes of these interactions, and in such a way the periphery acts upon an NGO as much as the NGO acts on the future of its host nation.<sup>20</sup> By acknowledging that each NGO is distinctive, that its role is based on how the interaction between 'pragmatism' and 'values' changes over time, and that it depends on the location in which it is working – as the political, economic, social and historical context differs – this dynamic perspective challenges researchers to uncover a deeper history of NGO interventions in the 'global south'. At the same time, the perspective adopted by Lorgen retains analytical utility by allowing for some degree of comparison between organisations, and across continents and time periods; it trains its focus on the minutiae of the interactions between an NGO and its host environment that help to determine its role in specific contexts, but without descending into the paralysis of continual contextualisation and description. NGOs are thus understood as an arena within which the ideological and practical tensions regarding development are internalised, debated and resolved.

How Oxfam resolved these tensions and found a role in Kenya, a nation for which development was (and is) intimately related with the very political challenge of independent nationhood, is the primary focus of the following thesis. Unsurprisingly, the study avoids making grand judgements on the success or failure of Oxfam interventions. While it includes some discussion of the organisation's relative successes, it is as much focused on the mechanisms, dynamics, structures and discourses of Oxfam's approach to its work in Kenya, and the extent to which these were influenced by (and themselves influenced) internal organisational debates and the local context (in particular the fluctuating relationship between Oxfam and the Kenyan state). In 1967, for instance, Oxfam granted £3,000 to Gatundu hospital; this was a relatively uncontroversial donation on the surface, but it takes on more significance when it is understood that Gatundu hospital was an institution used by President Kenyatta to accumulate donated funds ready for dispersal elsewhere in order to buy political support. The thesis uses case

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<sup>20</sup> N. Gilman, Review of Special Forum for H-Diplo – 'Modernization as a Global Project', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2009), p. 6; Jennings, 'Surrogates of the State', p. 29.

studies such as this to assess the function Oxfam fulfilled in Kenya and to contribute to a number of development 'histories': the history of Oxfam, the history of Kenyan development, and the history of development in Africa and as a broad international phenomenon. As such, it forms part of a wider endeavour to test the predominant theories of social science as regards NGOs and development empirically and, above all, historically, updating Eric Hobsbawm's call for historians to perform a useful interdisciplinary function by problematising overarching social theories. For Hobsbawm, social history could never equal the 'backward projection of sociology'; this thesis argues that development history does not equal the backward projection of contemporary theories about the form and function of development. Instead, the history of development as a project requires that general models of the structure and pattern of development interventions are challenged and nuanced by the examination of the highly contextualised interaction between 'local' and 'global' – or 'transnational' – forces.<sup>21</sup>

The major research questions the thesis seeks to answer include: what role did Oxfam play in Kenyan development from 1963-2002?; how did this role and Oxfam's approach change during that time?; how far were these changes in response to the local Kenya context, Oxfam's 'pragmatism' and 'values' or broader changes in development work globally?; what did these changes mean for the relationship between Oxfam and the Kenyan state?; how was this relationship constructed, shaped, understood and maintained?; and how did this relationship shift over time? The thesis argues that Oxfam did not impose an 'off-the-shelf' or apolitical development solution on Kenya, as alleged by the foremost academic critics of NGOs. On the contrary, the thesis argues that Oxfam 'values' predisposed it to take a very political view of poverty and development. Placing the Gatundu donation in its wider context, for example, reveals that the donation was part of an attempt to gain favour with the Kenyan government in order that Oxfam might encourage it to take on board the organisation's ideas about the appropriate role of the developmental state in Africa. Case studies such as this, alongside copious correspondence and reports, illuminate that the unique combination of Oxfam's 'pragmatism' – in particular its need to adapt to the shifting politics of development on the ground in Kenya (where the state sought to maximise its political control using the powerful rhetoric and practical benefits offered by development) – with changes in its 'values' and ideology caused the organisation to adopt three distinct roles in Kenya across

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<sup>21</sup> E. Hobsbawm, 'From Social History to the History of Society', *Daedalus*, Vol. 100, No. 1 (1971), pp. 20-45; see also J. Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, (London, Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 89-103.

the period. These included (but were not limited to) an effort to act as a supporter of state-led modernisation (as demonstrated by Gatundu), an attempt to back radical empowerment movements to challenge the Kenyan state, and a late struggle to direct high-level policy change. The thesis is divided chronologically in order to illuminate these divergent approaches and, crucially, to historicise the fluctuations in Oxfam's development work by linking them with their underlying causes. As a textured case study of Oxfam in Kenya and of its relationship with the Kenyan state, the periodisation of chapters two, three and four matches distinct phases in Kenyan governance: the Kenyatta era (1963-1978), the *de facto* and *de jure* single-party Moi era (1978-1991) and the multiparty Moi era (1991-2002). Precisely because so little is known of the interactions between NGOs and their local environment, laying out the detail of Oxfam's workings in Kenya in such a manner, as opposed to focusing on Oxfam's changing role in the context of an alternative chronology of development ideas at a global level (though this is an underlying theme of the thesis), is a natural starting point to test social theories regarding NGOs.

The sources used to analyse the role of Oxfam in Kenya are for the most part qualitative and archival in nature. (Quantitative sources are used more sparingly, and mostly to illustrate the shifting scale of Oxfam operations.<sup>22</sup>) Unsurprisingly, sources from the Oxfam archive formed the basis of the research. NGO archives such as this offer an unparalleled perspective on four decades of development, written as they were at the 'periphery' and close to the 'targets' of development work, and offering information on the relationship between the international community and 'southern' governments. Yet the majority of the Oxfam archive has remained almost completely untapped by historians. Indeed, content to leave the study of development to economists and anthropologists until quite recently, historians have spent little time analysing data held by the vast array of international organisations, described elsewhere as the 'missionary archive of the late twentieth century'.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, as mentioned above, NGOs have shown little interest in their own past. In a sign of acknowledgement that their past may be of interest to external researchers, however, Oxfam consented for their entire archive

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<sup>22</sup> Crucially, the size of investment was not seen by Oxfam staff as the most significant factor for determining the success or failure of projects: the difference spending (on whatever scale) made to people's lives was felt to be more important than disbursing ever-larger amounts of money. Nevertheless, it could still loom large in the remote locations in which it operated.

<sup>23</sup> A. Burton and M. Jennings, 'Introduction: The Emperor's New Clothes? Continuities in Governance in Late Colonial and Early Postcolonial East Africa', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (2007), pp. 1-25.

to be moved to the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and cataloguing began in 2013.<sup>24</sup> The author was one of the first researchers to be granted access to the archive as it was being catalogued. The following thesis is, moreover, the first attempt to use the newly organised Oxfam archive to research the development encounter in Kenya, and one of very few to use the archive to research Oxfam as an historical actor.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, the on-going cataloguing effort means that a significant portion of the archive was, and is, unavailable for researchers. This portion includes the majority of the project reports and evaluations for Kenya. Nonetheless, by using the materials available (for the most part annual reports, correspondence and minutes of the Africa Committee), it has been possible to piece together an enlightening narrative as regards a number of significant Oxfam projects in Kenya as well as to show how they reflected and influenced the overall shape of Oxfam's Kenya programme. The opening of the remainder of the archive in 2017 thus presents a novel opportunity for postdoctoral research, not only on Oxfam in Kenya, but also on its role in Africa in a comparative sense.<sup>26</sup> Research undertaken in the next few years will continue to push the frontiers of our knowledge of how Oxfam operated in the past.

The archival material available for research on Kenya included a number of project reports and evaluations as well as annual reports on the Kenyan development context and Oxfam's place therein. Field staff based in Nairobi for the most part wrote these reports for despatch to Oxford. Another large portion of the archive is taken up by the minutes and proceedings of the Africa Committee, first established in 1963 to coordinate Oxfam's work across the continent. The Committee met quarterly at Oxfam House to discuss Oxfam's work in each target country and any changes that were required in outlook, aims or operation. There also exists a great deal of detailed correspondence between Nairobi and Oxford, often clarifying the decisions of the Africa Committee or querying them based on local knowledge. As discussed in the following chapter, for the majority of the period under examination, Oxfam operated in a decentralised fashion, with much responsibility resting on the shoulders of its Field Directors. In 1968, there

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<sup>24</sup> The completed archive includes 34,000 project files, documenting core activity between 1955 and 2005; correspondence with international staff, country reports and records of programme administration and operations; minute books of the Oxfam executive; and campaign materials. For more information, see <https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/weston/our-work/projects/saving-oxford-medicine>.

<sup>25</sup> Chapter one discusses the historiography of Oxfam in greater detail.

<sup>26</sup> There is also potential for an historical comparison of the approaches taken in different continents, albeit with a focus trained at country or project level.

were only seven Field Directors to cover 89 countries and 638 projects.<sup>27</sup> These individuals occupied a central position in project selection and execution due to their position 'on the ground', and their interpretation of local circumstances was vital for determining the direction of the organisation in each location (as the three chapters on Oxfam in Kenya demonstrate). Unsurprisingly, therefore, much of the source material pertaining to this thesis was generated by either the Field Director or the Africa Committee and for the most part dwelt on their relationship and on the rapport between the Field Director and the host government. With very few staff employed in Kenya until the 1980s and beyond – the first Kenyan employee joined the organisation in 1984 – there are few non-'elite' voices to be heard, in any case. Consequently, the following thesis is necessarily focused for the most part on the voices of Field Directors and other 'elite' actors in Oxford. Nonetheless, since the documents contained in the archive were, for the most part, designed for internal consumption at a high level, they offer brutally honest opinions and appraisals of Oxfam's programme in Kenya and elsewhere. Discussions and correspondence concerning shortcomings and failures (as seen from one perspective) often led to spirited ideological arguments for and against the approach taken on the ground, disagreements over the aims and ideals of the organisation, and tension as regards the compromises necessary to achieve its objectives. Internal conflict thus comes to the fore to a much greater extent than in literature released into the public domain by NGOs like Oxfam, many of which attempt to present a coherent message on development and their organisation's role in combating poverty.

The earlier sections of the study also make use of sources held at the Kenya National Archives (KNA) in Nairobi.<sup>28</sup> Research in Kenya proved invaluable for understanding the development policies of the Kenya government across the period, the government's attitudes towards NGOs in general and its position on Oxfam's developmental efforts inside its borders, but was not without its challenges. As the size of government was scaled back in the 1980s and 1990s, facilities such as the KNA were some of the first to see their funding reduced, alongside higher education.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, files in the KNA were often difficult to find or in poor condition. Moreover, the researcher who wishes to learn about areas in the arid north and east of the country will struggle to find as much as those interested in more central areas: Kenya's periphery is marginal in more

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<sup>27</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 299.

<sup>28</sup> The thirty-year closure rule meant that only files from the pre-1984 period were available for researchers.

<sup>29</sup> This was, of course, convenient for a regime that saw its legitimacy challenged – particularly by university students and academics.

than a geographical sense. Although the KNA staff are knowledgeable about the collection and its boundaries, the researcher must spend a good deal of time copiously reading and comparing the numerous search guides and file indexes together with the computer database. Both aids suffer from limitations: for instance, the bound indexes – divided by geography and administrative department – often do not list files chronologically, even within their numerous sub-sections, and give either very general or misleadingly specific short titles for each file. Meanwhile, the utility of the computer database is undermined by the number of typing errors it contains, which result in false negative results for searches by keyword.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, even when files were identified in one or more of the indexes, it frequently transpired that they had been improperly catalogued or were missing. Regrettably, this was a common occurrence when looking for files that contained information specifically about Oxfam.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, by adapting the research methodology and widening the search criteria to include development reports and committee meetings from districts and provinces where Oxfam focused its work, departmental monthly and annual reports for departments related to Oxfam’s programme, and files that discussed the Kenya Freedom From Hunger Committee (KFFHC) – with which Oxfam was closely involved – it was possible to supplement the findings from Oxford. As a result of the 30-year closure rule for official files, however, research in the KNA was limited to the period between 1963 and 1984. For this reason, chapters three and four contain less local detail than chapter two and rely to a greater extent on documentation from Oxford. Fortunately, the early 1980s saw an expansion as regards the length and depth of Field Directors’ reports. Furthermore, contacts made with Oxfam staff in Kenya meant that research was possible in the Oxfam Head Office in Nairobi as well as at the Oxfam guesthouse for expatriate staff in Lavington. Files held in both locations mirrored the nature of the Oxfam archive in the UK, though they offered a greater level of detail as no effort to sort and remove files felt to be of lesser importance has been made for a number of years. Finally, 21 interviews were arranged with current and former Oxfam staff.<sup>32</sup> These helped to nuance the ‘official’ side of the story contained in the archives, providing information (then corroborated) about controversial and sensitive issues that were not documented in the archives.

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<sup>30</sup> See M. Carotenuto and K. Luongo, ‘Navigating the Kenya National Archives: Research and its Role in Kenyan Society’, *History in Africa*, Vol. 32 (2005), pp. 445-455 for a helpful guide on how to proceed when undertaking research in the KNA.

<sup>31</sup> Only the first of a number of files on Oxfam was even catalogued; moreover, this file concentrated on the period 1962-1964 and so was only of limited use.

<sup>32</sup> These interviewees are anonymised in the thesis.

## DEVELOPMENT? IT'S HISTORY.<sup>33</sup>

For a time during the 1980s, it seemed as if the idea of development had been banished from mainstream economics and was, in every sense of the word, history. Western economists and policy-makers saw the development project as a relic of the past: outdated and finished. In its place stood faith in market discipline, orthodox economic policy and the progressive nature of global capitalism, evidenced by the (erroneous) example provided by South East Asia's 'Newly Industrialising Countries' (NICs).<sup>34</sup> Hostility to the development project, and particularly to the *dirigisme* with which it was intimately related at that time, was to accelerate in the West throughout the decade as 'Reaganomics' and 'Thatcherism' displaced Keynesianism and ideas of redistribution from mainstream economic debate.<sup>35</sup> The championing of free-market economic policies was based less on the ostensibly positive examples provided by NICs, however, than on a powerful ideological shift in the West caused by changes in the global economy that threatened to undermine Western economic prosperity. Most importantly, after the Nixon administration abandoned the gold exchange standard in 1971, raw materials acquired increased price variability, and oil-producing nations were able to raise the price of oil by embargoing production, which they did in October that year.<sup>36</sup> These rising oil prices contributed to stagflation in the West (in particular in the US and UK), and as 'developed' nations turned inwards to deal with their own problems of rising unemployment and inflation, the hitherto dominant welfarist, *dirigiste* and voluntarist concept of international development (discussed below) came under sustained attack from economists such as P. T. Bauer, who advocated on behalf of efficient market forces and trickle-down economic growth at home and abroad.

The crippling debt crisis faced by developing nations during the 1980s only added fuel to the pro-market 'employers' offensive' associated with Reagan, Thatcher and international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank and International

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<sup>33</sup> Much of the early inspiration for this section, as well as its title, comes from two articles: N. Cullather, 'Development? It's History', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (2000), pp. 641-653, and F. Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', *Journal of Modern European History*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2010), pp. 5-23.

<sup>34</sup> NICs like Taiwan and South Korea experienced years of massive state intervention and ISI policies, protectionism, interest rate manipulations and labour market restrictions – the antithesis of free market principles. See M. T. Berger, 'The End of the "Third World"?', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1994), pp. 257-275.

<sup>35</sup> Most notably, they succeeded in suppressing the redistributive recommendations of the Brandt Report. R. Jolly, et al. (eds.), *UN Contributions to Development Thinking and Practice* (Bloomington, 2004), p. 112; Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Work?*, p. 35.

<sup>36</sup> C. Leys, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory* (London, 1996), pp. 21-23.

Monetary Fund (IMF). Though caused by a sudden hike in the interest rate on petro-dollar loans that had flooded the global market after the oil embargo,<sup>37</sup> the debt crisis reaffirmed the faith held by many in the West in the efficacy of supply-side economic reform and strengthened their belief that inefficient and corruption-riddled 'developmental states' in the South should succumb to the supreme rationality of the free market.<sup>38</sup> Thus the contemporary concept of development – based on state planning and investment – faced a 'perfect storm' of economic and ideological opposition, and the politics of development quickly became the 'politics of the write-off' as Western governments and IFIs denied Southern claims on global resources and placed the blame for failed development at the feet of crumbling Southern states. Indeed, state-led development would move from the cornerstone of economics to the millstone around its neck.<sup>39</sup> Bailout loans from the US-dominated IMF would stipulate as conditions for lending: the reduction of the size of the state (both in terms of budget and the number of state-owned enterprises), the devaluation of national currencies and the liberalisation of the host economy in general.<sup>40</sup>

Of course, such conditional loans – termed Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) – ensured that the incapacity of the state in the developing world given as their rationale would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. There was, moreover, little objective evidence that these conditions would successfully translate into broad economic growth: arguments in favour of the free market 'solution' to underdevelopment were abstracted, decontextualised and ignorant of longer-term colonial and more recent history, which had predisposed southern states to follow particular (and often nefarious) paths.<sup>41</sup> Rather than acknowledging the brutal combination of an inequitable global economic structure, the perverse legacy of colonialism and predatory post-colonial leadership, and attempting

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<sup>37</sup> After the US returned to a strong dollar policy in the mid-1970s, interest rates on petro-dollar loans to developing countries (hitherto negative in real terms since the increase in the price of oil had led to a surplus of petro-dollars) became prohibitively expensive, rising from 0.7 per cent between 1972-75 to around 5 per cent between 1980-82. This resulted in the combined capital accounts of developing nations moving from a surplus of \$85.7 billion between 1978-1980 to a cumulative deficit of \$54.8 billion between 1981-1984. Jolly, et al. (eds.), *UN Contributions to Development Thinking and Practice*, p. 140; B. R. Tomlinson, 'What was the Third World?', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2003), p. 316.

<sup>38</sup> The nature of 'developmental states' is discussed further below.

<sup>39</sup> Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', p. 8; B. Sanyal, *Cooperative Autonomy: The Dialectics of State-NGO Relationships in Developing Countries*, Research Series 100 (Geneva: ILO, 1994), p. 28; T. Mkandawire, 'Thinking about Developmental States in Africa', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, Vol. 25 (2001), p. 293.

<sup>40</sup> J. Sender, 'Africa's Economic Performance: Limitations of the Current Consensus', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1999), p. 105.

<sup>41</sup> This particular history is dealt with in greater detail below. Mkandawire, 'Thinking about Developmental States', p. 306.

to mould a solution to fit the needs of developing countries, the 'Washington consensus' in fact advocated a solution that best served the interests of the West.<sup>42</sup> That such a solution had no understanding of the needs of developing countries is clear from the development record of the time. Now considered a 'lost decade' of development, the 1980s was almost totally negative in economic and political terms, and often entrenched the negative facets of African and other Southern states which the SAP regime apparently aimed to eradicate. As Cooper wrote:

If the decline of development funding and state initiatives in economic matters, decreasing economic regulation, and the firing of bureaucrats and soldiers were supposed to unleash a wave of local creativity, that creativity often took the form of warlords organizing local armies, of underpaid civil servants organizing rackets of all sorts, or of structures of clientage and dependence becoming entrenched.<sup>43</sup>

In Kenya for instance, as SAPs forced a reduction in the size of the state, President Daniel arap Moi struggled to maintain the patronage networks holding together the fragile inter-ethnic elite alliance at the top of government. Partly as a result of this, the elite alliance fragmented, encouraging Moi and his cronies to manipulate ethnic divisions in order to incite the violent displacement of 'non-indigenous' (and coincidentally anti-Moi) ethnic groups from important constituencies, while also encouraging the President and his associates to loot the state coffers before being ousted.<sup>44</sup>

Economists reacted in different ways to the disastrous results of the SAP regime in Kenya and elsewhere. Some, such as Jeffrey Sachs, abandoned their advocacy of marketization and structural adjustment in favour of a return to state planning and large-scale development schemes.<sup>45</sup> Others, like William Easterly, saw the corruption and state failure encouraged by SAPs as a vindication of their anti-state and anti-development position, and continued to argue for the 'objective' primacy of the market.<sup>46</sup> Evidence of the failures of the SAP regime – including increasing poverty and inequality – was used to highlight the distance between the aims and outcomes of development and to question the development endeavour in its entirety.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> See chapter two. See also D. Branch and N. Cheeseman, 'Conclusion', in D. Branch, N. Cheeseman and L. Gardner (eds.), *Our Turn to Eat: Politics in Kenya since 1950* (Berlin, Lit. Verlag, 2010), pp. 244-252; D. Branch and N. Cheeseman, 'Democratization, Sequencing and State Failure in Africa: Lessons from Kenya', *African Affairs*, Vol. 108, No. 430 (2009), pp. 3-4, 7.

<sup>45</sup> J. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York, 2005).

<sup>46</sup> W. Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> E. Crewe and E. Harrison, *Whose Development? An Ethnography of Aid* (London, Zed Books, 1998), p. 14.

If the gap between intention and effect allowed those on the right to attack the idea that development could be separated from trickle-down economics, those on the left understood the gap differently; nonetheless, their conclusions still questioned the very concept of development. Influenced by the anti-developmental effects of structural adjustment and by the work of Michel Foucault, the left attempted to explain the failure of development through discourse analysis.<sup>48</sup> Criticism came in the assertion that development, both as an idea and as experienced reality, is, in fact, a knowledge-power dyad, in which power (whether economic, political, cultural or ideological – to name the most common examples) produces scientific ‘truth’ (knowledge), which is then used as justification for Western development interventions. These, in turn, support and maintain Western global hegemony and reinforce the power structure that enables the West to determine what is and is not ‘scientific’ knowledge.<sup>49</sup> For writers such as Arturo Escobar and James Ferguson, development thus serves as an apparatus of control and surveillance over the South, integrating and managing countries and populations in increasingly encompassing and powerful ways.<sup>50</sup> According to this interpretation, development makes the world safe for the continued dominance of Western capitalist imperialism.

Most insidiously, if development discourse reinforces power relations, it does so beneath a benign and outwardly-desirable surface: thus a development worker and recipient of development aid may believe that they are helping or being helped, but in reality their actions in delivering and receiving development help to naturalise Western modernity and inscribe on the world a single path for betterment. Whether a conspiracy of Western nations or an unintended consequence of well-intentioned development efforts, for many on the left, the development concept serves to reinforce global hierarchy by entrenching the dominant positions of those who have achieved ‘developed’ status.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, it is argued that such an action is, in fact, *depoliticised* by a development discourse that acts as an ‘anti-politics machine’, obscuring the historical and political causes of poverty with references to apparently ‘neutral’ science and

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<sup>48</sup> M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York, Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>49</sup> Escobar, *Encountering Development*; W. Sachs (ed.), *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (London, 1992); Cooper, ‘Writing the History of Development’, p. 6; M. DuBois, ‘The Governance of the Third World: A Foucauldian Perspective on Power Relations in Development’, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1991), pp. 1-30; D. B. Moore and G. J. Schmitz (eds.), *Debating Development Discourse: Institutional and Popular Perspectives* (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1995); J. Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: ‘Development’, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>50</sup> Escobar, *Encountering Development*; Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*.

<sup>51</sup> Cooper, ‘Writing the History of Development’, p. 6;

technology.<sup>52</sup> In this sense, even the failure of development interventions reinforces ‘developmentalism’ by defining anew a ‘target’ population in need of intervention. This serves to expand the power of ‘neutral’ bureaucracies and development institutions, which offer no alternatives to the dominant development paradigm.<sup>53</sup>

The claim that development has played a crucial role in guaranteeing the hegemony of capitalism on a global scale explains to a large extent the common misnomer that development and underdevelopment were ‘invented’ by the United States in 1945 – or in 1949 with President Truman’s ‘Point Four’ address – in order to justify intervention in the South on behalf of its capitalist project.<sup>54</sup> Development was, such authors allege, devised as a tool of modernisation and diplomacy.<sup>55</sup> Together with its antonym – underdevelopment – development justified US intervention and disguised the export of its global capitalist ‘imperialism’ in neutral, technical and scientific language.<sup>56</sup> For David Moore ‘the insertion of the word “development” into the lexicon of legitimacy for global capitalism is the most important facet of its hegemonic project’.<sup>57</sup> Similarly to the charge that European empires produced, and thereby controlled, the Oriental ‘other’ ‘politically, sociologically, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively’ through ‘Orientalism’, it is alleged that the US (with other Western nations following its footsteps) produced and controlled the South through ‘developmentalism’.<sup>58</sup> Yet even scholars who see development as a tool of American diplomacy (or imperialism) are now forced to acknowledge that development as experienced in the post-war period had at least some of its roots in the earlier colonial era.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, for many, this genealogy merely confirms their suspicions that development is colonialism by another means; whereas in actual fact the colonial history of the development concept challenges writing on

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<sup>52</sup> Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*.

<sup>53</sup> Cooper and Packard, *International Development and the Social Sciences*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>54</sup> Escobar, *Encountering Development*, p. 22; A. Escobar, ‘Anthropology and the Development Encounter: The Making and Marketing of Development Anthropology’, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1991), pp. 675-676; A. Escobar, ‘Imagining a Post-Development Era’ in J. Crush (ed.), *Power of Development* (London, Routledge, 1995), pp. 213-215; G. Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (New York, Zed Books, 1997); Sachs (ed.), *The Development Dictionary*; W. Sachs, ‘The Archaeology of the Development Idea’, *Interculture*, Vol. 109 (1990), pp. 1-25.

<sup>55</sup> Among American scholars in particular, a prominent master narrative asserts that the discourse of development is American, starting with Truman’s address and based on American ideas of progress, Wilsonianism and the New Deal. See M. Frey and S. Kunkel, ‘Writing the History of Development: A Review of the Recent Literature’, *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2011), p. 217.

<sup>56</sup> Sachs (ed.), *The Development Dictionary*, p. 1; G. Esteva, ‘Development’, in Sachs (ed.), *The Development Dictionary*, p. 6; Sachs, *The Archaeology of the Development Idea*, pp. 1-2; Escobar, *Encountering Development*, pp. 22-23, 26, 31-3, 41.

<sup>57</sup> D. B. Moore, ‘Development Discourse as Hegemony: Towards an Ideological History, 1945-1995’, in Moore and Schmitz (eds.), *Debating Development Discourse*, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Escobar, ‘Imagining a Post-Development Era’, pp. 213-215.

<sup>59</sup> Cooper, ‘Writing the History of Development’, p. 8.

development that has focused on abstraction and generalisation, and questions theories about development that have been used frequently to try to 'explain' history in 'big picture' narratives.<sup>60</sup>

Although the idea of development goes back to at least the European enlightenment, development as a transitive verb came into common usage towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup> It became a more orderly concept at the turn of the twentieth century after James Mill probed the connection between development and colonialism, and the concept was soon tied together with the idea of the 'civilising mission'. A systematic model, which linked planning, investment, science and technology together for the first time under the name of 'colonial development', emerged concurrently with British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain's dictum of 1895 that

It is not enough to occupy certain great spaces of the world's surface unless you are willing to develop them. We are landlords of a great estate; it is the duty of the landlord to develop his estate.<sup>62</sup>

Admittedly, colonial development was as much about advancing British interests as developing the colonies: a developed empire would provide outlets for British investment and markets for British manufactures; it would thus meet domestic demand for industrial expansion and employment, while staving off economic competition from America, Russia and Germany.<sup>63</sup> Equally, the colonies were imagined to be full of untapped resources that awaited capital and technical know-how to open them up.<sup>64</sup> Although the parsimonious Gladstonian Treasury ultimately blocked Chamberlain's grandiose plans for colonial roads, railways and irrigation, the latter had placed colonial development on the agenda. Most importantly, his was a concept of development that linked science,

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<sup>60</sup> J. Hodge, 'British Colonial Expertise, Post-Colonial Careerism and the Early History of International Development', *Journal of Modern European History*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2010), pp. 24-46; M. Woolcock, S. Szreter, and V. Rao, 'How and Why Does History Matter for Development Policy?', The World Bank Development Research Group Poverty and Inequality Team (2010), p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> A semantic shift had taken place so that development was no longer an intransitive verb as used by Marx and Hegel. See H. W. Arndt, 'Economic Development: A Semantic History', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (1981), pp. 457-466; Kunkel, 'Writing the History of Development', p. 219. See also D. Engerman and C. Unger, 'Introduction: Towards a Global History of Modernization', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 3 (2009), p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> M. Havinden and D. Meredith, *Colonialism and Development: Britain and its Tropical Colonies* (Routledge, 1993), pp. 86-89.

<sup>63</sup> M. Cowen and R. Shenton, *Doctrines of Development* (London, Routledge, 1996), p. 275; Havinden and Meredith, *Colonialism and Development*, p. 86.

<sup>64</sup> J. Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2007), pp. 54-55.

technology and state agency – a triumvirate that would resonate loudly in the near future.<sup>65</sup>

For the time being, enthusiasm for colonial development along these lines was muted. When officials in Britain and France (whose own commitment to *mise en valeur* was being challenged) tried to implement development schemes, their governments resisted.<sup>66</sup> (Rejection stemmed from two sources: firstly, recalcitrant Treasuries insisted that colonies should be self-sufficient and that they should contribute to the imperial metropole – not the other way around. Secondly, there was some concern that development raised too many expectations and could be tied politically to the wartime contributions of the colonies.<sup>67</sup>) The British government in particular promoted the idea that development for ‘natives’ was to be along the lines of their own civilisation, and that the colonial power should meddle as little as possible in this ‘natural’ and ‘traditional’ state of affairs.<sup>68</sup> There followed a struggle in the Colonial Office to combat these ideas, but they persisted into the 1930s, during which time the depression deepened the inward-looking nature of the imperial regimes.<sup>69</sup> Importantly, this meant that structural problems in the colonies – including their mono-export economies, their lack of domestic markets and the expatriation of profits by foreign investors – were left unaddressed.<sup>70</sup>

As the imperial economy recovered from the depression, however, wage labour and urbanisation undermined ‘tradition’ in spite of efforts to protect it.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile, although the imperial economy was improving, social conflict worsened: a series of strikes and riots took place in the West Indies, Northern Rhodesia and African port cities,

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<sup>65</sup> Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, p. 55.

<sup>66</sup> Havinden and Meredith, *Colonialism and Development*, p. 136; Cooper, ‘Writing the History of Development’, p. 9. For more information on the assimilationist French colonial development project, see F. Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>67</sup> D. J. Morgan, *The Official History of Colonial Development*, Vol. I (Atlantic Highland, N. J., Humanities Press, 1980), pp. 40-41; Havinden and Meredith, *Colonialism and Development*, p. 138.

<sup>68</sup> Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, p. 66.

<sup>69</sup> Even the 1929 Colonial Development Act, which guaranteed £1 million per annum from Britain for colonial development, was passed only because the Colonial Office framed it in such a way as to suggest that it had the potential to partially reduce British unemployment in the depression. See E. Wicker, ‘Colonial Development and Welfare, 1929-1957 – The Evolution of a Policy’, *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (1958), p. 174; Havinden and Meredith, *Colonialism and Development*, p. 147; S. Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy, 1914-1940* (London, Cass, 1984), pp. 167, 182; Cooper, ‘Writing the History of Development’, p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> To a large extent, colonies remained mono-export economies and lacked the domestic market that could insulate them from commodity price crashes. Moreover, profits generated in the colonies were for the most part expatriated by foreign investors. See Havinden and Meredith, *Colonialism and Development*, pp. 152-159.

<sup>71</sup> L. J. Butler, ‘Reconstruction, Development and the Entrepreneurial State: The British Colonial Model, 1939-51’, *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1999), pp. 29-30; Cooper, ‘Writing the History of Development’, p. 9.

including Mombasa, between 1935 and 1938. Already committed to a more 'constructive' concept of colonial development, the Colonial Office, and in particular the Colonial Secretary, Malcolm Macdonald, used these riots and disturbances as a lever to prise open Treasury coffers for social and welfare spending in the colonies.<sup>72</sup> In such a manner was the Colonial Office finally able to 'get away from the old principle that Colonies can only have what they themselves can afford to pay for...'; thereafter, they would have 'what a first-class Colonial power may reasonably be expected to provide'.<sup>73</sup> The Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 was the most notable result of these internal and external pressures. Under the act, money was to be spent for the first time on housing, education and social services: the aim was to make colonial populations 'happier, healthier [and] more prosperous', morally re-arming the entire imperial project.<sup>74</sup> Though the war restricted the amount that could be spent until the later 1940s, there followed an obvious intensification of government activity in the colonies, and particularly in British Africa, which has been termed the 'second colonial occupation'.<sup>75</sup> This 'occupation' promised not only economic development, but also welfare and an improved quality of life to colonial peoples who – in the context of 'hot' and Cold War, and the resultant economic strife for a severely indebted Britain – were increasingly referred to as imperial citizens as opposed to inconsequential subjects.<sup>76</sup>

Where protective trusteeship and the civilising mission had sown economic stagnation, social unrest and political dissent, late colonial development aimed to remove the grievances felt in the colonies, thereby defusing criticism of colonial rule and restabilising the imperial edifice. Citizenship, and the entitlement to development that it

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<sup>72</sup> A Royal Commission to investigate the situation in the West Indies was established in order to provide external (to the Colonial Office) sanction for 'constructive' development. Pressure from the United States, the League of Nations and humanitarian groups for colonial reform was also increasing around the same time: internal government memoranda thus spoke of the reassuring effect that an announcement on promoting the welfare of the colonies would have for Britain's allies, particularly as war loomed on the horizon. See H. Johnson, 'The West Indies and the Conversion of the British Official Classes to the Development Idea', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 15 (1977), pp. 68-69; Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, pp. 233-241. J. Harrison, 'The Colonial Legacy and Social Policy in the British Caribbean', in J. Midgley and D. Piachaud (eds.), *Colonialism and Welfare: Social Policy and the British Imperial Legacy* (Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, 2011), p. 64; R. Cox-Alomar, 'Revisiting the Transatlantic Triangle: The Decolonisation of the British Caribbean in Light of the Anglo-American Special Relationship', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2004), pp. 353-373; Morgan, *The Official History of Colonial Development*, Vol. 2, p. 203.

<sup>73</sup> Macdonald, quoted in Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, p. 253.

<sup>74</sup> F. Cooper, 'Modernising Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept', in Cooper and Packard, *International Development and the Social Sciences*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>75</sup> J. Lonsdale and D. Low, 'Introduction: Towards the New Order, 1945-1963', in D. Low and A. Smith (eds.), *History of East Africa* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976).

<sup>76</sup> For the more economically minded in the Treasury, colonial development was vital since the only method to counteract the dollar gap was to earn dollars from colonial exports. See Havinden and Meredith, *Colonialism and Development*, p. 230.

guaranteed, was supposed to bind the colonies to the imperial centre; development was about making citizenship worthwhile and integrating modernising citizens (and elites) more closely with the apparatus of empire by increasing their financial and political stake in its institutions.<sup>77</sup> Traditional justifications of colonial rule had, therefore, been replaced by developmentalist colonialism. Importantly, moreover, the ‘second colonial occupation’ was based on science and technology, which officials felt would help to rationalise and restore the credibility of British action in the colonial sphere.<sup>78</sup> (As discussed below, it was around this time that the modern NGO – and Oxfam itself – took shape, and this had profound implications for how NGOs understood development as a concept, how they saw their own place in the development endeavour and how they felt their efforts ought to complement those of the state.)

Yet if colonial officials recognised the potential for the concept of development to depoliticise the colonial origins of contemporary poverty (by recasting political, social and economic problems as technical ones that could be fixed by expert planning, scientific knowledge, modern technology and rational intervention) any hopes that the idea of development could turn political controversy into a technical issue were dashed fairly quickly.<sup>79</sup> Instead, development rapidly became a ‘claim-making construct’ for anti-colonial movements.<sup>80</sup> As development was quantifiable, it was possible to turn inadequate colonial efforts back against the empire by highlighting their insufficiency. In Kenya, the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) and Kenya African Union (KAU) began to measure their country’s lot in terms of the imperial rhetoric and criticised the local government in the language of London.<sup>81</sup> For its own part, the Kenya government refused calls for development that did not fit with the trope of the lazy African (who needed to be compelled to do what was in his or her interests) and resisted Colonial Office pressure to establish a department to deal with the social welfare of all races.<sup>82</sup> Only in response to the Mau Mau revolt did the local administration concede the principle of colonial

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<sup>77</sup> At home, a similar process was under way with the creation of the welfare state. O. Barrow and M. Jennings (eds.), *The Charitable Impulse: NGOs and Development in East and North-East Africa* (James Currey, 2002), p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> S. Clarke, ‘A Technocratic Imperial State? The Colonial Office and Scientific Research, 1940-1960’, *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (2007), p. 463.

<sup>79</sup> Frey and Kunkel, ‘Writing the History of Development’, p. 222; M. van Beusekom and D. Hodgson, ‘Lessons Learned? Development Experiences in the Late Colonial Period’, *Journal of African History*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2000), pp. 31-32.

<sup>80</sup> Cooper, ‘Writing the History of Development’, p. 11.

<sup>81</sup> J. Lewis, *Empire State-Building: War and Welfare in Kenya, 1925-1952* (London, James Currey, 2000), pp. 106, 110.

<sup>82</sup> Even then it was only as part of a brutal and indiscriminate counter insurgency movement, which involved mass relocations, imprisonment and torture. See Lewis, *Empire-State Building*, pp. 319, 356-357.

development outlined in London: from 1952, the government removed the remaining restrictions on Africans growing cash crops and improved access to land for progressive African farmers.<sup>83</sup> Soon after, the Swynnerton Plan – implemented in 1954 – attempted to create a buffer yeomanry class between Mau Mau rebels and the state by allowing African production for export markets.<sup>84</sup> Such development did not, however, draw the sting from attacks on the colonial government, which were increasingly framed using metropolitan rhetoric. The Kenyan trade union leader Tom Mboya appropriated metropolitan development ideas particularly successfully, posing his demands in a language of modernity and development that could not be rejected easily as backward-looking and atavistic.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, his and other African political parties could now argue that true development required sovereign control. In such a way, the idea of development served to bestow added utility onto the idea of an independent nation state and offered African elites the chance to temporarily disguise potentially destructive cultural and ethnic cleavages behind an inclusive developmental nationalism.<sup>86</sup>

Hence, a development concept based on state intervention, economic growth, higher standards of living, technology and scientific or expert knowledge, became the cornerstone of decolonising nations like Kenya in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>87</sup> The era of the ‘developmental state’ thus crosses the colonial – post-colonial divide, stretching from the 1940s into the 1970s as post-colonial elites justified their positions (and sought to marginalise opponents) using the rhetoric of development. For James Ferguson, the concept of development subsequently facilitated the entrenchment and expansion of bureaucratic state power in these newly independent nations. By prescribing and funding ‘neutral’ and technical solutions to poverty, Ferguson alleges, the concept of development not only depoliticised the causes of poverty, but also provided cover and legitimation for the spread of the bureaucratic developmental state machine as a

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<sup>83</sup> D. Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain’s Dirty War and the End of Empire* (New York, 2006).

<sup>84</sup> In the event, it served to entrench the particular historical pattern of Kenyan development, which had concentrated on high-potential areas and benefitted the Kikuyu ethnic group, putting their elite in prime position to dominate the first years of independence. See M. Chege, ‘Swapping Development Strategies: Kenya and Tanzania after their Founding Presidents’, in D. Apter and C. Rosberg (eds.), *Political Development and the New Realism in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Virginia, University Press of Virginia, 1994), p. 255.

<sup>85</sup> Cooper, ‘Modernising Bureaucrats’, p. 84.

<sup>86</sup> R. Desai, ‘Conclusion: From Developmental to Cultural Nationalisms’, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2008), p. 653.

<sup>87</sup> Other examples include India and the Gold Coast. See S. Bose, ‘Instruments and Idioms of Colonial and National Development: India’s Historical Experience in Comparative Perspective’, in Cooper and Packard, *International Development and the Social Sciences*, pp. 45-63; D. K. Fieldhouse, *The West and the Third World: Trade, Colonialism, Dependence and Development* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1999), p. 40; J. Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 262.

response to underdevelopment. In Lesotho, he found the development apparatus to be ‘a machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power which incidentally takes “poverty” as its point of entry’.<sup>88</sup> With external support the Lesotho government constructed administrative buildings, a police station, an immigration office and a connecting road, and established agricultural extension and medical services in areas over which the state formerly had limited control. In such a way, Ferguson argues, the instrumental effect of development interventions – the expansion of governance into areas formerly weakly governed – combined with the failure of such interventions to ‘solve’ underdevelopment, drives their constant renewal ahead of any limited evidence of success in their much-publicised developmental objectives. Theorising from this example, Ferguson concludes that the removal of the political aspects of poverty from development interventions is an integral part of development discourse, and that development organisations such as Oxfam are complicit – intentionally or not – in the ‘suspension of politics’ from highly political operations.

In Kenya, the challenge and purpose of independent nationhood was certainly felt to be synonymous with the idea of national development, and this justified the concretisation of the colonial ‘developmental state’ apparatus alongside many other (less savoury) elements of the colonial state, including the powerful provincial administration and the ruthless suppression of dissident voices. Development would, moreover, perform a marked political function: the portrayal of the state as an agent of modernity legitimised the expansion of its bureaucratic control. Meanwhile, in deciding where to locate development projects, boreholes, schools, medical facilities and other services, President Kenyatta’s government could reward allies and punish enemies; the state could create jobs, improve the quality of life and facilitate access to agriculture for its favourites and supporters, while at the same time casting a watchful eye over suspect populations or denying opponents their place in Kenyan development. Furthermore, Kenyatta’s doctrine of ‘African Socialism’ was an attempt to obscure the political action performed by the government through development interventions and to silence alternatives to his development apparatus. To do so, it combined modernising rhetoric with a smattering of African ‘tradition’; ‘African Socialism’ was an archetypal ‘anti-politics machine’ doctrine: by reducing poverty to a technical issue, prescribing ‘neutral’ and ‘scientific’ solutions to that poverty, and condemning and silencing opponents to such interventions by labelling

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<sup>88</sup> Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, pp. 255-256.

them as ‘backward’, it was an attempt to shore up the bureaucratic-executive Kenyatta state.<sup>89</sup>

Yet, states’ attempts to portray themselves as beneficent agents of development do not completely insulate them from having their populist rhetoric thrust back upon them. As discussed above in reference to the era of decolonisation, what is intended as a discourse of control can be appropriated and turned into a discourse of entitlement: the Kenyatta government itself soon came in for a great deal of criticism due to its failure to distribute the ‘fruits of independence’, and Oxfam would attempt to cajole the Kenyan state to fulfil its own rhetoric.<sup>90</sup> The history of development is, therefore, the history of how the concept has been mobilised and deflected to myriad ends.<sup>91</sup> Referring to a ‘discourse of development’ that serves predictable functions imbues the concept with an artificially unified character.<sup>92</sup> This is not to contend that development does not perform, in certain contexts, the depoliticising and disempowering functions that deconstructors of development imply. Rather, it is to make clear that the development apparatus is not monolithic. As Dorothy Hodgson, Sabine Planel and Hannah Whittaker have written for colonial Tanganyika and post-colonial Ethiopia and North-Eastern Kenya respectively, state development interventions – through the distribution of fertilisers, seeds and agricultural practices or through the settlement of pastoralists – can serve to extend state power and control over their (often troublesome) subject populations.<sup>93</sup> Development experts can, meanwhile, neutralise conflict-laden encounters with scientific jargon or disguise political issues as technical ones. They can also help to camouflage the government of men as the mere administration of ‘things’, opening up the lives of supposed beneficiaries as objects of knowledge and intervention, and linking the ‘periphery’ with the ‘centre’ – both in a global sense and within nations.<sup>94</sup> But it is important not to assume that the functions that development may serve explain and delegitimise the institution as a whole. The following thesis demonstrates how Oxfam itself performed some of these depoliticising functions, but only for a short period and,

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<sup>89</sup> Chapter one discusses this in greater detail.

<sup>90</sup> Cooper and Packard, *International Development and the Social Sciences*, p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> Cooper and Packard, *International Development and the Social Sciences*, p. 30.

<sup>92</sup> Crewe and Harrison, *Whose Development?*, p. 17.

<sup>93</sup> D. Hodgson, ‘Taking Stock: State Control, Ethnic Identity and Pastoralist Development in Tanganyika, 1948-1958’, *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2000), pp. 55-78; S. Planel, ‘A View of a Bureaucratic Developmental State: Local Governance and Agricultural Extension in Rural Ethiopia’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2014), pp. 420-437; H. Whittaker, ‘Forced Villagization During the Shifita Conflict in Kenya, ca. 1963-1968’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2012), pp. 343-364.

<sup>94</sup> Crewe and Harrison, *Whose Development?*, p. 109; DuBois, ‘The Governance of the Third World’, p. 21.

importantly, only while it endeavoured to challenge the government to fulfil its developmental mandate. When this highly political objective failed, Oxfam ceased its direct support for state-led developmental efforts; thus Oxfam was never a cog in the ‘anti-politics machine’. Hence, there is no substitute for analysing specific temporal and spatial contexts and demonstrating the hybridity of development as promoted by organisations like Oxfam, each with differing and shifting motivations and constellations of interested individuals, each interacting with diverse national contexts, and each operating with varied room for manoeuvre – as, for instance, pertained in Kenya between 1963 and 2002. In this historicised sense, development intervention is a much messier process than theories of Western hegemony suppose.<sup>95</sup>

## NEO-COLONIALISM OR NEO-PATRIMONIALISM? THE ‘KENYA DEBATE’

The fallacy of assuming that development serves as a one-way expression of power (whether internally or internationally) is perhaps best highlighted by an academic debate concerning Kenya that engaged scholars in the 1970s. The ‘Kenya Debate’ started after Colin Leys attempted to prove that Kenya’s post-colonial development was inevitably (and permanently) ‘dependent’ on external powers to the same extent as it had been during the colonial era. His argument was a product of its time, for during the 1970s ‘dependency’ theory – the most prominent left-wing critique of capitalism and development prior to the shift onto discourse analysis – was in vogue in academic circles. Dependency theory was the left’s effort to update Marx to fit the post-colonial world.<sup>96</sup> One of the first attempts to do this was made by Paul Baran in his 1957 book, *Political Economy of Growth*,<sup>97</sup> but it would take another decade of failed industrialisation and uneven development across the ‘third world’ before his conclusion – that ‘the role of monopoly capitalism and imperialism in the advanced countries and economic and social

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<sup>95</sup> E. Harrison, ‘The Monolithic Development Machine?’, in P. van Ufford and A. Kumar (eds.), *A Moral Critique of Development: In Search of Global Responsibilities* (New York, 2003), p. 103.

<sup>96</sup> Marx had said little about development in the colonial periphery other than that colonialism would speed the adoption of capitalism in ‘backward’ parts of the world, hastening their eventual embrace of socialism. See Arndt, *Economic Development: The History of an Idea* (London, University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 116.

<sup>97</sup> Baran argued that rather than the engine of development on the road to socialism, international capitalism was an obstacle to true development. See P. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1957); Arndt, *Economic Development*, p. 118; M. Blomström and B. Hettne, *Development Theory in Transition: The Dependency Debate and Beyond: Third World Responses* (London, Zed Books, 1984), p. 35.

backwardness in the underdeveloped countries are intimately related' – was readily adapted into a 'dependency' theory.<sup>98</sup> In 1967, Andre Gunder Frank published his widely read exposition on the 'development of underdevelopment', which postulated that rather than the mere persistence of feudal institutions, or a temporary deviation from the 'normal' evolutionary development schema (as seen in the West), underdevelopment in the 'periphery' was a necessary partner of development in the West, and that the total penetration of the 'periphery' by the capitalist system caused its underdevelopment.<sup>99</sup> Frank, along with Dudley Seers and Samir Amin, advocated delinking from the Western capitalist system in favour of self-reliance.<sup>100</sup>

Applying dependency theory to Kenya, Leys wrote of three insuperable obstacles to Kenyan development: the structure of the economy inherited from colonialism; the monopoly power of foreign capital on which African business was dependent; and the personal and elite rule of the Kenyan state by the President and his associates. Other experts on the country's economy soon disputed his application of dependency theory to Kenya, however. Noting that a capital accumulating class had preceded colonial rule and in some circumstances benefited from it – becoming dominant in post-colonial politics and the post-colonial economy – scholars such as Nicola Swainson and Michael Cowen argued that Kenya had the means to overcome any constraints to capitalist development.<sup>101</sup> Debate over whether economic growth was viable in the longer-term and how far capitalist relations of production had actually spread in Kenya eventually degenerated into two incompatible but equally plausible ways of reading the same evidence. Nonetheless, the argument that development in the 'periphery' was impossible

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<sup>98</sup> See Blomström and Hettne, *Development Theory in Transition*, pp. 49, 65; Arndt, *Economic Development*, p. 118.

<sup>99</sup> A. G. Frank, 'The Development of Underdevelopment', in R. Rhodes (ed.), *Imperialism and Underdevelopment* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1970), pp. 6-9. Moreover, although seventy low-income countries hit the 'development decade' target of 5 per cent growth per annum, positive growth rates were considered temporary and illusory. See Arndt, *Economic Development*, pp. 91, 132-133.

<sup>100</sup> Amin wrote of the 'blocked' nature of capitalism in the 'periphery' resulting from imperial extraction economies, the low level of domestic wages and demand and the unequal exchange between 'centre' and 'periphery' that resulted. Blomström and Hettne, *Development Theory in Transition*, p. 144.

<sup>101</sup> Leys, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*, p. 144. For the main contributions to the debate see: C. Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism 1964-1971* (London, Heinemann, 1974); M. Godfrey and S. Langdon, 'Partners in Underdevelopment?: The Transnationalization Thesis in a Kenyan Context', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1976), pp. 42-63; N. Swainson, *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya, 1918-1977* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980); C. Leys 'Accumulation, Class Formation and Dependency: Kenya', in M. Fransman (ed.), *Industry and Accumulation in Africa* (London, Heinemann, 1982); N. Swainson, 'Indigenous Capitalism in Postcolonial Kenya', in P. Lubeck (ed.), *The African Bourgeoisie: Capitalist Development in Nigeria, Kenya and the Ivory Coast* (Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987), pp. 140-160; S. Langdon, 'Industry and Capitalism in Kenya: Contributions to a Debate', in Lubeck (ed.), *The African Bourgeoisie*; C. Leys 'Learning from the Kenya Debate', in Apter and Rosberg (eds.), *Political Development and the New Realism in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

was shown to be incorrect.<sup>102</sup> Those who subscribed to dependency theory were, certainly, too deterministic and economistic, ignoring as they did the role of local exploiting classes in the economic problems facing developing nations and focusing too readily on the need to sweep away the capitalist system *tout court*. Attempts to make the dependency theory universal had in fact made it tautological and oblivious to the political struggles as regards development that take place in specific contexts.<sup>103</sup>

In reality, uneven development is far more 'textured', complex and historically contingent than an overarching theory such as dependency allows.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, Leys would soon argue that the elite dominance of agricultural land and manufacturing, the particular 'gatekeeping' state apparatus (discussed shortly) and the manipulation of ethnic divisions for political and economic power – each to a certain extent resulting from the particular pattern of development engendered by decolonisation – created tension between entrenched capital from the early post-independence years and the longer-term needs of Kenya's economy. Thus historical political conditions, not structural constraints, were to blame for Kenya's underwhelming economic performance since independence.<sup>105</sup> By taking history into account in such a way it is possible to talk of the asymmetrical nature of colonial and post-colonial development without subscribing to the idea that development is an exogenous imposition on Africa by the West.<sup>106</sup> Overarching theories regarding the discourse of development (which, in fact, offered anti-colonial elites a chance to push for independence and assert their control in newly decolonising nations), and dependent development (shown to be misleading by the Kenya debate), are less useful for critiquing development practices than nuanced historical analyses of the particular pattern of colonial development and decolonisation, which defined development as a relationship between unequal states (without determining the precise outcome of such a relationship).<sup>107</sup> Former colonies went from being entitled to development assistance from colonial metropolises to being independent countries poorly endowed for the future due to the deep structural distortions in economy and society left

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<sup>102</sup> Leys soon admitted that dependency theory had restricted his and other scholars' understanding of the Kenyan context by training their focus too exclusively on the issue of whether an African capitalist class existed and how independent such a class was from foreign capital. Leys, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*, p. 165.

<sup>103</sup> F. Cooper, 'Africa and the World Economy', *African Studies Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2/3 (1981), p. 9.

<sup>104</sup> Cooper, 'Africa and the World Economy', pp. 17-18; Leys, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*, p. 117.

<sup>105</sup> Leys, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*, pp. 152-163.

<sup>106</sup> Cooper argues that the 'Washington consensus' itself was 'neither a full consensus nor a durable one'. Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', p. 16.

<sup>107</sup> Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', p. 17.

by economic dualism and colonial rule, and with no enforceable claims on richer nations for assistance to overcome these problems. Moreover, at the moment of independence there was already a European-dominated development apparatus consisting of experts, administrators, scientists, bureaucracies and finance, which could be provided to adequately 'suppliant' nations.<sup>108</sup> As such, if development was not a hegemonic knowledge-power complex, there was unevenness in the relationship between donors and recipients, which crystallised immediately with decolonisation.<sup>109</sup>

The particular intertwined history of development and decolonisation had important legacies, in particular for post-colonial governance. Most far-reaching of all was the fact that governments of newly independent but impoverished nations would find more utility in cultivating patron-client ties – both with certain politically important groups within their own borders and with rich nations outside – than in cultivating national legitimacy at home. As discussed above, inheriting a state apparatus, infrastructure and idea of development that was distinctly colonial, post-colonial governing elites like Kenyatta used repressive colonial legislation to restrict and repress separatist groups or challengers to government authority and made use of technocratic development ideas in an attempt to silence alternatives to their economic policies.<sup>110</sup> Equally important was the fact that after taking over an extraverted economy, open to and reliant on world markets, elites used their control over the 'gate' between the national and international economy to centralise public resources in their own hands. These resources were then used to solidify the edifice of government by buying off potential challengers to the regime in complex patronage networks. Termed 'gatekeeper states' by Frederick Cooper, like colonial states before them many newly independent governments attempted to ensure that economic and political relations were tied tightly together and passed through 'nodes' that only they controlled.<sup>111</sup> In Kenya, the government elite made sure to position itself as a broker of relations between Kenyan society, the market and international organisations, controlling the all-important 'gate' between peasant producers and multinational corporations. This control enriched the

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<sup>108</sup> Kunkel and Frey, 'Writing the History of Development', p. 223.

<sup>109</sup> van Beusekom and Hodgson, 'Lessons Learned?', pp. 31-33; J. Cypher and J. Dietz, *The Process of Economic Development* (London, Routledge, 1997), pp. 67, 95.

<sup>110</sup> D. Branch, 'Violence, Decolonisation and the Cold War in Kenya's North-Eastern Province, 1963-1978', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2014), pp. 642-657; D. Speich, 'The Kenyan Style of "African Socialism": Developmental Knowledge Claims and the Explanatory Limits of the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (2009), pp. 449-466.

<sup>111</sup> F. Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 156-157.

elite at the apex of government through kickbacks and other forms of corruption and paid for the patronage necessary to maintain a modicum of internal legitimacy.<sup>112</sup>

Across Africa this patronage-based legitimacy was most often reliant on vertical ties between ethnic leaders and their supporters. As politics became a winner-takes-all struggle for control of the 'gate' between national elites who used their ethnic groups as a support base, horizontal ties such as the concept of the nation or any sense of national citizenship were debased in favour of 'political tribalism'.<sup>113</sup> The possibilities and experience of development were, then, vastly different depending on the extent to which networks of clientage and neo-patrimonialism – instead of citizenship or nationhood – shaped its contours. In Kenya and elsewhere, 'gatekeeping', 'extraversion' and the structural distortions of economic dualism engendered by the particular pattern of colonial development – and cemented in place by the statism and technocracy adopted by post-colonial leaders – are at the root of the 'failure' of development that Oxfam staff discussed in the 1980s. This is not to absolve the numerous authoritarian or dictatorial past leaders of independent African nations of the repeated pillaging and violent destabilisation of their own countries. Rather, it is to acknowledge that many of the sources of neo-patrimonialism, rent-seeking and political tribalism can be found in the experience of indirect rule, decentralised despotism and the exploitation of ethnic difference in the colonial period, while the post-colonial pattern of trade, investment and aid distribution reinforced the inegalitarian political and economic structures of former colonies.<sup>114</sup> For Africans at all levels, agency has too often been possible only possible in the tightest of corners.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Cooper, *Africa since 1940*, pp. 175-176.

<sup>113</sup> Christopher Clapham has argued that external legitimacy was vitally important to many post-colonial governments and buttressed such quasi-states long after they lost any internal legitimacy. The concept of political tribalism is discussed further in chapter two. C. Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 19, 247; Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', p. 18; J. F. Bayart, 'Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion', *African Affairs*, Vol. 99 (2000), pp. 217-267; J. F. Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (Longman, 1993); J. F. Bayart, S. Ellis and B. Hibou, *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*, (London, James Currey, 1998); D. Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963-2012* (London, Yale University Press, 2012); J. Widner, *The Rise of a Party-State in Kenya: From 'Harambee' to 'Nyayo!'* (University of California, 1992), pp. 8-9; R. Jackson and C. Rosberg, 'Sovereignty and Underdevelopment: Juridical Statehood in the African Crisis', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1986), pp. 1-31.

<sup>114</sup> Leys, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*, pp. 112, 190-191; G. Lynch, 'Histories of Association and Difference: The Construction and Negotiation of Ethnicity', in Branch, Cheeseman and Gardner (eds.), *Our Turn to Eat*, pp. 177-198; G. Lynch, 'The Fruits of Perception: "Ethnic Politics" and the Case of Kenya's Constitutional Referendum', *African Studies*, Vol. 65, No. 2, pp. 251-252; F. Holmquist, F. Weaver and M. Ford, 'The Structural Development of Kenya's Political Economy', *African Studies Review*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1994), pp. 69-105.

<sup>115</sup> Unfortunately, many of the 'solutions' advocated in response to theories of development as a hegemonic project reify indigenous agency, practices and social movements uncritically, ignoring the

For these reasons, it is no longer possible to avoid the analysis of specific contexts by way of ahistorical and decontextualised praise or denunciation of development. To paraphrase Cooper, the foregoing emphasises the importance of questioning development interventions historically by asking who intervenes, for what reasons, through what relationships and to what effect. The following thesis responds to this call and takes history as the most appropriate methodology for studying development, since states, development experts, international organisations and financial institutions as well as the 'objects' of intervention – the farmer, the peasant and the worker among others – bring their own pasts and interests for the future to the development encounter.<sup>116</sup> Non-governmental organisations such as Oxfam are just one of these development 'actors' about which researchers need to ask historical questions, but the task takes on an added urgency because to date NGOs have been treated generically, and therefore inappropriately, by critics of the development endeavour.

#### NGOs: MAGIC BULLETS OR MERELY THE LATEST COMPRADORS (COMPRANGOs)?

An NGO is most commonly defined as an organisation that is private, self-governing, non-profit, and where any income is channelled back into the primary focus of the organisation. This is most often the relief of poverty through humanitarian activity, whether by emergency relief or programmes of economic and social development.<sup>117</sup> The term 'NGO' was first used in a 1950 UN Resolution as a designation for the non-state organisations that could be accredited to the Economic and Social Council.<sup>118</sup> However, the history of organisations that fall under such a definition dates back much further, while the history of voluntary action itself far predates the appearance of NGOs under

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historical and self-interested involvement of local elites and power-holders in development. See Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', pp. 18-20; Crewe and Harrison, *Whose Development?*, p. 171; A. Whaites, 'Let's Get Civil Society Straight: NGOs, the State and Political Theory', in D. Eade (ed.), *Development, NGOs and Civil Society: Selected Essays from Development in Practice* (Oxfam, 2000), pp. 126-138; see also J. Lonsdale, 'Agency in Tight Corners: Narrative and Initiative in African History', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2000), pp. 5-16.

<sup>116</sup> Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', p. 20.

<sup>117</sup> Barrow and Jennings (eds.), *The Charitable Impulse*, p. 3; D. Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda* (West Hartford, Kumarian Press, 1990); Smillie, *The Alms Bazaar*, p. 32.

<sup>118</sup> A. Fowler, 'NGOs and the Globalisation of Social Welfare: Perspectives from East Africa', in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, p. 55.

any moniker.<sup>119</sup> Charitable activity directed at Africa by the West at first accompanied and supported the colonial empire. It was nearly exclusively missionary in character, with somewhere between 40 and 60 per cent of all health, education, water and food-security services in colonial Africa provided by churches. Such intervention was justified as a manner of delivering civilisation to colonial subjects.<sup>120</sup> Many NGOs trace their roots to these missionary groups – opening the sector up to the criticism that NGOs have always served imperial projects (as discussed below) – but the modern NGO in fact started to take shape, alongside the development concept, in interwar Europe. It was during this period that a more secular, institutional and international type of organisation emerged, one that preferred to focus on need rather than identity when providing assistance.<sup>121</sup>

Yet if the interwar period was important for the emergence of the modern NGO, the Second World War was formative. The devastating effects of the war provided the grounds for the proliferation of secular, internationally oriented organisations such as Oxfam (established 1942) and CARE (1946). In addition, the emergence of the welfare state in the aftermath of conflict had a particularly strong impact on organisations like Oxfam by redefining legitimate charity and the role of state and non-state actors.<sup>122</sup> Thereafter, Marshall Plan aid from 1948 – with its focus on long-term planning, construction and development – encouraged charitable organisations to adopt a more specifically development-oriented approach to charitable giving as opposed to an exclusive focus on relief after disaster or conflict.<sup>123</sup> Though emergency relief would remain the primary focus of NGO work throughout the 1950s, post-war NGOs increasingly incorporated development into their mandates, broadened their scope beyond Europe and North America and, in keeping with the ‘second colonial occupation’ *zeitgeist*, asserted that governments should provide for citizens in order to make citizenship

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<sup>119</sup> National recognition of the public benefit of philanthropic giving dates back to at least the early seventeenth century with contemporary Parliamentary legislation encouraging altruism by defining charitable activity and regulating tax incentives for private donors. Later in the century, the first overseas aid was provided when food was sent from Ireland to New England. See Fowler, ‘NGOs and the Globalisation of Social Welfare’, in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, p. 56; and Jennings, ‘Surrogates of the State’, p. 13.

<sup>120</sup> Fowler, ‘NGOs and the Globalisation of Social Welfare’, in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, p. 57; Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Work?*, p. 25.

<sup>121</sup> Save the Children, for instance, was formed in 1919 in response to the plight of German children after the First World War. On the other side of the Atlantic, the Commission for the Relief of Belgium (CRB) sought to provide relief for victims of famine in Belgium during the First World War. M. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 82, 86-87, 93.

<sup>122</sup> Fowler, ‘NGOs and the Globalisation of Social Welfare’, in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, p. 56.

<sup>123</sup> Barrow and Jennings (eds.), *The Charitable Impulse*, p. 11.

worthwhile.<sup>124</sup> They thus saw the need for their services as an indictment of a failing system, opening the door to a more politically engaged understanding of poverty and development; at the same time, NGOs such as Oxfam prescribed remedial action by the state as the only long-term solution to underdevelopment.<sup>125</sup> The following thesis shows how this political understanding of poverty – rather than a technical or apolitical approach – influenced Oxfam and helped to direct its work on the ground in Kenya after decolonisation.

For it was during the 1960s that the most substantial shift by NGOs away from emergency work and towards the adoption of a developmental outlook took place. This shift was influenced strongly by global trends in relief and development, including the invention of the ‘Decade of Development’ and the establishment of the Freedom From Hunger Campaign and the World Food Programme.<sup>126</sup> In this atmosphere, NGOs began to see longer-term development as a method of preventing disasters or at least lessening their effects, reducing the need for palliative relief work, which had little or no impact on the frequency or scale of disasters in the future.<sup>127</sup> By 1970, NGOs were raising and distributing around \$860 million in relief and development projects per year.<sup>128</sup> At the start of the following decade, 1,600 NGOs were registered in the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), and they distributed \$2.3 billion per year.<sup>129</sup> The 1980s would see a massive expansion in NGO numbers, resources and duties as the state fell out of favour in the West. These small, flexible, innovative, efficient and non-state actors were perceived as a ‘magic bullet’, a panacea for the suffocating *dirigisme* Western governments diagnosed in development as it stood in the early 1980s.<sup>130</sup> This idea held sway over IFIs and Western governments into the 1990s; thus an increasing volume of official aid was channelled through NGOs in this period. In the ten

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<sup>124</sup> Korten labels such NGOs ‘first generation NGOs’. See Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century*; Smillie, *The Alms Bazaar*, p. 31.

<sup>125</sup> Barrow and Jennings (eds.), *The Charitable Impulse*, p. 11.

<sup>126</sup> The ‘Decade of Development’ was announced by John F. Kennedy at his inauguration in 1961. The Freedom From Hunger Campaign was created by Dr. Binay Ranjan Sen in 1960, while the World Food Programme was founded in 1961. The Ministry of Overseas Development was established in Britain in 1964.

<sup>127</sup> Korten terms these NGOs ‘second generation NGOs’. See Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century*; Smillie, *The Alms Bazaar*, p. 31.

<sup>128</sup> Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Work?*, p. 33.

<sup>129</sup> Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Work?*, p. 33.

<sup>130</sup> W. Fisher, ‘Doing Good? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 26 (1997), p. 444; M. Edwards and D. Hulme (eds.), *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World* (West Hartford, Kumarian, 1996); M. Edwards and D. Hulme, *Making a Difference. NGOs and Development in a Changing World* (London, Earthscan, 1992); M. Edwards and D. Hulme, ‘NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World’, *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 7, No. 6 (1996), pp. 849-856.

years to 1994, for instance, the UK government increased its official funding of NGOs by 400 per cent. As the World Bank noted in 1991, NGOs 'have become an important force in the development process [mitigating] the costs of developing countries' institutional weakness'.<sup>131</sup> As a result, by 1993 NGO numbers had nearly doubled to reach 3,000, while their spending reached \$5.7 billion. Ten years later, NGOs were responsible for \$23 billion worth of aid money, or 30 per cent of all overseas development assistance.<sup>132</sup> Oxfam income illustrates this extraordinary growth in NGO funds: in 1959 it hovered around £500,000 per annum; by 1999 it had reached £124.3 million, and in 2014 it reached £389.1 million.<sup>133</sup>

Precisely because NGOs became a global phenomenon around the time of SAPs and neo-liberal economic theory, literature on NGOs is divided between those who saw NGOs as apolitical, marketised institutions that could work where the state failed, and those on the other side of the political spectrum, who feared that the development 'machine' would absorb NGOs, which would become powerful pacific weapons of Western hegemony through recommending technical solutions to poverty and underdevelopment rather than structural or political change.<sup>134</sup> Though the latter group hoped that NGOs might offer radical alternatives to development as conceptualised by IFIs and Western governments, many feared that Ferguson was correct to argue that international development agencies benefit as much as host states from depoliticising development interventions and disempowering local populations, since an apolitical development discourse reinforces their *raison d'être*.<sup>135</sup> In a related manner Firoze Manji and Carl O'Coill alleged that NGOs are part of a long history of voluntary action reinforcing imperial projects, and that NGO service delivery palliates against social unrest, constantly undermining the struggle of African people for emancipation from economic, social and political oppression.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report 1991: The Challenge of Development* (Washington, Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 135, cited in Fisher, 'Doing Good?', p. 444.

<sup>132</sup> Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Work?*, p. 48.

<sup>133</sup> Barrow and Jennings (eds.), *The Charitable Impulse*, pp. 5-6; 'Oxfam Annual Report & Accounts, 2013/14'.

<sup>134</sup> M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 36, quoted in E. Mawdsley, J. Townsend and G. Porter, 'Creating Spaces of Resistance: Development NGOs and their Clients in Ghana, India and Mexico', *Antipode*, Vol. 36, No. 5 (2004), p. 872.

<sup>135</sup> J. Fisher, *The Road from Rio: Sustainable Development and the Nongovernmental Movement in the Third World* (Westport, Praeger, 1993); Fisher, 'Doing Good?', p. 445; S. Kothari, 'Social Movements and the Redefinition of Democracy', in P. Oldenburg (ed.), *India Briefing 1993* (Boulder, Westview, 1993), pp. 131-162; Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, pp. 20, 255-256, 268.

<sup>136</sup> Manji and O'Coill, 'The Missionary Position', pp. 567-583.

Writers in this vein maintained that even if motivated by charity rather than conspiracy, too many NGOs adopt a ‘missionary position’, succumbing to pressure to pick up the social costs of neo-liberal restructuring, and ending up ‘too close for comfort’ to Western actors who co-opt them for their ability to disguise the need for radical change.<sup>137</sup> Thus Julie Hearn wrote that the ‘NGO-isation’ of Kenyan healthcare – and by extension Kenyan society – in the 1990s, in which USAID encouraged the Kenyan government (at policy level and by example) to favour privately run hospitals, was ‘the clear outworking of western foreign policy aimed at redefining the central relationships between the state, society and external actors’.<sup>138</sup> NGOs were considered complicit in such a process: their leaders were compradors, deriving status from ‘imperial’ (Northern) funding and their capacity to control significant popular groups. African NGOs, in particular, were described as ‘appendages’ of Northern agencies or COMPRANGOs, whose major function was to act as Western agents, pacifying populations by diverting attention from the root causes of African poverty and peddling Western values.<sup>139</sup> Other researchers notice similarities in the language that NGOs, IFIs and Western governments have used when talking about development since the 1980s, and argue that the latter use NGOs as a channel for the transmission of development-speak neutered by the West.<sup>140</sup> Articles and monographs document the change in NGO rhetoric from offering alternatives to development – challenging the very idea of development under capitalism – towards offering development alternatives – techniques and processes to maximise benefits *within* the global neo-liberal capitalist order.<sup>141</sup> In the post-Cold War era, moreover, it is alleged that NGOs have become firmly entrenched in Western foreign policy, which has

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<sup>137</sup> Manji and O’Coill, ‘The Missionary Position’; D. Mitlin, S. Hickey and A. Bebbington, ‘Reclaiming Development? NGOs and the Challenge of Alternatives’, *World Development*, Vol. 35, No. 10 (2007), pp. 1699-1720; Moore, ‘Development Discourse as Hegemony’, in Moore and Schmitz (eds.), *Debating Development Discourse*, pp. 16-17; J. Petras and H. Veltmeyer, ‘Age of Reverse Aid: Neo-Liberalism as Catalyst of Regression’, *Development and Change*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (2002), pp. 281-293; J. Pearce, ‘Development, NGOs and Civil Society: The Debate and its Future’, in Eade (ed.), *Development, NGOs and Civil Society*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>138</sup> J. Hearn, ‘The “NGO-isation” of Kenyan Society: USAID and the Restructuring of Health Care’, *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 27, No. 75 (1998), p. 90.

<sup>139</sup> J. Petras, ‘NGOs: In the Service of Imperialism’, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (1999), pp. 429-440; Y. Tandon, ‘An African Perspective’, Amsterdam: Transnational Institute. <http://www.tni.org/archives/tondon/perspective>, quoted in J. Hearn, ‘African NGOs: The New Compradors?’, *Development and Change*, Vol. 38, No. 6 (2007), pp. 1095-1110.

<sup>140</sup> M. Hilton, ‘International Aid and Development NGOs in Britain and Human Rights since 1945’, *Humanity*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2012), pp. 449-472.

<sup>141</sup> Moore, ‘Development Discourse as Hegemony’, in Moore and Schmitz (eds.), *Debating Development Discourse*, pp. 16-17; R. Tandon, ‘Riding High or Nosediving: Development NGOs in the New Millennium’, in D. Eade (ed.), *Debating Development*, (Oxford, Oxfam, 2001), p. 49; Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington, ‘Reclaiming Development?’, pp. 7-8; I. Anderson, ‘Northern NGO Advocacy: Perceptions, Reality and the Challenge’, in Eade (ed.), *Debating Development*, pp. 223-224.

now substituted short-term relief and crisis management for longer-term development and bilateral aid.<sup>142</sup>

Yet both abstract faith in NGOs as ‘magic bullets’ and criticism of NGOs as COMPRANGOs are far too generalising about NGOs and are, in fact, caught up in the debate over what it is to ‘do good’. Their arguments depend more on whether the author believes the world needs development alternatives or alternatives to development than any objective study of NGO interventions. Moreover, since NGOs have fallen out of favour on the left, and have been removed from concepts of civil society that reify ‘the local’, their varied transnational or a-national roles – as local, national and global actors simultaneously, state-like in some respects, sub-national and supra-national in others – are understudied.<sup>143</sup> More utility can be found by taking a neo-Gramscian approach, which emphasises that NGOs are fully part of African civil society – the site of struggles for ideological hegemony – and so are best seen as an ‘arena within which battles from society at large are internalised’.<sup>144</sup> When looked at from such a perspective, it is unsurprising that NGOs like Oxfam present a fluid and often contradictory image depending on where and when they are examined, and depending also on the particular set of values, motives and individuals that make up each individual NGO.<sup>145</sup> For this reason, it is important to avoid simple generalisations and instead concentrate on studying the agents themselves to reveal their rich ideological and functional diversity.<sup>146</sup>

If the question of *who* intervenes is historical, so too is the question of *how* a developmental actor intervenes, and particularly through what relationships it operates. Fortunately, political scientists have re-evaluated the role of voluntary organisations in civil society and the relations between civil society and the state in Africa. Many have come to the conclusion that conflict or congruence between state and civil society cannot be predicted in a straightforward manner.<sup>147</sup> Instead, relations can be any mixture of

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<sup>142</sup> Barrow and Jennings (ed.), *The Charitable Impulse*, p. 18.

<sup>143</sup> Ferguson, *Global Shadows*, pp. 89-103; Cooper, ‘Writing the History of Development’, pp. 18-20; Whaites, ‘Let’s Get Civil Society Straight’.

<sup>144</sup> C. Berry and C. Gabay, ‘Transnational Political Action and “Global Civil Society” in Practice: The Case of Oxfam’, *Global Networks*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2009), pp. 343-344; G. Clarke, ‘Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Politics in the Developing World’, Centre for Development Studies, University of Swansea, Paper No. 20 (1996), p. 5, cited in Fisher, ‘Doing Good?’, p. 449; Mawdsley, Townsend and Porter, ‘Creating Spaces of Resistance’, p. 872.

<sup>145</sup> Mawdsley, Townsend and Porter, ‘Creating Spaces of Resistance’, p. 872.

<sup>146</sup> Fisher, ‘Doing Good?’, p. 441.

<sup>147</sup> M. Bratton, ‘Beyond the State: Civil Society and Associational Life in Africa’, *World Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (1989), pp. 407-430; M. Bratton, ‘The Politics of Government-NGO Relations in Africa’, *World Development*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (1989), pp. 569-587; D. Rothchild and N. Chazan (eds.), *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa* (Boulder, Westview, 1988); D. Rothchild, N. Chazan and J. Harbeson (eds.), *Civil Society and the State in Africa* (Lynne Rienner, 1994).

collaboration, confrontation, complementation and consciousness-raising.<sup>148</sup> Crawford Young has suggested five potential areas of conflict between the state and NGOs. These areas of tension include: revenue; hegemony over territory; security of the status quo; autonomy of the regime from the 'people'; and legitimacy.<sup>149</sup> Elsewhere, Michael Bratton and Alan Fowler have suggested that conflict between NGOs and states is more likely when the former challenge the state politically, rather than economically, by attempting to operate in areas or sectors that the state occupies or intends to control. Even seemingly innocuous service delivery can fall into this pattern since it is a politically charged process.<sup>150</sup> This is particularly the case in Kenya, where (as chapter two discusses in greater detail) the provision of services reflects on the fundamental task of the post-colonial state – that of development – and politics revolves around the promise and distribution of resources and services.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, as the state struggled to fulfil its obligations under the SAP regime and NGOs filled the gap, development space became increasingly politicised.<sup>152</sup>

Of course, it is equally conceivable that NGO-state relations are characterised by congruence, particularly if the NGO in question occupies space that the state had not yet managed to penetrate or control. In such a scenario the NGO can – in the manner discussed by Ferguson – serve to legitimise and bolster a regime that basks in the glory of new boreholes or hospitals. NGO work can also help to expand state reach into areas not yet penetrated by state institutions: thus NGOs can, for instance, fund state extension workers who assess and prescribe solutions to local problems, expanding state control in the manner of the 'anti-politics' machine discussed above.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, NGOs do bring desperately needed resources into a polity, resources which the state may be able to appropriate or direct towards politically important regions or constituencies, or which the elite at the apex of the state may use to 'sustain themselves by providing a needed diversification of patronage resources as those of the state shrink'.<sup>154</sup> Thus NGOs can be

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<sup>148</sup> S. Dicklitch, *The Elusive Promise of NGOs in Africa: Lessons from Uganda* (Basingstoke, Macmillan Press, 1998), p. 98.

<sup>149</sup> C. Young, 'The African Colonial State and its Political Legacy', in Rothchild and Chazan, *The Precarious Balance*, p. 31.

<sup>150</sup> Bratton, 'The Politics of Government-NGO Relations in Africa', p. 576; A. Fowler, 'The Role of NGOs in Changing State-Society Relations: Perspectives from Eastern and Southern Africa', *Development Policy Review*, Vol. 9, No.1 (1991), p. 57.

<sup>151</sup> J. Semboja and O. Therkildsen, 'A New Look at Service Provision in East Africa', in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, p. 20.

<sup>152</sup> K. Kanyinga, 'The Politics of Development Space in Kenya: State and Voluntary Organisations in the Delivery of Basic Services', in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, p. 70.

<sup>153</sup> Dicklitch, *The Elusive Promise of NGOs in Africa*, p. 18.

<sup>154</sup> Fowler, 'The Role of NGOs in Changing State-Society Relations', pp. 62-64.

co-opted by states to prop up discredited regimes.<sup>155</sup> But just because NGOs *can* serve to support the expansion of a bureaucratic state does not mean that they will *in all cases*, as is suggested by the school of thought that considers development to be a Western discourse implanted elsewhere through COMPRANGOs. Whether NGOs are an asset or a liability for the developmental state depends on the precise nature of the state and of the NGO with which it is interacting.<sup>156</sup> State responses to NGOs can, therefore, vary markedly, but often include some elements of the following: controlling legislation, emasculation, co-optation, appropriation, reconstitution, harassment and deregistration.<sup>157</sup>

Clearly, any assessment of NGOs and NGO-state relations requires historicism and empiricism rather than theoretical assumptions. 'Big picture' narratives that look at multiple NGOs in numerous locations often overlook the internal dynamics of individual NGOs and the particular relations each has with the state in different countries and at different times, both of which help to define their activities. The following thesis contributes to our understanding of how an NGO develops policy and selects action based on the interaction of its needs, finances and relation with the host nation (pragmatism), its mandate, approach to development and its perception of the role of the state (values) and the political, economic, social and historical context in which it is active.<sup>158</sup> The interaction of pragmatism and values is highly contextual and so an NGO's role in development and its relationship with the state is procedural not paradigmatic. As such, to quote Adil Najam, 'almost anything that one can say about [NGOs] is true – or false – in at least some instance, somewhere'.<sup>159</sup> Rather than casting the net sufficiently wide as to stumble onto at least a partial truth about NGOs, by way of an historically and theoretically informed case study of a particular NGO in a particular historical context the following thesis attempts to historicise literature about NGOs and their role in development and hopes to forge new links (and strengthen existing ties) between the disciplines of history and development studies. As the thesis concludes, consolidating the

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<sup>155</sup> In Uganda, Susan Dicklitch asserts that this has been the dominant dynamic as government registration, regulation and supervision of NGOs forces them to play a supportive role for the state. Dicklitch, *The Elusive Promise of NGOs in Africa*, p. 102.

<sup>156</sup> Fowler, 'The Role of NGOs in Changing State-Society Relations', p. 64.

<sup>157</sup> F. Matanga, 'Civil Society and Politics in Africa: The Case of Kenya', presented at the Fourth International Conference of the ISTR, Trinity College, Dublin (2000), p. 24. See also Whaites, 'Let's Get Civil Society Straight', pp. 132-133.

<sup>158</sup> Lorgen, 'Dancing with the State', p. 326.

<sup>159</sup> Najam is paraphrasing from M. Esman and N. Uphoff, *Local Organizations: Intermediaries in Rural Development* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 58. Cited in A. Najam, 'Reviews', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 28 (1999), p. 365.

ties between the disciplines may have important implications not only for our understanding of past development efforts, but for our ability to impact on a policy environment increasingly fractured between grand, technocratic, one-size-fits-all development 'solutions', and public scepticism and hostility to the development endeavour.

The thesis is divided into four chapters and a short conclusion. The following chapter provides a brief historical survey of Oxfam's origins and work across the globe before discussing the precise contours of development space in which it operated in Kenya across the period under examination. Chapter two describes how between Kenyan independence in 1963 and the early 1970s, Oxfam offered its support to the Kenyan state apparatus in its attempt to fulfil the challenge of nationhood through development and service provision. In so doing, Oxfam extended the reach and control of the Kenyan state over recalcitrant populations. Yet Oxfam was not depoliticising poverty or reducing it to a technical issue. Rather, it was identifying with a political agenda in favour of the central developmental role of the state and aimed to encourage the Kenyan government to behave in a way that would reduce exploitation and promote equality. By the late 1960s, such an approach was seen to be ineffective, and was also challenged by a shift in Oxfam ideology towards 'conscientisation'. For these reasons, Oxfam disengaged from the state and no longer worked directly with the government in the hope of expanding its horizons (and reach) into formerly lightly governed areas; instead, Oxfam began working from the bottom up to 'empower' marginalised Kenyans. Chapter three focuses on the clash between Oxfam's new 'values' and realities on the ground in Kenya between 1978 and 1991. For, soon after Oxfam started work to 'conscientise' and 'empower' marginalised Kenyan citizens in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it noted the hostility on behalf of the Moi state to any such 'foreign' ideologies, and witnessed the closure of local partners and the detention and torture of their members. At the same time, Oxfam's commitment to 'conscientisation' was challenged in the face of drought and starvation in the north of the country. The Field Director's top-down and technical response to the complex emergency situation contradicted Oxfam 'values', however, and made Oxfam too high-profile a target for the Moi state. A middle-ground approach that aimed to avoid the wrath of the Kenyan state and Oxford alike was taken by his successor in 1985.

Chapter four begins with the apparent 'opening' of Kenyan politics that took place with the reintroduction of multipartyism in 1991. Despite Moi's obvious distaste for democracy and civil society, the opportunity to reengage with the Kenyan state would

prove too good to pass up for Oxfam, and the organisation is shown to have been drawn ever closer to Moi's development-politics nexus. This resulted in one of its most ambitious projects alongside the state and a number of its higher profile local employees being sucked into the political machinations of the late Moi regime. Regardless of their success or failure, Oxfam's approach to Kenya and its attempts to define a role in the country reveal the true complexity of development interventions. Indeed, each chapter tells the story of a complex series of actions and reactions on the part of Oxfam and the Kenyan state in particular, and emphasises that Oxfam shifted its tactics to meet the demands of the local context and the ideological demands emanating from Oxford. Moreover, the thesis reveals that Oxfam had a deep engagement with the politics of poverty and strived to have an impact on the policies that served to marginalise Kenya's poorest citizens. Thus although Oxfam tactics on the ground shifted almost continuously in response to the interaction between the local context and its organisational values, its overarching strategy for Kenya was defined by its aim to induce a more responsible state apparatus. By demonstrating Oxfam's political understanding of poverty and development, and its tactical shifts to adapt its overarching strategy to local circumstances, the thesis challenges static and generalising theories and calls for historicism and empiricism when analysing NGOs and the messy reality of development.

## Chapter One

### 'TO CHOOSE WHICH SIDE SHALL FEEL THE STUBBORN OUNCES OF MY WEIGHT...' OXFAM AND THE INTROVERTED KENYAN STATE, 1942-2002

You say the efforts that I make / will do no good; / they will never prevail / to tip the hovering scale / where justice hangs in the balance. / I don't think / I ever thought they would, / but I am prejudiced beyond debate / in favour of my right to choose which side / shall feel the stubborn ounces of my weight.

Excerpt from a poem by Bonaro W. Overstreet, an American author and psychologist. Quoted by a former Oxfam Field Director as regards the imperatives of charitable work.

Today, Oxfam has a strong claim to be one of the world's largest and best-known charitable organisations. In 2013/14 its work helped an estimated eleven million individuals directly, and countless more through lobbying and advocacy; it supported over six million people in twenty-four distinct humanitarian emergencies; it made grants to 81 partner organisations; and it received regular donations from over 400,000 people in the UK. Its total expenditure for the year was just under £269 million.<sup>1</sup> Unsurprisingly, therefore, the organisation has received a good deal of academic attention. Contributions to our knowledge about Oxfam vary methodologically, from overarching monographs concerning the history of the organisation as a whole, to discussions of particularly novel projects or approaches. The former include works by Maggie Black and Ben Whitaker on Oxfam's first fifty years.<sup>2</sup> Somewhat unavoidably, however, such an approach focuses on the organisational structure and 'values' to the detriment of our understanding of how the NGO and its field staff operate in the periphery, its impact in specific contexts, and the influence of the periphery on the central organisation. Equally, works that focus on the language that Oxfam uses in policy papers spend little time analysing the realities of what the organisation was doing on the ground.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, articles that discuss the impact of the organisation's emergency or development work in particular contexts

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<sup>1</sup> 'Oxfam Annual Report & Accounts, 2013/14', pp. 9-10, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*; Whitaker, *A Bridge of People*.

<sup>3</sup> As chapter three discusses in relation to the 'onion skin' approach, the two do not always mirror each other. See below and S. Ilcan and A. Lacey, 'Governing through Empowerment: Oxfam's Global Reform and Trade Campaigns', *Globalizations*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2006), pp. 207-225; Berry and Gabay, 'Transnational Political Action', pp. 339-358.

are often very narrowly focused and less interested in how the specific intervention might have influenced Oxfam or how the history and nature of the organisation might have predisposed it to adopt certain modes of operation.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the work of former Oxfam staff has sometimes veered towards the polemical, arguing for a particular conception of development or humanitarianism using examples of apparent success and failure from their direct experience with the organisation.<sup>5</sup> The following thesis adopts a different method of analysis – one first used by Michael Jennings in relation to Oxfam in Tanzania (discussed below) – focusing as it does on assessing how Oxfam operated within a specific context and how the periphery impacted on the NGO (chapters two, three and four) while remaining alert to the ways in which Oxfam’s origins, values and changing organisational structure (as outlined in this chapter) impacted on its work in Kenya.

In scale at least today’s Oxfam is far removed from its origins in the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Oxford. It was in the Old Library of the church that the first meeting of the Oxford offshoot of the National Famine Relief Committee took place on October 5, 1942. The immediate catalyst for the meeting was the increasingly desperate situation in Greece resulting from the allied blockade of the then German-held territory. Despite the widespread starvation that was evident in Greece by this date, the British government was set against any attempt to provide relief to the Greek population because it feared that food distributions and other aid would be appropriated by German soldiers. But at its peak, the death toll reached 2,000 per day, and in total over 200,000 people would die of starvation or related illnesses.<sup>6</sup> The Famine Relief Committee felt that Britain had an obligation to alleviate the worst of the food crisis and attempted to lobby Parliament for a change of policy. To pressure the government, the Committee referenced the heroic resistance of the Greek people in the face of Italian and German bombardments, which itself brought about severe reprisals from the occupying force.<sup>7</sup>

Lobbying for a change of policy was potentially politically explosive, however, for challenging wartime policy was at best unpatriotic and at worst subversive. Several of the speakers at the first Oxfam meeting thus urged caution lest their efforts be interpreted negatively. Nonetheless, there was a consensus in favour of lobbying strongly for

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<sup>4</sup> K. Pushpanath, ‘Disaster without Memory: Oxfam’s Drought Programme in Zambia’, *Development in Practice*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1994), pp. 81-91. One notable exception is I. Birch and A. Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development: A Casebook from Kenya* (Oxford, Oxfam GB, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist*.

<sup>6</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> Reprisals included the requisition of all food, clothing and medical supplies for the German campaign in Africa. This alone would have caused a humanitarian disaster; the allied blockade made things worse.

humanitarian assistance to those in desperate need, and this formed the basis of the Oxford Committee's work for the next two years. Although the Committee was a 'broad church', with no denomination particularly prevalent – it certainly lacked the formal religious connections and motivations that had characterised missionary organisations in their battles against clitoridectomy, for instance – it is likely that the Quaker ideals held by founding members such as Dr. Henry Gillett impacted on the ethos and philosophy of organisation and helped to create a consensus in favour of action during these early months.<sup>8</sup> Alongside pacifism and radicalism, there was a long Quaker tradition of providing relief on the basis of need, not political calculation: the Friends War Victims Relief Committee had been established during the Franco-Prussian War with a founding principle that relief should be distributed to those who needed it most, without regard to nationality or 'side'.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Oxfam's Quaker members believed that the donor or advocate fulfilled a 'mission' as spiritually significant as a relief worker. According to Black, this meant that those joining Oxfam would feel like they were joining an organisation akin to a secular church with its own overarching purpose – to combat suffering – and this position helped to shape the organisation as a donor agency rather than an implementing agency. Consequently, through the 1940s and 1950s Oxfam provided funds and materials for relief without a direct presence on the ground. It would continue to work on a collaborative basis with local groups, churches, governments and other international organisations – ranging from small organisations such as Catholic Relief Services to larger IFIs like the World Bank – throughout the period considered in this thesis. (Nonetheless, chapter three details how local circumstances could encourage the organisation to alter this collaborative orientation, even if temporarily).<sup>10</sup> Regardless of the influence of Quakerism, Oxfam's early efforts had mixed success: although nearly £13,000 was raised from the British public in donations and from purchases made at the first (temporary) Oxfam gift shop, the lobbying effort regarding Greece was unsuccessful.<sup>11</sup> Yet unlike many of the other 200 offshoots of the National Famine Relief Committee, the Oxford Committee did not disband once the war ended; instead it shifted

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<sup>8</sup> Missionary campaigns against clitoridectomy in Kenya split the Africa congregations of Protestant churches. See Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, p. 13. Black and Vaux note that Quaker principles could be seen in the respect Oxfam held for the individual and the strongly pacifist orientation of the organisation. Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 81; Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist*, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> For this reason, Oxfam was comfortable working outside Anglophone areas, as its efforts in the Congo (1960) and Cambodia (called Kampuchea in 1979) demonstrate particularly well. Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 63-69, 214-235.

<sup>10</sup> Jennings, 'Surrogates of the State', p. 19; Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 37, 81.

<sup>11</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 16.

its focus to post-war Europe and, soon after, the 'third world'.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, by 1949 Oxfam's mandate had expanded to encompass the 'relief of suffering arising as a result of wars or of other causes in any part of the world': as well as the expansion of Oxfam's geographic horizons, it was now also mandated to relieve suffering not associated with conflict. Throughout the 1950s, therefore, Oxfam responded to all manner of crises across the globe, including famine in independent India in 1951, earthquakes in Europe in 1953 and civil war in Korea between 1950 and 1953.<sup>13</sup>

Early in the following decade Oxfam would widen its focus to include development as one of its primary objectives and would begin the transition from a famine relief organisation to an organisation interested in the causes of suffering and their long-term solutions. Around the same time, organisations that shared Oxfam's interest in longer-term development, such as the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), were being created. These organisations, however, worked much more closely with their donor governments than Oxfam, which, until the 1990s had little contact with the British government.<sup>14</sup> Rather than responding to donor imperatives, Oxfam members were inspired by post-war development efforts including the creation of the welfare state in Britain in 1945, the Marshall Plan-led recovery in Europe from 1948, the 'second colonial occupation' in the empire from the mid-1940s, and the launch of the 'decade of development' and the Freedom From Hunger Campaign (FFHC) on a global scale in the early 1960s. Crucially, each of these initiatives recognised the central role of the state and 'scientific' planning in the alleviation of suffering. By the end of the decade less than ten per cent of Oxfam funds was spent on disaster relief: more than half went towards longer-term medical and welfare projects and the remainder was reserved for agricultural development and technical training.<sup>15</sup> The Congo famine of 1960-1961 further influenced Oxfam in this direction since although immediate relief was necessary, it was clear that the cause of

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<sup>12</sup> Alfred Sauvy coined the term 'third world' in 1952, which he felt was treated similarly to the 'third estate' in pre-revolutionary France. Ilcan and Lacey, 'Governing through Empowerment', p. 211.

<sup>13</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 40; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 112.

<sup>14</sup> USAID (1961) and CIDA (1968) have received much criticism for their role in legitimising the modernising and 'scientific' development discourse promulgated by the West. T. Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002), pp. 210-242; Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, p. 256.

<sup>15</sup> In the early 1960s only around 10 per cent of Oxfam funds were spent on projects requiring support over a number of years. Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 73. The FFHC, with whom Oxfam worked closely, was particularly important in stimulating the latter's move towards a developmental, preventive model of international aid. Whitaker, *A Bridge of People*, p. 21; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, pp. 122-123; Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 62-63; Hilton, 'International Aid and Development NGOs', p. 459.

suffering was longer-term and political: the Belgian withdrawal and politics of decolonisation were as much to blame as any natural disaster.<sup>16</sup>

The Congo relief effort also helped to convince Oxfam staff of the importance of intervention in Africa (Oxfam disbursed around 50 per cent of its grants budget in the continent from the early 1960s to the early 1970s), but it had another long-term impact on the organisation: for it was there that Oxfam Secretary Leslie Kirkley personally supervised Oxfam interventions for the first time and became convinced that such supervision should be replicated in future. Accordingly, Kirkley appointed Tristram 'Jimmy' Betts as Oxfam's first Field Director in 1961.<sup>17</sup> As discussed in more detail below, Betts was a former colonial civil servant (having worked as a Forestry Officer in Nigeria for 24 years) and a prominent member of the Fabian Commonwealth Bureau. Along with many civil servants and Fabians, Betts found certain jingoistic aspects of empire distasteful, but felt that the state-led, modernising impulse of late colonial governance could, and should, be maintained in the decolonising world through the encouragement of NGOs such as Oxfam. Betts' first task was to oversee Oxfam's FFHC programme in the British High Commission territories of Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland. There he promoted development schemes for progressive farmers (including dams, education and extension services) that had been pioneered during the colonial period in an attempt to gain support among rich and middle-income Africans.<sup>18</sup>

Oxfam would expand the Field Director system over the coming years to each area of particular interest, and Field Offices became a hub of contact with the NGO's constituents, controlled local policy and filtered local applications for funding.<sup>19</sup> By the mid-1960s Humphrey Hilton had been installed as an intermediary between Betts and the Grants Sub-Committee in Oxford (which made the final decisions on financial allocations), creating a *de facto* 'Africa Desk', and staff numbers had increased sevenfold to over 200.<sup>20</sup> (See Diagram 1 for an idea of how policy, ideas and funding moved through the organisation.) Moreover, the formerly *ad hoc* approach to grant making, which focused on the merits of particular schemes rather than any coherence of approach, was phased out and replaced by a concern with the overarching strategy within which projects should

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<sup>16</sup> Whitaker, *A Bridge of People*, p. 21; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 43.

<sup>17</sup> Betts was the brother of Barbara Castle, Minister for Overseas Development in the British government from 1964.

<sup>18</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 76-79; Hodge, 'British Colonial Expertise', pp. 24-44.

<sup>19</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 76.

<sup>20</sup> Within a few years other regions had begun to follow suit, installing their own intermediaries between Field Office and Grants Sub-Committee. Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 56, 73-81.

fit. As Jennings writes, Oxfam had evolved ‘from a war-time volunteer organisation for the relief of European suffering to an international NGO dedicated to the development of the poor and the relief of suffering worldwide’.<sup>21</sup> Yet even if bureaucratisation and formalisation sought to restrict the level of influence that individuals such as Betts could have on the organisation, Oxfam remained responsive to experience and was shaped by the context in which it operated. As structures were formalised in Oxford, a process of decentralisation was also set in motion. In its Field Directors Oxfam had men and women ‘on the ground’ able to judge applications and assess Oxfam’s local programme. Indeed, Field Directors and the periphery became increasingly influential in setting the course for Oxfam’s programmes and in defining policy and philosophy for the NGO as a whole – the recommendations of the Field Director were rarely refused in Oxford.<sup>22</sup>

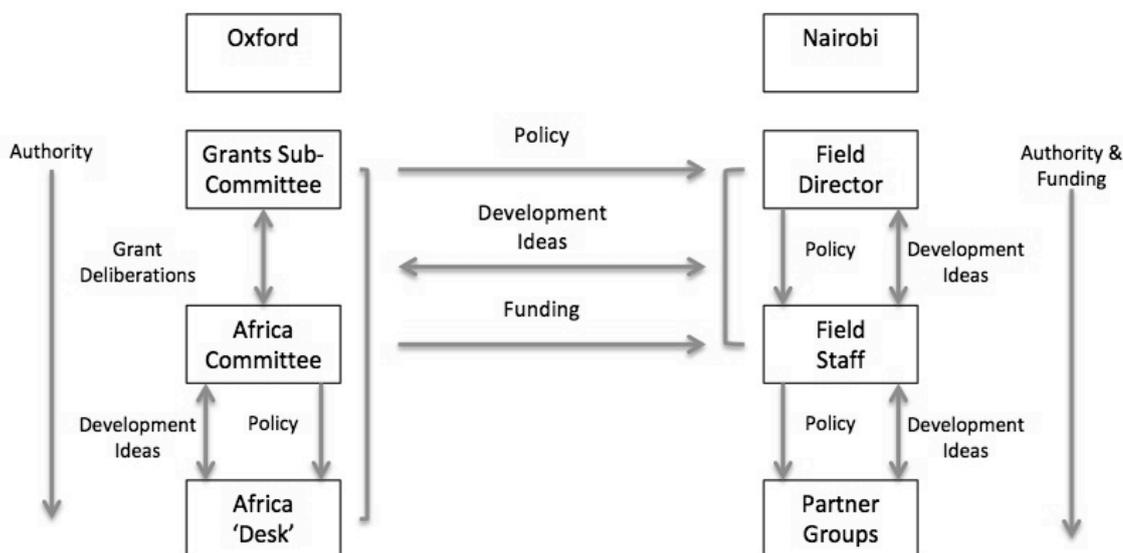


Diagram 1: An Outline of the Oxfam Hierarchy

One important issue Field Directors had to contend with was balancing Oxfam’s primary objectives: the relief of suffering and developmental schemes. This was more than an accounting issue, for the relief of suffering was ostensibly more ‘charitable’ than development aid. The latter did not always fit so comfortably with Oxfam’s status as a UK-based charity, particularly as it often went hand in hand with implicit or explicit criticism of government action or inaction. Oxfam’s shift towards development work thus brought it into conflict with the UK Charity Commission, which had judged in 1962 that

<sup>21</sup> Jennings, ‘Surrogates of the State’, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Jennings, “‘Almost an Oxfam in Itself’”, pp. 514-515.

'propaganda and advocacy for legislation... [are] political and not charitable; so, too, [is] the promotion of international friendship'. Endeavouring to perpetuate the older colonial mind-set discussed above, the Charity Commission was concerned to maintain the 'neutrality' of aid, and sought to downplay the political causes of impoverishment and their contemporary political solutions.<sup>23</sup> Its judgement against Oxfam was merely an opening salvo in a long struggle between the two institutions over the appropriateness of overseas development assistance for a British charity, but it was a serious shot across the bows nonetheless for an organisation that intended to lobby governments to expand development assistance and alter their policies, and at the same time wished to organise grassroots campaigns for social and political change.<sup>24</sup> In 1964, moreover, the Commission announced that it was going to place the activities of charities working overseas under greater scrutiny, and although not singled out for criticism it was clear that Oxfam was one of the primary targets. As chapter two discusses in greater detail, the attention of the Commission would put Oxfam's development work on hold in Kenya and elsewhere. Fortunately, in May, the House of Lords debated the issue and determined that all humanitarian relief was charitable; nevertheless, the Charity Commission demanded that Oxfam spell out its intentions with much greater clarity, which the latter did in 1965:

[Oxfam aims] to relieve poverty, distress and suffering in any part of the world (including starvation, sickness or any physical disability or affliction) and primarily when arising from any public calamity (including famine, earthquake, pestilence, war, or civil disturbance), or the immediate or continuing result of want of natural or artificial resources, or the means to develop them, and whether acting alone or in association with others.<sup>25</sup>

Notably, in this lengthened mandate Oxfam gave equal priority to calamity and the lack of resources (or the means to develop them) in underdeveloped nations. The latter were, of course, potentially political issues since they could be the result of anything from international trade and aid agreements that stipulated the transfer of unsuitable

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<sup>23</sup> Anna Bocking-Welch has shown how the Freedom From Hunger Campaign downplayed political issues, and served to increase public engagement with formerly imperial spaces in the neutral language of aid and development. A. Bocking-Welch, 'Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses: British Involvement in the United Nations Freedom from Hunger Campaign, 1960-70', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 40, No. 5 (2012), pp. 879-896.

<sup>24</sup> The following year, the Charity Commission declared Oxfam to be a charitable *and* political organisation, forcing the latter to readjust its mandate to the liking of the Commission. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 128.

<sup>25</sup> Jennings, 'Surrogates of the State', p. 24.

technology, to the corrupt governance and overstretched education services of newly independent nations.

Such an emphasis was, in fact, part of an attempt by a politically engaged group within Oxfam to encourage the organisation and its donors to focus on the structural issues that lay behind emergencies, poverty and suffering and to dispel the myth that Oxfam could make a difference in the absence of structural changes led by Southern or Western states. Indeed, a report prepared for Oxfam in 1967 by its Secretary, Dr. Cyril James, called on the organisation to stoke political awareness amongst Oxfam contributors and to 'play the role of Socrates and be a gadfly to sting the state to action' by raising the pressure on Western and Southern governments to help the poorest.<sup>26</sup> Chapter two demonstrates how Betts took up this mantle in Kenya in the 1960s by encouraging the state to intervene in 'backward' and politically unimportant areas of the country. Soon after the *James Report*, Oxfam published the *Haslemere Declaration* with Christian Aid and the Overseas Development Institute. The *Declaration* committed these British charitable NGOs to a more politically active role, calling as it did for an increase in the quality and quantity of official aid and adjustments to international trade, which, the committee alleged, favoured the rich. It concluded that charity was no longer enough:

Too often it is the equivalent of tossing sixpence in a beggar's cap: money given by those who have no intention of changing the system that produces beggars, and no understanding that they are part of it.<sup>27</sup>

Nonetheless, there was a certain amount of tension within Oxfam between those who sensed the need for a more political focus and those who emphasised the importance of the principle of apparently 'neutral' humanitarian interventions. Inspired by the writing of Renée Dumont and Frantz Fanon, and by the work of Des Wilson at Shelter, Deputy Director Reverend Nicholas Stacey wanted to increase Oxfam's political role by changing the organisation into an educational and lobbying body – a pressure group to influence the British government and the public regarding development issues.<sup>28</sup> He was, however, unable to convince the Council of Management of this change: they feared that contributions would drop as soon as Oxfam was no longer actively relieving

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<sup>26</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 107, 154-155.

<sup>27</sup> To some extent these interventions were the product of an intellectual context influenced by academic publications by renowned authors such as Gunnar Myrdal. Quoted in Hilton, 'International Aid and Development NGOs', p. 453.

<sup>28</sup> Stacey identified with the activist elements of Oxfam and supported the creation of 'Third World First' network across British universities. Whitaker, *A Bridge of People*, p. 25; Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 156-161.

suffering and that the Charity Commission would use any shift towards lobbying as an opportunity to strip Oxfam of its charitable status.<sup>29</sup> Stacey's subsequent resignation eased the crisis, but he and others who remained in the organisation – and not least those on the ground in Kenya – were disappointed at the Council's decision. Stacey later wrote in the *Times* that he had resigned because:

I think [Oxfam] has missed an opportunity to influence events which will dominate our history in the remaining years of this century, and I do not fancy myself primarily as a fund raiser.<sup>30</sup>

In Oxfam's 1969 annual report Leslie Kirkley offered some belated support to those within the organisation who remained committed to Stacey's position, writing that increasing donations and income year after year would mean nothing

if governmental and inter-governmental aid from the rich nations continues to diminish while public apathy about the Third World spreads... To go on increasing the size of our income is just not enough in itself – unless we are satisfied to end up as a mere sop to the national conscience – a gesture in the face of crisis.<sup>31</sup>

Buoyed by Kirkley's words, those within the organisation who had supported Stacey and his ideals continued to push for the principle of political interventions. Gradually, they gained the upper hand: soon after Stacey's resignation Oxfam helped to form Action for World Development (an independent lobbying body free of UK charity legislation), offered financial support to the *New Internationalist* (a magazine designed to complement local activism and central lobbying) and began to take membership of organisations dedicated to campaigns for political change.<sup>32</sup> Over the next two years the move towards a more educational and political Oxfam was codified, first by the allocation of five per cent of Oxfam income to educational activity, and then in a 1975 memorandum, which noted that Oxfam

recognise[s] our responsibility, as citizens, to influence, where appropriate, the organisations and institutions in this country, including Parliament, that are involved in the wider aspects of our relationships with the poor countries.<sup>33</sup>

Nonetheless, the type of development Oxfam advocated in the mid-1970s was qualitatively different from the modernising and colonial-esque efforts promoted by Betts

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<sup>29</sup> Whitaker, *A Bridge of People*, p. 25.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in Whitaker, *A Bridge of People*, p. 26.

<sup>31</sup> Whitaker, *A Bridge of People*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>32</sup> Hilton, 'International Aid and Development NGOs', p. 455.

<sup>33</sup> Whitaker, *A Bridge of People*, p. 30.

in Kenya during the 1960s (discussed in detail in the following chapter). Indeed, behind the final triumph of the more political wing of Oxfam was the influence of the Marxist-inspired conscientisation movement, associated with Paulo Freire. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire argued that the poor and downtrodden would only achieve full emancipation if and when they brought it about themselves. For development to be successful, therefore, it needed to originate from within the community.<sup>34</sup> Most importantly, people needed to be helped to understand the political blockages to their own development and to be assisted when challenging their governments to install more appropriate development policies.<sup>35</sup> Conscientisation had strong links with liberation theology and was a deeply controversial development philosophy because of its political content, yet according to Black, the impact of the ideology 'on the more radical minds in Oxfam was profound'.<sup>36</sup> In particular, Adrian Moyes and Michael Harris (Development Secretary and Director of Overseas Aid respectively from 1972) were fully committed to Freire's ideas and pushed the Executive Committee to accept the conscientisation interpretation of development and the need for attitudinal rather than technological change.<sup>37</sup> By the mid-1970s, Oxfam would regard the 'rediscovery of the will' as a vital part of the process of development. In Kenya and elsewhere its projects would be designed for the poorest to 'have more' in terms of food, health and wealth, but also to 'be more' – to improve the confidence and ability of the poorest to manage their own future. No longer were the poor merely the recipients of external aid; in fact, Oxfam argued that it was working to undo the unequal effects of previous 'top-down' programmes. Instead, the poor were integral to the development process and needed to participate fully in their economic and social development.<sup>38</sup> Lingering questions over whether Oxfam was championing the 'wretched of the earth' or merely reinterpreting the 'white man's burden' for charitable purposes resulted in the preparation and publication in 1975 of *Oxfam: An Interpretation*. Examined more thoroughly in chapter two, the document emphasised Oxfam's political 'solidarity' with the poor, and helped to define the 1970s as a period of 'anti-institutionalism' for the organisation.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 182.

<sup>35</sup> Hilton, 'International Aid and Development NGOs', p. 453.

<sup>36</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 183.

<sup>37</sup> Reggie Norton, the Latin American Field Secretary, had also absorbed such ideas and led a 'consciousness-raising exercise' among Oxfam staff in 1974. Jennings, 'Surrogates of the State', p. 25; Hilton, 'International Aid and Development NGOs', p. 453.

<sup>38</sup> J. Alderson (ed.), *Field Directors' Handbook* 3rd Ed. (Oxfam, Oxford, 1980), section three p. 3 (3-3), 3-4, 3-5, 3-7, 3-8.

<sup>39</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 197, 208.

## 'ALL AID IS POLITICAL'

Regardless of whether the organisation was acting as a 'gadfly' to the state or as a 'partner' of radical movements, Oxfam's political understanding of poverty inevitably interacted with circumstances on the ground prior to being translated into action. Oxfam's work during the conflict between the Nigerian government and Biafra separatists (1967-69) provides a notable example of how this process unfolded. In fact, Oxfam approached the conflict to some extent blinkered by the emerging liberation ideology discussed above: it was the first NGO to break ranks and declare support for the rebel movement (contradicting British foreign policy), claiming that 'the price for a united Nigeria is likely to be millions of lives'. With hindsight it is clear that the Biafrans actively manipulated aid agencies like Oxfam, using disaster relief interventions and publicity surrounding them as political capital in their struggle for separation from Nigeria.<sup>40</sup> On top of food deliveries and publicity for the cause, Oxfam also helped to support the breakaway Biafran state by purchasing its currency at inflated rates. The organisation was, indeed, the sole source of foreign currency for the Biafran regime (which it used to purchase weapons) between April and September of 1968.<sup>41</sup> A related criticism concerns Oxfam's relief efforts during the Ethiopian famine in 1983-84.<sup>42</sup> Not only was Oxfam's relief effort delayed by its investment in the 'extraordinarily optimistic ideology' of 'revolution through development' (which was so strong 'that aid agencies [like Oxfam] did not turn away from their developmentalist beliefs, even when poor people were suffering from the effects of famine').<sup>43</sup> It is also alleged that that Oxfam was blind to the extent to which the Ethiopian government manipulated donated funds because of its commitment to radical politics and a 'politico-ideological development philosophy'.<sup>44</sup> Invested in the 'radical' Ethiopian regime, many in Oxfam became apologists for the administration and

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<sup>40</sup> The Biafran authorities stubbornly resisted calls to open up relief channels from Nigeria in order to maintain a near famine situation. They then used a public relations company to exaggerate the very real suffering and sustain international support. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 134.

<sup>41</sup> D. Rieff, *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 2002), pp. 81-85.

<sup>42</sup> 'Band Aid' helped turn the disaster into a global news story, and Oxfam's income doubled within the year to reach £51 million. However, it is now alleged that much of the money donated to the combined efforts to end the famine was wasted or misused. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>43</sup> Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist*, pp. 44-45; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, pp. 156-157; Rieff, *A Bed for the Night*, pp. 101-106.

<sup>44</sup> In its most extreme form, the idea was that small development projects would even 'thaw the inhuman hostility of the Cold War'. Rieff, *A Bed for the Night*, pp. 101-106; Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist*, p. 51; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, pp. 156-157; Jennings, 'Surrogates of the State', p. 28.

considered rumours of the misappropriation of aid funds to be the propaganda of its internal and external political opponents.<sup>45</sup>

Oxfam was not alone in supporting the Biafran secessionists and the Ethiopian state; nor was it alone in accepting the political nature of poverty and emergencies. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) had long been critical of the International Committee of the Red Cross for its unwavering neutrality, for instance. Yet MSF was divided over whether it was justifiable to criticise governments for their role in humanitarian crises in the knowledge that such criticism would likely curtail the organisation's ability to provide relief.<sup>46</sup> Thus while others hesitated to define their attitude towards the interaction with politics and governments, Oxfam was one of the first NGOs of the post-war era to adopt a political stance in full cognisance of the consequences. Brian Walker, Director-General from 1974, later admitted that 'all aid is political':

The simplest grant... a new well in, say, a remote African village... A manifestly humanitarian gesture. But political, too – for a well belonging to the people disturbs the balance of power in that village. Whoever owned the watering place hitherto is now disadvantaged. Normally that means the landlord, the moneylender or the local political power boss. Sometimes all three in one. If the people have their own water they do not need to work for the landlord, or pay him a tithe, or vote for him in the election... The political power structure has been disturbed – with a measure of justice flowing towards the poor and away from the powerful. Even when multiplied many times over... this remains a modest enough gesture, and is neither radical or revolutionary. Nonetheless, it is a beginning – a threat to the power base of the rich and powerful and hence profoundly political.<sup>47</sup>

The outcome of Oxfam's engagement with the politics of development in its host nation is, of course, highly contextual. In Nigeria, Oxfam served to challenge the territorial integrity of the state, while its aid propped up the Ethiopian state and helped to maintain its hold in Tigre and Eritrea. Unfortunately, much recent literature on Oxfam has focused on discourse analysis of the kind described in the introduction. Thus Oxfam's engagement with issues of human rights and its acknowledgement of some of the positive aspects of globalisation have seen it tarred with the same brush as the IMF and World Bank as part of Western hegemony.

Certainly, during the 1980s a human rights framework emerged (in a fairly incoherent and haphazard manner) to become an organising motif for Oxfam.<sup>48</sup> Seeing

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<sup>45</sup> Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist*, p. 51

<sup>46</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Whitaker, *A Bridge of People*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>48</sup> One former employee noted that it took around ten to fifteen years to coalesce into something tangible. Interview with author no. XI, 4 December, 2014.

individuals as ‘rights-bearers’ and governments as ‘rights-protectors’ tied poverty, politics and development together in a relief-rights-development continuum.<sup>49</sup> Many also hoped that a human rights framework would encourage the translation of NGOs’ grassroots work into a global agenda, allowing Oxfam to do more than ‘put Band-Aids on malignant tumours’.<sup>50</sup> Discussion of rights such as these presented a challenge to authoritarian governments, not least that of President Moi in Kenya (as examined in chapters three and four). Broadly speaking, however, the end of the Cold War in 1989 opened space for rights talk and for Oxfam to attempt to give expression to the different groupings of civil society that had been ‘marginalised into poverty’.<sup>51</sup> Oxfam also began to lobby national governments and international organisations for policy change, and the World Bank regarded the organisation as ‘the unofficial leader of the non-governmental aid groups’.<sup>52</sup> Relations were particularly warm with the British Department for International Development (DfID) under New Labour from 1997. After the horrific genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and in an era of increasing levels of conflict in the South, Oxfam welcomed British government and NATO intervention in the Kosovo crisis in 1999. Indeed, Oxfam advocated the use of force to Robin Cook, then British Foreign Secretary, as the ‘only remaining option to uphold citizens’ rights in war’.<sup>53</sup> Matthew Hilton is critical of this closer engagement between NGOs and Western institutions, and also of the dominant language of ‘rights’ used by aid and development NGOs. He alleges that NGOs communicate ‘in a language influenced and directed by’ powerful Western interests and official development agencies, and as such form part of a pernicious system of global governance.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, questions remain over the extent to which Western military power used a new model of ‘moral triage’ based on human rights to justify intervention in

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<sup>49</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 198.

<sup>50</sup> Thus in 1985 Oxfam created a dedicated Gender and Development Unit (GADU) to tie small-scale efforts to help women in development to global movements for gender equality. Rieff, *A Bed for the Night*, p. 307.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with author no. XI, 4 December 2014; Hilton, ‘International Aid and Development NGOs’, p. 456.

<sup>52</sup> In 1988, Oxfam and War on Want established the UK Debt Crisis Network to coordinate development groups in the UK in order to lobby against SAPs. In 1993, Oxfam declared that it was working towards ‘basic human rights’, and two years later issued a Global Charter for Basic rights. The Jubilee 2000 campaign launched at the 1997 G8 summit in Denver took many of its arguments and ideas from the discussion between members of the Debt Crisis Network, and in 1999, debt forgiveness of \$100 billion was agreed for the world’s most indebted countries and there were promises of further bilateral debt relief. I. Anderson, ‘Oxfam, the World Bank and Heavily Indebted Poor Countries’, in B. Rugendyke (ed.), *NGOs as Advocates for Development in a Globalising World* (London, Routledge, 2007), p. 123, cited in Hilton, ‘International Aid and Development NGOs’, p. 456; R. Reitan, *Global Activism* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2007), p. 74-86.

<sup>53</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, pp. 189-191; Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist*, p. 21.

<sup>54</sup> Hilton, ‘International Aid and Development NGOs’, p. 459.

Kosovo and to demonstrate the strength of NATO.<sup>55</sup> Of course, close links with New Labour and DfID had positives for Oxfam and its beneficiaries. For instance, donor requirements from DfID were relaxed for Oxfam. One interviewee involved in Oxfam's humanitarian work in Kenya over a number of years noted how straightforward it was at that time to get government support for Oxfam's humanitarian interventions: 'if you wanted two million [pounds] to airdrop something in Wajir you [just] phoned them up'.<sup>56</sup> Hilton and others would undoubtedly argue that the proximity of Oxfam to the British government came at the cost of its independence.

Others see Oxfam as having become institutionalised in another fashion, and are particularly critical of the NGO for its attitude towards globalisation. In 2002 Oxfam produced a report titled *Rigged Rules and Double Standards: Trade, Globalisation, and the Fight Against Poverty*. In *Rigged Rules*, the organisation advocated on behalf of international trade and globalisation as the means to lift millions of people out of poverty.<sup>57</sup> Somewhat unsurprisingly, the NGO received much disapproval from the left for what critics called a 'schizophrenic analysis' that promoted democracy while at the same time calling for free trade, which, critics alleged, only serves to override democratic rights.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, detractors argued that Oxfam's stress on 'market access' was merely a linguistic camouflage for the World Bank policy of 'export first'.<sup>59</sup> In publishing its report, Oxfam was thus considered complicit with institutions (such as the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organisation) at the helm of neo-liberal initiatives to govern the South through its inclusion in the global marketplace.<sup>60</sup> Although Oxfam contested the neo-liberal approach to development, its attitude towards globalisation was considered too close to the ideological terrain the World Bank *et al.*<sup>61</sup> Instead of offering alternatives to a flawed international trading regime, therefore, critics saw Oxfam employing the language and remedies prescribed by that very regime.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist*, p. 17; Rieff, *A Bed for the Night*, p. 317.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with author no. XVI, 22 September, 2014.

<sup>57</sup> Oxfam, *Rigged Rules and Double Standards: Trade, Globalisation, and the Fight Against Poverty* (Oxfam, Oxford, 2002), p. 95.

<sup>58</sup> V. Shiva, 'Export at Any Cost: Oxfam's Free Trade Recipe for the Third World', published by D. Foskey via WTO Watch, No. 59 (2002).

<sup>59</sup> Ilcan and Lacey, 'Governing through Empowerment', p. 218; Shiva, 'Export at Any Cost'; W. Bello, 'What's Wrong with the Oxfam Trade Campaign', published by D. Foskey via WTO Watch, No. 55 (2002); W. Bello, 'The Oxfam Debate: From Controversy to Common Strategy', published by D. Foskey via WTO Watch, No. 63 (2002).

<sup>60</sup> Ilcan and Lacey, 'Governing through Empowerment', p. 208.

<sup>61</sup> Berry and Gabay, 'Transnational Political Action', pp. 347-348.

<sup>62</sup> Berry and Gabay, 'Transnational Political Action', pp. 353; Ilcan and Lacey, 'Governing through Empowerment', p. 219.

Unfortunately, as outlined in the introduction, such a critique has much less weight than one based on a precise and contextualised history of developmental interventions. The most comprehensive attempt to do this for Oxfam to date has concerned Tanzania. Michael Jennings has written that Oxfam's conscientisation approach and its willingness to accept a politicised understanding of poverty – and of the power relations behind underdevelopment – had a perverse impact on the ground in Tanzania. Indeed, precisely because Oxfam envisaged development in the newly decolonised nation to be explicitly and inherently political, its staff formed an ideological attachment to the host government, which followed President Nyerere's *Ujamaa* philosophy.<sup>63</sup> Outwardly, the *Ujamaa* philosophy seemed to be conscientisation in practice: it was a community-based scheme for rural development that matched Oxfam concerns for grassroots democracy and involvement in the development process and it focused on awakening the poorest to their plight rather than on technical or scientific methods to increase productivity or per capita income.<sup>64</sup> The NGO thus threw its weight behind the government, providing funding and advice on this apparent large-scale implementation of its own ideas and became a 'surrogate of the state' in the process.<sup>65</sup> Yet in undertaking projects in concert with the state, Oxfam actually weakened the position of the poor *vis à vis* the administration in Tanzania: the government was, in reality, implementing a system of rural control that reduced any local-level involvement in the development process. 'Villagisation' was, in fact, a method of increasing state power by drawing peasant farmers into the state system of production and marketing.<sup>66</sup> Turning Ferguson's 'anti-politics machine' theory on its head, Jennings argues that Oxfam's political development philosophy meant it placed less emphasis on the technical results of its development work than its political intent, thereby effectively blinding itself to the way its actions supported a centralised authoritarian state.<sup>67</sup> Ensnared by its own discourse, Oxfam failed to realise that the results of its work – the extension of state power, the marginalisation of opposition to the government and the weakening of the

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<sup>63</sup> M. Jennings, "Development is Very Political in Tanzania": Oxfam and the Chunya Integrated Development Programme, 1972-76', in Barrow and Jennings (eds.), *The Charitable Impulse*, p. 109.

<sup>64</sup> Jennings, "Development is Very Political in Tanzania", in Barrow and Jennings (eds.), *The Charitable Impulse*, pp. 130-132; Jennings, "Almost an Oxfam in Itself", p. 524.

<sup>65</sup> Jennings, "Almost an Oxfam in Itself", p. 529.

<sup>66</sup> M. Jennings, *Surrogates of the State: NGOs, Development and Ujamaa in Tanzania* (Bloomfield, CT, Kumarian Press, 2008), p. 175.

<sup>67</sup> Jennings, "Development is Very Political in Tanzania", in Barrow and Jennings (eds.), *The Charitable Impulse*, pp. 121-122.

poor – were contradictory to its aims.<sup>68</sup> Hence Jennings comes to a similar conclusion to James Ferguson, lamenting that even where development is made political, NGOs end up reinforcing state expansion and control. The following thesis questions whether such a conclusion stands up to examination for a country where there was little obvious coincidence between Oxfam and the state in terms of development ideology: the Kenyan development context was, indeed, markedly different from that pertaining across the border. In so doing, it asks whether it is possible to come to any general conclusions as regards the role that NGOs play in development, especially when considering our limited historical knowledge of their varied organisational forms, modes of operation and ideologies.

‘DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FACE THE CHALLENGE OF DEVELOPMENT... INDEPENDENCE WOULD BE REDUCED TO A MERE SLOGAN IF THIS CHALLENGE IS NOT MET BOLDLY’.<sup>69</sup>

The remainder of this chapter demonstrates the tight nexus between politics and development in Kenya under both President Kenyatta and President Moi. It documents the ways in which each leader sought to manipulate and appropriate the funds and the ideology of development with the intention to serve their ethno-regional constituencies and shore up their hold on political power. But before discussing the intricacies of the ‘introverted’ developmental state in Kenya, it is important to note that the roots of the connection between development and political power in Kenya are to be found in the country’s experience of colonialism; meanwhile, the ethnic nationalisms to which Kenyatta and Moi played using development were also formed in response to the ‘industrialisation, urbanisation and the intensification of state power’ that Kenya underwent during colonial rule.<sup>70</sup> For prior to the advent of British rule in the late nineteenth century, the indigenous society in the region comprised diverse inter- and intra-related ethnic groups co-existing in decentralised economies. Each ethnic group filled a specific niche in the localised exchange of specialised products. For the most part,

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<sup>68</sup> Jennings, “‘Almost an Oxfam in Itself’”, p. 530.

<sup>69</sup> T. Mboya, *The Challenge of Nationhood: A Collection of Speeches and Writings* (Oxford, Heinemann, 1970).

<sup>70</sup> J. Lonsdale, ‘Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism’, in P. Kaarsholm and J. Hultin (eds.), *Inventions and Boundaries: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Roskilde University, 1994), p. 137.

pre-colonial ethnic groups avoided direct competition; instead of clashing they ‘formed and re-formed by fission and fusion, like slivers of glass in a kaleidoscope’.<sup>71</sup> However, as labour markets became generalised and state institutions formalised under colonialism, ethnic difference began to matter in the competition for employment and security. Since the early colonial regime focused much of its attention on supporting the white settlers who were concentrated on high-potential Kenyan farmland, the ethnic groups located in those areas suffered displacement, but also benefited from opportunities for education (by missionary groups responding to their dislocation) and employment by the state – as tax collectors or police, for example. These opportunities allowed for increased levels of accumulation amongst the Kikuyu and Luo in particular, and their elite became wealthier and better integrated into the colonial system than other ethnic leaders.<sup>72</sup> Those who received education and off-farm incomes were, therefore, ready and able to purchase land, invest in manufacturing and engage in commerce come independence; those subsisting on unproductive land that held no interest for settlers, or those living ‘backward’ nomadic lifestyles were left behind.<sup>73</sup> The former were also able to entrench these advantages as employment by the state gave them an unprecedented ability to ‘help their friends and hurt their enemies’.<sup>74</sup> In this way the ‘complementary modes of subsistence’ of pre-colonial Africa were skewed by colonialism and replaced by ‘sharpening consciousness of difference’, and ethnicity acquired a patriotism normally associated – in Europe, at least – with the nation.

Moreover, as discussed in the introduction, colonial development schemes in Kenya aimed to draw the sting from criticism of colonialism and to dissipate likely unrest; for this reason they were most often directed to Kikuyu- and Luo-dominated areas such as Central and Western Province, areas that had suffered maximum displacement under colonial rule.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, the Kenya government would finally relent to pressure from the Colonial Office, KCA and KAU as regards encouraging more African participation in the development of Kenya’s economy during the Mau Mau revolt, itself partly a consequence

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<sup>71</sup> Lonsdale, ‘Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism’, p. 137.

<sup>72</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> Although inequality was most clearly visible between ethnic groups, not all Kikuyu or Luo benefitted from colonialism. In fact, there was a degree of internal differentiation between members of a new African petite bourgeoisie and a class of landless labourers. Yet for the time being ethnic groups were held together by traditions of mutual obligation and reciprocity wherein the success of ethnic elites in acquiring wealth and positions of power was considered beneficial for all members of the group. Lonsdale, ‘Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism’, pp. 138, 141.

<sup>74</sup> Lonsdale, ‘Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism’, p. 138.

<sup>75</sup> See Hodgson, ‘Taking Stock’ for an example of how colonial development sought to control populations in neighbouring Tanganyika.

of the skewed nature of colonial development.<sup>76</sup> Hence, whereas around £29 million was spent on Kenyan development between 1945 and 1953, from 1954 around £10 million per annum was budgeted for development as a method of countering insurgency.<sup>77</sup> By opening development opportunities to those loyal to the state through initiatives such as the Swynnerton Plan, which abolished restrictions on African involvement in cash crop exports from 1954, the government hoped to establish a stable yeomanry farming class (with conservative and property-respecting interests) as a buffer between Mau Mau radicals and the state.<sup>78</sup> The plan succeeded in practical terms, with over 300,000 farms and 2.4 million acres consolidated and enclosed by 1962, but it also helped to entrench pernicious features of the colonial political economy, including the dualist pattern of traditional and modern agriculture. Furthermore – as discussed above – the ideal of development opened the colonial government to the charge that truly national development required independence.<sup>79</sup>

In reality, however, Kenya's African elite was jostling for position to replace the white settlers at the apogee of the 'gatekeeper' state: experience during the late colonial period convinced this elite that access to the levers of the bureaucratic and developmental state came with the opportunity to direct public investment according to their personal – or their ethnic group's – interests, cementing their economic and political hegemony in much the same way as settlers had done previously.<sup>80</sup> If the skewed nature of colonial economic development meant it was always likely that competition to replace the settler elite would be framed in terms of ethnicity, the ban on national political parties implemented during the Mau Mau revolt guaranteed such a scenario, since district-level parties – for the most part ethnically homogeneous – had flourished in the vacuum. The parties that emerged once the ban on national parties was lifted were, therefore, coalitions of convenience among ethnic barons in order to gather ethnic voting

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<sup>76</sup> The skewed nature of colonial development was particularly troubling for a Kikuyu moral economy that equated wealth and poverty with morality. Mau Mau was, therefore, as much a Kikuyu civil war – a violent debate over the meaning of 'being Kikuyu', and thus who best should expel the British – as a war of insurgency. Lewis, *Empire-State Building*, p. 109; J. Lonsdale, 'The Moral Economy of Mau Mau: Wealth, Poverty and Civil Virtue in Kikuyu Political Thought', in B. Berman and J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa, Book Two: Violence and Ethnicity* (Oxford, James Currey, 1992).

<sup>77</sup> M. McWilliam, 'The Managed Economy: Agricultural Change, Development and Finance in Kenya', in Low and Smith (eds.), *History of East Africa*, pp. 281-284.

<sup>78</sup> Chege, 'Swapping Development Strategies', p. 255; Hodge, 'British Colonial Expertise', p. 32.

<sup>79</sup> McWilliam, 'The Managed Economy', in Low and Smith (eds.), *History of East Africa*, p. 264.

<sup>80</sup> Moreover, increasing African representation in cash crop agriculture did not have any effect on the sector's reliance on unpredictable commodity prices and left independent Kenya with a fiscal system vulnerable to exogenous shocks. L. Gardner, 'An Unstable Foundation: Taxation and Development in Kenya, 1945-63', in Branch, Cheeseman and Gardner (eds.), *Our Turn to Eat*, p. 57.

blocs large enough to negotiate access to state power as Britain withdrew.<sup>81</sup> The Kenya African National Union (KANU) party thus had only 'transient unity' as its leaders 'temporarily buried their differences to eject an oppressive minority'.<sup>82</sup> Its opponent, the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), was made up of a number of smaller ethnic groups and formed only in response to the strategic alliance between the most dominant ethnic groups in Kenya – the Kikuyu and Luo – within KANU. KADU hoped to restrict the putative dominance of the Kikuyu and Luo by negotiating a federal constitution with the British. At independence the competitive multiculturalism engendered by colonial rule and the skewed nature of colonial development manifested itself in political differences over the federal or '*majimbo*' constitution put in place by the British.<sup>83</sup> KANU – dominated as it was by the most populous ethnic groups – was successful in the general election to decide the first post-independence government in 1963, and sought to destroy a constitution that opened the possibility of decentralised power and accumulation.<sup>84</sup> Its leader and Kenya's Prime Minister, Jomo Kenyatta, sought a return to the colonial system of governance and development, whereby the central state (which he and his cabal would almost certainly dominate) was the node of power and wealth. Making use of what was left of the colonial bureaucracy, Kenyatta would starve the supposedly empowered districts of funds until they withered and could no longer function. Within two years of independence, KADU had crumpled, Kenya had become a *de facto* one party state and economic and political power was concentrated in the hands of whoever had control over the state apparatus.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> M. Gthinji and F. Holmquist, 'Reform and Political Impunity in Kenya: Transparency without Accountability', *African Studies Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2012), p. 58.

<sup>82</sup> P. Anyang Nyong'o, 'State and Society in Kenya: The Disintegration of the Nationalist Coalition and the Rise of Presidential Authoritarianism, 1963-78', *African Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 351 (1989), p. 233; D. Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta Struggles* (Nairobi, 2006), p. 251, cited in Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 7.

<sup>83</sup> *Majimbo* is the Swahili word for region.

<sup>84</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 14.

<sup>85</sup> *Majimboism* was a dead letter by 1965; those in KADU had seen sense beforehand, jumping ship to KANU in late 1964. In common with his aim to re-assert central control over Kenya's political economy, Kenyatta reinforced the position of Provincial Commissioners as representatives of the President. Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 14-15; D. Branch and N. Cheeseman, 'The Politics of Control in Kenya: Understanding the Bureaucratic-Executive State', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 33, No. 107 (2006), pp. 18-21; A. Fowler, 'Non-Governmental Organisations and the Promotion of Democracy in Kenya', Ph.D. Thesis submitted to University of Sussex (1993), p. 88.

## FROM 'FATHER OF THE NATION' TO THE 'LITTLE KILLER': KENYA UNDER KENYATTA, 1963-1978

Kenyatta and his government quickly took over the 'gatekeeping' function of the colonial state. Capitalising on the already existing infrastructure and economic base of the country, the elite at the apex of government acquired great personal fortunes and positions of influence by sitting astride the 'gate' between multinational corporations and peasant producers.<sup>86</sup> Control of the state gave this elite control of inward financial flows – whether aid, payment for exports or investment – and over exports (of the legal or illegal variety).<sup>87</sup> Using their political influence, this elite also had the opportunity to write legislation favourable to their economic interests and to insert allies into positions of power within marketing boards and boardrooms of parastatals relevant to their investments. The Kenyanisation of posts held by expatriates in private business also provided opportunities to reward allies and buttress the 'gatekeeping' economic system. As such, the boundary between public and private was porous to the extreme, with each sector reliant on the other for its success.<sup>88</sup> The wealth generated from political contacts and connections would, to complete the cycle, be used reinforce political power through a system of patronage: clamour for the 'fruits of independence' gave great sway to those with control over resources that could be distributed to an ethnic bloc in exchange for votes. Most important, in this regard, was the unquestioned ability of the President to direct state development resources as he saw fit.

Kenyatta's status as the 'father of the nation' during the early years of independence ensured that the development programme of the KANU government followed his own prejudices. For him development was a matter of individual hard work, a concept that reflected Kikuyu notions of civil society and the high-value members of the community placed on individual enterprise.<sup>89</sup> Accordingly, there would be no large-scale redistribution of private property formerly owned by Europeans or nationalisation of

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<sup>86</sup> Cooper, *Africa since 1940*, p. 157.

<sup>87</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>88</sup> In 1967 the Ndegwa Commission recommended that civil servants should be permitted to have business interests. Inevitably, these government employees would use their public positions to further their own private enterprises. Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>89</sup> E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, 'Hegemonic Enterprises and Instrumentalities of Survival: Ethnicity and Democracy in Kenya', *African Studies*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (2002), p. 241.

foreign-owned assets.<sup>90</sup> State investment, meanwhile, was to be directed to productive activities such as modernising agriculture and incentivising industry rather than welfare. At the same time, Kenyatta had a personal and political interest in promoting such a development policy: as mentioned above, the Kenyan elite (of which he was the leading member) had enriched and strengthened itself during the final years of colonialism and was in a strong position *vis à vis* the nexus between the state and the economy. This elite, and Kenyatta's Kikuyu allies in particular, had benefitted hugely from the transfer of vast tracts of land – and with them the large-holder export sector – from white settlers who sold their land on a 'willing seller, willing buyer' basis. Moreover, they stood to gain not only from the protection of what they had already acquired, but also from the continued promotion of individual enterprise: by taking out loans on the basis of their inherited collateral they were in an ideal position to invest in newly vacated land and industrial opportunities. Elite Kikuyu would, therefore, soon expand their ownership and influence into parastatals, trade, finance and manufacturing.

Except for the conversion twenty per cent of transferred land into smallholdings for less wealthy Africans, the idea and reality of Kenyan development had barely changed since independence. As in the colonial period, development would be focused on areas of political and economic importance for Kenya's elite: thus the interests of large-scale agriculture and the burgeoning modern urban sector remained paramount for Kenya's economic planners.<sup>91</sup> The state – dominated as in the colonial period by an aloof economic and political elite – would play a protective role for these sectors in the form of tariffs, subsidisation and credit, and would invest heavily in the infrastructure they required.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, steady economic growth at around seven per cent per annum and the distribution of land, jobs, businesses (particularly Asian businesses from 1967), and international credit provided for the patronage necessary to placate Kenyatta's allies outside the Kikuyu elite.<sup>93</sup> Until the early 1970s such distribution was not a zero-sum calculation since economic growth provided employment, white settlers' land was being

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<sup>90</sup> Republic of Kenya, *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya* (Nairobi, 1965), p. 19; C. Leys, 'Development Strategy in Kenya since 1971', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1/2 (1979), p. 298; Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>91</sup> Leys, 'Development Strategy in Kenya since 1971', p. 298.

<sup>92</sup> Holmquist, Weaver and Ford, 'The Structural Development of Kenya's Political Economy', pp. 76, 79, 85.

<sup>93</sup> The 1967 Immigration and Trade Licensing Acts tightened rules around work permits and licenses for non-citizens, and were thought to target Asians who were seen to dominate profitable businesses, forcing many into the unenviable choice of accepting citizenship in a hostile nation or leaving their businesses behind. See A. Ogot and W. Ochieng (eds.), *Decolonization and Independence in Kenya* (Ohio State University Press, 1995), p. 87; D. Himbara, 'The "Asian Question" in East Africa', *African Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (1997), pp. 1-18.

vacated and Asians were leaving Kenya. Once these avenues for accumulation dried up, however, the ruling regime would have to find other, and more nefarious, ways of buttressing a top-heavy system.<sup>94</sup>

For the time being, Kenyatta privileged the needs of his ethnic group, concentrating the resources of the developmental state on Central Province or on settlement schemes for migrating Kikuyu. Since the majority of Kenya's citizens could not expect to benefit directly from the President's largesse, they established '*harambee*' development initiatives. *Harambee* – which translates loosely as 'all pull together' – was a way for local populations to get development initiatives, such as schools and hospitals, off the ground by pooling resources.<sup>95</sup> Yet despite the best efforts of the local community, these initiatives often lacked the funds required for their proper completion and the local political elite would be called on respond to their constituents' demands for assistance by organising a *harambee* meeting to raise funds. The ability of local elites to intervene was, however, contingent on the 'recognition' of the President: only politicians loyal to Kenyatta would receive a fund-raising licence from the Provincial or District Commissioners. If the politician jumped this hurdle, they would then attempt to secure a powerful and influential 'patron' for the project, who would bring a personal contribution as well as contributions from their 'friends' or clients. The ability to attract a powerful donor also relied on the good relations between the local politician and Kenyatta (or his inner circle), and this, more often than not, depended on the ability of the former to guarantee votes for KANU in elections. If a politician was loyal and likely to win the constituency for KANU, they could expect to receive patronage from a high-level Minister or even the President himself.<sup>96</sup> The urge for an equitable redistribution of Kenya's resources as expressed in calls for *majimboism* was, therefore, quickly supplanted by a system of Presidential 'recognition', in which ethnicity became the currency for claims on development resources.<sup>97</sup>

Aside from self-enrichment, such an introverted and politicised development system served two political purposes for Kenyatta: firstly, it served to restrict the possibility of any truly 'nationalist' coalition forming against the Kenyatta government.

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<sup>94</sup> Widner, *The Rise of a Party-State in Kenya*, p. 47.

<sup>95</sup> Between 1965 and 1984 there were 37,300 of these projects, contributing between 12 and 17 per cent of gross national capital formation. Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, p. 309; Fowler, 'Non-Governmental Organisations and the Promotion of Democracy in Kenya', p. 95.

<sup>96</sup> If the politician was unable to guarantee a seat for KANU, or if he was suspect politically, he would receive no such beneficence. Fowler, 'Non-Governmental Organisations and the Promotion of Democracy in Kenya', pp. 97-99.

<sup>97</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 16.

The President retained ultimate control to recognise or refuse claims as regards development, and different ethnic groups would compete with one another for his patronage and Kenya's scarce resources.<sup>98</sup> Secondly, by appealing to the people over the heads of local politicians and demanding that the latter be judged on what they had done for the constituency through *harambee*, Kenyatta was able to turn elections into primaries on the ability of an MP to bring development to their area.<sup>99</sup> If a constituency's demands for development went unfulfilled, it was most often blamed on the local MP, who was considered less than useful at extracting resources from the centre. Thus the system of service provision and development insulated Kenyatta's government from criticism for the non-appearance of the 'fruits of independence' in less politically salient areas.<sup>100</sup> By turning local elections into primaries on the capacity of individual MPs to bring resources to 'their' people, Kenyatta's patrimonial alternative to the tax and spend model helped to restrict discussion about alternatives to the development policies advanced by the government.<sup>101</sup>

Suppressing dissent over development was a vitally important feature of Kenyatta's development system, for KANU was, as discussed above, little more than a tactical alliance of individuals with vastly different ideas as to how Kenya should proceed as an independent nation. After independence removed the common enemy, these differing ideologies threatened to spill out into the open, an event that would potentially challenge Kenyatta's hold on the Kenyan state. Kenyatta's Minister of Home Affairs (and later Vice President) Oginga Odinga, for instance, held more communocratic and egalitarian views than Kenyatta, inspired by his own Luo culture.<sup>102</sup> Odinga wished to see Kenya's resources – in particular formerly European-owned land – redistributed to the poorest immediately at independence.<sup>103</sup> Even Tom Mboya, Kenyatta's Minister for Economic Planning and Development, considered a significant redistribution of wealth necessary, albeit not immediately. Yet as the undisputed 'father of the nation', and

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<sup>98</sup> B. Berman, 'Ethnicity, Patronage and the African State: The Politics of Uncivil Nationalism', *African Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 388 (1998), p. 331; Fowler, 'Non-Governmental Organisations and the Promotion of Democracy in Kenya', p. 85.

<sup>99</sup> Fowler, 'Non-Governmental Organisations and the Promotion of Democracy in Kenya', p. 96.

<sup>100</sup> Fowler, 'Non-Governmental Organisations and the Promotion of Democracy in Kenya', pp. 96-97.

<sup>101</sup> Branch and Cheeseman, 'Conclusion', in Branch, Cheeseman and Gardner (eds.), *Our Turn to Eat*, p. 246; Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, p. 313.

<sup>102</sup> Atieno Odhiambo, 'Hegemonic Enterprises', p. 241.

<sup>103</sup> He articulated this position in a book whose title, *Not Yet Uhuru*, served to make clear his opinion that freedom was not contingent on the substitution of the Kenyan flag for the British flag, but depended instead on the equitable distribution of the 'fruits of independence' which had been denied to Kenyans under colonialism. O. Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru. The Autobiography of Oginga Odinga* (Heinemann, 1967); Speich, 'The Kenyan Style of "African Socialism"', p. 454.

entrenched at the centre of the development system, Kenyatta brooked no dissent. For the President, unity meant obedience, and so Mboya was tasked with creating a philosophy of development that fitted with Kenyatta's ideas but could be sold to the people in such a way as to inspire them to take up the 'challenge of nationhood'. The same man that had used the concept of development in the colonial era to rally the troops against colonialism was now given the colonial-esque assignment of using the development idea to help close down debate and to reassert the authority of the state that nationalists had spent so long attacking.<sup>104</sup>

In this vein, Mboya turned his Ministry for Economic Planning and Development into a 'policy formation laboratory', staffed by colonial planning experts and orthodox economists, and advised by foreign missions.<sup>105</sup> Its first 'scientific' theory of development was presented in the (in)famous Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965. Sessional Paper 10 defined development as modern state engineering to solve social problems through economic growth: social justice and humane living conditions would be the result, not the prerequisite, of such growth.<sup>106</sup> 'The most important policy' was, therefore, 'to provide a firm basis for rapid economic growth. Other problems such as Africanisation, education, unemployment [and] welfare services must be handled in ways that will not jeopardise growth'. 'African Socialism' – the name given to the development philosophy – was a mixture of free market economy and strong government control: it described a 'mixed economy', where the key concept was state planning based on the colonial pattern.<sup>107</sup> For Mboya, development was to be understood in the restricted colonial fashion as the implementation of technical procedures: Kenya was thus conceptualised as a 'laboratory of development' in which the application of 'neutral' technical knowledge by the state apparatus would test and refine the key assumptions of orthodox development theory.<sup>108</sup> 'African Socialism' was thus a classic 'anti-politics machine' discourse, seeking to smother alternatives to the capitalistic and individualistic nature of development in Kenya with the language and governance of technocrats and the promise of technical solutions to poverty, and to protect the privileged urban elite who served as 'gatekeepers' of the

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<sup>104</sup> Speich, 'The Kenyan Style of "African Socialism"', p. 450.

<sup>105</sup> D. Cohen and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, *The Risks of Knowledge: Investigations into the Death of the Hon. Minister John Robert Ouko in Kenya, 1990* (Ohio, Ohio University Press, 2004), p. 182, cited in Speich, 'The Kenyan Style of "African Socialism"', p. 457.

<sup>106</sup> Republic of Kenya, *African Socialism*, pp. 18, 26, 30-31; T. Mboya, 'African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya', in Mboya, *The Challenge of Nationhood*, pp. 79-80; Speich, 'The Kenyan Style of "African Socialism"', p. 458.

<sup>107</sup> Speich, 'The Kenyan Style of "African Socialism"', p. 457.

<sup>108</sup> Speich, 'The Kenyan Style of "African Socialism"', p. 458.

development idea itself by invoking progress and condemning the backwardness of opponents or those resistant to change.<sup>109</sup> Though Mboya tacked on to the Sessional Paper the African ‘tradition’ of ‘mutual social responsibility’, in reality African ‘traditions’ were considered obstacles to development by those who mattered. Indeed, in another echo of colonial policy, development and service delivery were used as part of a wider counter-insurgency movement against ‘backward’ irredentists, this time in the newly created North Eastern Province.

Under colonial rule, the arid north and northeast of Kenya had been left mostly to its own devices. It held no interest for British officials who were content merely to maintain order. Understandably, therefore, the Somalis in the region felt little attachment to the Kenyan state and instead hoped for unification with a Greater Somalia.<sup>110</sup> In 1960, inspired by the union of British and Italian Somaliland to form the Somali Republic, Somalis in the Northern Frontier District (NFD), as it was then known, formed the Northern Province People’s Progressive Party (NPPPP) to press for secession from Kenya. The party would win the support of a significant majority of Somalis in the election of 1961, and when the British appointed a commission to gather views on the issue of secession in the following year, they reported back that over eighty per cent of the region’s population favoured separation from Kenya. Near unanimity on the issue was recorded in Mandera, Wajir and Garissa.<sup>111</sup> Notwithstanding such public clamour, representatives of KANU, consistent with its centrist philosophy and its strangulation of *majimbo*, rejected any consideration of separation for what amounted to around a fifth of the landmass of Kenya. KANU’s guarantee to protect settler farmers after independence was made contingent on the British government conceding this issue, which they did in 1963: areas of the NFD that had overwhelmingly supported separation from Kenya would, therefore, become North Eastern Province.<sup>112</sup>

Anger at the decision spurred protests, which soon turned violent as administrators implemented restrictive security measures. Attacks on Kenyan military personnel immediately after independence led to the declaration of a state of emergency on 28 December: the *Shifita War* (*shifita* being a common term for bandit) began in

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<sup>109</sup> N. Cullather, ‘The Third Race’, *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (2009), p. 509; Burton and Jennings, ‘Introduction: The Emperor’s New Clothes?’, p. 9.

<sup>110</sup> This idea was first articulated by British officials in the early twentieth century. Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 29.

<sup>111</sup> E. Lochery, ‘Rendering Difference Visible: The Kenyan State and its Somali Citizens’, *African Affairs*, Vol. 111, No. 445 (2012), pp. 620-621.

<sup>112</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 30; Lochery, ‘Rendering Difference Visible’, pp. 620-621.

earnest only two weeks after independence.<sup>113</sup> Armed by the Somali government, insurgents engaged the Kenyan military in a small-scale conflict until 1967. Reports of indiscriminate and violent reprisals by the security forces were all too common over these years; yet as well as violent repression the Kenyan government followed the colonial government's counter-insurgency playbook and attempted to pacify and control the population of North Eastern Province through development interventions, in this case enabled by compulsory villagisation.<sup>114</sup> From 1966 Somalis were corralled into guarded settlements – manyattas – while the security forces engaged the *shifita* outside. 'Manyattarization' served a double purpose for the government: it was a security measure in so far as it would deny the *shifita* easy access to supplies, but it also offered the Kenyan state an opportunity to win the 'hearts and minds' of the recalcitrant population by offering development and services.<sup>115</sup> The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development dangled the 'carrot' of development in front of Somalis not yet convinced by the *shifita* cause, promising that:

the Government could carry out a number of economic and social projects in the area if the funds now being spent on military activities to restore peace were available for development.<sup>116</sup>

Whether voluntarily or not, by 1967, around ten per cent of the population of North Eastern Province and the northern and eastern districts of neighbouring Eastern Province were 'villagised'.<sup>117</sup> Notably, it was hoped that villagisation would 'rehabilitate' the nomad to the settled form of life considered vital for the modernisation of the province and to finally end all talk of separation.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, during a period when development was synonymous with increases in gross national product, the entire pastoral sector was an image of non-viability and non-productivity, and efforts were made to move pastoralists into a more productive way of life through settlement.<sup>119</sup> Villages were to be the focal point of state development efforts in North Eastern Province, albeit limited as they were to infrastructural development such as the building

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<sup>113</sup> D. Anderson, 'Remembering Wagalla: State Violence in Northern Kenya, 1962-1991', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2014), p. 660; Lochery, 'Rendering Difference Visible', pp. 620-621.

<sup>114</sup> Branch, 'Violence, Decolonisation and the Cold War', p. 649.

<sup>115</sup> Whittaker, 'Forced Villagization during the *Shifita* Conflict', p. 343.

<sup>116</sup> Branch, 'Violence, Decolonisation and the Cold War', p. 649.

<sup>117</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 32.

<sup>118</sup> Branch, 'Violence, Decolonisation and the Cold War', p. 647; Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 32.

<sup>119</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 33.

of classrooms and medical facilities.<sup>120</sup> Inadequate resources and the arbitrary selection of the sites for villages, however, meant that these facilities were soon overburdened: within a year of villagisation residents of villages in Mandera were wholly dependent on famine relief food.<sup>121</sup> Chapter two outlines how Oxfam stepped in to support the state in many such endeavours, both in North Eastern Province and in other areas populated by 'troublesome' pastoralists. It thus questions the extent to which Oxfam enabled the expansion of an authoritarian developmental state that sought to impose 'sedentarisation' on recalcitrant citizens and to suppress dissenting development ideas that challenged the political and economic elite.

Villagisation in North Eastern Province certainly aimed to delegitimise, and to a certain extent criminalise, pastoral activity as a backward and non-developmental way of life that posed a threat not only to the territorial integrity of the Kenyan state, but also to its ideological integrity.<sup>122</sup> As Geoffrey Gitahi Kariuki (MP for Laikipia-Nanyuki) stated to Parliament in 1965:

let loyal Somalis come out and show us their loyalty. Let them be put in a camp where we can scrutinize them and know who [amongst them] are good.<sup>123</sup>

Settlement was thus as much about integration into Kenyan state developmentalism as it was about spatial integration into the Kenyan nation. As already discussed, the two ideas were closely related and Kenya's elite in government attempted to act as 'gatekeepers' of development knowledge in order to maintain compliance with their self-interested economic programme. Crucially, Somalis were only the most obvious threat to Kenyan nationhood at that time. Villagisation was, therefore, merely one of the first examples of what Daniel Branch, taking his cue from E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, has referred to as the 'fetishisation of order' in post-colonial Kenya: the often violent efforts to discredit any group or individual who dissented from state-led development policies.<sup>124</sup> Dissenters were to be marginalised, like pastoralists, as disorderly, backward and anti-developmental and political decisions were recast as purely technical processes. In

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<sup>120</sup> There were some minor successes: five schools were established between 1966 and 1968 in Garissa, and each of the region's five settlements received a dispensary. Whittaker, 'Forced Villagization during the *Shifita* Conflict', p. 355.

<sup>121</sup> Whittaker, 'Forced Villagization during the *Shifita* Conflict', p. 357.

<sup>122</sup> Whittaker, 'Forced Villagization during the *Shifita* Conflict', p. 345.

<sup>123</sup> Whittaker, 'Forced Villagization during the *Shifita* Conflict', p. 347.

<sup>124</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 18; E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, 'Democracy and the Ideology of Order in Kenya', in M. Schatzberg (ed.), *The Political Economy of Kenya* (London, Praeger, 1987), pp. 177-202; H. Whittaker, 'The Socioeconomic Dynamics of the *Shifita* Conflict in Kenya, Ca. 1963-8', *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 53 (2012), p. 407.

facilitating this, Oxfam potentially helped to displace and obscure questions about the meaning and aims of Kenyan independence.<sup>125</sup>

NGOs were not, however, forced to comply with the government's development agenda. Indeed, NGOs in Kenya faced little difficulty under Kenyatta. His positive attitude towards individual private endeavour meant that foreign investment and incoming aid funds (which had potential utility as patronage resources) were welcomed with open arms. Domestic and foreign NGOs were allowed to operate freely for the most part as a result.<sup>126</sup> Between 1963 and 1978 the number of NGOs in Kenya increased from 45 to 132, and they operated under only loose central supervision. Kenyatta's promotion of local *harambee* initiatives also meant NGOs had a wide array of possible projects from which to choose when looking to distribute their resources. Moreover, the type of development articulated by Kenyatta – state-directed and technical – suited NGOs as they stood in the 1960s: as supporters of state-led development or providers of services to complement those efforts, NGOs on the whole were not predisposed to challenge the regime.

If not unheard of, therefore, questioning of Kenyatta's development policies was at the very least dampened for the first year of independence, allowing the elite at the top of the Kenya government to accumulate wealth and entrench their position of power. Nonetheless, as the colonial regime had found out previously, it was impossible to contain all dissent indefinitely: the rhetoric of development – which the government hoped would deflect demands on the regime – had in fact served only to delay the now heightened expectations around independence. Development was – in part thanks to Mboya's efforts during the anti-colonial struggle – felt to be the very *raison d'être* of the independent Kenyan state, and so, after a year of independence passed without the general population tasting its fruits, demands for redistribution would begin to take on the form of a national movement led by Oginga Odinga.<sup>127</sup> As Branch notes, the ensuing battle between Kenyatta and Odinga was not merely a tussle for power between interested individuals, but also an ideological struggle about the morality of development

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<sup>125</sup> Cullather, 'The Third Race', p. 509.

<sup>126</sup> Nominal responsibility for NGOs was given to the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, but observation and co-ordination were limited at best. Kenyatta also established the Kenya Freedom From Hunger Committee (KFFHC) in 1965 to try to co-ordinate NGO inputs. Fowler, 'Non-Governmental Organisations and the Promotion of Democracy in Kenya', p. 128.

<sup>127</sup> Branch, Cheeseman and Gardner (eds.), *Our Turn to Eat*, pp. 2-3.

and the nature of the nexus between politics, the developmental state and the economy in Kenya.<sup>128</sup>

In response to the challenge from Odinga, Kenyatta set about undermining his former ally. This was done first by increasing the volume of attacks on Odinga's concept of development, characterising it as conservative and communalistic – the very antithesis of the modernising development outlined in Sessional 10.<sup>129</sup> For Kenyatta, Odinga's theory of development was fundamentally flawed, since it conceived of a world where

effort is not needed... production is not necessary, and... in which all possessions and needs and services are given free.<sup>130</sup>

The attempt to side-line Odinga and his allies – in order to secure hegemony over the idea of development and the developmental state – was also supplemented by the use of more tangible methods: thus Kenyatta made sure that the republican constitution of December 1964 did not allow for the Vice President to succeed should the President die in office.<sup>131</sup> Further marginalised within KANU during 1966, Odinga resigned to form a new political party to argue for redistributive development policies – the Kenya People's Union (KPU).

Kenyatta set out to crush the new party as quickly as possible: sitting MPs who joined the party were made to fight for re-election in the 'Little General Election' later that year amidst an atmosphere of intimidation by the paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU) and petty bureaucratic disruption by the provincial administration. Its main activists were, moreover, harassed and detained. Government interference was greatest outside the KPU's main support base in Nyanza. The flourishing of the KPU in Nyanza – which did not benefit to the same extent as Central Province had under colonialism and during the early years of independence – allowed Kenyatta to characterise the opposition as a vehicle for the disgruntled and devious Luo ethnic group. Nevertheless, the KPU won nine of the twenty-nine by-elections and polled 20,000 more votes than KANU.<sup>132</sup> Kenyatta could not risk the same scale of revolt in the local elections in 1968, and so personally ordered returning officers across the country to reject the nomination papers

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<sup>128</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 63.

<sup>129</sup> Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, p. 317.

<sup>130</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 63.

<sup>131</sup> He also replaced Odinga as Minister for Home Affairs, promoting Daniel arap Moi to the position when the former leader of KADU crossed the floor of parliament to join KANU. Other allies of Odinga, such as Pio Gama Pinto, were dealt with more brutally. Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 45-47.

<sup>132</sup> R. Ajulu, 'Politicised Ethnicity, Competitive Politics and Conflict in Kenya: A Historical Perspective', *African Studies*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (2002), p. 254.

for KPU candidates: KANU candidates were returned unopposed. Meanwhile, having successfully side-lined the opposition, Mboya had outlived his usefulness to Kenyatta. A popular politician, Mboya was the standout candidate for the presidency once Kenyatta departed the scene, but threatened the continuation of Kikuyu accumulation. Once Kenyatta began suffering from ill health, the Kikuyu elite took things into their own hands: the architect of Kenya's development policy was murdered on 5 July, 1969.<sup>133</sup>

Though individuals other than Kenyatta were implicated in the orchestration of the assassination, the President took advantage of the ethnic divisions caused by Mboya's murder. Facing increased criticism from non-Kikuyu and particularly Luo citizens as regards their inability to 'eat' the fruits of independence, Kenyatta organised the 'oathing' of Kikuyu, transporting 300,000 Kikuyu to his home in Gatundu to swear an oath never to allow the Luo to lead the country. Moreover, rather than making any attempt to cool the temperature across Kenya, the President travelled to Nyanza with the specific intention to goad and aggravate the Luo population into striking first. Violence between KANU and KPU supporters at a Presidential event gave Kenyatta the pretext to ban the KPU and arrest Odinga. As during the colonial period, the government had stoked ethnic tensions and resorted to repression in order to obscure ideological debate over development and the future of the nation as well as to restrict any chance of a truly national class uniting to challenge elite accumulation.<sup>134</sup>

As a result of these machinations, the introverted development system in Kenya – a programme-less and clientelist system, dominated by a President who manipulated ethnic competition under a *de facto* one-party state, and oriented towards the protection of large-holder agriculture and the urban sector of the economy – was sustained into the 1970s. But the system was not impervious to economic difficulties; indeed, the extraverted nature of the economy made Kenya extremely vulnerable to cyclical boom and bust, and the country would experience the latter at a time of drought and recession in the early 1970s. Moreover, the country was becoming increasingly unequal: the International Labour Organisation (ILO) mission in 1972 discovered that the bottom 40 per cent of the population (in terms of income) received a mere 11 per cent of GDP. Meanwhile, the highest 20 per cent of earners collected 68 per cent, the highest 10 per

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<sup>133</sup> With no obvious Kikuyu candidate to replace Kenyatta, Mboya posed a threat to the elite Kikuyu cabal who had come to dominate Kenya's political economy. Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 69-88.

<sup>134</sup> Atieno Odhiambo, 'Hegemonic Enterprises', p. 241; Ajulu, 'Politicised Ethnicity', p. 260.

cent received 56 per cent and the highest 5 per cent pocketed 44 per cent of GDP.<sup>135</sup> The number of unemployed Kenyans was also rising, and was equivalent to 46 per cent of all wage earners in 1969.<sup>136</sup> In response, the government attempted to buy off some of the disaffected through tripartite agreements between state, business and unions that promised the expansion of employment in return for wage restraint.<sup>137</sup> Nonetheless, the 'system' came under further pressure in 1973 as inflation took hold, growth came to a halt and a new rival, in the form of J. M. Kariuki, challenged Kenyatta not to rule over a country 'of ten millionaires and ten million beggars'. Coming from Kariuki, the challenge was particularly troubling for Kenyatta because, as a Kikuyu, Kariuki threatened to divide Kenyatta's ethnic base.<sup>138</sup> His call resonated particularly with Mau Mau veterans who had yet to see any benefit from their sacrifice to replace the British with Kenyatta and his crony capitalist elite. Kenyatta attempted to placate Kikuyu farmers and cohere his ethnic support base by providing them with land: threats against remaining British settlers, combined with the offer of a quick sale, helped to free up agricultural land, as did the opening of formerly 'closed' districts to non-resident Kikuyu.<sup>139</sup>

Promoting large-scale agriculture and the modern urban sector, buying off elites and pacifying the disillusioned did not, of course, come cheap, particularly for a low tax regime aiming to attract foreign investment. In such a way, Kenya developed a 'structural tendency to fiscal crisis', and deficit financing increased into the mid-1970s.<sup>140</sup> As the following chapter describes, NGOs offered another means of defraying the cost of settlement schemes: for instance, the Lake Kenyatta Settlement Scheme, which sought to settle Kikuyu on the coast, received significant financial support from Oxfam. Nonetheless, by this time, Oxfam's support to the Kenyatta state had dwindled for a combination of ideological and practical reasons: connected to the shift towards conscientisation within the organisation, Oxfam began to take much greater notice of the inequitable and corrupt nature of Kenyatta's development system and lamented its inability to wield any influence over the administration. The ediface of Kenyatta's regime

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<sup>135</sup> Leys, 'Development Strategy in Kenya since 1971', p. 300.

<sup>136</sup> Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, p. 304.

<sup>137</sup> This had been done once before in 1964, and was repeated in 1970 and 1978. Holmquist, Weaver and Ford, 'The Structural Development of Kenya's Political Economy', p. 84.

<sup>138</sup> Moreover, he did not call for redistribution as the KPU had, but instead asked for improved reciprocal relations between the 'big men' at the top of government and those struggling to make ends meet. He was thus challenging his fellow Kikuyu not to accept poverty just because their man was in State House. Branch and Cheeseman, 'The Politics of Control in Kenya', p. 24; Widner, *The Rise of a Party-State in Kenya*, p. 77; Ajulu, 'Politicised Ethnicity', p. 261.

<sup>139</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 96, 99, 102.

<sup>140</sup> Holmquist, Weaver and Ford, 'The Structural Development of Kenya's Political Economy', p. 87.

was, however, already being placed under stress by revelations (linked with Kariuki) about the extent of corruption at the top of government, not least within Kenyatta's own family. The appropriation of land and the ostentatious wealth of public servants caused a great deal of public anger: in the election of 1974 fifty per cent of MPs would be voted out of office in a display of the public's frustration with a corrupt and self-serving government elite. Kariuki – a lightning rod for such anger – was, somewhat predictably, assassinated with the approval of the President in 1975.<sup>141</sup>

The murder cost Kenyatta his legitimacy with the Kenyan public, who were incredulous at the cover up: he was now nicknamed 'The Little Killer'. Yet by this stage the President was declining in both health and authority, and his remaining years would be dominated by an internal elite struggle for the presidency and its control over Kenya's networks of extraversion and patronage.<sup>142</sup> As Vice President, Moi was first in line to the presidency and he had the backing of Njonjo and other influential brokers. But Moi faced a challenge from a breakaway Kikuyu faction that supported Njoroge Mungai and campaigned to stop the Vice President automatically succeeding on the President's death in the Change the Constitution Movement. Nonetheless, with Njonjo's help (the Attorney General issued a statement that any discussion of the President's death would amount to treason, silencing discussion around the constitution) Moi was able to assume the presidency without too much trouble when Kenyatta died on 22 August 1978.

#### **'SIASA MBAYA, MAISHA MBAYA': BAD POLITICS, BAD LIFE – THE MOI ERA, 1978-2002**

Moi's difficulties were not over once he was safely ensconced at State House, however. The new President faced a difficult economic inheritance: inflation followed quickly on the tail of the late 1970s coffee boom and there was no obvious method of creating the growth required to match Kenya's growing population. Formerly European land had been mostly distributed, most export avenues had been tried and by now the public and private sectors of the economy rested in Kenyan, as opposed to foreign, hands. Neither were Moi's political troubles over, and it was here that he concentrated most of his

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<sup>141</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 108-116.

<sup>142</sup> Such struggles would only intensify during Kenya's short-lived economic boom in the later 1970s as its coffee prices rocketed in response to the collapse of the Brazilian coffee crop. Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 127.

attention. Using anti-corruption as a populist cover, the President set about removing his opponents from positions of influence. Kenyatta's former courtiers and those who opposed Moi's succession thus found themselves in court over allegedly irregular financial dealings or were defeated in their attempt to stand in the 1979 election. Meanwhile, Moi had ousted all but one of Kenyatta's Provincial Commissioners by 1980, and private sector boardrooms were encouraged to have a Kalenjin or pro-Moi representative in order to facilitate good relations with the state.<sup>143</sup>

There was a great deal of tension, though, between Moi's efforts to solidify his position politically and the need to put the economy on a sound footing. Notably, for the first time the political centre of gravity had shifted away from Kenya's economic power holders – the Kikuyu. Although influential Kikuyu like Njonjo and Mwai Kibaki were operating behind the scenes to maintain Kenyatta's system of elite accumulation, Moi faced pressure to allow his own ethnic group to 'eat' some of the fruits of independence in a 'Kalenjin ascendancy'. From an economic point of view a pre-occupation with substituting Kalenjin for Kikuyu was a risk, but for a politician as concerned with ethnicity as Moi (clearly demonstrated during his time with KADU) it was a risk worth taking. The President quickly assumed control over patronage and development system that he inherited from Kenyatta and used it to kick the props from beneath the ethno-regional power base of the previous regime, suffocating clientelist networks that he did not control and destroying the ability of the Kikuyu elite to operate and accumulate independently of the presidency.<sup>144</sup>

While a central theme of Moi's *Nyayo* ('footsteps') philosophy was the need for more equitable development, this was, therefore, mostly rhetoric to cover for the fact that Kalenjin and members of Moi's allied ethno-regional groups would receive the limited benefits on offer during the early years of his presidency.<sup>145</sup> John Cohen (who served as an advisor to the Kenya government between 1979 and 1992) has revealed how Moi was able to satisfy his clients' demands for patronage by offering them development

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<sup>143</sup> J. Barkan and M. Chege, 'Decentralizing the State: District Focus and the Politics of Reallocation in Kenya', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1989), p. 439; Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 141.

<sup>144</sup> Widner, *The Rise of a Party-State in Kenya*, p. 34; J. Barkan, 'The Rise and Fall of a Governance Realm in Kenya', in G. Hyden and M. Bratton (eds.), *Governance and Politics in Africa* (Boulder, Colo., Lynne Rienner, 1992), pp. 179, 186; Barkan and Chege, 'Decentralizing the State', p. 434.

<sup>145</sup> Barkan and Chege, 'Decentralizing the State', p. 436.

resources.<sup>146</sup> For instance, his Ministers and government officials pressured the Harvard Institute for International Development to train members of Moi's ethnic group and those of his allies ahead of Kikuyu.<sup>147</sup> Better employment opportunities were thus on offer from Moi's allies through the project. As well as employment in public service, Kalenjin and their allies were offered positions of power within KANU, while appointments to important parastatals were reserved for members of Moi's ethnic coalition without any regard for the impact such appointments would have on the economy. Parastatals were, indeed, routinely pillaged – particularly ahead of elections – to build Kalenjin wealth so that they could compete with the Kikuyu *wabenzi* class.<sup>148</sup>

The Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) Programme, launched in 1979, was also aimed at boosting the wealth and status of elites and their patrons in constituencies whose boundaries were coterminous with Moi's ethno-regional support bases. Since the idea for the programme originated with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, a Kamba, the first project – the Machakos Integrated Development Project – was, unsurprisingly, based in a major Kamba region. The second, fourth, fifth and sixth projects from this initiative were located in the home areas of the President and his supporters in the Rift Valley. In addition, Rural Trade and Production Projects were manipulated by powerful politicians and located in their home areas in order to generate political support and rents. In the initial selection system for these projects, Kalenjin areas were not included; only after pressure from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development and the Ministry of Finance were the criteria for selection adjusted to ensure the presence of projects in the President's home district and the Rift Valley. Finally, there were egregious examples of outright corruption: in 1986, for example, Moi gave the go-ahead to a project to install a dam on the Turkwell River at a cost of \$400 million. The European Economic Community (EEC) offered a soft loan for the project, but when a set of French construction firms – supported by French banks – offered Moi and his colleagues \$30 million, the decision was overturned and French firms were chosen instead. As the EEC representative outlined in a memorandum to all aid agency missions in Kenya:

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<sup>146</sup> The following is taken from Cohen's chapter on the subject: J. Cohen, 'Foreign Aid and Ethnic Interests in Kenya', in M. Esman and R. Herring (eds.), *Carrot, Sticks, and Ethnic Conflict: Rethinking Development Assistance* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2001), pp. 90-105.

<sup>147</sup> Eligible but undesirable candidates were often transferred between departments just as the selection process got under way in order to stop them being chosen.

<sup>148</sup> Severely weakened during the Kenyatta era, KANU offered Moi a vehicle for building his national status and provided ready opportunities for patronage.

[The] French contract and financing conditions are extremely disadvantageous for Kenya. The price of the French 'turnkey' offer is more than double the amount the Kenyan Government would have had to pay for the project based on an international competitive tender, and it is surprising that this was accepted at a time when the Kenyan Government is cutting down on investment in the country because of [a] lack of budgetary funds. A major portion (78 per cent) of the total price quoted by the French contractor is proposed to be financed by commercial loans payable at 16.01 per cent, much higher than the current commercial borrowing rate of 12 per cent.<sup>149</sup>

Kickbacks of twenty per cent or more were common under Moi, and corruption would only get worse as Kenya underwent the final stages of the transition from a developmental to a kleptocratic state.<sup>150</sup>

Whilst Moi did his best to loot the state, the Kenyan economy continued to crumble. In the late 1970s and early 1980s unemployment reached twenty per cent, inflation for the poorest peaked at around seventeen per cent, and trade deficits widened as the cost of oil rose sharply and prices for Kenya's exports collapsed. As a result economic growth slowed markedly and GDP per capita declined by one per cent per year between 1980 and 1985. Government borrowing increased to meet the associated costs and Kenya's deficit reached \$517 million in 1981; overall government debt had breached the \$1 billion barrier a year earlier. At twenty per cent of GDP, such borrowing was unsustainable, and the IMF stepped in with a structural adjustment loan of \$310 million in 1981. Conditions for the loan included the elimination of tariffs and the devaluation of Kenya's currency to slow the growth of the trade deficit, but this only served to strangle Kenya's already weak industrial sector. To add to the economic misery, Kenya was only just emerging from a serious drought (and would suffer another in 1983) and was still struggling with a booming population. All of this meant that Moi's task of building a 'Kalenjin ascendancy' would be a zero-sum game of redistribution at the expense of the Kikuyu.<sup>151</sup>

In order to cover for the redistribution of development funding towards the Rift Valley, Moi promoted the District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) policy.<sup>152</sup> District Focus embodies much of Moi's governance style: its rhetoric was egalitarian but its

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<sup>149</sup> Cohen cites B. Harden, *Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), p. 209.

<sup>150</sup> See Branch, Cheeseman and Gardner (eds.), *Our Turn to Eat*, p. 9.

<sup>151</sup> Holmquist, Weaver and Ford, 'The Structural Development of Kenya's Political Economy', p. 91; Widner, *The Rise of a Party-State in Kenya*, p. 47; Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 142-143; Fowler, 'Non-Governmental Organisations and the Promotion of Democracy in Kenya', p. 111.

<sup>152</sup> Holmquist, Weaver and Ford, 'The Structural Development of Kenya's Political Economy', p. 94; Barkan and Chege, 'Decentralizing the State', p. 450.

substance allowed for the distribution of assets to his ethno-regional allies.<sup>153</sup> In fact, DFRD was an echo of KADU's *majimbo* policy from twenty years previously: it promoted the interests of Moi's support base by making districts the 'operational units' for the planning and implementation of development. The results were as Moi planned: in terms of road construction, for instance, the President's support base experienced a growth in their share of central government funds from 32 per cent in 1979-1980 to 68 per cent in 1984-1985. Most of these new roads would be built around the President's home area in the Rift Valley, buying him political support and generating lucrative rents. Kenyatta's base, meanwhile, saw its share collapse from 44 per cent to 24 per cent over the same period.<sup>154</sup> Just as importantly, DFRD served to reduce the ability of MPs and Cabinet Ministers to build up independent power bases through patronising development projects. By forcing MPs to lobby District Development Committees rather than influential patrons in Nairobi, DFRD restricted the access the former had enjoyed previously to development resources from the centre. This weakened their electoral position – and also reduced the number of clients available to powerful Ministers and civil servants – undermining potential challengers to the President.<sup>155</sup> The district administration itself saw its power enhanced at the expense of Provincial Commissioners, previously a significant part of Kenyatta's bureaucratic-executive state.

Nonetheless, cuts to public spending negotiated with the IMF in return for bailout loans and general economic decline reduced the overall level of patronage available from the centre. Dwindling state resources were increasingly used to divide opponents into factions, and *harambee* became an almost mandatory tax imposed by Moi when visiting an area: the proceeds were placed under his complete control.<sup>156</sup> Meanwhile, NGOs – flush with cash under the logic of the New Policy Agenda (NPA) and SAPs – were funding ever-larger swathes of formerly state-run services (40 per cent of health care was NGO or private sector funded by 1990, for example).<sup>157</sup> Oxfam, for instance, was criticised for 'taking over' marginal areas of Kenya and setting up an 'alternative government' in places

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<sup>153</sup> Barkan, 'The Rise and Fall of a Governance Realm in Kenya', in Hyden and Bratton (eds.), *Governance and Politics in Africa*, p. 184.

<sup>154</sup> Barkan and Chege, 'Decentralizing the State', p. 449.

<sup>155</sup> Barkan and Chege, 'Decentralizing the State', p. 436.

<sup>156</sup> Whereas under Kenyatta *harambee* had allowed for the emergence of local patrons (albeit loyal to Mzee), under Moi *harambee* was totally under the President's control as he personally granted licences for fundraising. Barkan, 'The Rise and Fall of a Governance Realm in Kenya', in Hyden and Bratton (eds.), *Governance and Politics in Africa*, p. 186; Widner, *The Rise of a Party-State in Kenya*, pp. 143-145, 156-157, 198-199.

<sup>157</sup> Kanyinga, 'The Politics of Development Space in Kenya', in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, p. 78.

such as Turkana, since its access to funds and inputs far outstripped that of the state apparatus in these regions. Development space thus became increasingly politicised as NGOs challenged the state monopoly on development resources. Moreover, not only was their presence on such a scale a challenge to the legitimacy of the state – since their funding evaded governments – it was also a political challenge to the Moi regime at a time when Kenyan civil society was organising to protest the abuse of power by Moi and his allies.

They had much to protest against, for as avenues for corruption and patronage became exhausted (at one point humanitarian aid was even sold back onto the market<sup>158</sup>), Moi had begun to resort to colonial-esque repression: control of the police was placed in the Office of the President and troublesome ethnic associations such as the Gikuyu Embu and Meru Association (GEMA) were banned in 1980.<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, protests over the state of the economy were disrupted, Odinga was barred from standing for KANU in a 1981 by-election and reporters and Parliamentarians critical of the Moi regime were arrested and intimidated.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, when Odinga and others discussed the formation of a new second party, Moi arranged for an intimidated Parliament to change the constitution and codify Kenya as a *de jure* single-party state. A failed coup attempt in August 1982 allowed Moi to further marginalise any remaining rivals: he arranged for the arrest and detention of any who might pose a threat to his position for their suspected involvement in the attempt to topple the government.<sup>161</sup> The electoral process was also circumscribed by introducing queue voting as the method for the selection of KANU candidates for unopposed election to Parliament. This method of election – in which voters would stand behind an image of their chosen candidate – was so obviously an attempt to coerce and frighten citizens into voting for Moi's nominee that it inspired criticism from Kenya's extremely powerful churches in concert with prominent lawyers. NGOs such as the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) were conspicuous in their campaign for the removal of the queue voting method and for the reinstatement of multipartyism.

Yet the flourishing of domestic and international NGOs also presented an opportunity for the President, for if the state could be used to control them sufficiently to silence their criticism and to direct their resources in such a way as to sustain elite

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<sup>158</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 144.

<sup>159</sup> GEMA had supported Mungai and the Change the Constitution Movement in the late 1970s.

<sup>160</sup> Widner, *The Rise of a Party-State in Kenya*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>161</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 150-159.

patronage networks then his power would be secured, if not enhanced. His attempts to gain control over the sector in response to this calculation received a mixed response: some NGOs like *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* – a Kenyan NGO focused on women’s development – were easily co-opted into the regime in the late 1980s. Others, such as the Undungu Society are shown by Stephen Ndegwa to have worked within the accepted bounds of the regime, slotting into already existing patronage networks to protect themselves from the state.<sup>162</sup> Others still were established as little more than ‘briefcase’ NGOs with links to prominent politicians. As one donor noted:

There are basically four ways of making money in Kenya: coffee, tea, tourism and aid – and since the first three are spoken for, the last remains the only option.<sup>163</sup>

As discussed in chapter three, Oxfam would resist outright co-optation by the Moi state, but worked ‘with the grain’ of Kenya’s development system to enable space for work that would challenge the Moi state from the ground up. In fact, notwithstanding the climate of fear that Moi created, another ‘face’ of civil society was shown by NGOs like Oxfam and the Green Belt Movement. The latter, for instance, stood up to Moi over his plans to build on Uhuru Park.<sup>164</sup> Meanwhile, there was a concerted movement to resist Moi’s attempts for control over the NGO sector, and particularly his effort to change the law in 1990 to give absolute executive and judicial power over NGOs to the relevant Cabinet Minister (with no recourse to the courts for aggrieved parties). Lobbied by NGOs including Oxfam, and in fear of losing the resources that foreign NGOs brought into the country, the government watered down many of the most obnoxious clauses, but as a consequence relations between the state and NGOs (with the exception of Oxfam – as discussed shortly) soured significantly.<sup>165</sup>

Criticism of the government (if not of the President himself) was thus becoming increasingly voluble by the late 1980s. Having destroyed any notion of unity amongst Kenya’s ethnic elite by alienating the Kikuyu, the demobilisation of opposition movements in civil society was much tougher.<sup>166</sup> In addition, the end of the Cold War meant that the West had less utility for ‘friendly’ autocrats: many donors began to argue

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<sup>162</sup> S. Ndegwa, *The Two Faces of Civil Society: NGOs and Politics in Africa* (Kumarian Press, 1996), p. 64.

<sup>163</sup> Hearn, ‘African NGOs: The New Compradors?’, p. 1103.

<sup>164</sup> Ndegwa, *The Two Faces of Civil Society*, p. 83.

<sup>165</sup> Kanyinga, ‘The Politics of Development Space in Kenya’, in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>166</sup> The last remaining powerful Kikuyu, Mwai Kibaki, was demoted in 1988. Opponents to the regime would thus include prominent Kikuyu such as Charles Rubia and Kenneth Matiba who, along with Martin Shikuku, called for the return to multipartyism. Branch and Cheeseman, ‘Democratization, Sequencing and State Failure in Africa’, pp. 4-9.

that aid should become conditional on democratic reforms. In response to these internal and external threats, Moi improvised new ways to maintain his hold on power and the patronage and wealth that it brought. Ostensibly following IMF advice, Moi privatised state assets like parastatals. These assets were often sold at a knockdown price to businessmen with politicians as silent partners. The owners could then sell the asset (or shares in the asset) at its full market price, sustaining patronage networks and the wealth of the elite at the top of government.<sup>167</sup> The President and his allies also took advantage of laws allowing for export compensation funds: the Goldenberg scandal implicated several high-ranking politicians with links to the President in the manipulation of the law in order to claim compensation of around \$850 million for the export of minerals that did not exist. State finances were not the only part of the apparatus to be 'informalised' by Moi as he tried to hold on to power, however: the indiscriminate use of violence against protestors in favour of multipartyism on 7 July 1990 (twenty protestors were killed during the day thereafter known as *Saba Saba* or 7/7) was a green light for all allied politicians to whip up ethnic tensions and encourage the violent displacement of 'suspect' populations.<sup>168</sup>

Witnessing these trends, foreign donors reduced the level of development aid offered to Kenya pending such time as economic mismanagement, human rights abuse and political constraints were ended. In September 1991 the Danish government suspended all new aid to Kenya, the British government cancelled \$7 million in oil subsidies and the World Bank refused to grant a \$100 million loan for the energy sector. In November, the US, Canada, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Australia and the UK protested against the arrest of twelve opposition leaders; later that month the Paris Club of donors suspended all new aid to Kenya until corruption stopped and the political system was liberalised.<sup>169</sup> Desperate for sources of patronage, Moi for a time attempted to make ends meet by appropriating humanitarian aid delivered to deal with the shortage of maize throughout the country. Cognisant of the intricacies of the emergency situation on the ground, Oxfam would manage to work around the Kenyan state in targeting its own humanitarian response (though this raised ideological questions over whether Oxfam was justified in supplanting the state in such a manner). Moi did, however,

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<sup>167</sup> Cohen, 'Foreign Aid and Ethnic Interests in Kenya', in Esman and Herring (eds.), *Carrot, Sticks, and Ethnic Conflict*, p. 101.

<sup>168</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>169</sup> S. Brown, 'From Demiurge to Midwife: Changing Donor Roles in Kenya's Democratization Process', in G. Murunga and S. Nasong'o (eds.), *Kenya: The Struggle for Democracy* (London, Zed Books, 2007).

succeed in painting a politically useful picture of the humanitarian crisis to other organisations, such as the World Food Programme, and increased the number of districts apparently in need of assistance in each application for aid. According to later evaluations, the only crisis this aid eased was the crisis taking hold in Moi's patronage system. Indeed, once conventional development assistance resumed the state-led humanitarian programme would be closed within six months without explanation.<sup>170</sup> Evaluators acknowledged the 'extraordinary convenience' of the emergency assistance provided by WFP:

Transferring development aid to humanitarian assistance rather neatly resolved [Moi's] problem... In retrospect, it does seem unusual that Kenya, for the first time since independence, should declare an international appeal [for assistance].<sup>171</sup>

Unfortunately for Moi, the \$121 million or so that entered the country in cash or kind as a result of the humanitarian appeal was not enough to sustain Presidential patronage networks or his hold on power. The President thus took the calculated risk that it would be easier to retain control over a flawed democracy than it would be to run a patronage system without any money, finally caving to pressure to reinstate multipartyism on 3 December 1991.<sup>172</sup> He did so with foreboding, however, warning that in a land so poor and riven by ethnic tension as Kenya multipartyism would undoubtedly cause violence and ethnic conflict. Over the remaining years of his rule Moi did everything in his power to make those words seem prophetic. In particular, Moi and his supporters raised the spectre of *majimboism* as they had thirty years previously, only this time it was not used to create an abstract fear of Kikuyu hegemony amongst Kalenjin and other allied ethno-regional groupings, but to equate the loss of future elections with the loss of all that the Kalenjin had (apparently) gained during Moi's time as President. Moi would thus instrumentalise disorder and encourage the ethnic cleansing of the Rift Valley in the early 1990s.<sup>173</sup> Yet although the President and his allies whipped up ethnic tensions for their own personal gain, there was a great deal of grievance, in particular against the Kikuyu, upon which the elite could draw. The movement of Kikuyu into areas where they were considered foreign – which took place under Kenyatta and his 'Kikuyu ascendancy' – left a

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<sup>170</sup> N. Middleton and P. O'Keefe, *Disaster and Development: The Politics of Humanitarian Aid* (London, Pluto Press, 1998), p. 66.

<sup>171</sup> Middleton and O'Keefe, *Disaster and Development*, pp. 58, 63.

<sup>172</sup> Brown 'From Demiurge to Midwife'.

<sup>173</sup> The Youth for KANU '92 group with close links to Moi were implicated in much of the violence, as were Provincial Commissioners and security officers, while the judiciary was likely to turn a blind eye towards the actions of Kalenjin perpetrators. Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October 2014.

legacy of anger and frustration all too easily tapped by unscrupulous politicians who could raise fears that similar dispossessions would happen again if KANU and Moi were ejected from power.

Aided by the fracture of the opposition, Moi won the election in 1992 by the narrowest of margins. Sensing an opportunity to work with a less dominating state apparatus, Oxfam re-engaged with the Kenya government at a time when most NGOs remained severely hostile to the Moi regime. Hoping that the state would be forced to listen to its marginalised constituents for the first time as a result of the multiparty system, Oxfam sought to encourage reforms to the development of pastoral areas. But the fragile position of the Presidential elite – by the mid-1990s the press reported that ‘Ministers with a strong local following’ could not guarantee a ‘large pro-KANU turnout’ without ‘favours for these ethnic loyalties’ – only encouraged the President and his supporters to behave as ‘agents of disorder’ and to plunder the state with newfound vigour.<sup>174</sup> Kickbacks thus reached a peak of sixty per cent of the value of the contract, and Kenya continued to slide from a prebendal to a predatory state. A joint Oxfam and World Bank project would thus succumb to the patronage demands of the Moi state, and Oxfam staff – popular as a result of Oxfam projects – were tempted to cross over into Parliament in the 1997 election. (Unsurprisingly, upon entering Parliament some former Oxfam staff were sucked into the politicised and corrupted development system perpetuated by Kenyatta and Moi, allegedly losing interest in development schemes that did not line their own pockets.) After using violence to divide the opposition once more, Moi was, however, able to win a more convincing electoral victory in 1997, and he would remain in power until the end of his constitutionally mandated term of office in 2002.

## ‘OLD WINE IN NEW SKINS’? THE NARC GOVERNMENT AFTER 2002

Notwithstanding the sense of opportunity that Kenyans felt in 2002, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) that replaced Moi offered little in the way of alternative policies to those that had characterised the previous regime. Headed by Mwai Kibaki, a central figure in both the Kenyatta and Moi governments, it was also just as criminal and

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<sup>174</sup> ‘Moi Goes Up Country’, *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (1995), p. 3, cited in J. Cohen, *Ethnicity, Foreign Aid, and Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Kenya*, Development Discussion Paper 520 (Cambridge, Harvard Institute for International Development, 1995), pp. 30, 32. Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 243.

corrupt. The Anglo Leasing affair saw around \$1 billion siphoned from the state to build the personal wealth and war chests of Kibaki and his allies ahead of the 2007 election. Yet with members of civil society having ‘crossed over’ into Parliament, there was less outright criticism of Kibaki than there had been of Moi towards the end of his term in office, allowing Kibaki to concentrate on entrenching the political and economic dominance of his ‘Mount Kenya Mafia’ through ethnic-based patronage politics and the capture of public institutions. Oxfam would note – with much poignancy in hindsight – that the government was leaving ‘historical grievances’ open to political manipulation; but its staff hoped that progress would be broadly linear in the new, post-Moi era. Their hopes, along with many observers, would be dashed in 2007/08, when those ‘historical grievances’ felt by non-Kikuyu were compounded by the desperate attempt by Kibaki’s ‘mafia’ to retain power through electoral fraud. Protests against the election result quickly turned into violence against Kikuyu in the Rift Valley as local politicians capitalised on historical and contemporary grievances against the Kikuyu and called for the revival of *majimboism*.

Kenya’s frustrated aspirations as regards the promise of development – the very *raison d’être* of the independent nation state – meant that a slogan nearly 50 years old still held enormous over the population. Those long denied their chance to ‘eat’ sought to stake their claim to the ‘gatekeeper’ state and the ‘fruits’ that it offered for its denizens. For his part, Kibaki continued Moi’s ruinous legacy of informalising the state, turning to private militias like the *Mungiki* to fight back.<sup>175</sup> As a result, half a million people were displaced and over 1,200 people were killed. Kenya’s elite had for too long failed the ‘challenge of nationhood’, and ordinary Kenyans reaped the destruction wrought by this failure.<sup>176</sup> The following chapters demonstrate how Oxfam, with its politicised understanding of poverty and underdevelopment, adopted a variety of tactical approaches to advance towards its overarching strategic objective in Kenya: to cajole the Kenyan state to become more responsible for its marginalised citizens, to encourage it to spread the ‘fruits’ of independence broadly, and thus to ensure that the state fulfilled its original purpose. The near impossibility of such a task, given Kenya’s particular development-politics nexus, should not detract from the importance today of recounting

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<sup>175</sup> See G. Murunga and S. Nasong’o, ‘Bent on Self-Destruction: The Kibaki Regime in Kenya’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2006), pp. 1-28 and Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 245-287 for a detailed discussion of the NARC government.

<sup>176</sup> Indeed, the need to keep the post-violence coalition together contradicted the need to prosecute those responsible for the violence. Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto – suspected of orchestrating the violence on both sides – were thus able to avoid trial in Kenya.

this historical process. For it is by such an investigation that researchers can begin to deconstruct overarching narratives around discourse and Western hegemony in favour of a nuanced and historicised understanding of the development encounter in all its complexity.

## Chapter Two

### A 'MESSIANIC VISION OF THE POSSIBILITIES' – OXFAM IN KENYA, 1963-1978

Experts, Advisors and Officials flock... like so many migratory birds and, like the birds, leave little trace of their passage.

C. L. Ryland, Regional Government Agent, Turkana in his Annual Report for 1963.

*The following chapter concentrates on the relationship between Oxfam and the Kenya government between 1963 and 1978. During the first half of this period Oxfam was ideologically committed to supporting the Kenyan state as an institution and was thus agnostic as to its political orientation. Influenced by its Field Directors – who had previously worked alongside modernising colonial governments in Africa – and by its faith in the remedial power of the state as exhibited powerfully by welfare reforms in the UK (its 'values'), Oxfam operated in partnership with the Kenyatta state on projects to modernise Kenyan agriculture and settle troublesome pastoralists. Such projects were consistent with the Kenyatta regime's own 'modernisation' efforts and accepted its contention that the state was a pivotal development actor. Importantly, Oxfam understood the development-politics nexus in Kenya and hoped to gently cajole and convince the state to expand its horizons beyond ethno-centric patronage and clientelism and to develop 'backward' pastoral areas. The Kenyatta regime was unmoved; nonetheless it was happy to accept Oxfam aid as it freed up government funds for its more politically important clients while at the same time entrenching government control over 'backward' pastoralists. For a time, Oxfam's faith in the remedial power of the state meant it was pragmatic about the lack of response from the Kenya government to its blandishments. Yet once the state-centric ideology of the first Field Directors was challenged by an organisational shift towards 'conscientisation', Oxfam could no longer ignore the litany of failures that its work alongside the Kenya state had produced, and the organisation withdrew from co-operation with the state. The chapter concludes that the outcome of the interaction between 'pragmatism' and 'values' in the Kenya context pointed in two very different directions in the 1960s and the 1970s, and this served to define the nature of the Kenya programme in markedly different ways.*

Kenya first appeared on Oxfam's radar in the mid-1950s as a result of the Mau Mau revolt. More specifically, what first attracted Oxfam's attention was the ruthless counter-insurgency movement that enveloped areas of the country and caused displacement and suffering for the local population. The organisation donated funds in the hope of lessening the effect of the 'removal of bread-winners from their families', which was a

consequence of the detention and repatriation of suspected rebels.<sup>1</sup> Although Oxfam might have reflected colonial attitudes when it noted that some of the malnutrition and illness among children was due to 'ignorance and fecklessness on the part of the parents' rather than the escalating conflict, along with its partners it acknowledged that the misery it witnessed was 'mostly due to emergency conditions' and the 'long hours of communal labour that make it almost impossible for people to attend to their own gardens'.<sup>2</sup> The response to suffering in Kenya was in keeping with the organisation's work elsewhere at this time. Across the globe, from Bihar, India – which suffered a devastating famine in 1951 – to the Ionian Islands – which experienced a devastating earthquake in 1953; and from Korea – which was consumed by civil war until 1953 – to Algeria – which endured its own visceral conflict from 1954 – Oxfam had started down the path of direct involvement in disaster relief, dispatching clothing, footwear, blankets and milk, along with small amounts of cash to welfare schemes and orphanages. But the organisation was careful not to involve itself in the politics of these crises.<sup>3</sup> In Kenya, the NGO made no attempt to criticise government heavy-handedness or the revolt itself; it saw its role as one of gap-filling: in places where the impact of the revolt was particularly severe but where (perhaps unsurprisingly) the government was unable or unwilling to ease the situation, Oxfam would act through partners on the ground to provide short-term relief. For instance, after the Catholic Missionary Society reported to Oxfam that feeding schemes were needed to save around 200 vulnerable people from starvation at Fort Hall (later Murang'a), Oxfam donated £900 between 1955 and 1957. Other grants for this effort and related rehabilitation and feeding schemes included £1,000 to Save the Children, £1,250 to the Salvation Army and £1,000 to the Friends' Service Council.<sup>4</sup>

Oxfam continued to operate in this *ad hoc* manner into the early 1960s. In January 1962, the organisation donated £25,000 to the Kenya government through the National Food Relief Committee in order to support the latter in its relief efforts after droughts and floods killed upwards of 60 per cent of the livestock in areas such as Turkana, Kajiado and Samburu. Livestock deaths on such a scale threatened the lives and livelihoods of many thousands of Kenya's poorest and most marginalised citizens. In addition, the NGO earmarked £15,000 to assist local authorities having difficulties with their medical and

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<sup>1</sup> 'First Grants to Kenya', No Date, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10, Folder 2.

<sup>2</sup> 'First Grants to Kenya', No Date, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10, Folder 2.

<sup>3</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 40-63.

<sup>4</sup> 'First Grants to Kenya', No Date, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10, Folder 2.

health services following the floods; the sum was supplemented by five tons of dried milk.<sup>5</sup> The following year Leslie Kirkley visited Turkana and recommended that Oxfam provide finance for the maintenance of famine camps in the region. Jimmy Betts, newly in place as Field Director for East and Southern Africa, seconded Kirkley's recommendation and Oxfam committed to provide 50 per cent of the cost of running five famine camps in Turkana, up to a limit of £12,000 per annum.<sup>6</sup> The Permanent Secretary at the Ministry for Constitutional Affairs and Administration admitted that the grant had come 'at a very opportune time', for the UK government – with one eye on Kenyan independence – had refused to allocate the funds necessary for an increased famine relief budget. (The original budget of £284,000, based on optimistic estimates of rainfall and crop production, was considered woefully inaccurate, and a 'top-up' of £25,000 had been requested from the British government.) The only alternative for Neil was to find the same amount in savings; yet this was, he admitted in an internal memo, equivalent to reducing the ration from 9 lbs. to 5 lbs. per head per week.<sup>7</sup> As the general election approached, the political ramifications of such 'draconic [sic] measures' were obvious and the Permanent Secretary wrote to District Commissioners lamenting the dire financial situation in which the government found itself, particularly at a time of increased political pressure to distribute food to constituencies attracted by radical nationalism. A direct application to Oxfam for assistance was mooted, but was considered unnecessary once the organisation's donation for the famine camps had been received. Oxfam's assistance in Turkana allowed the government to cut less from its own allocation, in all likelihood giving the administration a little more room for manoeuvre in its battle to undermine the rhetoric of radical nationalists.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 'Famine and Floods in Kenya, 1961', Kenya National Archives, Nairobi (hereafter KNA), Report on Famine Relief in Kenya, 1965/66, KA/8/5; 'Turkana Fishing Scheme, Lake Rudolf, 1963, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10, Folder 3; 'Letter to the Permanent Secretary of the Treasury (unsigned)' 1 October, 1962, KNA, Famine Relief Reserve Crops (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief), MOH/47/3.

<sup>6</sup> 'Monthly Report, November 1962', 7 December, 1962, KNA, Monthly Reports, Turkana, PC/NKU/2/27/29; 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Dearden', 14 January, 1963, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12; 'Letter from Mr. Ellerton to Dr. Haupt', 27 March, 1963, KNA, Famine Relief Crops (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief) MOH/47/3.

<sup>7</sup> It would have involved cutting 15,000 bags of maize from a total allocation of 36,800.

<sup>8</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Neil to Mr. Butter', 29 January, 1963, KNA, Famine Relief Reserve Crops (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief), MOH/47/3; 'Letter from Mr. Neil to all District Commissioners', no date, KNA, Famine Relief Reserve Crops (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief), MOH/47/3; '£14,000 to help feed Turkana', newspaper clipping – no date/author, KNA, Famine Relief Reserve Crops (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief), MOH/47/3.



Map 1: Oxfam projects 1963-1978. 1 = Fishing project on Lake Rudolf/Lake Turkana (1963); 2 = Toretet dams (1963) & Chemase road scheme (1963); 3 = Perkerra irrigation scheme (1962); 4 = Turkana famine camps (1962); 5 = Lorengippe water spreading scheme (1963); 6 = Rombo & Kimana irrigation scheme (1965); 7 = Turkana mobile film unit (1966); 8 = Isiolo development project (1970); 9 = Garissa settlement scheme (1971); 10 = Maasai rural development centre (1968); 11 = Samburu rural development centre (1973); 12 = Hybrid maize seed distribution (1965); 13 = Narusurra farm mechanisation scheme (1967); 14 = Gatundu hospital (1967); 15 = Lokichar irrigation scheme (1967); 16 = Lake Kenyatta settlement scheme (1976).

While the government appreciated the breathing room that the Oxfam grant supplied, the organisation's commitment to the famine camps did have one string attached: it was conditional on the government maintaining support for the camps over the longer-term. The dynamic of the relationship between Oxfam and the Kenya government was thus set before independence: over the following four decades the organisation would work in areas of minimal political importance to the government (note the concentration of Oxfam projects in the Rift Valley, and particularly in Turkana,

as shown by Map 1) while gently trying to cajole the state to take on long-term responsibility for these areas. The question of whether this was an appropriate form of gap-filling or a neo-colonial imposition from an external agency with the (limited) power provided by its ability to provide funding – as well as the anxiety that Oxfam merely served to get the government off the hook for its ethnic and regional biases in the short-term – would plague staff right across the period as the true nature of the Kenyatta and Moi states came into view. For the time being, the imposition of conditions on its aid was accepted as part of the broader shift within the organisation towards sustainable and truly developmental projects. Betts had, in fact, written to the Ministry of Lands and Settlement a few months earlier, noting that while over the previous 18 months Oxfam had concentrated on Kenya's famine situation, during that time the organisation had 'turned its attention more and more to longer term possibilities... and we feel that the time is ripe for us to reconnoitre [such] possibilities in Kenya'.<sup>9</sup> In his letter Betts requested that he and Kirkley be allowed to visit Kenya to discuss how Oxfam could best work alongside the government for the longer-term development of the country. The conversation which unfolded between the Oxfam representatives and assorted Ministerial officials on 1 November focused on the specific projects for which the government wanted support: considering Oxfam's expertise, the government suggested that post-famine rehabilitation schemes for the Maasai and Turkana regions as well as assistance with agricultural education might be acceptable.<sup>10</sup>

There was nothing particularly unusual about these discussions in a general sense: Oxfam was attempting to formalise its often *ad hoc* relations with governments across Africa at the time and the pattern of its aid was slowly shifting from famine relief to famine prevention.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, such an approach was not out of character for the Field Director. An ex-colonial civil servant, Jimmy Betts had spent 24 years as a Forestry Officer in Nigeria before joining the Fabian Commonwealth Bureau. 'Betts the Bolshie' worked for the bureau for five years, during which time he got to know many of the personalities

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<sup>9</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Lands and Settlement', 2 October, 1962, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12.

<sup>10</sup> 'File No. Visit/Betts-Kirkley/5', 16 October, 1962, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12; 'Letter from Mr. Dearden to Mr. Knowles', 19 October, 1962, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12.

<sup>11</sup> A year later at a meeting of the Africa Committee, the chairman would note that Oxfam had completed this transition. Minutes of the Africa Committee, 5 December, 1963, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 1: December 1963 - November 1965.

of African nationalism.<sup>12</sup> Such contacts proved important in setting up meetings with government officials. In his introductory letters to the Kenya government, for instance, the Field Director was careful to mention his 'old acquaintance' Tom Mboya.<sup>13</sup> In addition, although his left-wing sympathies and his attempt to move the centre of gravity of the Oxfam programme to the field made him something of a 'legend' within the organisation, on the ground Betts 'assumed the colonial officer role with which he was familiar', making the 'seamless transition' from late colonial technocrat to post-colonial development expert that both Kothari and Hodge discuss elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, before his work began in earnest in Kenya, Betts had spent time working with governments in the High Commission territories, concentrating on long-term schemes for progressive farmers, including dams, education and extension services. These were akin to previous government efforts to target rich and middle-income farmers in Kenya through the Swynnerton Plan and Million Acre Scheme and suggested his willingness to promote approaches to development pioneered during the colonial period. As Betts remarked in an interview with a Kenyan newspaper: 'I have always been very keen on the longer-term aspect... I'm not a do-gooder in this way. I have concepts and ideas about rural development in Africa... and we've slowly swung Oxfam around'.<sup>15</sup> For his part, Kirkley was equally committed to the idea that long-term projects to prevent hunger and destitution were charitable, and he pushed this line strongly during his time at the head of Oxfam.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, both he and Betts kept their cards close to their chest for the duration of the meeting with Kenyan government officials, reminding the latter frequently that support for the schemes discussed was contingent on approval from Oxford.

Government representatives were similarly cautious, using the meeting to learn the 'likes and dislikes' of Oxfam and its 'local rules' for funding. They were seriously concerned about 'the tendency of the volunteer agencies to slip outside the ordinary

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<sup>12</sup> He joked that this helped in his role with Oxfam, as 'they can never accuse me of neo-colonialism if they think I'm holding the purse-strings a bit too tight now and again'. 'We Forced Aid Out of Britain', *Sunday Nation*, 9 April, 1967, pp. 15-16, Daily Nation Archive, Nairobi.

<sup>13</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Lands and Settlement', 2 October, 1962, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12.

<sup>14</sup> For Uma Kothari, the common movement of colonial development experts into post-colonial development organisations was part of the 'intertwining of these fields wherein heterogeneous and shifting ideologies and practices were imbricated in each other'. U. Kothari, 'Authority and Expertise: The Professionalisation of International Development and the Ordering of Dissent', *Antipode*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2005), p. 433; Hodge, 'British Colonial Expertise', pp. 24-44; Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 76-79.

<sup>15</sup> 'We Forced Aid Out of Britain', *Sunday Nation*, 9 April, 1967, pp. 15-16, Daily Nation Archive, Nairobi.

<sup>16</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 85-91.

priority net in connection with the allocation of development funds' (which were to be focused on high-potential agricultural areas), and wished to acquaint the Oxfam representatives with Kenya government procedures.<sup>17</sup> As it happened, the civil servants present at the meeting were justified in their concern about voluntary agencies operating outside of the government's development priorities, for one of the first Oxfam development projects in Kenya was, according to the government at least, unsolicited and unwelcome. The project itself – to help dig dams for the Kipsigis living in Kericho in the Rift Valley – was on a fairly large scale considering Oxfam's recent conversion to development: 100 dams were to be dug by a local partner during 1963 at a cost of £10,000.<sup>18</sup> These dams would provide standing water for cattle, which, Oxfam hoped, would lead to improved milk quality and reduced workloads for local women who had previously travelled long distances each day to fetch water. Each dam would hold around two million gallons of water – enough to support 20 families with 15 cattle for around four months without rain. Richard Exley, an Oxfam representative who visited the project, lauded his organisation's newfound ability to support and initiate such large-scale, 'government-esque' schemes, boasting that the project demonstrated the way forward for NGOs in filling the development gaps left by government.<sup>19</sup> According to Exley the project even impressed local MPs, hitherto sceptical of the utility of NGOs and protective of the government's role in development projects: the MP for Bomet was quoted as saying that 'because we have uhuru, let no-one think we do not need help from overseas. There is no end to what this water has done to the Kipsigis. It means money, education and development'.<sup>20</sup> Encouraged by such praise, Oxfam continued to support the project and by 1965 the organisation had donated £26,000. This financed the completion of 181

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<sup>17</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Dearden to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Land Settlement and Water Development', 12 October, 1962, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12; 'Letter from Mr. Knowles to Mr. Carey-Jones', 15 October, 1962, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12.

<sup>18</sup> Though Oxfam income around this time was around £2 million, the organisation had expanded its interest from 56 countries in 1960 to 73 by 1963. Divided equally, each country would receive on average only £27,000. Of course, not all countries were treated equally: some (such as the Congo) required large expenditure for relief efforts; others had only one or two minor projects supported by the organisation. As a single commitment, however, the Kericho dams were a relatively large developmental investment at the time.

<sup>19</sup> Exley, who had joined Oxfam in 1957, was the architect of the 'Hunger £Million' campaign of 1963. Perhaps he had such publicity in mind when reporting on the Toretet scheme. See Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 79-83.

<sup>20</sup> 'Quotes from Oxfam's Representative's Report', April 1964, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 1; 'Richard Exley, Oxfam', no date, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 1; R. Exley, 'A Few Observations on Visits to Oxfam Projects in Africa', 1 May, 1964, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 1: December 1963 – November 1965; 'The Construction of Cattle Dips, Kipsigis District', no date, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

dams on the way towards a new target of 200. Over the following decade the project (which would come to include funding for cattle dips) would receive a total of £48,000 from Oxfam. Visiting the project in 1969, Oxfam's overseas aid appraiser noted that the dams and cattle dips were impressive and performed their functions well.<sup>21</sup>

Representatives of the central government were less impressed with the scheme. Firstly, they were irritated to not have heard of the project before Betts had been given an 'outing' by local officials and had been convinced of the idea.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, civil servants discussing the project considered it rather 'off beam' and mysterious, judging that it would be of only very limited economic benefit.<sup>23</sup> Officials were exasperated that Oxfam had not been better advised by local technical officers and believed that the organisation had been misled into supporting a project that should never have been a priority for charitable assistance.<sup>24</sup> For the Kenya government, development projects were to be geared towards increasing the productive potential of agricultural land and inculcating modern attitudes among farmers in high-potential areas. In Kericho, the government was focused on producing tea, not improving the quality of life of its citizens. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Oxfam's efforts in Toretet would receive a lukewarm reception.

Elsewhere in the Rift Valley the central government was bounced into accepting another development project promoted by a local administration seemingly emboldened by the temporary experiment in *majimboism*. The Chemase road scheme was an attempt to develop a 'poverty-stricken and malaria-infested' area of the Rift Valley, an area that had not benefitted from the gradual development of other areas of Nandi district because of its difficult climate and topography. As with Toretet, rehabilitating Chemase was far down the list of priorities for the Kenya government. However, in 1959 the Agricultural Department of the colonial government had planted an experimental sugar plot that had flourished beyond all expectations, encouraging local farmers to plant their own plots: by 1962, 475 acres had been prepared. According to local proponents of the scheme, the

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<sup>21</sup> 'The Construction of Cattle Dips, Kipsigis District', no date, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

<sup>22</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Roemer to Mr. Dearden', 22 November, 1962, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12; 'Letter from Mr. Dearden to Mr. Roemer', 23 November, 1962, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12; 'Letter from Mr. Dearden to Mr. Classen', 6 March, 1963, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12.

<sup>23</sup> One civil servant argued that the project was useful only in providing the local administration with employment now that the hut tax had been abolished. 'Letter from Mr. Dearden to Mr. Roemer', 22 January, 1963, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12; 'Letter from Mr. Dearden to Mr. Betts', 22 January, 1963, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12; 'Letter from Mr. Dearden to Mr. Classen', 6 March, 1963, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12.

<sup>24</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Classen to Mr. Dearden', 21 February, 1963, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12.

sugar crop had offered the potential to revolutionise the area's economy, making poverty and famine 'a thing of the past'. Unfortunately, the rapid expansion of the sugar crop exceeded the infrastructural capabilities of the area, in particular the inadequate roads that became a 'sea of mud' with every rain shower. Given the limited potential of the area in the opinion of the government, the provincial administration lacked the resources necessary to deal with the problem and so the community development officer approached Oxfam directly, asking for £6,000 for a road-building scheme to link the sugar cane plots with the processing factories 24 miles away.<sup>25</sup>

In April the following year, once Oxfam received a guarantee that the local authority would maintain the road – ensuring in Betts' mind that the government would continue to develop the area – the organisation provided the required funds. The Oxfam representative who visited the project was delighted with the prospects that Oxfam assistance would give the area, noting that the crop for 1963 alone would bring in over £12,500. Jeanne Townsend also noted how, much like the Kipsigis dam project, the Chemase scheme showed 'how money made quickly available can fill an urgent gap in government programmes in a developing country'.<sup>26</sup> Oxfam staff were, however, unaware that civil servants from the central government had earlier refused to send the application to KFFHC because 'stripped absolutely of unnecessary verbiage... this is a try-on'. Officials had rejected completely the premise that the area was suffering from food shortages.<sup>27</sup> When the Treasury was informed that the application had been sent to Oxfam, it was embarrassed but resigned to the fact that the project had 'got to a stage where our support, or lack of it, will make little difference'.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, in neither case did officials consider it judicious to share their reservations about Oxfam projects with Betts since he had personally recommended the schemes. To do so would, officials feared, only embarrass Betts and jeopardise the chances of the government receiving funding for its own priority projects. Instead, civil servants resolved to co-ordinate Oxfam's work more closely with government priorities in future.

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<sup>25</sup> J. Townsend, 'The Road from Chemase', no date, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 2; 'Letter from Mr. Butler to Mr. Brown' and enclosed proposal, 11 June, 1962, KNA, Project – Sugar Roads for Chemase Scheme (OXFAM), BV/7/63.

<sup>26</sup> J. Townsend, 'The Road from Chemase', no date, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 2.

<sup>27</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Brown to the Executive Officer, ALDEV', 15 June, 1962, KNA, Project – Sugar Roads for Chemase Scheme (OXFAM), BV/7/63; E. Mettrick, 'Note: File No. FAO/8 Case 9/4', 22 August, 1963, KNA, Project – Sugar Roads for Chemase Scheme (OXFAM), BV/7/63.

<sup>28</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Ndisi to Mr. Knowles', 16 September, 1963, KNA, Project – Sugar Roads for Chemase Scheme (OXFAM), BV/7/63; 'Letter from Mr. Knowles to Mr. Ndisi', 19 September, 1963, KNA, Project – Sugar Roads for Chemase Scheme (OXFAM), BV/7/63.

The intensity of discussions between the two parties would, therefore, increase in early 1963, and government representatives reemphasised that Oxfam would contribute most towards Kenyan development by working with the state in its efforts to modernise Kenya's agriculture. Accordingly, government representatives discussed with Betts the possibility of Oxfam funding farmer training centres (FTCs) and the purchase of improved planting materials.<sup>29</sup> The former request was for £6,000 per annum for three years, which would provide a subsidy for the neediest farmers to attend training. The government hoped that in time 13 FTCs would receive upwards of 20,000 farmers per year and would be a major instrument of its agricultural extension policy.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, the funds for improved planting material would help the poorest farmers afford hardier and healthier varieties of food crops. The latter request was for over £73,000.<sup>31</sup> In the event, Betts recommended to Oxford grants totalling around £100,000 for 1963. This amount included the Kipsigis dams, the Turkana famine camps and the extension of the government-run Perkerra irrigation scheme (on which more later), but not (yet) the FTC or improved planting schemes. For this Betts apologised, noting his limited budget and the fact that 'Kenya is more fortunate than other territories we are considering in the amount of aid it is receiving from alternative sources'.<sup>32</sup>

Nonetheless, the idea that Oxfam could support or plug holes in government development plans in Kenya gained increasing support in Oxford. As the Deputy Director of Oxfam, Henry Fletcher, remarked after his visit to East Africa in the same year, 'if Oxfam really wants its help in this area to be significant, it must be prepared to work with governments'. Indeed, the faith that many in the organisation placed in the decolonising state as a central developmental actor in the region meant that Oxfam would work with governments of all ideological persuasions, not just those with whom it had a particular affinity, as Jennings notes for Tanzania.<sup>33</sup> In Kenya, for instance, Oxfam faced a capitalist government committed to growth above all else – a position that might have upset the

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<sup>29</sup> 'Application for Assistance towards Courses at Farmers Training Centres', 10 November, 1962, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12; 'Note for Mr. Dearden from Mr. Pean', 13 November, 1962, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12.

<sup>30</sup> 'Application for Assistance towards Courses at Farmers Training Centres', 10 November, 1962, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12.

<sup>31</sup> 'Application for Funds from the Freedom From Hunger Campaign United Kingdom Committee to Facilitate the Provision of Improved Planting Material of Food Crops to African Farmers as a Positive Effort to Reduce the Occurrence of Famine in Famine-Prone Areas', no date, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12.

<sup>32</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Dearden', 14 January, 1963, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, BV/93/12.

<sup>33</sup> Jennings, "Almost an Oxfam in Itself", pp. 509-530.

left-wing sensibilities of many members of the organisation; yet Fletcher asserted that ‘there is no doubt in my mind that Kenya Oxfam ought to concentrate on development schemes with the government, mainly the Ministry of Agriculture’.<sup>34</sup> Inevitably, the desire to work with the Kenya government also had something to do with the sense of possibility that independence conjured for Kenyans and foreigners alike. For Kenyans, independence promised the opportunity to take control over their political and economic future, and foreign well-wishers were, for a time, swept along by this hopefulness, believing that the scale and speed of change since the Second World War could, if anything, be increased by working with those who had fought for the right to manage their own destiny. At the same time, the stress Fletcher placed on working with governments was, in part, another symptom of Oxfam’s shift towards supporting long-term, planned development schemes and away from reactive, emergency assistance. A sub-committee of the Africa Committee was established in late 1964 to consider precisely this issue, and recommended that 60 per cent of Oxfam’s Africa budget should be spent on planned development projects with the advice and participation of governments.<sup>35</sup> In this recommendation the Committee was following the advice of Roger Swynnerton, who wrote a paper for Oxfam advocating the use of ‘modern knowledge’ – such as conservation, composting, drought-resistance and irrigation – to improve agricultural production (much as he had advised in his development plans for colonial Kenya in the 1950s).<sup>36</sup> Of course, for a charitable body, such work was controversial and raised eyebrows at the Charity Commission. In her report on Chemase, Townsend had attempted to pre-empt the inevitable criticism by providing the answer to those who asked ‘are roads really the concern of charity?’:

The concern of any charitable organisation interested in the progress of the struggling people of the world is to fill the gap wherever there is need. Needs... are legion – but they are not confined to vitamins, milk-powder, antibiotics, seeds or even tractors. Of all the urgent requirements needed by underdeveloped countries, improved roads and communications are amongst the most vital – without them development is an empty thought and itself is doomed to failure.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> ‘Deputy Director’s Tour of East and Central Africa’, 11 June, 1964, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 1: December 1963 – November 1965.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Record of a Sub-Committee of the Africa Committee set up to Consider the Future Pattern of Aid in Africa South of the Sahara’, 20 November, 1964, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 1: December 1963 – November 1965.

<sup>36</sup> R. Swynnerton, ‘Improvement of the Food Supplies of the People of Africa’, 31 October, 1964, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 1: December 1963 – November 1965.

<sup>37</sup> J. Townsend, ‘The Road from Chemase’, no date, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 2.

Unfortunately for Oxfam, the attempt to justify its work in Chemase was unsuccessful and for a few months in 1964 the organisation's support for any new schemes in concert with the Kenyan government was put on hold as the House of Lords debated the extent to which development aid such as road building was charitable. At the same time, the Charity Commission considered the appropriateness of Oxfam routing its funds through governments. Betts was furious, noting that that 'a decision against Oxfam [on these matters] would... strike at the roots of the whole Freedom From Hunger Campaign', which, as its Director pointed out, was focused on public works because 'it is only by public works that we can tackle the problem of poverty at its roots'.<sup>38</sup> Just as concerning for Oxfam was the fact that the increased scrutiny on the organisation and its work had caused reservations to creep into the Africa Committee as regards its policy towards governments. Fletcher was quick to remind the Committee that if Oxfam did not work with states, its 'help will always be on the fringe, rather than getting to the root of the problem'. Thus

whatever misgivings there may be, the Committee should be of good courage in this respect... [for] in many cases, our most effective help will be given in collaboration with government departments.<sup>39</sup>

Importantly, as Fletcher revealed in a memorandum on the organisation's aid policy in Africa, Oxfam had always allowed for a wide interpretation of its mandate to cover 'all types of assistance to those in need, both by way of immediate aid and through measures to help them to self-sufficiency'. The 'narrower interpretation placed on Oxfam's activities by the Chief Charity Commissioner and others has', he pointed out, 'never formed part of the [Africa] Committee's thinking', and their 'too cautious "safety-first" attitude would [have achieved] far less'.<sup>40</sup> In the event, the Lords backed the charities' positive case ahead of the reservations of the Commission, and measures 'reasonably closely connected with the relief of poor people' were now to be seen as charitable; yet public works and schemes for economic improvement were still for the time being unjustifiable.<sup>41</sup> Kirkley continued to press the Commission for the acceptance of such schemes. He was convinced that the state, wherever located, had a set of responsibilities

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<sup>38</sup> Betts' response was quoted in a letter from Mr. Knowles to Mr. Mettrick, 8 January, 1964, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), BV/93/12; Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>39</sup> 'Deputy Director's Tour of East and Central Africa', 11 June, 1964, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 1: December 1963 – November 1965.

<sup>40</sup> T. Fletcher, 'Aid Policy in Africa', 17 June, 1964, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 1: December 1963 – November 1965.

<sup>41</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 89.

to its citizens along the lines of the welfare state in Britain. To freedom from want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness, he wished to add freedom from hunger. With the amendment of Oxfam's 'objects' clause in 1965 (as described in chapter two), the organisation was finally free to engage in public works alongside governments in order to push this agenda. Later in the year the Africa Committee would resolve that

while projects for the immediate relief of suffering had a very important part to play, it was considered that preference should be given to applications designed to help people to help themselves, rather than those that just kept people alive.<sup>42</sup>

With only a brief interruption, therefore, Oxfam would expand its engagement with the government in Kenya during the 1960s. As well as maintaining its support for the famine camps in Turkana, the NGO supported the establishment of fishing on Lake Rudolf (now Lake Turkana).<sup>43</sup> Turkana attracted Betts' interest because, with none of the advantages of climate or topography held by areas to the south, it was considered severely underdeveloped. This arid and inhospitable region was also sparsely populated, for the most part by nomadic pastoralists, and since it produced neither crops nor votes, its development held very little economic or political importance for either the colonial government or the Kenyatta regime. The few government interventions in the region had aimed to provide a more settled way of life for these nomadic pastoralists (and in so doing to help ease the famine crisis taking hold), but were severely underfunded. Thus although the colonial government first attempted to encourage fishing on Lake Rudolf in the early 1960s, the scheme had ground to a halt by 1962 and Oxfam was asked to step in to rescue the enterprise. Betts gladly supported the scheme, providing £2,600 in the following year for a launch for boats and for a small road to transport the catch for processing. Around 200 fishermen were to benefit from the investment in the short-term, though the longer-term prospects for the project were uncertain; for the time being the National Food Relief Committee purchased the fish on behalf of the famine camps (also supported by Oxfam).<sup>44</sup> Indeed, as the district annual report for 1963 pointed out, 'the darker side of the picture' was that 'apart from the purchase of dried fish for famine relief

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<sup>42</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 2 September, 1965, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 1: December 1963 – November 1965.

<sup>43</sup> At nearly 300 kilometres in length and with a surface area of over 6,000 square kilometres, Lake Turkana is the world's largest desert lake.

<sup>44</sup> R. Cox, 'Turkana Fishing Scheme, Lake Rudolf', 1963, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 3; 'Letter from G. Ellerton to Dr. Haupt', 27 March, 1963, KNA, Famine Relief Reserve Crops (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief), MOH/47/3; 'Background on Turkana Fishing', 3 October, 1963, KNA, Turkana District – Development, BV/33/19.

there was virtually no market', and by the end of the year 'most of the fishermen had ceased fishing and the whole scheme [faced] disaster'. The author criticised the project and the 'experts, advisors and officials', who 'flock to the Gulf like so many migratory birds and, like the birds, leave little trace of their passage'.<sup>45</sup>

Of course, if one sees the fishing project in isolation, it is insignificant other than as a 'white elephant' project for which NGOs are often criticised. Yet the project takes on broader significance if it is seen in its wider historical context as but one of many government projects that Oxfam supported in Kenya which aimed to settle pastoralists and 'rehabilitate' them to a more 'modern' and 'developed' way of life. These schemes varied in size and scope, but retained a modernising focus. In Baringo district, for instance, Oxfam supported an attempt by the state to destock part of the region and introduce controlled grazing and agriculture in spite of the resistance of the local population. The Perkerra irrigation scheme, to which Oxfam donated £7,000 in 1962 (on condition of a government contribution of £5,000), aimed to irrigate 16,000 acres of land considered 'unproductive' for settlement by the local Tugen and Njemps and for conversion into agricultural land producing onions, bananas and maize.<sup>46</sup> By the end of 1963 over 300 tenants and their families were in occupation of land holdings and over 1,380 acres of land had been irrigated (an increase of 536 acres on the previous year). The scheme would produce a good crop that year, bringing in over £23,000 for local producers after expenses had been deducted.<sup>47</sup> Notwithstanding its success, local people and their elected representatives voiced their anger at the imposition of the project and the changes in land tenure it presupposed.

Elsewhere in the Rift Valley resistance to settlement at the behest of government was even greater: in Rombo and Kimana, the irrigation of over 600 acres of land – for which Oxfam donated £5,000 in 1965 – was supposed to overcome the 'human problems' in the region, pushing the local Maasai to abandon their 'semi-nomadic, ancient ways' in

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<sup>45</sup> C. L. Ryland, 'Turkana Annual Report, 1963', 23 March, 1964, KNA, no reference.

<sup>46</sup> 'Extension of the Perkerra Irrigation Scheme', March 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11; 'Note from E. Green, File No. FAO/8/Case 16/41', 27 April, 1963, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), BV/93/12; 'Letter from Mr. Dearden to Mr. Betts', 18 June, 1963, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), BV/93/12; 'General Summary of the Perkerra Catchment Grazing Scheme', 14 December, 1963, KNA, Range Management, Baringo, AN/40/27.

<sup>47</sup> 'Annual Report, Department of Agriculture, Rift Valley Region', 1963, KNA, Annual Reports – Agriculture, AN/42/160.

favour of settlement on farmland.<sup>48</sup> A successful pilot scheme led to the application for £65,439 from Oxfam, but local leaders noted the difficulty for the Maasai in accepting rigid conditions such as boundary redistribution and stock limitation.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, with Betts' encouragement, Oxfam granted £20,000 to the government for the scheme in September 1966 and left open the potential for a further grant.<sup>50</sup> Within a month, however, local resistance to changes in land tenure led by the local MP Stanley Oloitiptip forced government officials to ask Betts to withdraw the grant.<sup>51</sup> The local provincial agricultural board roundly criticised the Maasai for their obstinacy and for not taking the government's advice, warning that 'if these people wanted financial assistance', they had to learn to accept government conditions.<sup>52</sup>

Back in the arid north, a government assessment concluded that the combination of settlement (with the provision of schooling and technical training) and irrigation was the only realistic solution to the 'Turkana problem', defined as the 'backwardness of the human element' and their tendency to 'want to remain unchanged and to cling to their old ways of life'.<sup>53</sup> In fact, the government considered Turkana so 'extraordinarily backward' that a slow and studied approach was useless; instead, a complete overhaul of the Turkana culture was necessary, for 'no solution of the Turkana problem is possible by which all the people can continue their traditional way of life'.<sup>54</sup> Other than the enforced modernisation of the Turkana, the only other options – to do nothing or to continue to find famine relief funds – were considered inhumane and wasteful, respectively.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> 'The Rombo Agricultural Scheme', November 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11; 'Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Kajiado District Agricultural Committee Meeting', 7 September, 1967, KNA, DC/KAJ/4/7/4.

<sup>49</sup> 'Minutes of the Kajiado District Agricultural Committee', 9 June, 1966, KNA, DC/KAJ/4/1/17.

<sup>50</sup> 'List of Recommended Grants, Africa Committee Meeting', 1 September, 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 2: January – September 1966; 'Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Kajiado District Agricultural Committee', 16 September, 1966, KNA, DC/KAJ/4/1/17.

<sup>51</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 27 October, 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 - November 1967; 'Monthly Report for February', 14 March, 1967, KNA, Monthly Reports Kajiado (Vol. II), DC/KAJ/4/1/11; 'Minutes of the Kajiado District Agricultural Committee', 7 November, 1967, KNA, DC/KAJ/4/7/4.

<sup>52</sup> 'Minutes of the Provincial Water Committee, Rift Valley Province', 15 March, 1968, KNA, DC/NKI/4/8/8; 'Annual Report, Department of Agriculture, Rift Valley Province', 1966, KNA, Annual Reports for the Rift Valley from 1965, AN/42/43.

<sup>53</sup> 'Rehabilitation in Turkana – Scheme A, Paper for Ministry of Agriculture Planning Committee', 1962, KNA, Project – Turkana Rehabilitation, BV/104/103; 'Minutes of the Turkana Development Committee', 20 July, 1963, KNA, Turkana Development Committee, AN/16/6; 'Annual Report, Department of Agriculture, Rift Valley Province', 1964, KNA, Annual Reports – Agriculture, AN/42/160.

<sup>54</sup> 'File No. Proj/Turk/1/(TY)/8', 27 October, 1964, KNA, Range Management, Turkana, AN/40/33.

<sup>55</sup> 'Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, Report on a Visit to Turkana District to Assess the Rehabilitation Problem', 27 August, 1962, KNA, Turkana Rehabilitation, BV/104/104; 'Reconnaissance of the Agricultural Potential of the Turkana District', 1964, KNA, BV/111/118.

Furthermore, in the latter case civil servants argued that the Turkana were 'content to idle under the hot sun if someone supplies them with free food', and estimated that at the present rate of population increase (and even with good rainfall) famine camps would receive around 3,500 new claimants per year – an unsustainable rate of growth.<sup>56</sup> Officials in the Ministry of Agriculture thus called on the government to employ drastic remedies to wean the population from continual feeding before it was too late.<sup>57</sup> Aside from the fishing scheme already mentioned, of particular interest to the Ministry was an experimental water-spreading scheme for minor subsistence crops and fodder at Lorengippe.<sup>58</sup> The scheme aimed to divert run off water onto land ready for crops and grasses. Yet because it was at first an uneconomic investment government officials did not consider it a priority for loan funds; rather, they hoped that saving the Turkana from 'human degradation' would be an 'open and shut case' for Oxfam.<sup>59</sup> For this reason, the organisation was approached to supplement the government investment of £7,000 with £10,000 from its development budget. According to government officials, £17,000 would irrigate 500 acres of land and provide subsistence carbohydrates for 2,400 people. Ominously, they also noted that such a project would avoid the necessity of moving people out of Turkana by force of arms.<sup>60</sup> Oxfam agreed very quickly to fund the scheme in late 1963 after Betts treated the application as one of emergency need, and initial results were positive: four fields of grasses had sprung up by April 1964, each supporting local inhabitants and their cattle.<sup>61</sup>

Jennings has argued elsewhere that Betts and Oxfam were beginning to shift towards a self-help and community-based model of development around this time, influenced by the programme in Tanzania.<sup>62</sup> If this interpretation is correct, the fact that

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<sup>56</sup> 'File No. Proj/Turk/1/(TY)/8', 27 October, 1964, KNA, Range Management, Turkana, AN/40/33; 'Famine Relief: Turkana', 4 May, 1965, KNA, Turkana Rehabilitation, AN/2/24.

<sup>57</sup> 'Preliminary Report on Famine Conditions in Affected Areas of Kenya', 3 December, 1965, KNA, Famine Relief Reserve Crops (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief), MOH/47/4.

<sup>58</sup> 'Rehabilitation in Turkana – Scheme A, Paper for Ministry of Agriculture Planning Committee', 1962, KNA, Project – Turkana Rehabilitation, BV/104/103; 'Minutes of the Turkana Development Committee', 20 July, 1963, KNA, Turkana Development Committee, AN/16/6; 'Annual Report, Department of Agriculture, Rift Valley Province', 1964, KNA, Annual Reports – Agriculture, AN/42/160.

<sup>59</sup> 'File No. Proj/Turk/1/(TY)/8', 27 October, 1964, KNA, Range Management, Turkana, AN/40/33.

<sup>60</sup> 'Turkana Rehabilitation Scheme, Water Spreading', 29 June, 1963, KNA, Turkana Rehabilitation, BV/104/103; 'Minutes of a Meeting on Turkana Development', 16 January, 1964, KNA, Rehabilitation and Development, Turkana District, DC/LDR/1/1/104.

<sup>61</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Roemer at the Treasury', 9 September, 1963, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), BV/93/12; 'Record of a Meeting with Mr. Betts of Oxfam', 15 June, 1963, KNA, Project – Turkana Rehabilitation, BV/104/103; 'Turkana Water Spreading Scheme', 8 March, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

<sup>62</sup> Jennings, "Almost an Oxfam in Itself", pp. 509-530.

Betts and Oxfam were simultaneously supporting the state-led and top-down development of 'backward' communities in a neighbouring country might appear somewhat perplexing. What the Kenya programme reveals, however, is that Oxfam supported the state as a vital development institution for the modernisation of post-colonial Africa and was somewhat agnostic as to each regime's ideological fixations. Oxfam values – which were forged in a left-liberal consciousness that stressed the failure of government while at the same time prescribing remedial action by the state – emphasised the central importance of the state to development and so engendered pragmatism as to its precise characteristics. In such a way Oxfam and Betts' 'developmentalist paternalism' encouraged the organisation to support the Kenyatta state in its modernising developmental efforts in Kenya at the same time as it adopted a community-based development approach in support of the Nyerere state in Tanzania.<sup>63</sup> The fact that Oxfam would later embrace community-led development as its focus does not, therefore, necessarily mean that it was adopting it out of an ideological conviction forged by Betts and others in Tanzania in the mid-1960s. If so, Oxfam would have most likely ceased to work directly with the Kenya state, which was promoting top-down development. Rather, before adopting the 'conscientisation' ideology in 1969-70, Oxfam sought to expand its support to the Kenyan government as its primary concern and was pragmatic about its developmental orientation. (The precise nature of this pragmatism – its limits and how far it served to disguise Oxfam motives in Kenya – is discussed in the following section.)

Hence, by the mid-1960s, Oxfam was heavily involved with the government in its attempt to educate and modernise the Turkana out of their 'economic and social slumber' and into the cash economy and nation-building project of independent Kenya.<sup>64</sup> Betts would regularly attend the Turkana Development Committee at this time, and in early 1966 he emphasised that Oxfam could provide further support to government efforts in the region on top of the £20,000-£30,000 Oxfam was already spending annually in Turkana. The Field Director offered no dissent to the conclusion of the Committee that the Turkana had to change their way of life before development could proceed, asking only that Oxfam be given enough notice of government intentions by officials in order to

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<sup>63</sup> The modernising approach was not unfamiliar, of course, since it echoed the approach Betts would have adopted as a colonial official elsewhere in the continent.

<sup>64</sup> 'Turkana District Annual Report', 1965, KNA, Annual Report from Other Districts, DC/KAJ/4/1/15; 'Letter from Mr. Peberdy to the Assistant Director of Agriculture', 18 September, 1967, KNA, Project – Turkana Rehabilitation, BV/104/106.

allow the full consideration of projects in Oxford.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, as Betts revealed to officials in government, he was anxious to 'inculcate' the same level of interest in the modernisation of Turkana in Michael Harris (Field Secretary to the Africa Committee and another former colonial official), 'since [Harris] will be the advocate of *our* future applications to [Oxford]'.<sup>66</sup> To do so, Betts arranged meetings between Harris and government representatives during Harris' tour of Eastern Africa in May 1966.

These meetings proved important in convincing Harris and the Africa Committee to accept Betts' recommendation to support the creation of a mobile educational unit, as requested by Turkana's District Commissioner (DC).<sup>67</sup> For the DC, the mobile educational units would 'combat ignorance and re-orientate the *maskinis* ('poor') to the new social and economic values' – 'African Socialism' – pertaining in independent Kenya. Prior to his meetings in Nairobi, Harris had warned Betts that the idea of a film unit was less than popular at Oxford, with some members of the Africa Committee expressing themselves, unofficially, fairly negatively on several issues to do with its aims and scope. After his trip to Eastern Africa, however, and with Betts' assurances, Harris was able to convince the Committee to donate nearly £8,000 for the project, which would be spent on teaching Turkana how to inoculate their animals and improve animal husbandry in the hope of creating a market for animals from the area.<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately for Betts and Harris, despite reaching nearly 8,000 people in the region the film unit was quickly written off as a failure due to the limited nature of the film material both in quantity and quality and the lack of interest shown by the Turkana.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps somewhat embarrassed that his close relationship with government officials had inclined him to advocate for, rather than thoroughly evaluate, the scheme, Betts wrote a particularly hostile letter about the project as the unit was withdrawn from Lodwar, making clear his anger that so many factors that militated against its successful operation were not made clear in the application for funding.<sup>70</sup> The resignation of the unit's operating officer soon after was,

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<sup>65</sup> 'Minutes of the Turkana Development Committee', 10 January, 1966, KNA, Turkana Development Committee, AN/16/6.

<sup>66</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Gibson', 12 April, 1966, KNA, Turkana Development Committee, AN/16/6. My emphasis.

<sup>67</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Gibson', 12 April, 1966, KNA, Turkana Development Committee, AN/16/6.

<sup>68</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Harris to Mr. Betts', 13 April, 1966, KNA, Turkana Development Committee, AN/16/6.

<sup>69</sup> 'The Turkana Mobile Education Unit', no date, KNA, Turkana Development Committee – Mobile Film Unit, AN/16/7; 'Report on Filmobile', 15 August, 1967, KNA, Turkana Development Committee, AN/16/6; 'Review of Film Unit', 27 November, 1967, KNA, Turkana Development Committee, AN/16/6.

<sup>70</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Foot to Mr. Lyttle', 6 December, 1967, KNA, Turkana Development Committee, AN/16/6; 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Sweetman', 16 April, 1968, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43.

accordingly, considered merely 'another unfortunate occurrence in the history of a project which has proved ill-fated from the start' and expenditure was frozen from May 1968 until such time as a complete 're-think' of the project had been concluded.<sup>71</sup>

The mobile film unit was an embarrassing setback for Betts, but it did not stop him and his successors from building on Oxfam's development profile and strengthening the organisation's relationship with the Kenyan state. Indeed, Oxfam would become so deeply entrenched in Turkana that by the late 1960s it had almost become part of the administration; thus when the organisation reduced its commitment in the region in 1969, the Range Department found that it had exhausted its own funding fully six months before the next central government allocation, rendering it unable to operate for half the year.<sup>72</sup> During the later 1960s and early 1970s Oxfam was also supportive of government initiatives outside Turkana. In Isiolo, in Eastern Province, for instance, the NGO aided the government in its effort to 'rehabilitate' the region following the *shifita* conflict through the creation of group ranches for the cultivation of maize. Irrigated by the Isiolo and Uaso Nyiro rivers, these ranches would, the government argued, allow service provision on a scale large enough to generate development.<sup>73</sup> In November 1968, Malcolm Harper – who replaced Betts as Field Director from August of that year – visited the region to discuss the issue with local government officers. He agreed with their assessment, stating that settlement schemes offered the only long-term solution to the *shifita* 'menace' and the underdevelopment of the region.<sup>74</sup> In April 1970 Oxfam would grant nearly £4,000 towards the capital expenditure for buildings and recurrent expenditure on salaries for one such ranch, allowing 100 families to be placed on 150 acres of land.<sup>75</sup> Five months later, Harper reported that 'the atmosphere of hopelessness and helplessness' that characterised the area after the *shifita* emergency had begun to lift, and that Oxfam should be gratified to be associated with the change alongside the government.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Ndeti', 10 May, 1968, KNA, Turkana Development Committee – Mobile Film Unit, AN/16/7; 'Letter from Mr. Sweetman to Mr. Betts', 24 May, 1968, KNA, Turkana Development Committee – Mobile Film Unit, AN/16/7.

<sup>72</sup> 'Monthly Report for October, Turkana District', 20 November, 1969, KNA, Monthly Reports, Turkana, AN/42/42.

<sup>73</sup> 'Minutes of the Isiolo District Development Committee', 17 February, 1969, KNA, District Development Committee Meetings, DC/ISO/4/1/27; 'Note on the Meeting of the Isiolo District Development Committee', 30 August, 1968, KNA, District Development Committee Meetings, DC/ISO/4/1/27.

<sup>74</sup> 'Isiolo District Development Project', 7 July, 1969, KNA, Agriculture, Food Situation, Famine Relief General, PC/EST/2/2/23.

<sup>75</sup> 'Isiolo Development Project', 4 June, 1970, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11; 'Isiolo Development Project', 23 March, 1973, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 3.

<sup>76</sup> 'Visit to Central Kenya, August, 1970', 2 September, 1970, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/5/8 Folder 2: Jamaica – Kenya.

Meanwhile, Oxfam supported the government take-over of a pilot irrigation scheme that aimed to settle nomadic Kenyan Somalis near the town of Garissa, North Eastern Province. A local self-help group had formed in the area in 1967 with the hope of developing irrigated cultivation in the region. Taken with the idea, the government adopted the scheme in 1970 and asked Oxfam for funds to enable its three-fold expansion to 300 acres and 100 families.<sup>77</sup> Through the demonstration effect of the project, the government hoped to rid the area of the nomadic ‘habit’, which, it argued in its application to Oxfam, ‘militates against any sort of development in the province’ and only encouraged famine crises. As in Isiolo, the solution to underdevelopment and chronic famine in the region was settlement: development, according to government officials, ‘requires people to settle in one place to effect it, for example building schools and sending children [there]’.<sup>78</sup> The pilot irrigation scheme was, therefore, intended to further encourage ‘villagisation’ and to enable the provision of essential services – and the extension of government apparatus – in the region.<sup>79</sup> The new Field Director for East Africa, Toby Gooch, thought the scheme was valuable as a demonstration of an ‘alternative to the nomadic life... so vulnerable during drought’, and Oxfam granted £6,274 in 1971 to help cover the cost of new irrigation equipment, construction and the payment of workers on the scheme.<sup>80</sup> Initially, the project was a success, with all 35 of the original members (and their dependents) off famine relief by 1972 and the majority of the crops making profit. 40 new members were accepted in 1973, and Oxfam donated another £3,200 for the further expansion of the scheme.<sup>81</sup> By late 1973, however, it had become clear to the manager of the scheme that wealthier participants (including one MP) dominated the group and manipulated the poorer members into working for them while they were absent. He reported to Oxfam that the well-to-do members had

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<sup>77</sup> The scheme would focus on growing onions, tomatoes, cowpeas, bananas and melons. ‘Proposed Crop Development in the North Eastern Province for the Period 1970/74 Development Plan Period’, no date, KNA, Irrigation Scheme (Garissa), PS/2/2; ‘Copy of Application to Oxfam Prepared by Agricultural Department, Garissa Self-Help Irrigation Scheme Application for Oxfam Grant’, no date, KNA, Irrigation Scheme (Garissa), PS/2/2.

<sup>78</sup> ‘Minor Irrigation Schemes – North Eastern Province’, 3 November, 1971, KNA, Irrigation Scheme (Garissa), PS/2/2.

<sup>79</sup> ‘The Development of Minor Irrigation Schemes in the Dry Areas of Kenya’, 28 March, 1972, KNA, Irrigation Scheme (Garissa), PS/2/2; ‘Annual Report, Garissa District’, 1972, KNA, Annual Report, Garissa District, 1972, RE/8/25.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Merryman to Mrs. Mbogo’, 16 February, 1972, KNA, Freedom From Hunger Organisation, AMP/5/5.

<sup>81</sup> ‘Garissa Self-Help Farming and Irrigation Scheme, Ministry of Agriculture, Kenya’, 16 December, 1974, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

essentially become 'parasitic' to the project.<sup>82</sup> Nonetheless, Oxfam remained hopeful that the local committee would remove absentee members and retained an interest in the project until 1977.<sup>83</sup>

The interlinked story of these relatively small-scale projects helps to illustrate Oxfam thinking as regards the development of Kenya's marginalised areas and peoples, and particularly its support for modernising alternatives to pastoralism, something that tallied well with government attitudes in Kenya and across Africa at the time. The organisation's early efforts in support of the state in the region were, indeed, premised on the dominant caricature of pastoralists as out-dated primitives destroying potentially cultivatable land. Considering that Betts had worked for over twenty years in the colonial administration, it is perhaps unsurprising that he retained older colonial ideas about human progress. For the idea that pastoralists were 'backward' had filtered into development thinking during the colonial period along with the image of pastoralists as exotic and primeval, and had encouraged contemporary development planners to impose restrictions on pastoralist mobility in order to discourage the pastoralist lifestyle.<sup>84</sup> As David Anderson has written, colonial governments were 'unable or unwilling to confront the otherness of pastoralist communities', and officials predicted the swift demise of pastoralists in the face of western ideas and technologies.<sup>85</sup> In the 1930s, and throughout the 'second colonial occupation', the British mounted some of the first interventions in pastoral areas in order to accomplish this feat. These interventions most often began from the premise that pastoralism was a destructive system, and that the only solution was to steer 'backward' pastoralists into modern and secure livelihoods. As in the post-colonial period, narratives of overstocking and primitivism justified the constraint of pastoral land use and characterised the intrusion of government as a neutral and even benevolent act.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> J. Merryman, 'An Evaluation of the Organization, Management, and General Developments of the First Garissa Self-Help Farming and Ranching Group', 15 August, 1975, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 3.

<sup>83</sup> 'Garissa Self-Help Farming and Irrigation Scheme, Ministry of Agriculture', 27 April, 1977, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

<sup>84</sup> These caricatures proved difficult to shake off, delaying the recognition that pastoralism was a rational response to an unforgiving environment until much later. Moreover, they made no attempt to understand that pastoralism was the 'product of a particular cultural ordering of property which constitutes livestock and cash as distinct domains which are not freely inter-convertible'. See J. Ferguson, 'The Bovine Mystique: Power, Property and Livestock in Rural Lesotho', *Man*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (1985), pp. 647-674; Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, pp. 135-168; Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, pp. 1-10.

<sup>85</sup> D. Anderson, 'Cow Power: Livestock and the Pastoralist in Africa', *African Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 366 (1993), p. 121.

<sup>86</sup> Interventions in pastoralist areas were, however, often extremely expensive, partly because they required constant policing (as would a number of Oxfam projects in Turkana) in order to stop pastoralists

By the mid-1960s, the development paradigm as regards pastoralists (for NGOs and developmental states alike) was 'resettlement': in the minds of 'scientific' planners, pastoralism as a way of life was finished.<sup>87</sup> Theoretical underpinning for this approach was later provided by Garrett Hardin's 1968 article 'Tragedy of the Commons', which offered a powerful image of the inherently destructive and non-viable nature of pastoral nomadism; its prescription of development schemes that privatised communal rangelands had powerful advocates in government and donor circles at the time.<sup>88</sup> Predictably, the Kenyan state had political as well as the socio-economic motives for engaging in development schemes in pastoral areas alongside Oxfam. As discussed with regard to the *shifita* conflict in the previous chapter, settlement schemes and the expansion of irrigated agriculture in the Rift Valley were as much about the imposition of government control – through observation and management – over areas and populations that were neither culturally nor territorially integrated in the Kenyan state, as they were about economic improvement for its own sake. As C. L. Ryland, Regional Government Agent for Turkana, noted in early 1964,

This has been a bewildering year for the Turkana tribesman. Before the general election he was still imbibing the heady wine of an 'uhuru' where there would be no police or chiefs and unlimited rifles and no boundaries. After the election he saw little change from the old routine. The "Serikali" [government] still went about its duties, the police were ubiquitous, taxes were demanded and grazing and international boundaries remained. They cannot be blamed if the wine has turned a little sour in their mouths, and there have therefore been some rumblings of dissatisfaction...<sup>89</sup>

The local District Commissioner reported with some relief a year later that the district for now lacked full 'political awareness'. However, he acknowledged that:

once this consciousness develops it will be directed against the up country civil servants, who are seen as agents of a regime from 'Kenya'. *Such a trend of thought can only be arrested by rapid economic development.*<sup>90</sup>

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from ignoring the newly imposed restrictions on movement. 'Half Yearly Report – January to June, 1969', 7 June, 1969, KNA, Range Management – Monthly, Quarterly and Half Yearly Reports, AN/40/6; 'Monthly Report, April 1971', 3 August, 1971, KNA, Monthly Reports, Quarterly and Half Yearly Reports, AN/40/2.

<sup>87</sup> D. Anderson, 'Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Restocking: Ideology and Practice in Pastoralist Development', in D. Anderson and V. Broch-Due, *The Poor Are Not Us: Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa* (Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1999), p. 246.

<sup>88</sup> J. McCabe, 'Turkana Pastoralism: A Case against the Tragedy of the Commons', *Human Ecology*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1990), pp. 82-83; R. Hogg, 'NGOs, Pastoralists and the Myth of Community: Three Case Studies of Pastoral Development from East Africa', *Nomadic Peoples*, Vol. 30 (1992), p. 124.

<sup>89</sup> 'Annual Report, Turkana, 1963', 23 March, 1964, KNA, no reference.

<sup>90</sup> 'Turkana District Annual Report', 1965, KNA, no reference. My emphasis.

'The resulting residential stability', argued the DC, 'would pave the way for the establishment of other social services like education, health and even security; which are inhibited by the present nomadism'.<sup>91</sup> He envisaged development 'along the lines of the growth of centres of population... the connecting of these centres by adequate roads, the improvement of grazing by water spreading... such increase of irrigation schemes for agricultural purposes as financially possible, and the most efficient development of educational and medical facilities'. At the same time, a 'reasonable [sic] good road will enable supervision to be made by Government officers from Lodwar'.<sup>92</sup>

Less threatening than separatists in North Eastern Province, perhaps, the Turkana were still looked on with suspicion and not a small amount of embarrassment: they were considered 'lazy, quarrelsome, greedy, ignorant, ungrateful and primitive'. Thus although the response to the 'primitiveness' of each of these areas was not equal in its ferocity, both regions were to be settled, villagised and pushed into commercial agriculture. For the Turkana, such developmental interventions were unwelcome: irrigation schemes were named *Amana emoit*, or 'fields of the foe'.<sup>93</sup> Yet the government was unconcerned with their opinion; for development along these lines would allow the observation and management of a segment of the population not yet culturally, politically, economically or territorially assimilated into the Kenyan state. In such a way, it could be argued that Oxfam behaved in the manner predicted by James Ferguson and functioned as part of the 'anti-politics machine' in Kenya by supporting the expansion of the state into marginal areas; certainly, Oxfam's support for the state in its modernisation efforts meant that the problematic aspects of facilitating state expansion into pastoral areas – in particular enhanced state control and surveillance – could be rendered in a positive light as necessary steps on the path to development taken by a 'neutral' and benevolent bureaucratic state. The thesis returns to this issue at the end of the present section, however, for Oxfam in fact supported a much wider range of state-led modernisation efforts than discussed hitherto.

Before moving onto these efforts, it is important to note that aside from the element of supervision and control over awkward populations that modernisation schemes offered the government, there was also the important question of self-interest

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<sup>91</sup> 'Turkana District Annual Report', 1965, KNA, no reference.

<sup>92</sup> 'Visit to Turkana by Richard Frost', February, 1968, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/5/8 Folder 2: Jamaica – Kenya.

<sup>93</sup> V. Broch-Due and F. Storås, 'The Fields of the Foe: "Amana Emoit": Factors Constraining Agricultural Output and Farmers' Capacity for Participation', Report of NORAD Consultancy Team, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen, 1983.

among elite Kenyans who saw the expansion of settled agriculture and land consolidation as an opportunity to expand their investment portfolios. Often highly placed in the state, these elites had a vested interest in stigmatising pastoralists as backward and conservative in order to make them vulnerable to criticism and to legitimise the privatisation of formerly communal land.<sup>94</sup> As Harper reported to Oxford in 1969, one hugely expensive FAO/government irrigation scheme on the Turkwell River – costing in the region of £150,000 – had developed a meagre 50 acres of land for mixed cultivation in its first year. Notably, of these 50 acres, the Provincial Commissioner pushed for 30 acres to be set aside for the three Turkana MPs.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, it was relatively simple for elites to manipulate such schemes to their advantage because there was little discussion with pastoralists about development interventions other than to tell those present at *barazas* – who were often town-based, not nomadic, pastoralists – that they were happening.<sup>96</sup>

Inevitably, given these issues, villagisation has since been found to have been mostly haphazard, while irrigated agriculture has been criticised for its unsuitability in areas where there was no reliable labour force to generate a product for which there was also no market. Schemes in Turkana and elsewhere would thus draw in the desperate, but were barely functional in reality. For instance, three government schemes in Turkana (for which the Oxfam scheme served as a pilot) cost on average over £40,400 per hectare, or £14,400 per tenant household, and operating costs alone were three times the margin that farmers could expect to generate.<sup>97</sup> The Katilu irrigation scheme was, according to Vigdis Broch-Due, an ‘over-mechanis[ed], over-staffed, uncoordinated and costly operation, coupled with a decision making structure in which farmers are only allowed to play a nominal role’.<sup>98</sup> In Isiolo, the Malka Daka scheme, started in 1976 by the government with support from the FAO and the United Nations Development Programme

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<sup>94</sup> Anderson, ‘Cow Power’, p. 133.

<sup>95</sup> It is unclear whether the Provincial Commissioner was successful in this particular effort, or how often this sort of manipulation affected Oxfam projects, for the names of the beneficiaries of such schemes were not recorded. M. Harper, ‘Turkana Tour Report’, 27 April, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/5/8 Folder 2: Jamaica – Kenya.

<sup>96</sup> On the one hand, the lack of communication was a result of the government’s protectiveness over its apparent mandate to impose its vision of development on its citizens; on the other hand, it often so happened that a posting to a remote, pastoral area was a punishment for misbehaving government officers, meaning that they were less than interested in conveying government plans to ‘primitive’ citizens, and more interested in maximising their own benefit from development interventions. D. Akabwai, ‘Extension and Livestock Development: Experience from Among the Turkana Pastoralists of Kenya’, Pastoral Development Network Paper 33b, (London, Overseas Development Institute, 1992), p. 5.

<sup>97</sup> Anderson, ‘Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Restocking’, p. 247.

<sup>98</sup> V. Broch-Due, ‘Women at the Backstage of Development: The Negative Impact on Project Realization by Neglecting the Crucial Roles of Turkana Women as Producers and Providers’, Report for the FAO, Rome, 1983.

(UNDP), aimed to develop food production to provide an opportunity for nomads to lead 'stable and prosperous lives through irrigated agriculture and settlement, and to offset the destructive effects of desertification' caused by pastoralism.<sup>99</sup> This, too, was a failure, with production not coming anywhere near to meeting high recurrent costs, let alone the enormous capital costs. Upon realising that the scheme was costing around £11,200 per hectare, the FAO and UNDP withdrew in 1980. In his assessment of these irrigation projects, Richard Hogg is highly critical of the way in which agriculture was presumed to be the answer to the perceived lack of development in the northern and arid areas of Kenya; but this should come as no surprise when one considers the faith and vested interest that Kenyan politicians and development planners had in agriculture and modernisation. In the 1965 Sessional 10 Paper, nearly one third of planned expenditure was earmarked for land consolidation, registration, irrigation and settlement schemes.<sup>100</sup> Later, Tom Mboya would lecture the KFFHC on the importance of irrigation, fertilisers, improved crop varieties, better tools and the modernisation of the farmer himself in the battle to avoid a Malthusian final solution in Kenya: 'backward' farmers and pastoralists were a handicap to development.<sup>101</sup>

Oxfam, heavily invested as it was in supporting the state in its efforts to overcome the human 'obstacle' to development through the extension of modernised agriculture, would, in fact, tick off many of Mboya's demands during the mid-1960s. Thus, having been convinced that agricultural education had a 'vital part to play' in the 'future progress and development' of Kenya, Oxfam donated £18,000 for the foundation and support of Farmer Training Centres (FTCs) in 1963. The FTCs were to be the site of modernising education in cultivation, animal husbandry and modern farm management for 'backward' farmers; the Oxfam grant provided support for around 3,000 pupils.<sup>102</sup> Betts considered the centres particularly important in areas where pastoralists were beginning to be settled and had to be taught how to farm land for commercial gain. For this reason, from 1966 Oxfam concentrated its support for FTCs in the Rift Valley, providing a further £19,000 between 1966 and 1968 to help nearly 6,000 students receive an education

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<sup>99</sup> R. Hogg, 'Irrigation Agriculture and Pastoral Development: A Lesson from Kenya', *Development and Change*, Vol. 14 (1983), p. 579.

<sup>100</sup> Whittaker, 'Forced Villagization during the *Shifita* Conflict', p. 352.

<sup>101</sup> 'Speech by the Hon. T. J. Mboya, Minister for Economic Planning and Development, to the Annual General Meeting of the Kenya Freedom from Hunger Committee', 20 March, 1966, KNA, Agriculture, Food Situation, Famine Relief General, PC/EST/2/2/38.

<sup>102</sup> By 1965 over 20,000 students had attended courses at Kenya's 30 FTCs.

suitable for Kenya's modernisation of farming.<sup>103</sup> Other educational institutions to receive Oxfam support included the Maasai Rural Development Centre in Kajiado. First established by the Presbyterian Church to encourage the Maasai to abandon their nomadic life and adopt settled ranching, the centre provided education in line with government policy (an agricultural officer advised the project). Oxfam donated nearly £7,000 to the centre in 1968 for the creation of a demonstration ranch of 500 acres to showcase the principles of modern agriculture to the Maasai. Harper noted that the 'conversion' of the Maasai to a 'more modern form of agriculture is likely to be a long and laborious effort since the Maasai... love their cattle [and] do not take easily to change'. Nonetheless, it was considered a task worth completing in order to help develop the region.<sup>104</sup> A few years later the organisation donated over £23,000 (or 83 per cent of the total cost) to the Samburu Rural Development Centre in Nakuru. The centre aimed to combat the desertification of the area – which was blamed on overstocking, overgrazing and soil erosion – by encouraging the settlement of pastoralists.<sup>105</sup>

In addition, Oxfam supported government efforts to convince farmers of modern methods, including the use of fertiliser and improved maize seeds. The former was first discussed in 1963 in response to a World Bank recommendation that phosphatic fertiliser be introduced in Kenya. The Bank convinced the Kenya government to provide £150,000 per annum for a fertiliser subsidy, but there still remained the question of convincing farmers of its merits. The government turned to Oxfam for £17,000 to allow for the demonstration of fertilisers in a 'blitz' campaign.<sup>106</sup> The plan for the campaign noted that 2,000 one-acre units would each receive 30 bags of fertiliser. With enough staff to supervise 6,000 demonstrations per year, each serving 60 farmers, the scale of the project was large, and 720,000 farmers were to be targeted in the course of the two years

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<sup>103</sup> 'Schemes for Oxfam', no date, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), BV/93/12; 'Letter from Mr. Mettrick to Mr. Betts', 20 May, 1964, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), BV/93/12; 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Malavu', 14 July, 1966, KNA, Project – Turkana Rehabilitation, BV/104/105; 'Bursaries for Farmers at Agricultural Training Centres, Ministry of Agriculture', 8 July, 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

<sup>104</sup> 'Demonstration Farm at Olooseos Rural Development Centre', 1968, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 3.

<sup>105</sup> 'Samburu Rural Development Centre', 15 January, 1974, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

<sup>106</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Knowles to Mr. Mettrick', 15 November, 1963, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), BV/93/12; 'A Short Note on an Application for Funds for Fertilizer Demonstration in Small Holder Farming Areas in Kenya', 1963, KNA, OFTA – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), BV/93/12; 'Notes of a Meeting', 7 October, 1963, KNA, Project – Fertiliser Demonstration Plots (Oxfam), BV/104/19; 'Fertilizer Demonstration in Smallholder Farming Areas in Kenya', 1963, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

funded by Oxfam.<sup>107</sup> By mid-1965 2,649 plots had been planted using Oxfam funds, and reports on the scheme noted that ‘there is no doubt that the plots helped to convince farmers that it pays to use better seed, apply fertilisers, plant early [and] follow good husbandry practices in order to get better yields’.<sup>108</sup> In some areas Oxfam plots were said to ‘out-yeild’ local plots by as much as 400 per cent, and demonstration plots were considered more convincing than ‘all the talks given to farmers in barazas’.<sup>109</sup> Meanwhile, the introduction of improved varieties of maize was first discussed with Oxfam in 1965 as a response to the food shortage taking hold in certain areas of Kenya following the failure of the long rains.<sup>110</sup> The government blamed farmers who had not adopted modern practices for the severity of the shortage, and thus the Department of Agriculture developed a campaign to demonstrate better husbandry and distribute improved maize seed from the Katumani research station.<sup>111</sup> In essence, the project would follow the same pattern as the fertiliser distribution: the government hoped to encourage the use of drought-resistant maize in areas of low rainfall using demonstration plots.<sup>112</sup> Oxfam provided £10,000 as an emergency grant to help the government establish the project in Kitui and Machakos: the funds were used to bulk sufficient seed for distribution and to enable a five-shilling subsidy for farmers to purchase the improved maize.<sup>113</sup> According to numerous government reports, the demonstration plots in Machakos were particularly successful at convincing farmers to purchase improved seed and follow improved methods of crop husbandry.<sup>114</sup>

Importantly, each of these interventions in which Oxfam was a partner – the spread of fertiliser, seeds and modern practices to ‘backward’ farmers – points towards

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<sup>107</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Mettrick to Mr. Betts’, 25 November, 1964, KNA, Project – Fertiliser Demonstration Plots (Oxfam), BV/104/19; ‘Letter from Mr. Harris to Mr. Mettrick’, 3 December, 1964, KNA, Project – Fertiliser Demonstration Plots (Oxfam), BV/104/19; ‘Field Secretaries’ Report’, 11 February, 1965, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 1: December 1963 - November 1965.

<sup>108</sup> ‘Letter from Assistant Director of Agriculture to Director of Agriculture’, 20 May, 1965, KNA, Project – Fertiliser Demonstration Plots (Oxfam), BV/104/19.

<sup>109</sup> ‘Letter to the Chief Agriculturalist from the District Agricultural Officer, Central Nyanza’, 13 December, 1966, KNA, Project – Fertiliser Demonstration Plots (Oxfam), BV/104/19.

<sup>110</sup> ‘Machakos District Annual Report’, 1965, KNA, Machakos District Annual Report, 1965, BB/3/40; ‘Kitui District Annual Report’, 1965, KNA, Kitui Annual Report, 1965, BB/3/38.

<sup>111</sup> ‘Eastern Region Annual Report, 1964, Department of Agriculture’, 1965, KNA, Meetings, Reports, Annual Reports, PC/EST/2/2/39.

<sup>112</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Cole to Mr. Betts’, 30 June, 1965, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Harris to Mr. Cole’, 2 August, 1965, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43; ‘Letter from the Assistant Director of Agriculture to the Deputy Director of Agriculture’, 21 January, 1966, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Annual Report, Eastern Province’, 1965, KNA, Meetings, Reports, Annual Reports, PC/EST/2/2/39; ‘Machakos District Annual Report’, 1967, KNA, Annual Reports, Machakos, PC/EST/2/3/1.

the extension of state control in the same manner as the settlement of pastoralists. This is hardly surprising given that Oxfam was steeped in a left-liberal consciousness that prescribed remedial action by the state. Yet as discussed above, the highly technical developmental approach of such interventions can become a mechanism for the exercise of state power, because their successful implementation relies on the extension of governmental bureaucracy 'at the coalface of the subjugation process'.<sup>115</sup> Each technical intervention in which Oxfam was involved certainly encouraged the adoption of practices that generate dependence on state-mediated resources such as education in the latest techniques or the purchase of the most modern types of fertiliser and seed. For Sabine Planel, this exacerbates the vulnerability of the already vulnerable, disempowering farmers and subordinating their local knowledge *vis-à-vis* the state and its scientism.<sup>116</sup> Such an outcome is particularly noteworthy in Kenya, as Mboya was tasked with asserting state control as part of Kenyatta's 'fetishisation of order' through silencing development alternatives. Mboya set about this task by using modernisation rhetoric to marginalise political opponents and to recast political choices as technical solutions, thereby painting as 'backward' – and thus denying them the right to dissent – those who resisted 'neutral' state-led modernisation schemes (such as those pursued in collaboration with Oxfam). For James Ferguson and Timothy Mitchell, development discourse serves in this way to disguise social inequality and powerlessness: by prescribing technical solutions to political problems development discourse can serve to entrench the apparently 'neutral' bureaucratic state apparatus in a position of domination over its citizenry.<sup>117</sup> The evidence presented so far suggests that Oxfam was at best an unwitting participant in such a project and at worst had unwavering faith in the capacity of the state as a development actor and was blinded by the idea of modernisation in the heady climate of possibility in the 1960s. Its development projects alongside the state not only helped to expand state surveillance and control over recalcitrant subjects in a physical sense; they also helped to depoliticise Kenyatta's (very political) act of enforcing 'order' by reifying a 'neutral' development discourse based on 'science' and technological progress. Nevertheless, as the following section makes clear, Oxfam's analysis of the situation in Kenya was not so one-dimensional and the question of its complicity in the construction of an hegemonic knowledge-power regime is far from straightforward: indeed, Oxfam

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<sup>115</sup> Planel, 'A View of a Bureaucratic Developmental State', p. 420.

<sup>116</sup> Planel, 'A View of a Bureaucratic Developmental State', pp. 420-427.

<sup>117</sup> Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*; Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, pp. 222-223.

had concluded that given the politics of development in Kenya, the only way to integrate marginalised regions in the project of national development was to encourage the expansion of the developmental state.

## OXFAM IN KENYA: THE TWO FACES OF AN NGO

From the evidence above, it is clear that Betts supported Kenyatta's developmental state in the early years of independence and that he successfully convinced many on the Africa Committee to back his commitment to aiding the government in the modernisation of 'backward' regions of Kenya. There was, however, a certain amount of tension between idealists such as Betts, Harris and Fletcher, who wished to work closely with governments for the impact such collaboration offered, and sceptics on the Committee who wished to avoid co-optation by those same governments or were concerned that Oxfam interventions would weaken the incentive for governments to act. Indeed, a number of Committee members were careful to warn Field Directors like Betts 'not to become involved in projects that should be a direct government responsibility', and reminded them to exclude schemes, which 'are really the job of indigenous or foreign governments'.<sup>118</sup> Dame Margery Perham, for instance, advised field staff to 'study' governments to 'discover which border-line activities lie nearest to their interests' in order that Oxfam could work together with states *without* taking on their responsibilities.<sup>119</sup> She argued that this would help the organisation avoid 'being increasingly regarded by overseas governments... as merely another source of financial assistance by which budgetary gaps can be bridged'.<sup>120</sup> Long a proponent of state-centric development in colonial Kenya and Africa and strongly in favour of 'native paramountcy' in political and economic terms, Perham's position on Oxfam working by way of a delicate partnership with the host state was to be expected. Indeed, Perham had argued during the colonial era that the British had a duty and interest in working with the 'awakening

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<sup>118</sup> 'Special Meeting of the Africa Committee', 13 January, 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 2: January 1966 – September 1966.

<sup>119</sup> 'Guidelines for Field Directors', 24 February, 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 2: January 1966 – September 1966; M. Perham, 'Problems of Definition', 24 February, 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 2: January 1966 – September 1966.

<sup>120</sup> 'Guidelines for Field Directors on Relief and Welfare Projects', 28 March, 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 2: January 1966 – September 1966; 'Guidelines', 5 May, 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 2: January 1966 – September 1966.

African desire to catch up quickly with the rest of the world’, and called for a ‘massive application of capital’ by the state ‘to reconstruct the economic as well as the social and political life of colonial territories’. This effort also required ‘large numbers of experts discovering the lessons of science and applying them in campaigns for the betterment of life’. In the post-colonial world, Perham continued to advocate on behalf of experts and their vital role in supporting the state as the central development actor; but she was clear in her advisory position for Oxfam that just as Oxfam projects were not always suitable for government participation, government projects were not always suitable for Oxfam.<sup>121</sup>

As regards Oxfam’s work in Kenya, one project in particular came in for criticism from those more sceptical about working with the state. The Narosurra Farm Mechanisation Project, located in the arid Baringo district of the Rift Valley, was a training scheme for farmers in modern methods and tractor operation. It ran three 12-week courses in machinery operation for around 80 students each year, and sought to ensure that modern methods of farming ‘percolate to the smallest landowner’.<sup>122</sup> The scheme received financial assistance from the Kenya government and its board included high-level state officials such as the Minister for Natural Resources, Jeremiah Nyagah, and the Permanent Secretary of the Office of the President, Geoffrey Kariithi. The arch-moderniser Tom Mboya would open the scheme in 1967, promising government assistance in making tractors available to ‘progressive farmers’ on extended credit terms in order that ‘farmers... have the knowledge and the implements together with the right spirit to serve the nation’.<sup>123</sup> Like Mboya – and the World Bank, which recommended the scheme – Betts considered the project to have immense potential for the modernisation of the region. He thus asked the Africa Committee for £27,575 as a capital grant and

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<sup>121</sup> Perham had written previously that democracy was ‘largely sterile unless wedded to a democratic economy... under control by the state’, and had railed against ‘tropical East Ends’, condemning those who would ‘lie across the main road of African advance’. Lewis, *Empire-State Building*, p. 363; M. Perham, ‘The Future of East Africa’, *The Times*, 13-15 August, 1931; M. Perham, *The Times*, 14 March, 1942; M. Perham, ‘African Facts and American Criticisms’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 3, April, 1944; M. Perham, ‘The British Problem in Africa’, *Foreign Affairs*, July, 1951; M. Perham, ‘A Changing Continent’, Letter to *The Times*, 28 October, 1952.

<sup>122</sup> ‘Narosurra Farm Mechanisation Training Scheme, Progress Report’, no date, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 1.

<sup>123</sup> ‘Narosurra Farm Mechanisation Training Scheme, Progress Report’, no date, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 1; ‘Minutes of the Executive Council of the Kenya Freedom From Hunger Committee’, 25 September, 1967, KNA, Freedom From Hunger Committee General, BY/51/1; D. Hunger, ‘Report on my Tour in East Africa’, 27 September, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 – November 1967; ‘Narosurra Farm Mechanisation Training Scheme’, 14 January, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

£82,748 over three years for recurrent expenditure.<sup>124</sup> In March 1967 the Committee agreed at first to grant £4,500 with which the scheme could purchase three tractors. A year later, and noting the hand-to-mouth existence of the project, the Committee approved a grant of £17,630 for recurrent costs for two years.<sup>125</sup> The grant was conditional on the Kenya government formalising its commitment to funding the scheme at £2,000 per annum and undertaking to not allow the project to collapse after Oxfam funding ceased.<sup>126</sup> A letter from the Minister of Agriculture confirmed the government's position shortly thereafter.<sup>127</sup>

Soon after the grant had been allocated, Betts admitted to the KFFHC that he had received serious criticism from Oxford concerning the scheme.<sup>128</sup> In fact, several members of the Committee 'still considered this to be a scheme suitable for Government, rather than Oxfam, support'.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, 'doubts were raised whether mechanised farming in marginal areas was a good investment of Oxfam funds'.<sup>130</sup> This pointed towards the central question of Oxfam's function in Kenya. As Bernard Llewellyn, Oxfam's overseas aid appraiser, reported

In a country where the average per capita income is £90, it seems slightly inappropriate to be subsidising the training of some men thought by the Government credit-worthy enough for a £1,500 tractor which, when paid for, will provide them with an income way above the national average... I suspect such development as a means to the gradual eradication of need is too indirect and is not obviously appropriate for a charity... If World Bank consultants are needed to advise us on schemes appropriate for our support, I suspect we have moved into an operation or role for which we are probably unfitted...<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> 'List of Recommended Grants', 8 March, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 - November 1967.

<sup>125</sup> This sum was generated by deducting any liability for depreciation and the £4,500 donated for the tractors from Betts' original estimates. 'Narourra Farm Mechanisation Training Scheme', 14 January, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

<sup>126</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Sweetman', 16 April, 1968, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project - Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43; Minutes of the Africa Committee', 27 March, 1968, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 - November 1969.

<sup>127</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 30 May, 1968, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 - November 1969.

<sup>128</sup> 'Minutes of the Executive Council of the Kenya Freedom From Hunger Committee', 25 September, 1967, KNA, Freedom From Hunger Committee General, BY/51/1.

<sup>129</sup> 'Narourra Farm Mechanisation Training Scheme', August/September, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam, PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 - November 1967.

<sup>130</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 8 March, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 - November 1967.

<sup>131</sup> B. Llewellyn, 'Visit to Kenya and Tanzania', 3 January, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 - November 1969.

Indeed, Llewellyn was personally of the opinion that small projects were as justifiable as schemes alongside governments, because they were the ‘most important thing that ever happened’ in the lives of the beneficiaries.<sup>132</sup> Crucially, he also considered it a ‘questionable part of Oxfam’s role’ to urge the Ministry of Economic Planning and development to give extra support to the Ministry of Agriculture ‘in the hope of getting funds for Narosurra’. He criticised Betts and Harper for their ‘pre-empting of government choice’ in pushing ‘government into a decision because it does not wish to lose help already given’. Llewellyn thought this ‘arrogance’ contrary to the ‘spirit of the times’ and far from ‘the best way of working with governments in developing countries’.<sup>133</sup>

Yet it is precisely this ‘nagging from aid dispensers who think they know best’ as regards Narosurra which reveals the true nature of Betts’ support for the Kenya government during these early years.<sup>134</sup> For it shows that Betts, and later Harper, did not blindly follow government priorities when establishing a set of projects in the country or offer their support to an apparently ‘neutral’ state, as argued by Ferguson for Lesotho. Rather, they wished to leverage their financial support in order to make government follow through on its development commitments. Importantly Oxfam schemes were located in underdeveloped regions cast adrift by the highly politicised developmental apparatus in Kenya: the region on which Oxfam concentrated its early efforts, the northern Rift Valley, was marginal in both a geographic and political sense. As Betts noted, ‘politically it does not carry high priority with the Kenya Government’ and was thus ‘less likely to be the beneficiary of the major sources of aid’ in normal circumstances.<sup>135</sup> On the other side of the coin, Oxfam’s Field Director was insistent that the organisation would not work in Central Province which lay to the east and south of the Rift because it was home to a vast population and a concentration of the ‘politically clamant peoples of the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru tribes, who formed the spearhead of the Mau Mau protest’. These facts meant that Central Province was looked on far more favourably than the Rift Valley by the Kenyatta regime, which would request Oxfam partnership in large-scale projects such as a scheme to provide piped water to Thika at a cost of £600,000 (the

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<sup>132</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 106.

<sup>133</sup> B. Llewellyn, ‘Visit to Kenya and Tanzania’, 3 January, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

<sup>134</sup> B. Llewellyn, ‘Visit to Kenya and Tanzania’, 3 January, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

<sup>135</sup> ‘Turkana Development Committee’, January 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 2: January – September 1966.

contribution asked from Oxfam was £72,000).<sup>136</sup> In such an instance, Oxfam would, of course, have been a very junior partner (so as not to suggest that the state required significant external support in its political stronghold – a message that would potentially undermine its legitimacy); nonetheless, Oxfam’s resources would have been a welcome contribution to the overall cost. To the west, Nyanza Province was equally politically fortunate, (at least for the time being) receiving as it did ‘the support of the Vice President who draws his political influence from [the] area’. Not coincidentally, it was ‘also receiving the benefit of major agricultural development’ and would not be a priority area for Oxfam. ‘This is not to say’, Betts admitted, that ‘needs are not there for our kind of work, but [instead that] our impact would be lost’.<sup>137</sup> The Nairobi office thus rejected any applications from government for assistance in Central (with the exception of poor areas of Nairobi) and Nyanza, because they were ‘well-endowed’ and accordingly areas of low priority for the organisation, and focused on the Rift Valley.<sup>138</sup> Figure 1 shows that from 1962/63 to 1978/79, the Rift Valley received the most Oxfam funding in each year except 1969/70 and 1977/78.

One exception to this rule was provided for Gatundu hospital, which received around £3,000 from Oxfam in 1967.<sup>139</sup> Such a contribution was not, on the face of it, entirely necessary. The hospital sat in Kenyatta’s constituency and so was able to raise Ksh. 45,000 (around £2,500) in cash on the morning of its opening, as the government machinery moved to Gatundu and donations were forthcoming from the Cabinet and diplomatic corps.<sup>140</sup> Although this *harambee* was to come after Oxfam’s grant, Betts knew that the hospital was near to the President’s home and that the latter had ‘taken a keen personal interest in the Hospital and given it much time and encouragement’; in all likelihood he also knew that the hospital would be better funded than others in the area, let alone those in marginal regions.<sup>141</sup> However, in their chapter on Kenyan development,

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<sup>136</sup> ‘Africa Committee Meeting, Applications Not Recommended’, 19 January, 1972, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/3 Folder 1: February 1970 – May 1972.

<sup>137</sup> ‘Turkana Development Committee’, January 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 2: January – September 1966.

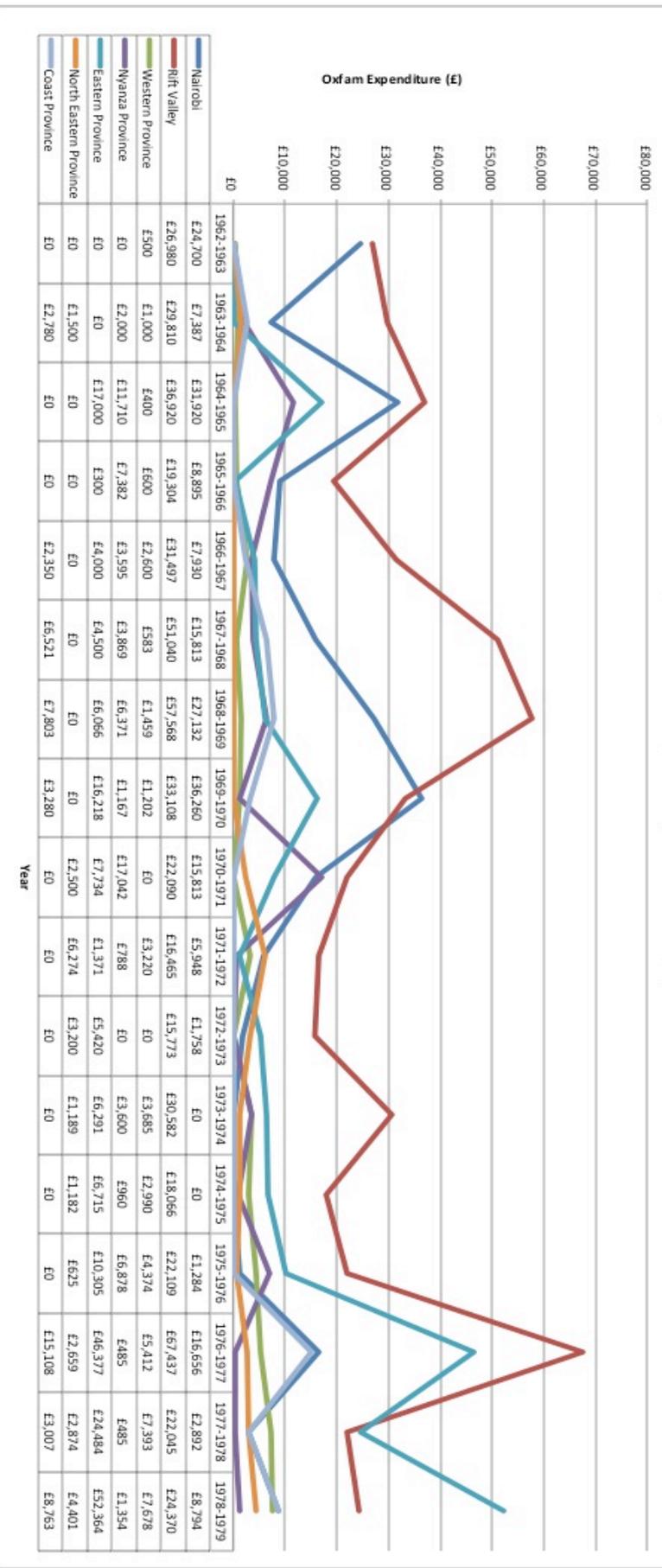
<sup>138</sup> ‘Commitments and Applications: Eastern Africa Budget’, 7 February, 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 2: January – September 1966; ‘Applications Not Recommended’, 19 January, 1972, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/3 Folder 1: February 1970 – May 1972; ‘Nairobi Office – Annual Review’, November, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

<sup>139</sup> ‘List of Recommended Grants’, 11 May, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 – November 1967.

<sup>140</sup> ‘Kiambu District Annual Report’, 1968, KNA, Kiambu District Annual Report, HT/17/104.

<sup>141</sup> ‘List of Recommended Grants’, 11 May, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 – November 1967.

Figure 1: Oxfam Expenditure in Eight Kenya Provinces (£), 1962/63-1978/79



Source: Grants lists 1962/63 to 2003/04. As yet uncatalogued at the Bodleian Library.

Cowen and Shenton suggest that contributions to Gatundu hospital were key for foreign organisations wishing to build relations with the Kenyatta state. These contributions were amassed by Kenyatta and then used to fund smaller projects and inculcate loyalty to the President in other areas.<sup>142</sup> While there is no direct evidence that Oxfam made a grant in order to seek favour with the state, it is scarcely credible that the organisation, so focused on the most marginal areas of Kenya, would consider a grant to the Gatundu hospital for any reason other than to secure some influence with the state.

Moreover, it is quite possible that the contribution to Gatundu was part of the effort to gain influence in order to encourage the state – which Oxfam saw as the prime mover of development in Kenya and Africa – to work in less ‘well-endowed’ areas.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, Betts had elaborated on the tactic of ‘shaming [governments] to do more’ in an interview with the *Daily Nation* earlier in 1967. Recalling his efforts to convince the governments of Bechuanaland and Swaziland to accept agricultural training in the early 1960s, Betts remarked that by working alongside government and subsidising its efforts, he was able to cajole each government into implementing his ideas even after Oxfam funds had been spent: ‘in this way’, he argued, ‘our money was a lever well beyond its own actual value’.<sup>148</sup> Leveraging Oxfam funds was, in fact, considered increasingly important for many within the organisation around this time as it became clear that the scale of poverty across the globe was too vast for small agencies to have any impact alone. As the *James Report* acknowledged:

the relief and development of peoples in all parts of the world cannot be accomplished by voluntary agencies alone. Massive effort by all governments is essential, and to encourage such effort, Oxfam must play the role of Socrates and be a gadfly to sting the State to action.<sup>149</sup>

The Kenya government would, of course, attempt to work Oxfam support to its own benefit. For instance, the Rift Valley provincial agricultural board complained that at Narosurra, the local Tugen people were left ‘empty handed while people from other districts benefitted from the training on their land’.<sup>150</sup> A special meeting was arranged at Narosurra to question the owner of the farm, who admitted that most of the students

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<sup>142</sup> Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, pp. 312-313.

<sup>147</sup> ‘Nairobi Office – Annual Review’, November, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

<sup>148</sup> ‘We Forced Aid Out of Britain’, *Sunday Nation*, 9 April, 1967, pp. 15-16, *Daily Nation* Archive, Nairobi.

<sup>149</sup> For more information on the *James Report*, see page 54 and Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 155.

<sup>150</sup> ‘Minutes of the Provincial Agricultural Board, Rift Valley Province’, 29 December, 1967, KNA, Minutes – Rift Valley Provincial Agricultural Board and Correspondence, 1966-1969, DC/NKI/4/8/8.

came from Central Province and none came from Nakuru, Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, Laikipia, Baringo or Elgeyo/Marakwet.<sup>151</sup> Although there is no conclusive proof that the state actively manipulated the selection at Narosurra to benefit students from Central Province, the bias in favour of Central Province matched Kenyatta's political priorities at the time, and it is probable that government involvement ensured applicants from that region were treated more favourably than those from elsewhere.

Narosurra and Gatundu thus shed some light on a country-specific 'dance' between Oxfam and the state in Kenya – with the former attempting to 'prime the pump' or to 'sting' the government to work in less-favoured areas and the latter trying to work the NGO's support into its own priorities and to its own advantage. Importantly, the fact that the Kenyan state was not 'neutral' was precisely the reason Oxfam wished to expand government horizons and encourage it to take responsibility for marginalised areas. As mentioned above, this did run the risk of helping to extend state control over areas formerly lightly governed, but the ends justified the means: Oxfam had faith in the state (in an abstract sense) as the central development actor and was convinced that it could cajole the state in Kenya away from ethnic patrimonialism and towards a more rational and bureaucratic approach to the development of marginalised areas. Oxfam was not blind to the politics of development in Kenya; it hoped it could take advantage of the personalised nature of politics in Kenya – whereby 'big men' were invested in everyday disputes regarding development resources at the local level – in order to influence the state to become the 'neutral' development actor that it believed all states should be. It is unlikely that Betts believed Oxfam could fundamentally alter the basic nature of the Kenyan state, but any redirection of resources to marginalised areas would have been grounds for celebration.

The history of other Oxfam schemes in Kenya supports such a conclusion. For example, Betts and representatives from the Range Management Department had agreed in 1966 that the limited resources then available from the state (and Oxfam) meant that for the time being experimental schemes should receive priority in Turkana. These schemes would, they hoped, convince the upper echelons of government ministries, which had to date 'sat on their hands [sic]' in Turkana, to enact larger-scale development

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<sup>151</sup> 'Minutes of a Special Committee of the Provincial Agricultural Board, Rift Valley Province, held at Narosurra', 12 February, 1968, KNA, Minutes – Rift Valley Provincial Agricultural Board and Correspondence, 1966-1969, DC/NKI/4/8/8.

programmes in the region.<sup>152</sup> The success of the pilot irrigation scheme at Lorengippe (which produced 1,000 lbs. of grass seed from 30 acres) did, according to the government, '[show] the way to development in Turkana and gives hope in the quest to find a solution to a very difficult problem'.<sup>153</sup> Encouraged by Lorengippe (or by the extension of government control that resulted from it), the government established other projects in the region, including an irrigation scheme at Lokichar in order to provide 5,000 acres of drought-resistant fodder for livestock.<sup>154</sup> Oxfam would support the project at Lokichar, providing £10,000 in 1967 to help the government pay for the requisite machinery, vehicles and salaries.<sup>155</sup> Both parties were eager to get started straight away, and were 'anxious not to imitate' the previous example of the 'Agricultural Department [which] promised the earth to the Turkana' but had not yet delivered.<sup>156</sup> Meanwhile, Oxfam's support for mission hospitals in marginal areas was also predicated on the government taking responsibility for them. When, in 1968, no government grant was allocated while Ministers discussed the relationship between the state and such hospitals, Betts and Harper held off from offering assistance: Harper wrote that the issue of government contributions 'is a matter which Government must clearly resolve before further voluntary agency assistance at such hospitals will readily be offered'.<sup>157</sup> Oxfam grants were, therefore, being used to entice and cajole the government to take responsibility for its citizens in peripheral areas.

One of the larger projects with which Oxfam was involved in these early years attempted to do both. Starting in 1967, the School Feeding Scheme – with the participation of the KFFHC, Catholic Relief Services and Oxfam – aimed to provide lunch at a heavily subsidised rate for schoolchildren in the poorest and most marginal areas of Kenya. Oxfam provided the funds for the initial survey into the possibility of such a

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<sup>152</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Newbould to the Head of Range Management', 3 February, 1967, KNA, Range Management, Turkana, AN/40/33.

<sup>153</sup> 'Turkana Water Spreading Scheme', 8 March, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

<sup>154</sup> 'Quarterly Report – Rift Valley Province', 8 August, 1966, KNA, Range Management Quarterly Reports and Monthly Reports, AN/40/4; 'Letter from Mr. Newbould to the Head of Range Management', 3 February, 1967, KNA, Range Management, Turkana, AN/40/33.

<sup>155</sup> 'Quarterly Report – Rift Valley Province', 8 August, 1966, KNA, Range Management Quarterly Reports and Monthly Reports, AN/40/4; 'Turkana Water Spreading Scheme', 8 March, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11; 'List of Recommended Grants', 5 January, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 – November 1967.

<sup>156</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Newbould to the Head of Range Management', 3 February, 1967, KNA, Range Management, Turkana, AN/40/33.

<sup>157</sup> M. Harper, 'Turkana Tour Report', 27 April, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/5/8 Folder 2: Jamaica – Kenya; 'Nairobi Office – Annual Review', November, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

scheme, which, along with the promise of £40,000 to allow the scheme to run from 1966 to 1968 (while it grew and built up its number of paying students) encouraged the Kenya National Council of Social Services (KNCSS) to organise a comprehensive programme for the scheme, due to reach 50,000 students in its first year, rising to 150,000 by the end of 1968.<sup>158</sup> A further £20,000 was allocated by Oxfam as a loan for the construction of kitchens in Nairobi and Mombasa.<sup>159</sup> The Africa Committee acknowledged that 'the initiative of the feeding project was very largely due to Mr Betts', whose allocation to the scheme of around a quarter of his funds for Kenya for 1966-1968 demonstrated his belief in the project.<sup>160</sup> As well as finance, Betts invested a significant amount of time and energy in the establishment of the scheme; so much so, in fact, that the School Feeding Council considered him somewhat overbearing. Their complaints found their way to the Africa Committee, which asked Betts to step aside from involvement in the scheme. They noted that 'Betts had become too involved in the management of the project rather than limiting himself to its supervision' and that he had even appointed the national organiser (Mrs Haggie) without reference to Oxford or local representatives.<sup>161</sup> The behaviour of Mrs Haggie turned out to be particularly damaging for Oxfam: her letters to the District Commissioner at Machakos, venting frustration at the slow movement of bureaucracy, were considered impertinent, and she was cautioned that

you jump to conclusions and pass judgement with alarming alacrity... it is a sign of the times that none shall ride roughshod over our established ways, and you make a false start by taking fright so early in the day.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Each child would pay for his or her meals at 18 shillings per year, meaning that the scheme would pay its own way once the higher number was reached. 'List of Recommended Grants', 1 September, 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/1 Folder 2: January – September 1966; 'Development Schedule', 27 October, 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 – November 1967; 'School Feeding Programme', 1 November, 1966, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

<sup>159</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 11 May, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 – November 1967.

<sup>160</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 11 May, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 – November 1967.

<sup>161</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 11 May, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 – November 1967.

<sup>162</sup> 'Letter from Mrs. Haggie to Mr. Mkok', 19 August, 1967, KNA, Agriculture, Food Situation, Famine Relief General, PC/EST/2/2/23; 'Letter from the District Commissioner, Machakos to Mr. Mkok', 1 September, 1967, KNA, Agriculture, Food Situation, Famine Relief General, PC/EST/2/2/23; 'Letter from Mr. Mkok to Mrs. Haggie', 13 September, 1967, KNA, Agriculture, Food Situation, Famine Relief General, PC/EST/2/2/23; 'Letter from Mrs. Haggie to the District Commissioner, Machakos', 15 September, 1967, KNA, Agriculture, Food Situation, Famine Relief General, PC/EST/2/2/23.

She was told by Oxfam to resign, and Betts was advised to ‘divest himself of managerial responsibility and give every encouragement to the scheme’s take-over by [a local Council]’.<sup>163</sup>

Internal wrangles were the least of Oxfam’s concerns regarding the feeding project, however: the first two terms of 1967 saw feeding start at only 59 schools, with only 3,820 children paying for the meals.<sup>164</sup> With such a low take-up (partly due to the poverty of the areas in which it operated), the scheme was not sustainable even with external funding, and so correspondence between Oxford and Nairobi questioned whether increasing the cost of the school meals – which would hurt the poorest participants but would ensure the survival of the scheme – was an option for Oxfam. Naturally, Bernard Llewellyn was scathing in his criticism of the project, which – despite its expansion to reach 15,810 students by the time of his visit to Kenya in late 1968 – he alleged was doing next to nothing for the neediest Kenyan school children. He also noted that whereas in normal circumstances organisations come to Oxfam with ideas for funding, in this case, Oxfam had assumed the responsibilities of initiating, encouraging and catalysing in order to ‘get something going which we are persuaded will be of benefit’. He considered Oxfam unsuited for such a role, remarking that ‘our messianic vision of the possibilities is otherwise interpreted by those who know the details’ and complaining that ‘the imaginations of the original promoters ran riot’. ‘Some’, he argued,

will view the... project as a bold and imaginative piece of Oxfam planning which didn’t quite come off. Others – and I count myself among them – will see it as another costly attempt to fly before we have learnt to walk.

Moreover, Llewellyn suggested that the only reason Harper continued in his support of the project after Betts’ departure was that ‘the administration of the scheme had gained a certain momentum [and] Oxfam’s face was very much involved’. Finally, he criticised the Field Director for ‘badgering the government’ to commit itself to the continuance of the scheme.<sup>165</sup>

In fact, the two issues Llewellyn raised – Harper’s support for the scheme and his ‘badgering’ of government – were interrelated. The Field Director retorted that it was not

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<sup>163</sup> ‘Minutes of the Africa Committee’, 11 May, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 – November 1967.

<sup>164</sup> T. Betts, ‘Kenya National School Feeding Scheme: Memorandum on Probable Future Costings’, August, 1967, KNA, National School Feeding, TR/42/1.

<sup>165</sup> B. Llewellyn, ‘Visit to Kenya and Tanzania’, 3 January, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

for the sake of Oxfam's honour that the School Feeding Scheme retained his support, but rather 'because I felt that the idea behind the scheme was good'. It was for this reason that he attempted to link government into the scheme:

If this project expands as planned, surely government must take it over? If they do not, then either it must close down or it must never expand as *part of national policy*. If it does not finally become *integrated into Government's education plans* then it will never cover as many children *as we would eventually want it to*. Of that I am sure; and that is one of the main reasons why I believe that we should try to influence Government here. This must be one of the scheme's objectives.<sup>166</sup>

A major reason for the continued support given to the project was, therefore, to allow it to expand to reach such a size that would compel the government to assume responsibility for the scheme, and by extension for children in the least developed districts of Kenya.<sup>167</sup> In spite of – or rather because of – their continued commitment to the scheme, Betts and Harper would even use the threat of the *withdrawal* of Oxfam funds to put more direct pressure on the government to get involved: following Perham's advice, the organisation resisted becoming a surrogate of the Kenyan state and hoped that the threat of withdrawal would force any interested personalities (and particularly Ronald Ngala) to come forward in support of the scheme. Accordingly, Betts wrote to the School Feeding Council in early 1968 warning that his support for the scheme would be discontinued unless 'the scheme has the financial backing of [the] government'.<sup>168</sup> With the support of Betts and Harper, the Africa Committee also placed strict conditions on a new grant of £39,088 for 1969: these included reaching a minimum number of children (40,000 by 30 June, 1969; 75,000 by 31 December, 1969; and 120,000 by autumn 1970) as well as obtaining direct support from the Kenya government.<sup>169</sup>

By the middle of 1969, it was clear that these conditions had not been met.<sup>170</sup> As regards the number of children reached by the scheme, this was unavoidable, for there was a shortage of beans used to create the lunches, which meant the scheme reached

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<sup>166</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Harper to Mr. Bennett', 2 March, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969. My emphasis.

<sup>167</sup> Z. Otieno, 'National School Feeding Council of Kenya', 7 January, 1971, KNA, CCK School Feeding Programme, XH/3/4.

<sup>168</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to the National School Feeding Council of Kenya', 12 February, 1968, KNA, National School Feeding, TR/42/1.

<sup>169</sup> 'Minutes of a Sub-Committee of the Africa Committee to discuss the Kenya National School Feeding Scheme', 31 December, 1968, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969; 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 27 November, 1968, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

<sup>170</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 23 July, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

only 27,865 children by June 1969.<sup>171</sup> Yet as the Assistant Director (Overseas) wrote in a letter to the Kenyan High Commissioner to the UK, the lack of government commitment was particularly disappointing, since the organisation 'was led to believe as a result of discussions held between Government representatives and our staff that a sympathetic hearing would be given to proposals for financial assistance from the Kenya Government'.<sup>172</sup> In response to this letter, both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Co-operatives and Social Services urged the High Commissioner to 'plead with Oxfam not to withdraw its financial assistance'; if necessary he was advised to approach Oxfam's Director personally to persuade him to reconsider withdrawal.<sup>173</sup> The Kenya government wanted the benefit of the scheme without taking on the responsibility for it, however; as it stood, the scheme got the state off the hook as regards one potentially sizeable area of welfare expenditure, freeing up funding for its preferred 'productive' expenditure. The High Commissioner would eventually meet with the Director of Oxfam to argue on behalf of the government, but he was pessimistic as regards his chances of success. He noted at the foot of his reply to the Ministry of Co-operatives and Social Services that,

I've also spoken to them on [the] telephone and urged them to reconsider their decision. It seems that they want [the] Kenya Government to contribute some share to the scheme's cost.<sup>174</sup>

Indeed, the Africa Committee resolved in July that only if the government gave a 'firm undertaking to provide financial support' would Oxfam consider future assistance.<sup>175</sup> In view of Oxfam benevolence, and in order to meet the condition for further funding, government officials suggested a token contribution.<sup>176</sup> For a time, promises of assistance from the Ministry of Co-operatives and Social Services convinced Oxfam to hold off from withdrawing their support. Leslie Kirkley thus wrote to Ngala in August 1969 to say 'how

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<sup>171</sup> 'Minutes of the Executive Committee of the National School Feeding Council of Kenya', 5 June, 1969, KNA, National School Feeding, TR/42/1.

<sup>172</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Bennett to Dr. Karanja', 5 May, 1969, KNA, National School Feeding, TR/42/1.

<sup>173</sup> 'Telegram from Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Kenya's Representative in London', 13 June, 1969, KNA, National School Feeding, TR/42/1; 'Letter from Mr. Bolt to Dr. Karanja', 17 June, 1969, KNA, National School Feeding, TR/42/1; 'Letter from Dr. Karanja to Mr. Bolt', 25 June, 1969, KNA, National School Feeding, TR/42/1.

<sup>174</sup> 'Letter from Dr. Karanja to Mr. Bolt', 25 June, 1969, KNA, National School Feeding, TR/42/1.

<sup>175</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 23 July, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969; 'Letter from Mr. Gooch to Dr. Karanja', 16 August, 1969, KNA, National School Feeding, TR/42/1.

<sup>176</sup> 'National School Feeding Council of Kenya', no date, KNA, National School Feeding, TR/42/1; 'Note by Mr. Othieno at the Ministry of Co-operatives and Social Services', 29 May, 1969, KNA, National School Feeding, TR/42/1.

encouraged we are by the keen interest which the Kenya Government is showing in the maintenance and development of the programme'. He continued,

As I know you will appreciate, it has always been our hope, whilst giving substantial assistance during the pilot period of the scheme, that Government would feel able to accept financial obligations at a later date... I hope that you will take this letter as an expression of our thanks to you for your interest and desire to assist in the development of the scheme.<sup>177</sup>

Unfortunately for Oxfam, whether for reasons of financial hardship or simply because it was uninterested in taking over responsibility for the scheme, the government did not – in spite of promises made in the KANU manifesto – provide any assistance.<sup>178</sup> Consequently, the Africa Committee cancelled Oxfam support for the project, despite it having reached 30,506 children by November 1969.<sup>179</sup> The disappointment within the Committee was clear: a year later they noted the fact that £71,667 had been wasted when the Kenya government refused to make its promised contributions.<sup>180</sup> CARE would replace Oxfam as the main donor to the scheme in 1969, but also withdrew after two years. As the executive officer noted in 1971,

Oxfam termination of support last year, and CARE termination of support this year resulted in part from a similar conviction that the school feeding programme must receive direct subsidy from Government to confirm recognition of the high priority assigned it verbally by all three supporting ministries and reconfirmed specifically in the KANU Manifesto last election.<sup>181</sup>

Betts and Harper had wanted the School Feeding Scheme to have both a tangible impact on the ground and to influence the state to take responsibility for the education of children in Kenya's marginalised periphery. Unlike the agricultural schemes documented above, however, the School Feeding Scheme offered too little political or economic benefit to the government considering its cost. (Indeed, the more impact the scheme had on the ground by aiding the poorest in society in the manner of welfare expenditure, the less likely the state was to take an interest. A cheaper scheme – focused solely on those

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<sup>177</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Kirkley to Mr. Ngala', 26 August, 1969, KNA, National School Feeding, TR/42/1.

<sup>178</sup> Z. Otieno, 'National School Feeding Council of Kenya', 24 June, 1969, KNA, CCK School Feeding Programme, XH/3/4.

<sup>179</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 13 November, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969; 'Minutes of the Executive Committee of the National School Feeding Council of Kenya', 17 December, 1969, KNA, CCK School Feeding Programme, XH/3/4.

<sup>180</sup> 'Minutes of Africa Committee', 14 October, 1970, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/3 Folder 1: February 1970 – May 1972.

<sup>181</sup> Z. Otieno, 'National School Feeding Council of Kenya', 7 January, 1971, KNA, CCK School Feeding Programme, XH/3/4; 'Minutes of the Executive Committee of the National School Feeding Council of Kenya', 19 February, 1971, KNA, CCK School Feeding Programme, XH/3/4.

who could afford the meals – would have been more likely to attract the government’s attention, but would have alienated the Africa Committee since the poorest would not have benefited.) Yet if the scheme failed to achieve its goals, it nonetheless demonstrates the ‘dance’ between Oxfam and the Kenyan state as regards development. Moreover, the scheme would encourage a debate between Nairobi and Oxford about the nature of Oxfam priorities, a debate which would form part of a much bigger dialogue in Oxford regarding the very purpose of the organisation as the ‘decade of development’ drew to a close.

### ‘I DO NOT FANCY MYSELF PRIMARILY AS A FUND RAISER’

In combination with Betts’ and Harper’s efforts on Narosurra, the School Feeding Scheme drew particular criticism from Bernard Llewellyn because of the efforts to ‘wring a declaration of intent from [the] government to continue [an Oxfam] scheme’. The latter conceded that it was difficult for Oxfam ‘not to see its role as a catalyst in stimulating Governments to do things which [the] agency thinks desirable’, but considered that ‘we should look again at this policy of demanding a Government take-over of a commitment’. He asked the Africa Committee ‘how much pressure should we exert, by reason of our financial involvement, on Governments other than our own?’ His own answer was unambiguous: ‘When Governments do take over a project because of pressure’, he argued, it is ‘at the cost of some other part of their development programme’, and Oxfam does not ‘know better than such Governments how their scarce resources should be spent’. Llewellyn concluded that ‘it would be preferable to move away from this pressurising of Governments... to pick up particular bills which the continuance of Oxfam projects will incur’.<sup>182</sup> Harper disagreed strongly, writing soon after that Llewellyn ‘talks of “how their [i.e. government] scarce resources should be spent”’. And yet he must know as well as any of us how much is wasted on prestige and peripheral activities’. Moreover, revealing his interest in using Oxfam finance to influence newly independent governments, Harper asked whether ‘if we are not to put any pressure on Governments overseas, perhaps we should withdraw entirely from supporting any Governmental

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<sup>182</sup> B. Llewellyn, ‘Visit to Kenya and Tanzania’, 3 January, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

schemes?’<sup>183</sup> For Betts, and now Harper, the whole point of working together with governments was to influence them – as the central development actor – to adopt a more responsible attitude towards their citizens.

The disagreement over the nature of Oxfam’s programme in Kenya mirrored wider debates within Oxfam over its objectives and its rationale for continuing to exist. As discussed in chapter one, in the late 1960s and early 1970s Oxfam questioned whether it should retain a focus on small-scale, reactive aid and helping to ease suffering often caused by politics or man-made disasters, or whether it should transform itself into a lobbying group, using education and pilot projects to cajole governments into action to help the most vulnerable *before* disaster hit. Betts and Harper had, in fact, been doing in Kenya what Nicholas Stacey would have wanted: by moving away from relief towards development, by working with the government on brave pilot projects and experimental schemes that the state could take over and by concentrating on ‘small neglected groups who lack political pull’, the Kenya programme offered Oxfam the chance to ‘assist in the main stream of development’.<sup>184</sup> Though Stacey was forced to resign from the organisation over this issue, Oxfam’s Field Directors in Africa gave their support to his position in a submission to the Africa Committee in early 1969, noting that although it ‘should not be a basic function of Field Directors’, it was ‘accepted that there were occasions when Oxfam should seek to influence Governments’.<sup>185</sup> Perhaps swayed by this intervention, when the Africa Committee met with Llewellyn a month later they emphasised that aid to governments was justifiable and that ‘in such cases it was essential to seek assurances from governments as to their priorities and ultimate intentions, in relation to such schemes’. On the other hand, the Committee conceded that it could be seen as inappropriate in the post-colonial era for Oxfam to pressure their hosts to support schemes that the organisation had chosen unilaterally.<sup>186</sup> Thus Field Directors were advised not to bounce governments into support of schemes that they, but not the government, considered worthwhile. However, such a formulation left enough room for manoeuvre for those on the ground to pressure government to support

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<sup>183</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Harper to Mr. Bennett’, 2 March, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

<sup>184</sup> N. Stacey, ‘When Charity Begins Abroad’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 June, 1970.

<sup>185</sup> ‘Summary of Discussions during the Field Directors’ Meeting in Nairobi: Memorandum to Members of the Africa Committee’, 23-24 January, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

<sup>186</sup> ‘Minutes of the Africa Committee’, 20 February, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

Oxfam schemes in which the state had declared an interest. Harper and his successor Toby Gooch were, therefore, free to continue working alongside the Kenya government in the early 1970s as described above for Isiolo and Garissa. They retained a focus on less fortunate areas of the country, but resisted the temptation to become a 'surrogate' for the state in those areas, concentrating instead on using pilot projects to encourage government to operate there.

Rather like a doctor who prescribes a dose of virus in order to vaccinate against disease, Oxfam prescribed state intervention as a solution to a problem (inequitable development) caused by that same state. Oxfam field staff, cognisant of the limits of finance and manpower within which they worked and familiar with the consequences that negligible state investment had on marginal areas in Kenya, hoped that by using their limited financial leverage they could encourage the state to invest in its periphery. By encouraging the state to integrate these areas into a nation-building project defined by development discourse, Oxfam sought to protect those regions from a future of irrelevance and underdevelopment. Oxfam's ideological commitment to the institution of the state, combined with faith in its own ability to nudge the state in a responsible direction, encouraged it to be pragmatic about the precise characteristics of that state in the short-term. Thus the organisation could work as intimately with the state in Kenya – to some extent its polar opposite in terms of attitudes to the poor and welfare – as in Tanzania, where the ideological foundations of the state matched Oxfam ideals more closely. The former merely required more cajoling to invest in schemes that matched Oxfam concerns. If the state-centric 'treatment' failed, of course, Oxfam ran the risk of acting as a 'carrier' for the 'virus' of a self-interested government elite, opening up these marginal areas to control and exploitation. This risk was something that Oxfam staff at the time did not appreciate fully before the mid-1970s, as even those who resented Oxfam putting pressure on governments did not question the central importance of the state as a development actor or its ability to act in a 'neutral' fashion if properly administered.

The Lake Kenyatta Settlement Scheme provides a final example of the risks involved in such a strategy. First established in Lamu in 1970 as a project for growing 5,000 acres of cotton, the scheme was reimagined as a settlement scheme for 1,000 families in 1973 because Kenyatta was 'very much interested in settling landless people in

the area'.<sup>187</sup> Initially intended to provide settlement for local landless people, and specifically those displaced by the *Shifita* conflict, the scheme in fact quickly received an influx of settlers from elsewhere. In particular, Kenyatta made sure to settle landless Kikuyu as part of the expansion of the Kikuyu 'frontier' that took place throughout the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>188</sup> Such migration encouraged ethnic tensions to form between autochthonous residents and incoming 'foreigners' – tensions released in a brutal fashion in the 1990s and 2000s as multiparty elections took on an ethnic hue. Inward Kikuyu migration to Lamu certainly caused mixed feelings in the Coast provincial agricultural board, whose members were concerned about the reaction of people born at the Coast. The chairman of the board emphasised, however, that other members 'should endeavour to educate their people to change with the new Kenya [by addressing] Barazas on matters pertaining to developments and building of the nation in general'.<sup>189</sup> Oxfam began funding medical work at the Lake Kenyatta scheme in 1976, and remarked that by that time there were around 15,000 settlers, with a large Kikuyu contingent from the overcrowded highlands.<sup>190</sup> After discussions with the Ministry of Health, Oxfam had agreed to provide funds for a mobile clinic and its associated costs for transport, housing, equipment, salaries and training for local health workers. The organisation allocated £39,325 for this purpose between 1976 and 1982, the Africa Committee noting positively just before Kenyatta's death the recent 'efforts... made by the government to meet their commitments' in the area. Indeed, the Committee made it 'a matter of deliberate policy' that the clinic 'works closely with the local Government of Kenya dispensary [in order] that its work will eventually be taken over by the Government'. By February 1989 the organisation had donated over £133,000 to the scheme in total, but it remained just as unlikely that the government (now under Moi) would dedicate sufficient investment and

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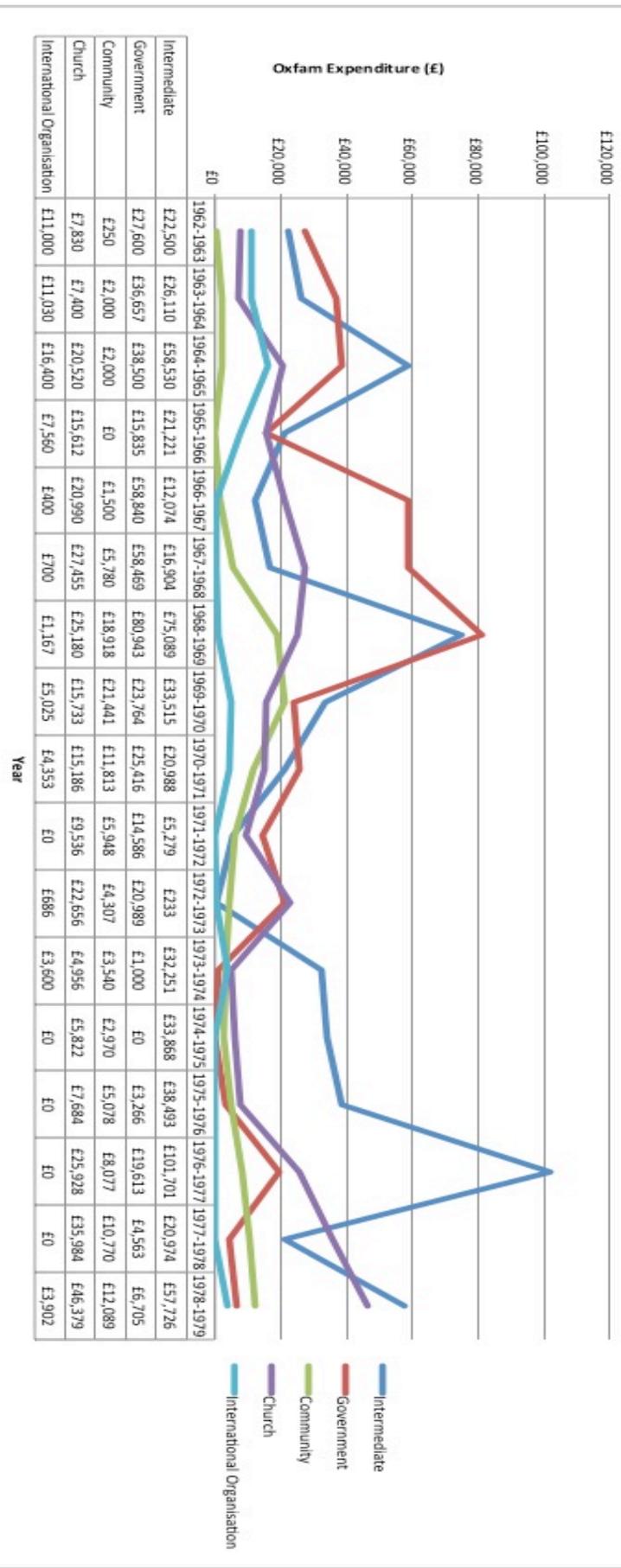
<sup>187</sup> 'Handing Over Report, Lake Kenyatta Development Project – Lamu', 9 July, 1973, KNA, Lake Kenyatta Cotton Scheme, CE/2/6; 'Letter from Mr. Kaaria to the Provincial Water Engineer, Coast Province', 2 August, 1973, KNA, Lake Kenyatta Cotton Scheme, CE/2/6; 'Minutes of the Provincial Agricultural Board, Coast Province', 10 July, 1973, KNA, Provincial Agricultural Board, CE/2/12.

<sup>188</sup> The results of the expanded Kikuyu 'frontier' were most notable in the Rift Valley: by 1969 over 150,000 residents of the province had actually been born in Central Province. Inward migration to the Rift soared in the 1970s as Kenyatta announced new settlement schemes. Branch relates that Trans Nzoia district experienced per annum population growth of nearly eight per cent per annum between 1969 and 1979. Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 97.

<sup>189</sup> 'Minutes of the Provincial Agricultural Board, Coast Province', 12 November, 1973, KNA, Provincial Agricultural Board, CE/2/12.

<sup>190</sup> Branch estimates that there were around 3,600 Kikuyu settled at the scheme. Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 97.

Figure 2: Oxfam Expenditure in Collaboration with Partners (£), 1962/63 to 1978/79



Source: Grants lists 1962/63 to 2003/04. As yet uncatalogued at the Bodleian Library.

staff to this area.<sup>192</sup> In their willingness to support a government-led scheme in a marginalised region of Kenya Oxfam had, once more, played a role – albeit unintentionally – in the state’s attempt to utilise development discourse and resources politically. In this case the organisation aided Kenyatta in his attempt to cohere his ethnic support base by helping to finance a project that had been manipulated to placate frustrated Kikuyu with land traditionally claimed by non-Kikuyu.

Crucially, the Lake Kenyatta Settlement Scheme is something of an outlier as regards Oxfam’s work in the mid-1970s, for by this time the organisation had mostly wound down elements of its programme that involved partnership with the Kenya government. Figure 2 demonstrates that Oxfam spending in collaboration with the state was steady or increasing throughout the 1960s (with the exception of 1965-66 – a hangover of the Charity Commission difficulties), reaching a peak in 1968-69.<sup>193</sup> The year after, spending in partnership with the state dropped from £80,000 to around £23,000, and continued to decline haltingly to nothing in 1974-75. As should be clear from the foregoing, however, the decline in the level of work with the government had little to do with the concerns raised by Llewellyn, which were noted but dismissed by the Africa Committee. Rather, there were two reasons why Oxfam began to disengage with the Kenya government in the early-to-mid 1970s, one practical and one ideological. These issues would become interlinked in the minds of those involved in the Kenya programme in the later 1960s and early 1970s to suggest that some level of detachment from the state was necessary.

The first reason for disengagement was simple: as the hopefulness around independence began to fade into the past and the rose-tinted spectacles were removed, staff became concerned that the Kenya government was ignoring Oxfam cajolery and fudging its commitments to the organisation and to its people. Whereas certain delays and obfuscations had been expected and waived away in the optimism of the early independence period, by the later 1960s it was difficult to ignore the fact that Oxfam efforts were hitting a brick wall of government indifference to the organisation’s blandishments. The School Feeding Scheme was only the most notable example of this

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<sup>192</sup> ‘Lake Kenyatta Settlement Scheme: Mobile Clinic and Community Health Workers’, February, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11; ‘Minutes of the Africa Committee’, 10 May, 1978, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/5 Folder 2: January 1978 – January 1979; ‘Grants Approved by Between Committees Procedure’, September – November, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/11 Folder 1: January 1985 – April 1985.

<sup>193</sup> The peak in spending with non-governmental or ‘intermediate’ partners in 1968-69 was, meanwhile, due to a number of large, one-off grants to build schools and homes for disabled children.

issue. Narosurra also faced delays in funding despite government support, with Harper complaining that letters from Bruce McKenzie and Tom Mboya in support of the scheme were less than specific about future government commitments and that the government's failure to send its full quota of students was a bad omen.<sup>194</sup> Even the more promising schemes such as the irrigation work in Turkana and the Fertiliser and Maize projects faced delay and maladministration. As regards the former, there were problems early on in relation to inadequate government reporting on the progress of the project. In fact, the lack of progress reports reflected the lack of progress: no suitable engineer was available during the first seven months and so no movement had been made on the ground.<sup>195</sup> Belatedly, the project was successful at developing grass seed, and the government made a follow-up application in late 1966 for Lokichar.<sup>196</sup> On this occasion, Betts was informed by Oxford that such a grant was unlikely before a full report on the final stages of the original scheme was presented to Oxfam.<sup>197</sup> In the end, civil servants would arrange a 'cooked up report' on the balance of the Oxfam funds. The funds had, in reality, been used to support other schemes run by the state in the region.<sup>198</sup> Nonetheless, the cooked up report did its job, and Oxfam granted £10,000 to Lokichar in early 1967.<sup>199</sup>

Upon investigation later in the year, however, Oxfam representatives discovered that the first tranche of this grant (£5,000) had not been used (at least in the way that it was supposed to be used) and that a site for the scheme had not even been selected. The remainder of the grant was frozen as a result, and Betts warned the government that the whole grant would likely be cancelled if officials did not fully apprise Oxfam of the

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<sup>194</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Harper to Mr. Bennett', 2 March, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969; 'Nairobi Office – Annual Review', November 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 2: January 1968 – November 1969.

<sup>195</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Hilton to Mr. Mettrick', 24 March, 1964, KNA, Project – Turkana Rehabilitation, BV/104/103; 'Letter from Mr. Mettrick to Mr. Hilton', 3 April, 1964, KNA, Project – Turkana Rehabilitation, BV/104/103; G. Classen, 'African Land Development: Turkana Rehabilitation – Irrigation Development', 13 May, 1964, KNA, Rehabilitation and Development, Turkana District, DC/LDR/1/1/104; 'Letter from Mr. Mettrick to the Assistant Director of Agriculture', 5 October, 1964, KNA, Project – Turkana Rehabilitation, BV/104/103; 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Mettrick', 26 October, 1964, KNA, Project – Turkana Rehabilitation, BV/104/103; J. Newbould, 'Water Spreading in Turkana', 14 October, 1965, KNA, Project – Turkana Rehabilitation, BV/104/104.

<sup>196</sup> 'Application for Oxfam Grant', 6 September, 1966, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108; 'Turkana Water Spreading Scheme', 8 March, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

<sup>197</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Cole', 11 November, 1966, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

<sup>198</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Chester to the Assistant Director of Agriculture', 30 November, 1966, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

<sup>199</sup> 'List of Recommended Grants', 5 January, 1967, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/2 Folder 1: October 1966 – November 1967.

situation.<sup>200</sup> In response, the government admitted that none of the grant money had been utilised because rains had made the scheme inaccessible, but scolded Oxfam for showing ‘undue impatience with the providence that has provided Turkana with a near record rainfall year’. The official added that ‘I would much prefer to implement this joint project in an atmosphere of cooperation and trust than through the medium of ultimata [sic] and acrimonious correspondence’.<sup>201</sup> This was not to be: in early 1968 the Oxfam representative who investigated the scheme, Richard Frost, revealed that the government had transferred equipment and funds from the Oxfam schemes in Turkana to their own prestige scheme in the region (with acreage reserved for MPs); indeed, Frost noted that ‘all the machinery from Lorengippe is [at the government scheme]’. Moreover, he concluded that this machinery must have been purchased using Oxfam funds because the entire Oxfam grant had been used whereas the government had only spent £1,743 of its £7,200 commitment.<sup>202</sup> Frost estimated that the government had misappropriated at least half of Oxfam’s donation for the Lorengippe scheme.<sup>203</sup>

Harper wrote to Betts to outline his anger and to make it clear that ‘the Kenya Government had no right to transfer equipment and/or funds’ from an Oxfam scheme to a government scheme without reference to the organisation. The transfer had also, they now realised, impacted negatively on the Oxfam schemes since the requisite equipment was unavailable to complete the irrigation work.<sup>204</sup> Betts wrote to the head of the range management division to convey his dismay at the findings, and to demand answers to these allegations.<sup>205</sup> Internally, the government defended its actions as utilising equipment where it was needed most, but officials had no satisfactory answer for Oxfam.<sup>206</sup> The issue was felt to be ‘an unhealed sore in the side of our relations with Oxfam which are not of the best at the moment’ and officials feared that ‘it is at present

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<sup>200</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Harper to Mr. Betts’, 1 November, 1967, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108; ‘Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Pratt’, 8 November, 1967, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

<sup>201</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Pratt to Mr. Betts’, 13 November, 1967, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

<sup>202</sup> ‘Abstract from Mr. Frost’s Report on Turkana Water Spreading’, February, 1968, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

<sup>203</sup> ‘Visit to Turkana by Richard Frost’, February, 1968, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/5/8 Folder 2: Jamaica – Kenya.

<sup>204</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Harper to Mr. Betts’, 27 March, 1968, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

<sup>205</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Meadows’, 15 April, 1968, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

<sup>206</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Birir to Mr. M’Rabu’, 16 May, 1968, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

jeopardizing [sic] our current approaches for funds'.<sup>207</sup> In early 1969, with the issue still not resolved to Oxfam's satisfaction, Harper wrote to the Ministry of Agriculture asking for clarification and noted that 'Mr Meadows... spoke of his desire for a spirit of mutual cooperation between Oxfam and his Department. This can only succeed', he wrote, 'if both sides act fairly towards each other'. He also pointed out that 'there can be no chance of our remitting the £5,000 [for Lokichar] until [Oxfam funds] had been fully accounted for', since, as 'trustees of public donations' Oxfam was accountable to its supporters for the use of its funds.<sup>208</sup> Finally, Harper warned officials that 'I am considerably tougher in chasing reports and accounts than was Mr Betts', who was known on all sides to be sympathetic towards the Kenya government.<sup>209</sup> Even so, it was only after more than six months of government silence as regards the Oxfam grant that Harper wrote 'to forewarn [the government] that the patience of my Committee is being extended to the extreme by your failure' and that the Lokichar scheme would be cancelled unless the situation was resolved within a matter of weeks.<sup>210</sup> In the event, the situation was resolved when Nicholas Stacey visited Turkana in early 1970, as he agreed 'off the record' to ignore a discrepancy of £1,500 in the use of Oxfam funds as long as the government guaranteed that it would provide the same amount to the Oxfam schemes in Turkana. When this was done, Oxfam released the remaining £5,000 for Lokichar.<sup>211</sup>

Meanwhile, just as the dispute over the Turkana schemes was threatening to boil over, the fertiliser and maize schemes faced serious setbacks. The former faced issues of late or non-delivery of the fertiliser and suffered in poor rains.<sup>212</sup> Though the government

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<sup>207</sup> 'Note by Mr. Sweetman', 31 July, 1968, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108; 'Note by Mr. Trapman', 18 February, 1969, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

<sup>208</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Harper to Mr. Trapman', 13 February, 1969, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108. Government officials considered this somewhat unfair since it was 'assumed that provided the general objective was achieved that there would be a degree of flexibility within the whole'. 'Letter from Mr. Meadows to Mr. Harper', 12 March, 1969, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

<sup>209</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Harper to Mr. Meadows', 25 March, 1969, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

<sup>210</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Harper to Mr. Trapman', 14 November, 1969, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

<sup>211</sup> 'Letter to Mr. Meadows', 28 February, 1970, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108; 'Letter from Mr. Harper to Mr. Trapman', 28 April, 1970, KNA, Project – Turkana Water Spreading, BV/104/108.

<sup>212</sup> 'Letter from F. Back to the Chief Agriculturalist, Ministry of Agriculture', 26 May, 1965, KNA, Project – Fertiliser Demonstration Plots (Oxfam), BV/104/19; 'Letter from J. Muthama to the Chief Agriculturalist, Ministry of Agriculture', 29 May, 1965, KNA, Project – Fertiliser Demonstration Plots (Oxfam), BV/104/19; 'Letter from G. Stern to the Director of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture', 15 June, 1965, KNA, Project – Fertiliser Demonstration Plots (Oxfam), BV/104/19.

considered the demonstration plots a success,<sup>213</sup> Betts was chastised by Oxford because ‘there is no measure by which to judge [said] success’, and the scheme itself was criticised for avoidable mistakes such as late planting and the failure to use insecticide.<sup>214</sup> Officials defended the scheme, highlighting that the demonstration plots had higher yields than neighbouring areas and that there was a ‘great increase’ in the use of fertilisers and other improved methods of husbandry nearby. They also attempted to shift the blame for the poor delivery of supplies onto the private sector.<sup>215</sup> As regards the maize scheme, Betts discovered in mid-1966 that Oxfam’s grant had been sat idle for nearly a year due to the mismanagement of the grant timetable, which had meant that seed was not available at the required time.<sup>216</sup> Government officials feared that Oxfam would withdraw the grant, since by their inaction they had deprived ‘other needy causes of assistance’.<sup>217</sup> Yet even after the Oxfam funds were spent, there were difficulties concerning the delivery of the seed: in Machakos, for instance, only enough seed for 4,800 acres was delivered despite immediate demand for 10,000 acres’ worth of seed and the potential for 30,000 acres to be planted. In Kitui, there was immediate demand for seed to cover 5,000 acres, but only 1,000 acres’ worth of seed was delivered.<sup>218</sup> By the time more seed arrived, many farmers had planted their farms with any seed they could get their hands on.<sup>219</sup> Disappointed, Betts wrote to Oxford in early 1967 that although over half the Oxfam grant was still unspent, officials involved with the scheme were talking ‘somewhat glibly’ of Oxfam contributing £5,000 per year, and he promised to assess the scheme afresh in order to recommend to Oxford whether to repatriate the grant.<sup>220</sup> The scheme was, therefore,

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<sup>213</sup> ‘Letter from W. Symon to the Chief Agriculturalist, Ministry of Agriculture’, 22 July, 1965, KNA, Project – Fertiliser Demonstration Plots (Oxfam), BV/104/19; ‘Letter from G. Williamson to the Director of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture’, 3 August, 1965, KNA, Project – Fertiliser Demonstration Plots (Oxfam), BV/104/19.

<sup>214</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Harris to Mr. Betts’, 19 January, 1967, KNA, Project – Fertiliser Demonstration Plots (Oxfam), BV/104/19.

<sup>215</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Cole to Mr. Betts’, 15 February, 1967, KNA, Project – Fertiliser Demonstration Plots (Oxfam), BV/104/19.

<sup>216</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Cole to Mr. Betts’, 18 May, 1966, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43.

<sup>217</sup> ‘Note on Oxfam Katumani Maize Seed Project’, 10 May, 1966, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43; ‘Letter to Mr. Muthama from Mr. Dearden’, 9 May, 1966, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43.

<sup>218</sup> ‘Telegram from Ministry of Agriculture re. Maize Scheme’, 27 October, 1966, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43.

<sup>219</sup> ‘Letter to Mr. Mburu from Mr. Kanai’, 14 November, 1966, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43; ‘Letter from Mr. Reid to the Assistant Director of Agriculture, Eastern Province’, 17 June, 1967, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43.

<sup>220</sup> ‘Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Harper’, 17 February, 1968, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43.

allowed to continue into early 1968, but Betts cautioned the government that this and other failures 'on the part of the various departments of the Ministry of Agriculture are causing me serious embarrassment with my Head Office', and that he would cancel the maize grant if information on the state of the scheme was not forthcoming soon. Such an eventuality, he noted, would doubtless 'prejudice the attitude of my Committee to future grants' to the Kenya government.<sup>221</sup>

In response, the Ministry of Agriculture circulated a memorandum reminding its officials that if this occurred it would 'do a very great deal of harm to Kenya's reputation with non-Governmental Agencies and above all with Oxfam'. 'They will', an official suggested, 'immediately conclude (perhaps with some justification) that this Ministry is incapable of handling their grants and will be most reluctant to offer support in the future'. The official placed the maize scheme in its wider context, noting that

the lack of attention given to the successful completion of these smaller Oxfam... projects is not confined to the [maize] scheme. You will recall that [I] drew your attention to both [Narosurra] and the [Fertiliser Demonstration Scheme] also. Neither of these schemes has had a particular [sic] successful history, and both have suffered from considerable periods of inattention by the Department of Agriculture... What makes matters worse is that these projects are completely financed by or have considerable Oxfam participation. If we do not pay some attention to either, we cannot expect Oxfam to pay attention to our future requests.<sup>222</sup>

He advised that these schemes be given priority within the Department in order that they could be brought to a constructive conclusion.<sup>223</sup> In the event, while the grants for Narosurra and the fertiliser scheme were allowed to remain with the government, the balance of Oxfam's grant for the maize scheme was refunded at Betts' insistence in September 1968.<sup>224</sup> 'Oxfam may well be a charitable organisation', one official noted, 'but its executives are hard headed pragmatists who demand results almost immediately money is voted'.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Sweetman', 16 April, 1968, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43.

<sup>222</sup> 'Memorandum on Oxfam Grants to the Department of Agriculture', 22 April, 1968, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43.

<sup>223</sup> 'Memorandum on Oxfam Grants to the Department of Agriculture', 22 April, 1968, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43.

<sup>224</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Sweetman', 16 August, 1968, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43; 'Payment Voucher: Item Oxfam Grant for Katumani Maize Seed', 20 September, 1968, KNA, Ministry of Agriculture: Project – Katumani Maize Seed Project (OXFAM), BV/104/43.

<sup>225</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Meadows to the Provincial Range Officer, Rift Valley Province', 26 April, 1967, KNA, Range Management, Narok, AN/40/22.

For as long as he remained in Kenya, Betts was committed to working through these issues with the government, referring to the 'battle with my Committee' in terms of 'us' (meaning Betts and the government) versus 'them' (Oxford).<sup>226</sup> Harper also remained dedicated to working with the government, despite his more tenacious attitude; though by 1969 his frustration was beginning to show: 'Rash promises by the politicians are all too common', he wrote, 'No wonder people prefer to turn to Oxfam!'.<sup>227</sup> Yet by the time he was replaced by Toby Gooch in 1971, relations between Oxfam and the government had cooled considerably, partly as a result of the afore-mentioned failures in the administration of Oxfam grants. 'In general', Gooch remarked, 'co-operation with Government has not been too good'. These failures and particularly the inattention with which Oxfam grants were treated had highlighted the limit to Oxfam's influence in Kenya. Moreover, Gooch noted that Kenya was making rapid economic progress and recommended on both counts that Oxfam should make a steady reduction in its assistance to the country.<sup>228</sup> Accordingly, the Africa Committee reduced the size of the Kenya programme from 1970.<sup>229</sup> Given the decline in relations with the government, Oxford also decided to move the local headquarters to Addis Ababa in 1973.<sup>230</sup> The effect of this shift is visible in Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5. Figure 2 demonstrates that each constituent part of the programme was reduced markedly in scale between the late 1960s and early 1970s. This was reflected in the number and cost of the projects undertaken thereafter. During 1974 the Oxfam programme in Kenya was restricted for a time to 11 projects, and stabilised at 15 projects until 1976, as shown by Figure 3. This was around half the average number of projects Oxfam worked with in the 1960s. Meanwhile, as Figure 4 demonstrates, budget allocations were reduced to around £50,000 per year, a far cry from the £100,000-plus budgets of the mid-to-late 1960s. The fall in expenditure is even more noticeable in real terms, as illustrated by Figure 5. Spending in the mid-1970s dropped to around one sixth of its real-terms level in the peak years of the later 1960s and spending across the decade averaged around one third of the average spend during the 1960s as a whole.

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<sup>226</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Betts to Mr. Peberdy', 14 March, 1967, KNA, Project – Beekeeping Extension Project, BV/104/12.

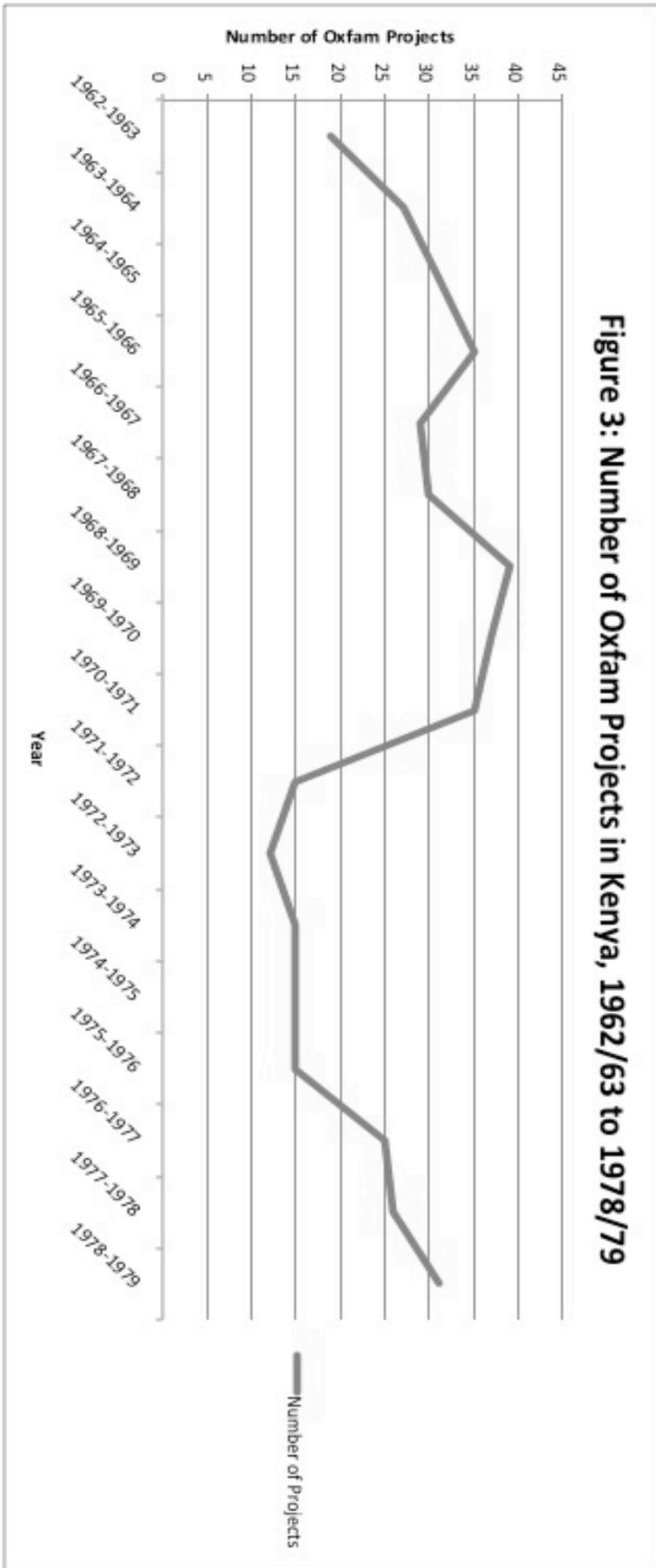
<sup>227</sup> M. Harper, 'Turkana Tour Report', 27 April, 1969, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/5/8 Folder 2: Jamaica – Kenya.

<sup>228</sup> 'Annual Report 1972/73, East Africa', September 1973, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/3 Folder 2: October 1972 – November 1973.

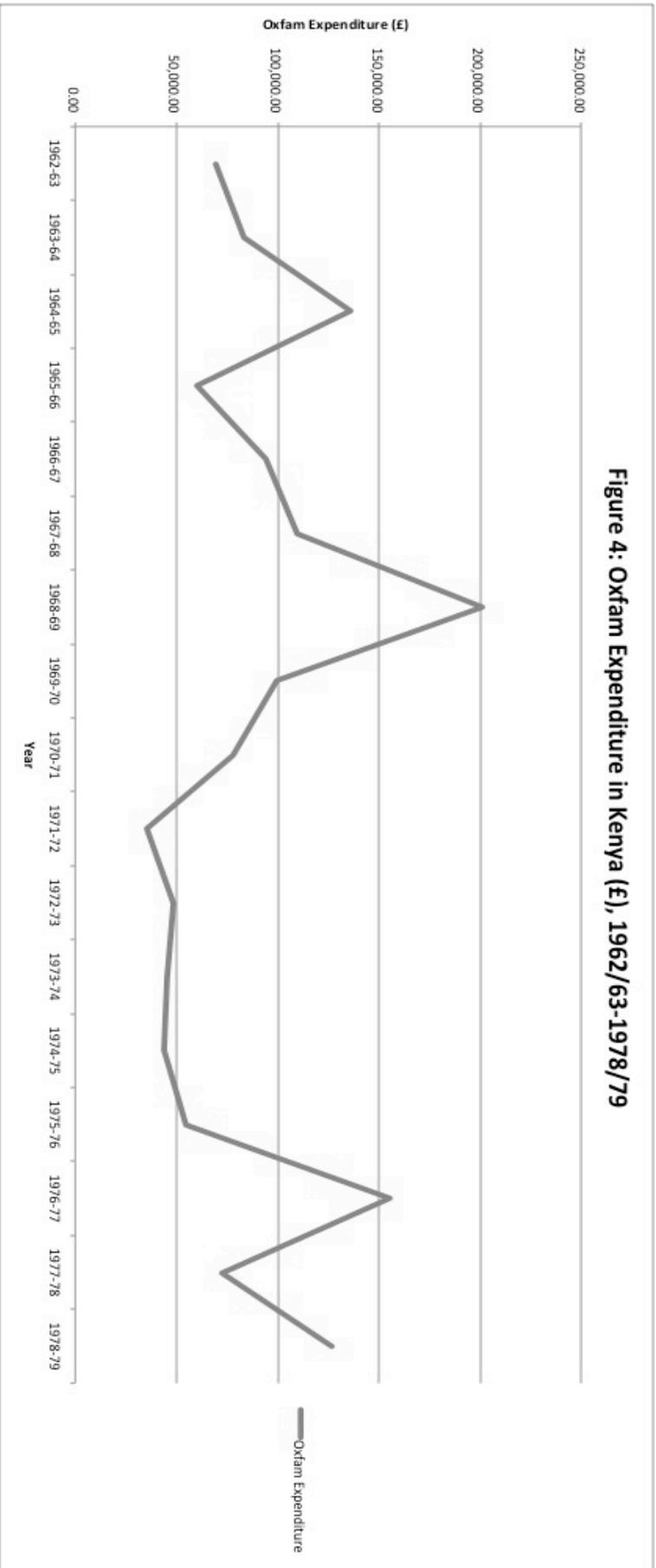
<sup>229</sup> 'Annual Report for East Africa, 1973/74', October 1974, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/4 Folder 1: January 1974 – May 1975.

<sup>230</sup> 'Minutes of the Kenya Freedom From Hunger Campaign Projects Committee', 29 November, 1973, KNA, Freedom From Hunger General, MOH/51/4.

**Figure 3: Number of Oxfam Projects in Kenya, 1962/63 to 1978/79**

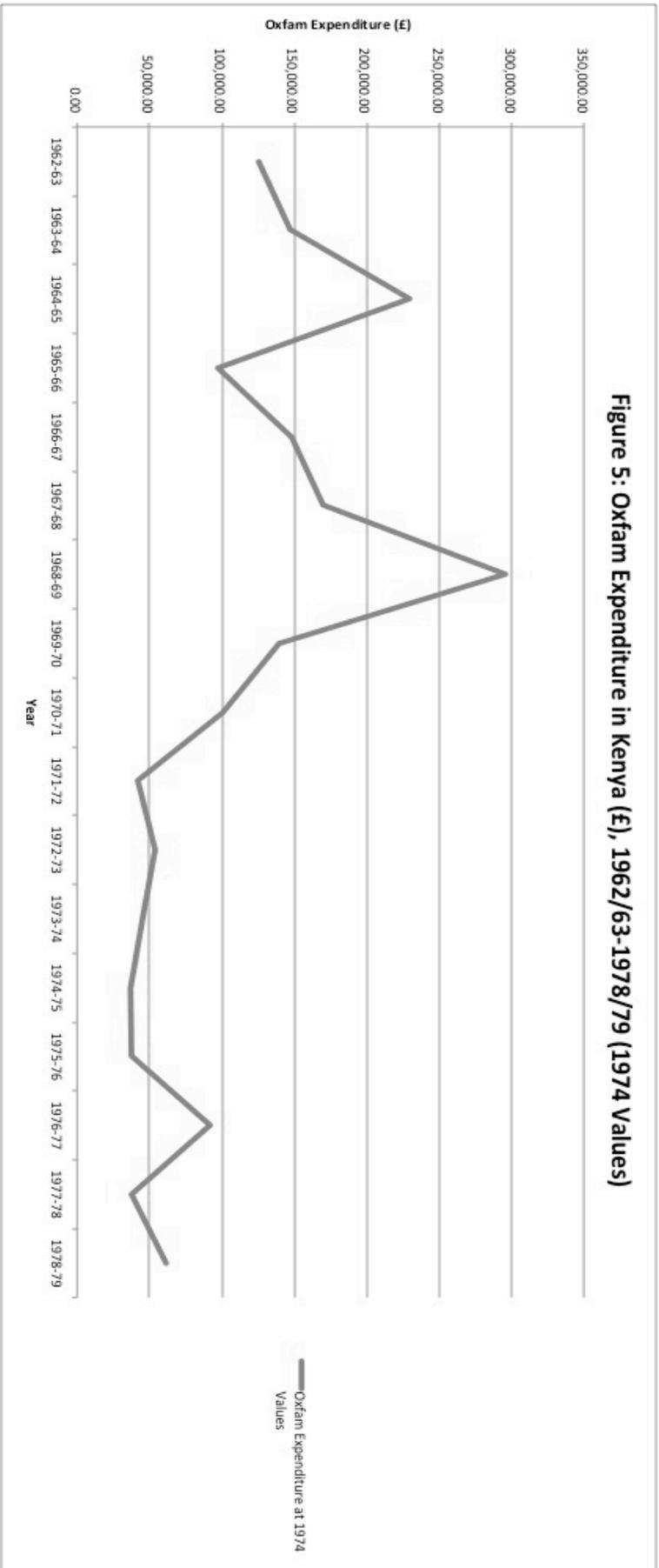


Source: Grants lists 1962/63 to 2003/04. As yet uncatalogued at the Bodleian Library.



Source: Grants lists 1962/63 to 2003/04. As yet uncatalogued at the Bodleian Library.

**Figure 5: Oxfam Expenditure in Kenya (£), 1962/63-1978/79 (1974 Values)**



Source: Grants lists 1962/63 to 2003/04. As yet uncatalogued at the Bodleian Library. Calculated using the Retail Prices Index: Long Run Series, 1947-2004, Office for National Statistics, 'Consumer Price Inflation since 1750'. J. O'Donoghue, L. Goulding and G. Allen, 'Consumer Price Inflation since 1750', available at <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rei/cpi/consumer-price-indices/1750--2003/index.html> [accessed 23 October, 2013].

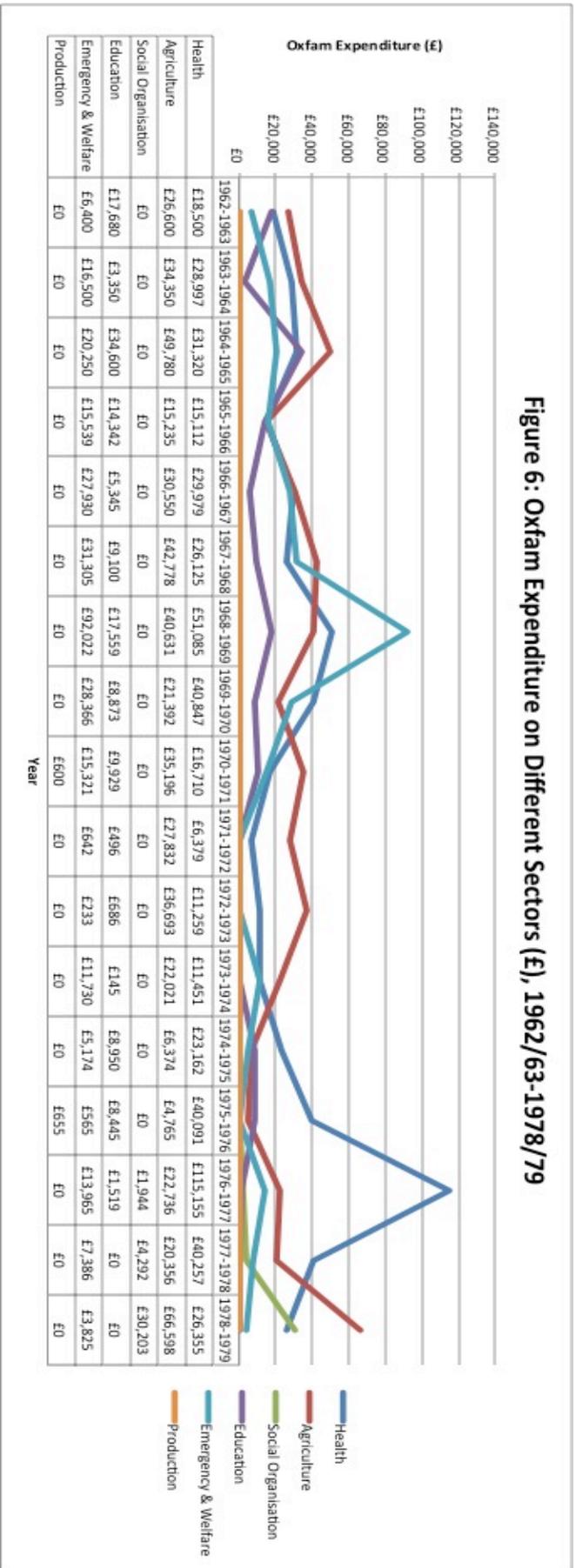
When Oxfam returned to Nairobi – which was, it admitted, ‘the communications hub of East Africa’ – in 1976, Tim Brierly, who had replaced Toby Gooch in 1975, advised that although Oxfam ‘must main a respectable programme’ in Kenya due to the tax privileges and customs agreements negotiated with the government, the organisation should keep ‘a fairly low profile’. Furthermore, Oxfam would, he argued, ‘probably do better not to fund governmental projects in the future’, especially since the government ‘receives so much aid from the World Bank, ODM [Overseas Development Ministry], etc.’. Brierly was cognisant that the chance of finance on the scale at which Oxfam could offer it having any impact on the government was limited in the extreme. While a higher budget was provided for Kenya in 1976-77, therefore, it was mostly the result of two large, and somewhat anomalous, grants to other NGOs (and in particular to the American Medical and Research Foundation – AMRF or AMREF – for research into hydatid disease) in addition to the Lake Kenyatta Project, and it was reduced for the following year.<sup>232</sup> Crucially, disengagement from the state had an impact on the shape of Oxfam’s programme as well as its scale: Figure 2 highlights the crossover between support to the state and other ‘intermediate’ organisations around 1974 and the peak in engagement with the latter in 1976-77. The orientation of the Oxfam programme shifted at the same time, with Oxfam soon spending four times more on medical projects than agricultural projects because, as Brierly lamented, ‘whereas there are many excellent voluntary agencies like AMRF and church hospitals... in the medical field, there are relatively few non-governmental agricultural activities...’.<sup>233</sup> The transition between agricultural and medical projects occurred around 1974, as shown by Figure 6, which also illustrates that such a shift had happened once before – between 1968 and 1970 – as Oxfam spending alongside the state in agricultural development projects started to collapse while medical spending (boosted by three grants to AMRF) remained high. (Note, meanwhile, that the spike in welfare spending in 1968/69 was a result of Oxfam categorising the School Feeding Scheme as welfare spending.)

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<sup>232</sup> T. Brierly, ‘Report on East Africa’, May, 1977, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/5 Folder 1: January 1977 – October 1977.

<sup>233</sup> T. Brierly, ‘Report on East Africa’, May, 1977, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/5 Folder 1: January 1977 – October 1977.

Figure 6: Oxfam Expenditure on Different Sectors (£), 1962/63-1978/79



Source: Grants lists 1962/63 to 2003/04. As yet uncatalogued at the Bodleian Library.

The decline in support within Oxfam for working alongside the Kenya government was not solely due to the practical issues discussed above, however. In fact, Brierly made it clear that Kenya remained 'the easiest country for Oxfam to work in because the Government favours voluntary agencies'. The other reason for Oxfam's disengagement from the state was that the organisation underwent something of an ideological revolution, which meant it could no longer ignore the fact that Kenya had 'an elite and corrupt political system that is less in tune with Oxfam ideas than the socialist and earnest system of Somalia... while Sudan, Rwanda and Burundi strike a happy medium'. For Brierly, it was in these countries that Oxfam 'should try and concentrate more of our assistance in the future'.<sup>235</sup> In a politically-charged critique of the Kenya government, he wrote that:

The high and healthy island of fertility rising to the north of the booming capital city of Nairobi is surrounded by scrubby wastes that are rapidly turning to desert. The country continues to be run by a Government that has been described as a "family of business-men politicians of whom Kenyatta is God the Father." Members of Kenyatta's own family have been implicated in the widespread poaching of game... and destruction of trees... that threaten respectively the future of Kenya's main revenue source (tourism) and the ecology and rainfall of the country. Civil servants, including the once impartial District Commissioners, have since 1970 been allowed to take part in business and thus have a vested interest in the continuance of Kenya's capitalist type of society. "Fat cats" in big Mercedes buy up land from poor peasants and property from the dwindling Indians for letting at exorbitant prices to foreign diplomats and firms... The "elitist and corrupt" system in Kenya [means that] development [is also] mainly concentrated on the economically viable areas on either side of the Rift Valley...<sup>236</sup>

Kenyatta's policy of full-blooded capitalism did, of course, split KANU in the later 1960s, while the government's failure to improve the lot of the majority of Kenyan citizens was reflected in the popularity of J.M. Kariuki and in the results of the 1974 election – in which nearly 50 per cent of sitting MPs were defeated. Kenyans were thus equally concerned with the Kenyatta government's turn towards authoritarianism, and individuals such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o risked their freedom to express their anxiety as regards inequality and corruption.<sup>237</sup> Yet despite the fact that Kenya was 'the most

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<sup>235</sup> T. Brierly, 'Report on East Africa', May, 1977, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/5 Folder 1: January 1977 – October 1977.

<sup>236</sup> T. Brierly, 'Report on East Africa', May, 1977, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/5 Folder 1: January 1977 – October 1977.

<sup>237</sup> Thiong'o's 1977 novel *Petals of Blood* deals with the failure of the ruling *wabenzi* elite to meet the needs of ordinary citizens. It critiques the neo-colonial relations between the Kenyan elite and their former colonisers, the prevalence of corruption and the contradictions of modernisation for pastoral communities that lose their land once they can no longer repay loans made available for 'development'. In such a way,

unevenly developed country in the area', with 'extremes of wealth and poverty and growing corruption' as its most salient features, Brierly feared that

such is the prestige and personality of the "Old Man" (Mzee) that Kenyatta is unlikely to be toppled in whatever remains of his lifetime... The tribal dominance of the Kikuyu in Kenya politics could also cause trouble, although so far the Kikuyu have proved too numerous and too adept to be seriously challenged by the other tribal groups who are by no means united among themselves.<sup>238</sup>

Importantly, in contrast to Betts and Harper, Brierly was pessimistic about the future and doubtful of the potential for Oxfam to influence the government:

Kenya is an ideologically isolated mountain of [capitalism]... more democratic than most other African countries, but [where] no real opposition is tolerated... The Kenyatta "royal family" still rules... with pictures on the front pages of the newspapers everyday of Mzee being entertained by traditional dancers to prove that he is still very much alive.<sup>239</sup>

He expected nothing less than that 'the ruling KANU [would] try and maintain a similar system after Nzee [sic] Kenyatta dies'.<sup>240</sup>

The distaste with which the Field Director discussed the Kenya government differs markedly from the early optimism shown by Betts, Harper and Fletcher among others, which was based on their ideological faith in the newly independent state and in Oxfam's ability to influence its developmental orientation. Such a faith had encouraged a pragmatic attitude as to the Kenya state's own capitalist ideology, its increasing authoritarian tendencies and the limited success of Oxfam's efforts to influence the state to become a more 'neutral' development actor. Just as these difficulties became more obvious, however, Oxfam itself underwent a shift in its attitude towards the state and state-led development, a shift that meant these problems could no longer be swept under the carpet. As discussed in chapter one, the early 1970s saw Oxfam – influenced by Paulo Freire – starting to talk of empowerment as the key to development. Indeed, by the middle of the decade Oxfam had adopted much of the *concientizacao* or

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Thiong'o attacks 'the warped logic of modernity', which dislocates people from nature and fatally weakens marginal areas. Thiong'o was arrested for his outspokenness in the same year, and remained in prison until December 1978. N. wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood* (London, Heinemann, 1977); S. Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 128-160.

<sup>238</sup> T. Brierly, 'Report on East Africa', May, 1977, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/5 Folder 1: January 1977 – October 1977.

<sup>239</sup> 'Report on Eastern Africa', May, 1978, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/5 Folder 2: January 1978 – January 1979.

<sup>240</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Brierly to Mr. Harris', 1 September, 1976, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/4 Folder 2: October 1975 – October 1976.

'conscientisation' methodology and expressed its support for liberation theology as unleashed by Vatican II. Oxfam's Director, Brian Walker, outlined in 1978 that

Development work overseas is essentially about people and not so much about economic systems and putting in large amounts of capital... It is essentially to help people to grow within themselves. The cardinal sin in our work is to make such people dependent on us. Cultural imperialism is something we try very hard to avoid.

Instead, 'the Oxfam approach is to help people to identify the elements which help to make them poor and to explore ways to tackle those elements'.<sup>241</sup>

Hence, Oxfam's handbook for Field Directors – first published in the mid-1970s as part of the conscientisation of Oxfam itself – asked how Oxfam could champion the 'wretched of the earth' rather than simply 'reinterpreting the white man's burden to coincide with British charitable impulses'.<sup>242</sup> It concluded that the organisation should codify its commitment to a process of conscientisation 'which encourages people to recognise and develop their potential and to decide their own values and priorities'. The handbook criticised 'capitalistic societies and others with elitist elements' – of which Kenya was certainly one – for the restriction of opportunity and the polarisation of wealth. It cautioned that the 'bias against the poor' in the development process could not be challenged through 'orthodox development programmes designed by governments... for the downward movement of technological and material stimulus'. Moreover, though 'offense to those in power' was to be avoided, the handbook warned that 'the unequal and unacceptable effects of just such programmes [were precisely what] Oxfam may be faced with countering'. Modernisation programmes akin to those Betts had supported in Kenya were now seen to have extended a system of domination by governments and international financial institutions by encouraging the quiescence of development 'subjects' without the means to counter 'scientific' modernising schemes. The organisation should, therefore, try to 'work with voluntary groups rather than governments', making sure that projects contained a 'social' as well as a 'technical' aspect. Improving people's material situation was no longer enough: Oxfam wished to make them 'less accepting in outlook [and] more aware of what they can do to effect an improvement in their circumstances'. The section on pastoralism perhaps best

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<sup>241</sup> J. Slim, 'For the Famished Third World', *The Birmingham Post*, 24 July, 1978.

<sup>242</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 188.

illuminated the shift in ideology, conceding that development no longer implied settlement, but transhumance.<sup>243</sup>

As regards Kenya, the Field Director and Africa Committee agreed in 1977 that Oxfam should 'try to find more grass-roots, village-level schemes to support rather than... paternalist projects' which had characterised earlier efforts in the country. A new partnership was suggested with the Catholic churches, which, as Brierly acknowledged, 'are very aware of the need for greater human involvement from below'.<sup>244</sup> The contrast between the anti-institutionalism of such an approach and the methods that the organisation had used in Kenya in the 1960s could not be clearer. In terms of ideology, as the Kenya government moved right, Oxfam moved left, and this widening ideological gap served to illuminate and magnify the practical difficulties Oxfam was experiencing. Together, these concerns encouraged Oxfam to by-pass the state towards the end of the Kenyatta era instead of working *through* its institutions to encourage state responsibility. Such a trend is shown in Figure 2, as the share of Oxfam funds that went to government fell below the increasingly numerous small grants to intermediate organisations (local NGOs), church bodies and community groups for inter-church agricultural schemes and community-built dams, for example. (These are discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.) No longer was there an attempt to influence government directly, since 'compared to the World Bank... or the British Overseas Development Ministry... Oxfam is very small fry indeed'. Oxfam's influence was instead to be found 'among the local voluntary agencies' and better development opportunities were seen to lie outside the state (and outside of Kenya).<sup>245</sup>

Oxfam had, therefore, distanced itself from the Kenya government before the Moi era, which is commonly seen as representing the nadir of government-civil society relations in Kenya. The organisation, and particularly those on the ground in Nairobi, had always known that the state was inefficient, corrupt and pushed an elite capitalist project that was exclusive and exploitative of the very regions that Oxfam most wished to help. But they had faith in the institution of the state and in their own ability to nudge the Kenya government away from ethnic patrimonialism and towards a more socially responsible position. Never fully co-opted into the 'anti-politics machine' in Kenya due to

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<sup>243</sup> Alderson (ed.), *Field Directors' Handbook*, 1-1, 3-3, 3-4, 3-7, 3-8, 5-5, 17-4, 30-1.

<sup>244</sup> T. Brierly, 'Report on East Africa', May, 1977, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/5 Folder 1: January 1977 – October 1977.

<sup>245</sup> 'Report on Eastern Africa', May, 1978, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/5 Folder 2: January 1978 – January 1979.

their refusal to work in politically favoured regions, the organisation's actions did in some cases aid the expansion of the 'bureaucratic-executive' Kenyatta state into areas as yet lightly governed. Yet Oxfam hoped that forcing the state to engage with its citizens would inculcate a less political approach to development. Following Lorgen's theorisation, changing Oxfam values meant that whereas Betts and Harper had hoped that the government could be encouraged through pilot projects and financial incentives to expand its reach to areas of the periphery – and were thus pragmatic about its political orientation – by the early 1970s Oxfam was ready to move away from its engagement with a state ideologically isolated and insulated from its citizens by the *de facto* one-party system and by large-scale support from the West.<sup>246</sup>

It is important to note, though, that Oxfam actually saw conscientisation as another method for making the state responsible for its citizens. *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz's 1873 treatise on conflict, offers an insight into the distinction between strategy and tactics used implicitly by Oxfam. In war, he writes, not everything can be foreseen; responses to shifting context have to be based either on strategic and long-term planning or discriminating judgement based on short-term imperatives.<sup>247</sup> In 1960s Kenya, while armed conflict was limited to the north-east, political and ideological conflict over development created its own 'fog of war'. For a time there was coincidence between Oxfam's long-term strategy (to build a responsible state) and its short-term tactics (to work with the state to encourage such an approach). Once top-down tactics were shown to be ineffective, however, those on the ground embraced the new tactics of empowerment and conscientisation; yet the long-term strategy – to create a responsible state – remained constant. Thus instead of the top-down or 'supply side' reform which Betts had hoped to achieve in the 1960s, Oxfam adopted bottom-up or 'demand side' reform in the later 1970s: where Oxfam had failed to cajole the state to take on responsibility for the whole country as opposed to merely politically and economically significant areas, it hoped that Kenyan citizens would have more success. The organisation was given some hope by the 'Kenya we Want' conference – attended by national leaders including Moi – which resolved that development plans 'should be deliberately and consciously geared to enhancing a faster pace of growth and

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<sup>246</sup> Clapham, *Africa and the International System*, pp. 247-250.

<sup>247</sup> C. von Clausewitz, *On War* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949).

development in the marginal areas and among underprivileged members of society'.<sup>248</sup> Of course, such rhetoric only briefly disguised Moi's ruthlessly political redistribution of the spoils in Kenya and his desire to control and dominate the development space to an extent that Kenyans had not yet experienced. The following chapter describes how Oxfam struggled to find room to operate under Moi's increasingly paranoid and authoritarian regime.

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<sup>248</sup> 'Report on Eastern Africa', May, 1978, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/5 Folder 2: January 1978 – January 1979.

## Chapter Three

### 'THE WAR IS NOT BEING WON... MORE PEOPLE ARE POOR' – OXFAM IN KENYA, 1978-1991

Development questions... cannot be discussed outside the existing modes of production and the social structures emanating from those modes during a definite historical period... Questions of development cannot be ideologically neutral... To many of the Third World countries development issues also entail liberation... from fear of natural phenomena, superstition, ignorance and poverty. It also means the extent to which that individual is capable of understanding the national and international forces that are militating against his freedom and his liberty... It means making people the subject and not the objects of development.

Odhiambo Anacleto, Assistant Field Director for Oxfam in East Africa, writing in 1984.<sup>1</sup>

*In contrast with the previous chapter, the following concentrates less on examining the nature of the projects with which Oxfam was involved in Kenya and more on the debates within the organisation – both at Oxford and between Oxford and Nairobi – over the future of its operations in Kenya and across Africa. The previous chapter concluded with Oxfam starting to work around the state in Kenya, tapping into the conscientisation and empowerment ideologies. This chapter shows how such an approach ran into difficulties in Kenya due to a paranoid government and a Field Director unconvinced of its merits. Instead, flush with cash from high-profile relief campaigns in the early 1980s, the Field Director shifted Oxfam towards 'operationality' in Kenya. Yet many in Oxford regarded such a move as inconsistent with the organisation's history and values, and the debate over whether Oxfam should be an 'operational' or 'facilitative' agency at a time of increasing income helped to define the future direction of the organisation. Thereafter, the attempt of a new Field Director to accommodate the demands from Oxford with the realities on the ground in Kenya – as the government became ever more hostile to NGOs and civil society in general – demonstrates clearly the relative importance of 'values' and 'pragmatism' in determining the direction and methods of an NGO such as Oxfam. Above all, the innovative and flexible response of the organisation to changing circumstances, both global and local, helps to counter narratives that NGOs adopt 'one size fits all' approaches.*

With the benefit of hindsight, Oxfam's optimism as regards a potential Moi government may seem naïve. But at the time much of Kenyan civil society was willing to suspend disbelief as Moi freed political prisoners, worked to build good relations with Nairobi

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<sup>1</sup> O. Anacleto, 'New Initiative in Development: Development and Developers in the Third World', 4 September, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 African Field Directors' Conference, 1984.

University and initiated a hugely popular anti-corruption drive. Even prominent backbench critics of Kenyatta's government declared themselves satisfied with the path Moi was following. The President was, however, rather more interested in the corrupt dealings of those who had opposed his bid for the presidency than in the illegalities perpetrated by his allies.<sup>2</sup> Anger at the 'Kikuyuisation' of the government under Kenyatta also lent weight to the second President's calls for redistribution, which would, conveniently, dismantle the ethno-regional base of the previous regime. As shown in chapter one, with the economy stagnating soon after Moi's accession, the redistribution of employment and investment towards his ethno-regional strongholds in the Rift Valley came at the cost of Moi's Kikuyu opponents.

Although the Rift Valley contained a large number of severely impoverished people that Oxfam wished to see helped by the government, the organisation surmised fairly quickly that the zero-sum nature of Moi's political and economic calculations meant that even in the Rift 'under-privileged sections of the population' such as herdsmen, small farmers, agricultural workers and the urban poor would be left to struggle for existence.<sup>3</sup> The organisation condemned the government's attitude towards development as 'capital intensive, mainly infrastructural [and] favouring the better off rather than the really poor'. 'To some extent', the report continued, 'it is also politically motivated. There has for instance been considerable road improvement and other development in the Tugen area – Moi country!'<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands Programme, launched by the government in 1979, focused its efforts on Moi's ethno-regional support base in the Rift Valley and priority status was given to districts most closely associated with the President.<sup>5</sup> Combined with 'corruption in government circles' and 'exploitation [of the poor] by people in authority', the government's approach to development – which more or less picked up from where Kenyatta left off, albeit in different locations – made it impossible for Oxfam staff newly versed in conscientisation to consider direct participation in government development projects.<sup>6</sup> A report to Oxford in the early years of the Moi regime admitted, therefore, that no mention was made of working with the government because there was 'little likelihood of Oxfam participating in government

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<sup>2</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> 'Report on Eastern Africa', March, 1981, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/7 Folder 1: January 1981 – July 1981.

<sup>4</sup> 'Report on Eastern Africa', March, 1981, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/7 Folder 1: January 1981 – July 1981.

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, 'Foreign Aid and Ethnic Interests in Kenya', in Esman and Herring (eds.), *Carrot, Sticks, and Ethnic Conflict*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>6</sup> 'Report on Eastern Africa', March, 1981, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/7 Folder 1: January 1981 – July 1981.

devised and/or implemented programmes'.<sup>7</sup> For Oxfam's Field Director in Nairobi (from 1981), David Campbell, 'long term solutions to the country's difficulties are unlikely to be found in the acquisitive, capitalist ideology of Kenya's present ruling elite, which the west is now going to such lengths to support'.<sup>8</sup>



Map 2: Oxfam projects 1978-1991. 1 = Various empowerment work with churches in Meru, Kitui, Machakos (late 1970s); 2 = Pilot restocking schemes in Isiolo and Kalabata (1983/84); 3 = Emergency restocking work in Turkana (1984); 4 = Emergency restocking work in Samburu (1984); 5 = Turkana water harvesting scheme/Lokitaung pastoral development project (1984/1989); 6 = Wagalla relief (1984); 7 = Kakuma pastoral development project (1989).

<sup>7</sup> 'Report on Eastern Africa', March, 1981, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/7 Folder 1: January 1981 – July 1981.

<sup>8</sup> 'Annual Report, Kenya and South Sudan', 26 August, 1983, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/9 Folder 2: July 1983 – October 1983.

Instead of a traditional ‘philanthropic approach’ in collaboration with government, Oxfam continued to seek out grassroots and village-level schemes with which to act in partnership. Odhiambo Anacleto, Assistant Field Director for Eastern Africa, noted that whereas the ‘philanthropic approach’ meant grants and aids were often irrelevant to people’s needs or even ‘inimical to the healthy development of the productive forces of the community’, the new ‘development philosophy’ of working in partnership with groups at the village level to help people identify and find solutions to their own problems meant

see[ing] ourselves as participants in the process of development to which we only offer a contribution, leaving the main cause of development to be decided by the people who are developing themselves.<sup>9</sup>

Michael Behr, one of Oxfam’s most senior staff in Africa, concurred, writing in 1979 that ‘technical solutions to poverty... should not take on higher importance than social change’.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, the Nairobi office set out to build strong links with church-related agencies in Meru, Kitui and Machakos (see Map 2); these were the first in the country to adopt the psycho-social approach to development adapted from Freire. Oxfam also offered financial support to the co-ordinating body of such agencies, the Christian Development Education Service (CDES), which sought to encourage the ‘progressive ideology’ of many Catholic dioceses in Kenya.<sup>11</sup> Equally notable was the movement of ‘radical’ members of the ‘Catholic Mafia’ into Oxfam over the next ten years.<sup>12</sup> Yet although Oxfam’s tactical focus was now trained at a local level in Kenya, the state remained the ultimate strategic target of its efforts: as Behr admitted, ‘until governments... take action themselves then little positive [outcome] will result’. While the organisation’s own attempts to encourage the government to take responsibility for

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<sup>9</sup> O. Anacleto, ‘New Initiative in Development: Development and Developers in the Third World’, 4 September, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 African Field Directors’ Conference, 1984.

<sup>10</sup> Behr would soon take this approach to Zimbabwe, where he helped to create the Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP). M. Behr, ‘Oxfam in Africa’, July, 1979, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/6 Folder 1: May 1979 – November 1979.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Report on Eastern Africa’, March, 1981, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/7 Folder 1: January 1981 – July 1981.

<sup>12</sup> Phrase used by former Oxfam staff member in interview with author no. XII, 5 December, 2014. See also ‘Kenya Biannual Report’, 10-11 January, 1991, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12 Folder 6: Kenya Biannual Report, November 1989 – October 1990. Kenyan churches played a vital role in challenging the Moi regime’s authoritarianism. Yet despite it being well understood that churches were the drivers of critique in Moi-era Kenya, the collaboration between internal and external civil society actors requires more research. Because of its partnership with radical churches Oxfam would provide a good window into this moment of possibility; unfortunately, for Oxfam, such research is not feasible until project reports are catalogued in 2017. See J-F. Bayart, ‘Civil Society in Africa’, in P. Chabal (ed.), *Political Domination in Africa* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 112-119; M. Bratton, ‘Civil Society and Political Transitions in Africa’, in J. Harbeson, D. Rothchild and N. Chazan (eds.), *Civil Society and the State in Africa* (Boulder, Colo., Lynne Rienner, 1994), pp. 52-76.

politically and economically marginal areas had failed, it hoped that 'more notice will be taken if the pressure comes from the Third World itself' and that by mobilising local communities to challenge the government it could force the latter 'to recognise and face up to their role and responsibilities in the development process'.<sup>13</sup>

Oxfam was, therefore, hopeful about the potential for work from the bottom up; however, it did not lionise the 'local' in Kenya in the manner of later development theorists who, in their determination to condemn the totalising logic of the big project, valorise the small-scale initiative in a rather broad-brush and uncritical manner.<sup>14</sup> Campbell understood that Kenyan civil society was fragmented along ethnic lines and lacked the 'spirit of altruism, of national consciousness and responsibility' present in places such as India: 'attitudes towards development, indeed towards survival', noted one report, 'are much more tribally based'.<sup>15</sup> Aside from displaying ethnic preference, many local organisations in Kenya were also used as vehicles for elite accumulation. A bureaucratic bourgeoisie, finding itself under pressure as the state withered under structural adjustment, established or took control over many local NGOs to enable 'a needed diversification of patronage resources'.<sup>16</sup> For this reason Oxfam seconded Rob Rees as an agricultural adviser to the Catholic diocese of Meru to help the organisation find true *harambee* projects as opposed to the 'help yourself' variant that was becoming increasingly common.<sup>17</sup> Although there was little quantifiable evidence of success – a particular difficulty with empowerment approaches to development – by the early 1980s Oxfam was confident that Rees' efforts to encourage farmers to 'form groups, identify problems and seek solutions' was having an impact on the attitudes and actions of groups with whom he worked. Reports documented that farmers were 'questioning the status quo and putting pressure on local government structures' for the first time.<sup>18</sup> A later review of Rees' work with the Kamujine Farmers' Centre and Women's Programme at

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<sup>13</sup> M. Behr, 'Oxfam in Africa', July, 1979, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/6 Folder 1: May 1979 – November 1979; 'Report on Eastern Africa', March, 1981, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/7 Folder 1: January 1981 – July 1981.

<sup>14</sup> J. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, (Yale University Press, 1998); cf. Crewe and Harrison, *Whose Development?*, p. 171.

<sup>15</sup> 'Annual Report, Kenya and South Sudan', 26 August, 1983, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/9 Folder 2: July 1983 – October 1983.

<sup>16</sup> Julie Hearn quotes one donor who explained that 'there are basically four ways of making money in Kenya – coffee, tea, tourism and aid – and since the first three are spoken for, the last remains the only option'. Hearn, 'African NGOs: The New Compradors?', p. 1103. See also I. Gary, 'Confrontation, Co-operation or Co-optation: NGOs and the Ghanaian State during Structural Adjustment', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 68 (1996), p. 163; Dicklitch, *The Elusive Promise of NGOs in Africa*, p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> 'Report on Eastern Africa', May, 1978, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/5 Folder 2: January 1978 – January 1979.

<sup>18</sup> 'Report on Eastern Africa', March, 1981, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/7 Folder 1: January 1981 – July 1981.

Meru noted that the group had successfully pressed local government staff into enforcing agricultural regulations for the benefit of small farmers.<sup>19</sup>

Yet just as empowerment work was gaining ground in many radical dioceses across Kenya, the authoritarian Moi regime clamped down on civil society activity and sought to entrench state control over Kenyan development. As described in chapter one, Moi used the failed coup attempt of 1982 to justify dismantling opposition to his government, and thus civil society actors who promoted ‘foreign ideologies’ like empowerment faced the threat of torture and imprisonment.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Campbell reported in 1983 that at least one Oxfam partner was arrested at the time of the coup, taken to a provincial jail and tortured using electric shocks.<sup>21</sup> However, perhaps more concerning for Moi than ‘evil’ ideologies was the fact that members of NGOs and local organisations were primed to shed light on his attempt to reorient the development priorities of the Kenyan state towards his ethno-regional support base. At a time of structural adjustment and reduced levels of patronage, revelations concerning the skewed nature of Kenyan development would have posed a threat to Moi’s hitherto unchallenged ability to direct state resources. Hence the President attempted to silence criticism of his development agenda through intimidation. Meanwhile, numerous donor-led drives to document district-level government spending or to chart the status and location of all public infrastructure projects – both of which made transparent the informal and murky budgetary allocation process and the relationship between ethnic interests and public sector investment – were mothballed in the 1980s under pressure from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, local and international NGOs posed a more latent, but no less dangerous, threat to the legitimacy of the state itself. Chapter two demonstrated that during the Kenyatta era of stable economic growth and increasing bilateral aid flows, NGOs were regarded as a complement to the developmental state. In contrast, during the early 1980s Kenyan growth stalled, structural adjustment conditionalities pared away parts of the state, and donors became increasingly convinced that routing their funding through NGOs was an improvement on bilateral agreements with corrupt governments

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<sup>19</sup> ‘Kamujene Farmers’ Centre and Women’s Programme – Meru District’, July, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Annual Report, Kenya and South Sudan’, 26 August, 1983, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/9 Folder 2: July 1983 – October 1983.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Annual Report, Kenya and South Sudan’, 26 August, 1983, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/9 Folder 2: July 1983 – October 1983.

<sup>22</sup> Cohen, *Ethnicity, Foreign Aid, and Economic Growth*, pp. 18-19.

unable to fulfil basic tasks.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, while NGOs flourished, the Kenyan government was struggling to fulfil rising expectations. In a nation whose legitimacy was bound tightly with the ability of the state to deliver development and services to the *wananchi*, this was politically dangerous for the ruling elite. Government sensitivity was, no doubt, piqued further by the fact that NGOs like Oxfam still relied heavily on expatriate staff.<sup>24</sup> As the decade wore on, the development space in Kenya became increasingly politicised.<sup>25</sup> A confidential letter from the Chief Secretary at the Office of the President reveals one attempt to maintain control over the rhetoric surrounding development interventions. Written to all Permanent Secretaries and Provincial Commissioners, the letter sought to ‘draw your attention to an undesirable practice... which must be stopped for the sake of good image of the Government [sic]’. The author urged government officers to stop embarrassing the government by referring to foreign aid in a manner that suggested that the funds or materials donated belonged to the donors and not the government. ‘The credit given to the donors’, the letter fulminated, ‘is superfluous and unjustified. It should be understood that funds and equipment, once borrowed or donated, belong to the Government’. The author advised that individuals who initiate projects using a bank loan do not credit the bank if the project turns out to be a success: ‘the credit for success... goes to the borrower and not to the bank’. In such a way, he reasoned, credit for projects funded by donors should always go to the government.<sup>26</sup>

As well as attempting to control the rhetoric surrounding foreign aid, the government looked to establish more concrete ways of controlling NGO inputs. In 1983 the state forced NGOs to re-register their operations in what one interviewee called a ‘clumsy effort to get a grip of NGOs’.<sup>27</sup> The District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD)

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<sup>23</sup> Structural adjustment programmes, of course, undermined the ability of the state to deliver its basic functions.

<sup>24</sup> Oxfam’s first Kenyan Assistant Field Director was hired only in 1983, and soon left under acrimonious circumstances. There was no Kenyan Field Director (or Country Representative as it was then known) until 1999. The lack of Kenyan staff contrasts markedly with the situation in Tanzania, where locals were much more heavily involved in the management of the NGO by the mid-1980s. According to one interviewee, this helps to explain the level of tension between Oxfam and the Kenya government during this period. Interview with author no. V, 12 January, 2015; Interview with author no. XI, 4 December, 2014; Interview with author no. VIII, 6 November, 2014; ‘From Ideas to Reality: The Work of Oxfam’s Programme Officers in Kenya’, January 1990, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/9 Folder 11.

<sup>25</sup> Kanyinga, ‘The Politics of Development Space in Kenya’, in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, p. 70.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Statements on Foreign Aid by Government Officers’, 21 January, 1983, KNA, Development General, BB/13/33.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with author no. V, 12 January, 2015.

initiative also sought to integrate NGO activities into development frameworks created by government officials in District Development Committees (DDCs). Under DFRD, NGOs were required to attend DDCs and subordinate committees and NGO activities required DDC approval.<sup>28</sup> A government seminar on DFRD spoke of the need for DDCs to 'be conversant with and monitor the progress of all the projects that are foreign funded or aided', and reminded officials that 'money for foreign projects should be channelled through the district treasuries...'.<sup>29</sup> Many NGOs saw this not only as a blatant power grab by the government, but also as an attempt to interfere with development activities to neutralise their emancipatory content while redirecting them towards politically important regions and constituencies.<sup>30</sup> In the prevailing atmosphere, however, Oxfam and its development partners were careful to use only a 'mild version of Freirian dialogue and to not take too 'political' an approach 'for fear of antagonising the increasingly sensitive government'.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, the CDES – Oxfam's partner as regards Catholic development interventions – was forced to disband in 1983 following government 'investigations' into its activities during the coup attempt. Alan Fowler argues that the success of the CDES in changing the attitudes of Kenyans and highlighting the injustices of the development system using Freirian methods simply posed too much of a threat to the state.<sup>32</sup> The government clampdown on Catholic priests and increased state surveillance necessarily 'put a brake on' Oxfam's 'radical' work with the churches. According to one interviewee, very few agencies were properly subversive, but they were seen as threatening by a government racked with paranoia.<sup>33</sup> It was, therefore, pragmatic for Oxfam not to be too closely associated with such 'dangerous' elements.

If empowerment work was becoming increasingly treacherous in Kenya, this was not necessarily an occasion for regret for Oxfam's Field Director, who was less than enamoured with the idea as expressed by 'intellectuals' from Oxford with little understanding of work in the field. Indeed, soon after his arrival in Africa, Campbell criticised Oxfam's tactical approach to Kenya as misconceived and based on a faulty

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<sup>28</sup> Kanyinga, 'The Politics of Development Space in Kenya', in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>29</sup> 'Seminar on District Focus for Rural Development – Paper by the Provincial Commissioner (Embu)', 17 May, 1984, KNA, Development General, BB/13/33.

<sup>30</sup> Kanyinga, 'The Politics of Development Space in Kenya', in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>31</sup> 'Annual Report, Kenya and South Sudan 1982-83', 26 August, 1983, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/9 Folder 2: July 1983 – October 1983.

<sup>32</sup> Fowler, 'The Role of NGOs in Changing State-Society Relations', p. 58.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with author no. V, 12 January, 2015.

optimism, present from the start of its work in Kenya, that Oxfam could be a ‘catalyst’ in the process of social change.<sup>34</sup> In contrast to Behr and Anacleiti, Campbell felt that ‘there are many groups who want advice from really experienced agriculturalists and who would benefit from small inputs we could provide, rather than the less specific approach, based on Freirian dialogue,’ pursued by Rob Rees in Meru.<sup>35</sup> Seeking to provide an antidote ‘to the epidemics of megalomania and naïveté which from time to time sweep through Banbury Road and our Field Offices’, he reminded his colleagues that Oxfam was a small agency in a part of the world where size was a crucial factor. Moreover, since Field Directors still retained a great deal of influence in their respective geographical spheres (both because they had their feet on the ground and because control was more difficult in an age of telex and infrequent telephone conversation), Campbell had the freedom to shape the Kenya programme in a more ‘technical’ direction. An unfolding drought situation in Turkana provided the opportunity to do so, and strengthened the position of those who advocated technical inputs ahead of conscientisation. As two of Campbell’s contemporaries observed, although conscientisation and empowerment were important, Oxfam could not turn its back on immediate need ‘as some in the organisation seemed to think’: empowerment ‘to be able to watch livestock die because there are no functioning vet services’ was not really empowerment at all.<sup>36</sup>

### ‘ANIMALS OF STRANGERS’

In the 1983-84 drought, over 80 per cent of cattle and small stock (goats and sheep) and 40 per cent of camels died in Turkana, forcing 80,000 pastoralists – around half the population – to head for famine camps.<sup>37</sup> Yet if Campbell was to put a more technical approach into action in response to this crisis, he faced a significant problem: with the exception of religious groups (who often attempted to proselytise using offers of stock)

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<sup>34</sup> ‘Annual Report for Kenya, Sudan and Uganda, 1981/82’, 22 July, 1982, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/8 Folder 1: March 1982 – July 1982.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Annual Report for Kenya, Sudan and Uganda, 1981/82’, 22 July, 1982, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/8 Folder 1: March 1982 – July 1982.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with author no. V, 12 January, 2015; Interview with author no. VI, 1 September, 2014.

<sup>37</sup> R. Hogg, ‘The New Pastoralism: Poverty and Dependency in Northern Kenya’, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (1986), p. 322.

there were no established local groups through whom Oxfam could work in Turkana.<sup>38</sup> Direct collaboration with the authoritarian Moi state was, predictably, considered inappropriate, particularly since the government was more concerned with securing its own position than with providing relief during drought to bothersome pastoralists.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Campbell was sceptical of the value of previous Oxfam efforts alongside the state in Turkana and hired external consultants to advise on the best way forward for the organisation in the region. These consultants helped to convince Campbell (and Oxfam as a whole) that its work in Turkana, centred as it was on settlement and irrigation, had in fact contributed to the destruction of pastoral systems. As Brian Hartley outlined at a Field Directors' meeting in late 1982, the continued marginalisation and underdevelopment of pastoral regions could be traced back to

prejudices against nomads and the nomadic way of life through the misguided belief that sedentary livestock operations are preferable, and the desire of Government to control the people and offer them social services... backed by outside influences... such as Non-Governmental Organizations.<sup>40</sup>

The meeting criticised the 'fallacy of the "settle the nomad" policy' (when survival in the region depended on mobility), the adverse effect of government sponsored development projects to create irrigation schemes (which 'destroy strategic dry season grazing reserves'), the 'negative attitude of Government officials to the needs of nomadic and semi-nomadic groups', and the introduction of new water points (which attracted sedentary populations and destroyed rangeland).<sup>41</sup> The meeting concluded that Turkana had been 'messed up by earlier aid policies', and that Oxfam had helped cause disarray in the region.<sup>42</sup> As Campbell wrote later, 'archaic and troublesome relics as they seem to many modern Kenyans, [pastoralists] are in many ways the best equipped to exploit

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<sup>38</sup> J. Moris, 'Oxfam's Kenya Restocking Projects', paper presented at Oxfam's Arid Lands Management Workshop, March 1987.

<sup>39</sup> In fact, during the drought crisis Moi preferred to channel relief funds to maize-growing centres rather than pastoralist areas in order to bolster his political support. 'Annual Report Kenya and South Sudan', 16 January, 1985, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/11 Folder 1: January 1985 – April 1985; M. Jerven, 'Revisiting the Consensus on Kenyan Economic Growth, 1964-95', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2011), p. 16; R. Bates, 'The Politics of Food Crisis in Kenya', in Schatzberg (ed.), *The Political Economy of Kenya*, pp. 75-92.

<sup>40</sup> B. Hartley, 'Working with Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Pastoralists', presented at the Field Directors' meeting, 4-9 October, 1982, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Nairobi Conference, 1982.

<sup>41</sup> B. Hartley, 'Working with Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Pastoralists', presented at the Field Directors' meeting, 4-9 October, 1982, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Nairobi Conference, 1982.

<sup>42</sup> 'Meeting of Africa Field Staff, Nairobi', 4-10 October, 1982, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/8 Folder 2: October 1982.

[northern Kenya]'.<sup>43</sup> The Kenya government's continued commitment to 'disastrous' irrigation schemes and settlement – the theme of Wajir's agricultural show opened by the Provincial Commissioner in 1984 was 'discouraging nomadism' – thus provided yet another reason for Oxfam to avoid direct partnership with the state.<sup>44</sup> The impact of conscientisation ideology on Oxfam also ensured that its staff understood more clearly by this point the fact that the state had a vested interest in stigmatising pastoralists as backward in order to justify intervention 'in the name of "development"', whereas they actually 'aimed at controlling or changing or destroying them'.<sup>45</sup> In truth, Campbell wrote, while the government's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands paper of 1979 focused on settlement and alternatives to pastoralism, 'lurking in the minds of the policy makers and other powerful people is often the intention to take eventually the land [sic] out of the hands of the pastoralists altogether and for it to be ranched by others'.<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, the Field Director concluded that if Oxfam wanted to support the pastoral sector as the most appropriate way of life in the region, it had to undertake intervention alone and become operational. In the context of drought and widespread livestock deaths, the first major intervention that Oxfam initiated aimed to restock destitute pastoralists to enable them to return to the pastoral sector. Campbell did not consider that Oxfam could act as the saviour of pastoralism, however; rather, following the thread which runs through all of Oxfam's work in Kenya to this point, he wished to provide an example that the government could follow. Indeed, he outlined clearly that if successful in this 'radical departure from most hitherto tried and implemented pastoral development programmes' – which had made pastoralists 'more not less vulnerable to drought' – Oxfam would 'try to persuade the government... that it should be adopted on a wider scale'.<sup>47</sup> Thus although no longer working directly with the state, Oxfam and its staff retained hope that its restocking effort would influence the state as the central

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<sup>43</sup> D. Campbell, 'Oxfam's Work with Nomadic Pastoralists in Kenya, 1981-84', September, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 African Field Directors' Conference, 1984.

<sup>44</sup> 'Wajir Annual Report', 1984, KNA, SA/15/60; See also Isiolo's annual report from the same year, which spoke of the 'unlimited efforts' the government was making to settle the population: 'Isiolo District Annual Report', 1984, KNA, ACJ/4/2; 'Minutes of the Africa Field Committee', 27 October, 1983, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/9 Folder 2: July 1983 – October 1983.

<sup>45</sup> 'Annual Report Kenya and South Sudan', 16 January, 1985, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/11 Folder 1: January 1985 – April 1985.

<sup>46</sup> 'Annual Report, Kenya and South Sudan 1982-83', 26 August, 1983, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/9 Folder 2: July 1983 – October 1983.

<sup>47</sup> R. Hogg, 'Re-stocking Pastoralists in Kenya: A Strategy for Relief and Rehabilitation', paper presented to the Overseas Development Institute, February, 1985, p. 9; D. Campbell, 'Oxfam's Work with Nomadic Pastoralists in Kenya, 1981-84', September, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 African Field Directors' Conference, 1984.

stakeholder for development in the country: tactical change only partially disguised strategic continuity, therefore.

Pastoralists do, of course, maintain their own 'traditional' restocking networks. Unfortunately, these are less efficient in severe drought or famine situations when stock levels drop precipitously and obligations to fellow pastoralists are relaxed. Moreover, as commercialisation and settlement took root in this period (inspired by government and development agency interventions), a divergence between rich and poor pastoralists became increasingly marked. This stratification helped to undermine traditional restocking networks, as wealthier pastoralists were much better insulated from disaster and more capable of ignoring calls to help fellow pastoralists (which were always to a certain extent based on reciprocity).<sup>48</sup> As Richard Hogg – an anthropologist affiliated with the Overseas Development Institute – reported to Oxfam in 1980, Boran in Isiolo with over 1,000 stock did not look to help friends or relatives as earlier traditions of reciprocity and the collective pooling of risk had corroded.<sup>49</sup> Following Hogg's advice, therefore, Oxfam established a pilot restocking project in Isiolo in September 1983. The programme aimed to encourage 70 families to move out from the Malka Daka irrigation scheme, where overstocking and an acute dependence on subsidies had become prevalent after the FAO and UNDP withdrew in 1980.<sup>50</sup> The organisation noted that the irrigation schemes had failed without traditional restocking taking their place and recognised the importance of supporting traditional mechanisms of stock redistribution. Thus each of the 70 families chosen for restocking by the project leader received 50 small stock as a gift. In such a way Oxfam hoped to repair at least some of the 'harm done by... expensive blunders' in the region.<sup>51</sup> The scheme would cost on average around £800 per family, or one-fifteenth of the cost of irrigation schemes.<sup>52</sup> Families were also given maize (contributed by WFP) to hold off stock sales by meeting food needs for long enough to allow each flock the time to increase in number. In May 1984 (likely before it was possible

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<sup>48</sup> Wealthier pastoralists often benefitted from short-lived crises, which forced poorer pastoralists to sell their stock at reduced prices. Anderson, 'Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Restocking', pp. 248-251; Moris, 'Oxfam's Kenya Restocking Projects'.

<sup>49</sup> R. Hogg, 'Pastoralism and Impoverishment: The Case of the Isiolo Boran of Northern Kenya', *Disasters*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1980), pp. 299-310; R. Hogg, 'The Politics of Drought: The Pauperization of Isiolo Boran', *Disasters*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1985), pp. 35-43.

<sup>50</sup> The majority of the 1,800 Boran settled there remained only out of hope that a new donor would rescue the project. Hogg, 'Irrigation Agriculture and Pastoral Development', pp. 581-589.

<sup>51</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Field Committee', 27 October, 1983, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/9 Folder 2: July 1983 – October 1983.

<sup>52</sup> Hogg, 'Re-stocking Pastoralists in Kenya', pp. 5-10; Moris, 'Oxfam's Kenya Restocking Projects'.

to fully evaluate the success of the pilot scheme), the Isiolo restocking programme was replicated in Kalabata, Turkana: there, ten families received 70 small stock each.<sup>53</sup>

To put these efforts in perspective, however, over 11,000 families were still registered at government food-for-work sites in Turkana alone. Accordingly, the tentative evidence coming out from Isiolo that restocked families had severed 'their long dependence on food aid' and moved back into the pastoral sector was enough to convince the Field Director and his external consultants that a more ambitious restocking programme could, and should, be undertaken in Turkana. The programme drawn up for acceptance by Oxford in July 1984 was on a much larger scale than the pilot schemes: it aimed to restock 500 families over two years with flocks of 50 small stock. The restocked families were encouraged not to sell or gift stock to other pastoralists, but to use them only to re-establish themselves in the pastoral sector. The cost of the programme, £124,750, was much greater than any previous Oxfam intervention in Kenya and was particularly significant since the government, 'deprived of funds in the public sector, [was] able to do very little' in the region.<sup>54</sup> Though small in scale when looked at from a broader national development perspective, Oxfam thus had a considerable presence in pastoral areas like Turkana, where its finances, organisational capacity, skills and knowledge (built up as one of very few agencies present there over the longer-term) were in great demand. Moreover, along with other operational programmes (discussed below) the scheme helped to push Oxfam spending in Kenya to over £500,000 for the year. This marked a significant departure for the organisation in scale and operability, but given the emergency circumstances, the Africa Committee approved the application without much comment.<sup>55</sup>

Yet as the programme got underway, the difficulty of restocking even 500 of the 11,000 destitute Turkana families became apparent, and a year into the effort Campbell admitted that 200 was a more realistic target. Even to reach this smaller target the scheme required a cash injection of over £50,000, taking the overall cost to £176,975.

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<sup>53</sup> Hogg, 'Re-stocking Pastoralists in Kenya', p. 8.

<sup>54</sup> NORAD had, to a certain extent, taken on Oxfam's previous role in support of the Ministry of Agriculture in Turkana, but funding for the region was still notoriously limited. Due to the 30-year rule at the KNA and the lack of sources on marginalized regions such as Turkana, it is impossible to know exactly how limited, but Oxfam makes frequent references to the lack of government spending in the area. 'Minutes of the Field Committee for Africa', 27 October, 1983, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/9 Folder 2: July 1983 – October 1983; 'Ministry of Agriculture: Browse and Fodder Trials', October, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986.

<sup>55</sup> 'Applications for Consideration', 19 July, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/10 Folder 2: July 1984 – October 1984; 'Minutes of the Field Committee for Africa', 19 July, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/10 Folder 2: July 1984 – October 1984.

This more than tripled the cost per family from just under £250 to over £880. The Africa Committee accepted, with some reluctance, the high per capita cost (which, in fact, worked out about the same as the Isiolo project), but noted that this leniency was only because the scheme was regarded as an essential pilot initiative.<sup>56</sup> The target of 200 families was finally reached in April 1986.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, compared with Isiolo – where the beneficiaries were fairly easy to select due to the failure of the irrigation scheme – selection of beneficiaries in Turkana had proved much more difficult due to the scale of the district and the scale of the problem. Furthermore, although the animals were given directly to pastoralists by Oxfam and were called ‘Ngiberen Ngimoi’ (‘animals of strangers’), local stock were identifiable and came with a history, meaning there were numerous claims and counter-claims against restocked animals. Often, questions arose over whether there remained any obligation (either in stock or in other resources) on behalf of the restocked pastoralist towards the person who had sold their stock to Oxfam. As the project expanded these problems became more acute: chiefs, local Councillors and MPs all became involved in selection, and there were frequent allegations that the recipients of stock were not sufficiently destitute to require restocking. The involvement of these interested parties helped to confuse issues of ownership and control over the stock even further, and uncertainty over the way the progeny of restocked animals could be used restricted attempts to reconstruct reciprocal relations with wealthier households. Finally, Oxfam’s inbuilt ideological bias to ‘bet on the weak’ (by discouraging those restocked from selling or gifting their stock to others) also meant that the constraints placed on pastoralists were far from ‘traditional’. Consequently, even a few years later only a small number of the original ‘restockees’ were able to fully sustain themselves using restocked herds alone: most relied on food aid as a supplement to pastoralism; a quarter returned to the settlement areas.<sup>58</sup>

Regardless of these setbacks and disappointments, the realisation that pastoralists had descended from ‘conjunctural’ to ‘structural’ poverty – a decline earlier development efforts had helped to encourage – ensured that Oxfam considered the schemes a

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<sup>56</sup> ‘Minutes of the Field Committee for Africa’, 18 October, 1985, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/11 Folder 2: July 1985 – October 1985; ‘Minutes of the Africa Field Committee’, 22 January, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/12 Folder 1: January 1986 – April 1986; ‘Minutes of the Africa Committee’, 23 April, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/12 Folder 1: January 1986 – April 1986.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Minutes of the Africa Committee’, 23 April, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/12 Folder 1: January 1986 – April 1986.

<sup>58</sup> Anderson, ‘Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Restocking’, pp. 253-254.

worthwhile effort.<sup>59</sup> Hence, the organisation started another operational programme in Samburu in July 1984. On this occasion, rather than attempting to reintegrate the destitute into pastoralism, Oxfam first concentrated on emergency destocking to enable pastoralists to exchange their dying stock for food. The animals were then slaughtered and the meat distributed locally, with the hides and skins sold in Nairobi to help support the scheme. These sales helped restrict the overall cost of the destocking effort to £27,765. As the rains improved in late 1984, destocking was no longer considered appropriate, and so Oxfam shifted to restocking pastoralists using an emergency grant of £51,680. The organisation distributed surplus animals (exchanged for maize) to those without stock, but the arrangement took the form of a loan from Oxfam to the pastoralist in order to stop the latter killing or redistributing animals as soon as they were received. The 'loan' was to be repaid after two and a half years and the repayments were to be used to restock other families.<sup>60</sup> In correspondence with Oxford, Campbell noted that the programme was the only substantial NGO intervention in the district at the time, and he soon requested over £200,000 in additional funding in order to meet the needs of the region. On this occasion, the Africa Committee was disinclined to provide the requested grant in full. Indeed, some members felt the emergency grants procedure had been used to try to pre-empt the Committee's decision on further support, since without such support, the original emergency grant would have been wasted.<sup>61</sup> Additional funding for Samburu restocking was, therefore, restricted to £131,384 and delayed until early 1986.<sup>62</sup> By late 1987, 186 pastoralist families had been successfully restocked.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, later reviews of the Samburu restocking effort would record that only 20 per cent of those restocked returned all the loaned animals and only one third of animals had been returned overall, which limited the second round of restocking.<sup>64</sup>

Notwithstanding the determination to make a success of the restocking projects, Oxfam did not focus exclusively on facilitating the exchange of stock during this period. In Turkana a two-year project to demonstrate rainwater harvesting for sorghum cultivation

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<sup>59</sup> Anderson, 'Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Restocking', p. 256; Interview with author no. V, 12 January, 2015.

<sup>60</sup> 'Applications for Consideration', 18 July, 1985, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/11 Folder 2: July 1985 – October 1985; 'Field Trip Report for Northern Districts of Kenya (CARE Kenya)', 17-18 December, 1984, KNA, Rural Development General, SA/7/3.

<sup>61</sup> 'Minutes of the Field Committee for Africa', 18 July, 1985, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/11 Folder 2: July 1985 – October 1985.

<sup>62</sup> 'Africa South Sub-Committee', 16 July, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/12 Folder 2: July 1986.

<sup>63</sup> Hogg, 'NGOs, Pastoralists and the Myth of Community', p. 138.

<sup>64</sup> Hogg, 'NGOs, Pastoralists and the Myth of Community', p. 138.

was established alongside the restocking effort in 1984. The project, which cost £45,640, aimed to build on Turkana knowledge of sorghum cultivation in 'gardens' (located in wet season grazing grounds) to supplement pastoral income. Oxfam hoped that the cultivation of sorghum, a traditional Turkana activity, would help the poorest pastoralists avoid the vicious circle during drought whereby: stock are sold for food, the value of stock plummets as more and more animals flood the market, pastoralists are forced to sell more animals to survive, and eventually they become stockless and destitute. The Turkana traditionally planted the sorghum crop after the first substantial rainfall of the year and then (because it was fast-maturing) harvested before the pastoralists moved away from the area.<sup>65</sup> Rainwater harvesting would, Oxfam believed, improve the reliability of sorghum cropping.<sup>66</sup> However, the project had limited impact: only 100 hectares of land received any benefit, while yields varied hugely depending on rainfall.<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, despite Oxfam's best efforts, its projects and programmes in pastoral areas were on such a small scale relative to the problems of pastoralism that their direct impact was always likely to be minimal: 'perhaps', as one interviewee concluded, 'it was unrealistic to wish to re-establish pastoralists' old way of life'.<sup>68</sup> Oxfam staff were more disappointed by the fact that the schemes seemed to have little impact on the government's attitude to pastoralists: they recalled that the government's embarrassment about these 'primitives' continued to grow during this period, and government officials still articulated openly their desire to see pastoralists settled and modernised. These officials were, though, content for Oxfam to continue to work towards rehabilitating a small number of pastoralists, since although Oxfam's interventions were not on a scale to pose any real challenge to state legitimacy they helped to cover for the government's lacklustre response to the crisis.<sup>69</sup> The government's own project in the region, the Turkana Rehabilitation Project, consisted largely of a quick-fix food distribution and was manipulated by government officers for personal and political gain.<sup>70</sup> Its funding from the European Community was withdrawn in the late 1980s after

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<sup>65</sup> 'Applications for Consideration', 19 July, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/10 Folder 2: July 1984 – October 1984.

<sup>66</sup> A. Cullis, 'Turkana Water Harvesting Project', February, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 4.

<sup>67</sup> Hogg, 'NGOs, Pastoralists and the Myth of Community', p. 135.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with author no. V, 12 January, 2015.

<sup>69</sup> It is unlikely that the government would have made much effort there in any case, since the area was solidly KANU, but Oxfam's work at least excused government inaction.

<sup>70</sup> 'A Review of Oxfam's Approach to Relief Food Distribution in Samburu and Turkana, 1992/3', October, 1993, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/5/5/8 Folder 2: Kenya, 1992-1993.

revelations of gross mismanagement and fraud.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, the Oxfam schemes brought in resources, which chiefs and MPs hoped to appropriate either physically or rhetorically (by claiming credit for Oxfam's work) for use in consolidating their political support-base.<sup>72</sup> Thus Oxfam's Turkana restocking project for a time garnered a 'high political profile' as MPs tried (without success) to force the expulsion of expatriate consultants in an attempt to control the distribution effort.<sup>73</sup>

### 'OUR VOICE DOES NOT EVEN AMOUNT TO A WHISPER'

Although Oxfam's operational projects in Kenya were small in relation to the problems facing pastoralism, they were, nonetheless, large enough to present something of a departure from the normal mode of operations for the organisation. As shown in Figure 7, Oxfam spending in Kenya increased markedly in nominal terms, more than doubling from around £225,000 in 1983-84 to over £500,000 in 1984-85. Deflated to 1974 values in order to compare with Oxfam's earlier efforts, the jump is no less dramatic, and though it reveals that the scale of the spending did not match the peaks in the optimism of the 1960s, it demonstrates that Oxfam was still spending more in relative terms than at any point since 1968-69. Moreover, as Figure 8 reveals, a higher proportion of this increased spending was coming from Oxfam operational projects. Whereas the organisation had spent nothing on operating alone in Kenya before 1980-81,<sup>74</sup> and then dedicated only a minimal amount – around two per cent of its overall outlay – to operational work before 1983-84, in 1984-85 Oxfam operational spending accounted for over 50 per cent of its budget in Kenya. Operational work continued to receive more than 45 per cent of the organisation's total spend for the next two years. In fact, fluctuations in Oxfam's operational work (since operational expenditure was phased over time) helped to dictate the overall trend of its spending in Kenya. Oxfam was, therefore, not only spending much

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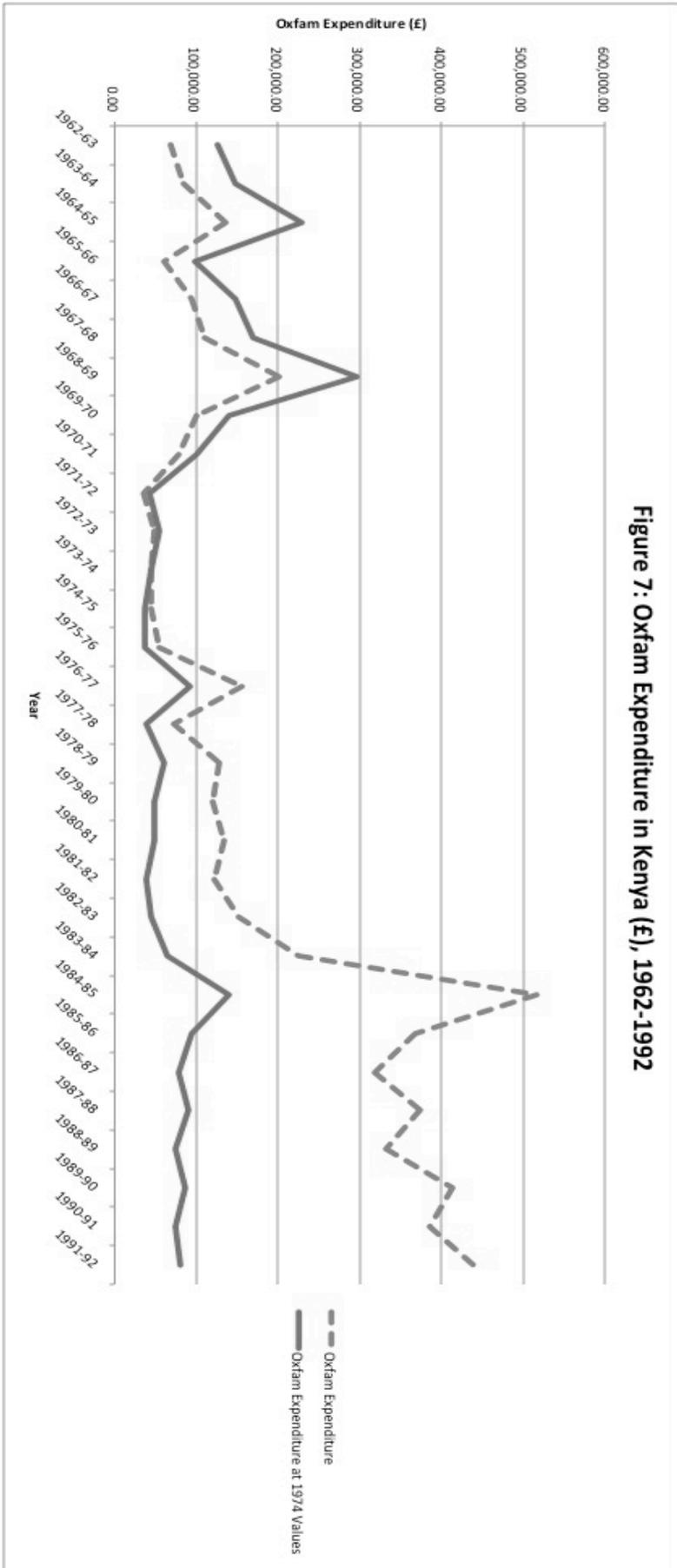
<sup>71</sup> 'A Review of Oxfam's Approach to Relief Food Distribution in Samburu and Turkana, 1992/3', October, 1993, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/5/5/8 Folder 2: Kenya, 1992-1993.

<sup>72</sup> Interviews confirmed that the latter was a much more common occurrence, as it was harder to trace and counter. Interview with author no. V, 12 January, 2015; Interview with author no. XI, 4 December, 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Ironically, as chapter four illustrates, the replacement of expatriate experts with Oxfam staff employed from the local area would soon place the position of these MPs under much greater threat. 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1985 – November 1986', 21 January, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 2: January 1987.

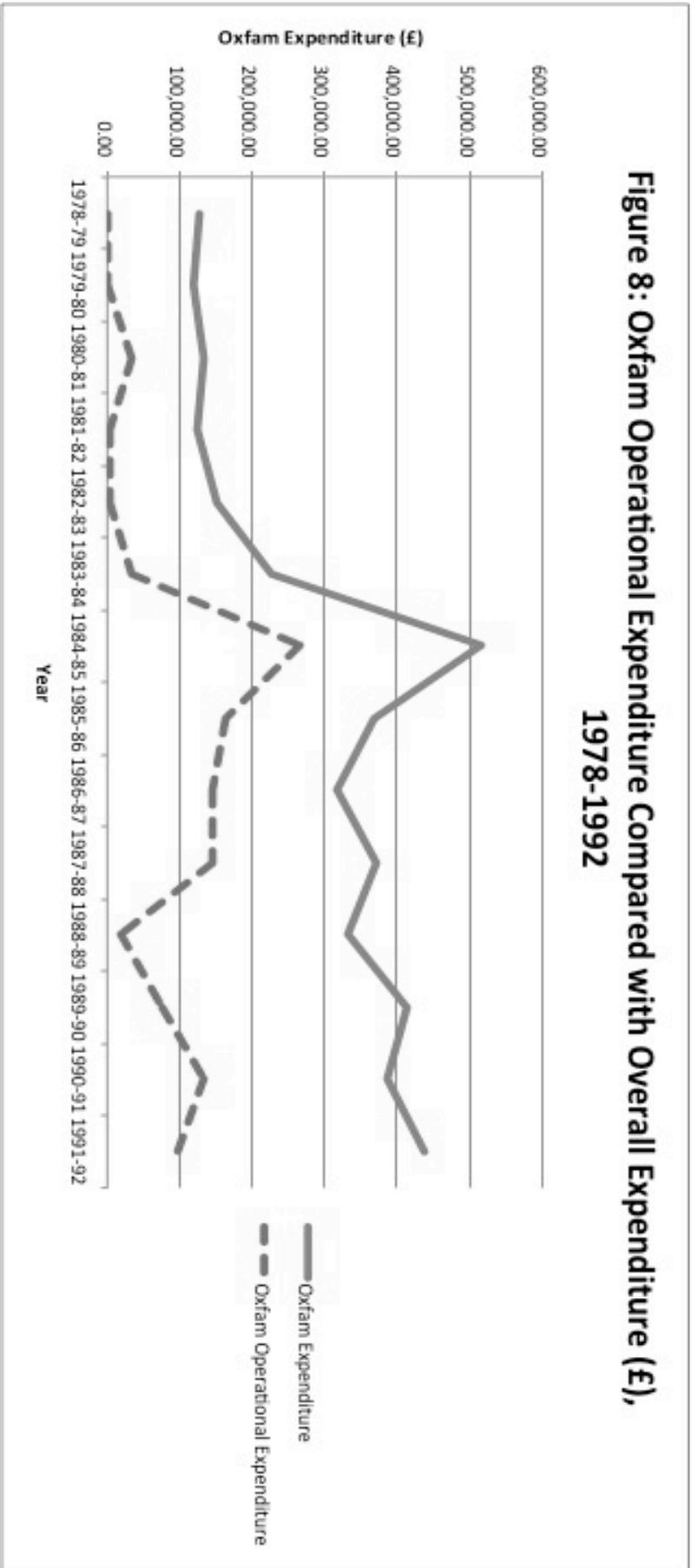
<sup>74</sup> The small spike in Oxfam operational spending at this time is due to the purchase of equipment and payment of salaries for emergency work during the 1979/80 drought.

**Figure 7: Oxfam Expenditure in Kenya (£), 1962-1992**



Source: Grants lists 1962/63 to 2003/04. As yet uncatalogued at the Bodleian Library.

**Figure 8: Oxfam Operational Expenditure Compared with Overall Expenditure (£), 1978-1992**



Source: Grants lists 1962/63 to 2003/04. As yet uncatalogued at the Bodleian Library.

more in Kenya than a few years previously, but was doing so because it had, for this period at least, altered its *modus operandi* to become an operational NGO.

As discussed above, the move towards 'operationality' in Kenya was a tactical shift that reflected the situation on the ground (drought and the lack of viable partners) and also the favourable attitude of the Field Director towards more technical interventions. But such a move was only possible in a period of increased income for the organisation as a whole, and this came about partly as a result of the surge in donations following Oxfam's high-profile role in the relief effort as regards the Ethiopian famine: during the early-to-mid-1980s Oxfam income would increase at a rate of around 20 per cent per annum. In Oxford, the Africa Committee debated the implications of this newfound wealth during 1985 and 1986. Peter Wiles, the area co-ordinator for Africa, noted in late 1985 the 'pressures on Oxfam to gear up our work and to embark on larger projects because of the fashionable support for NGOs in international circles'. He warned that 'these pressures need to be handled carefully, and it seems to me that we should continue to campaign and press for the large bi- and multi-lateral agencies to improve their own work, rather than take on work which they themselves should be doing'. Nonetheless, he also cautioned that Oxfam should

avoid the 'head-in-the-small-project syndrome' and look to where our work is going in broader terms... [since] we now have the opportunity provided by the amazing successes of our fundraisers to think more widely and look for opportunities which a few years ago would have been unthinkable for Oxfam.<sup>75</sup>

The debate over the future direction of Oxfam's work began in earnest a few months later in response to a paper written by Jeremy Swift. Swift was a member of the Africa South Sub-Committee and was thus closely involved with Oxfam's work in Kenya – particularly in the pastoral regions; indeed, the Kenya programme would be an important marker in the debate as its contemporary form pointed to one possible tactic for Oxfam in these circumstances: to scale up its operations and become an implementing agency. Swift's paper opened by outlining his concern that 'conditions in Africa and the scale of Oxfam's resources are changing so rapidly that what has been right hitherto may not automatically be so in the future'. He argued that the failure of development in the 1980s – which had left people in marginalised places such as Turkana worse off than in 1960 – together with the collapse of many African states under external pressure, would likely

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<sup>75</sup> 'Area Co-ordinator for Africa – Annual Report, October 1984 – September 1985', 18 September, 1985, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/11 Folder 2: July 1985 – October 1985.

encourage a continuation in the upward trajectory of NGO funding. How Oxfam responded to that funding, he believed, would define the organisation for good or ill. Noting the small scale of NGO projects in comparison to those initiated by governmental agencies and IFIs, Swift lamented that ‘even a long record of NGO successes does not ensure that things improve for people other than the small group of primary beneficiaries’. Given the scale of problems he witnessed in Africa, and especially in the pastoral areas of Kenya and other sub-Saharan countries, ‘a few small, sensitive and largely successful projects may not make much of a dent in the overall crisis’. Consequently, Oxfam faced a choice between three possibilities: first, the organisation could continue to work on small projects, such as teaching Turkana pastoralists to fish, but do more of them; second, they could scale up operations into the middle ground, replicating the approach taken to restocking in Kenya (albeit with more beneficiaries) ‘in an attempt to operate on a scale that could conceivably make an impact on the African crisis’; third, Oxfam could seek out partnerships with larger organisations such as the World Bank and International Monetary fund to operate on large scale projects with budgets in the tens of millions of dollars. From his experience in pastoral areas, Swift considered the first option unsatisfactory, if not wasteful. Instead, he recommended that Oxfam should work towards middle ground, integrated programmes in defined areas, and pointed to the work done in Turkana as an example of what Oxfam should be doing across Africa. Furthermore, Swift believed that Oxfam ought to make use of its increased visibility to force its way into the formation of development policy by governments and IFIs in order to ensure that its constituents were not ignored under pressure for ‘mindless market liberalisation’. In such a manner, Swift hoped that Oxfam would replicate the approach taken in Kenya, bypassing ‘increasingly inefficient central governments’ with midi-sized implementation projects, but using these projects to justify its involvement with policy advocacy.<sup>76</sup> For Swift, the state remained at the heart of the development endeavour, but rather than working as a gadfly to gently sting the state so that it would heed Oxfam’s ideas, he argued that Oxfam should use its newfound wealth to scale up into something much more forceful in order to compel the state to come to the table and (re)consider its methods.

Swift’s paper was discussed briefly at the April 1986 Africa Committee meeting, and participants agreed that it raised fundamental questions about models of

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<sup>76</sup> J. Swift, ‘Oxfam’s Future Work in Africa’, tabled at Africa Committee Meeting on 23 April, 1986 (but widely circulated beforehand), OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/12 Folder 1: January 1986 – April 1986.

development 'in the context of widespread failure and the absence of coherent theory'. The latter was a global malaise: the 'Washington consensus' was far from consensual as many development organisations, including Oxfam, challenged the market-led approach of structural adjustment. At the same time, the empowerment philosophy as articulated by Anacleiti and others was placed under severe strain by the scale of the crises enveloping Africa and the decisions of those on the ground to implement emergency operational programmes such as the one found in Kenya. Involved in the meeting was Frank Judd, a former labour MP and Minister for Overseas Development, who had recently been appointed as Oxfam Director. He concurred with Swift that although the organisation's reputation 'rested on its experience at the micro-level', and in spite of evidence of success in individual projects, 'the war is not being won and more people are poor'. He thus bemoaned the fact that whenever Oxfam was challenged to do more 'we tend to become defensive and worried that we will be spoiled'. Predictably, Judd would later advocate a much bigger, and much more political, role for Oxfam in the international arena.<sup>77</sup> The Committee would accept Swift and Judd's argument that 'there is a crisis for NGOs in Africa because we are losing out to the dominant political and economic powers dominating [the continent]'; but, unlike Swift, it did not make any recommendations as to how Oxfam should resolve this situation. Instead, it resolved that the next Committee meeting would debate the issue, and asked members of the Committee to prepare papers on their own position.<sup>78</sup>

One Committee member firmly supportive of Swift was Ingrid Palmer, who wrote that the emergence of a general crisis in Africa combined with the recent increase in Oxfam's resources raised questions about the impact the organisation was having on the major problems confronting the continent. Africa, she contended, required a wholesale change 'rather than numerous disassociated projects'. Instead of Oxfam continuing to 'delve away separately on projects which try to retain a "pure" basis', Palmer argued that the bulk of its resources should go towards working alongside official development agencies or towards participation in 'sectoral' programmes, and she foresaw Oxfam sharing 'in mainstream economic and social development with the very large funders'. At the same time, a scaled-up Oxfam could 'help governments to stand up to the IMF/World Bank' if the latter were too draconian in their implementation of structural adjustment.

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<sup>77</sup> Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, pp. 266-267.

<sup>78</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 23 April, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/12 Folder 1: January 1986 – April 1986.

As regards 'operationality', Palmer was agnostic: 'if a new opportunity for influencing a district-level development programme requires Oxfam to be operational, does it make sense to forego this because in the first years expatriates have to be fielded?', she asked. It would, she concluded, 'be better to see international NGOs go operational than that the lack of local NGO personnel and mobilised people leaves a vacuum under the international experts'.<sup>79</sup>

Others on the Committee were less sympathetic towards Swift's argument, however. Brian Pratt, a member of Oxfam's research and evaluation unit, remarked that though Oxfam was in the fortunate position of being able to meet the needs of the poor with increasing resources – something that would challenge many of the organisation's *post hoc* rationalisations for small scale work in fact 'moulded' by an 'ever permanent lack of money' – there remained cases where 'small really is beautiful'. Thus while Pratt accepted Swift's argument in favour of working to influence policy decisions – since these were too often made 'on the basis of ignorance, theory divorced from practice and vested interests' – he was steadfast in his refusal to countenance middle-ground operational work as the way forward, and warned against 'the tendency in a period of growth... to look to operational programmes as an easy means of absorbing cash surpluses... Operational work', he argued, 'is still too tied to the "quick technical fix" approach to development'. Instead, 'the effort should always be made first to identify local structures... It should always be Oxfam's aim not to replace local groups but to strengthen them' via generous allocations to smaller projects over longer periods of time.<sup>80</sup> Paul Shears, a member of the Africa North Sub-Committee, seconded Pratt's argument, noting that the large-scale programmes advocated by Swift based on his experience of Turkana and other pastoral regions would miss the minutiae of local power relationships in non-pastoral societies, and would only help landlords or power holders to get richer at the expense of the poor.<sup>81</sup>

A more ideologically-charged argument against scaling up was made by Ian Leggett, a member of Oxfam's Africa Desk who had worked extensively in Tanzania. Conscious of the need for consistency with Oxfam's 'history, principles and ideas' – which

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<sup>79</sup> I. Palmer, 'Oxfam's Future Work in Africa', tabled at Africa Committee Meeting on 21-22 October, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986.

<sup>80</sup> B. Pratt, 'Discussion Paper: Areas of Expansion for Oxfam's Overseas Programme', 14 March, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986.

<sup>81</sup> P. Shears, 'Oxfam's Future Work in Africa: Some Short Comments on Jeremy Swift's Paper', no date, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986.

were, he thought, better reflected in the Tanzania programme than the Kenya programme now that Oxford had adopted the conscientisation methodology – he rejected the urge to increase the scale of Oxfam’s work, to ‘go operational’ and to form closer alliances with larger funding agencies. He criticised Swift and Palmer for perpetuating the ‘myth’ that development in Africa would be achieved by supporting bigger projects, noting that despite their admission that development had failed, both papers advocated ‘more of the same’ except in larger and stronger doses as advocated by the IMF. Moreover, like the IMF, which ‘puts its own man... [into] key institutions of debtor governments so as to ensure that the required policies are followed, so we are talking about “going operational” to make sure that the projects we support are “a success”’. Leggett proceeded to question whether bilateral and multilateral agencies had any identity of interest with Oxfam or worked for the poor and oppressed. He cited Tanzania as an example of a country with ‘a government that has long been recognised by Oxfam as actively supporting its own ideals’, but which had ‘been slowly and painfully throttled by the concerted efforts of multilateral financial institutions’. The organisation should not, he averred, ‘cast in our lot’ with these organisations; nor should it bypass elected governments in a neo-colonial fashion by working operationally. Indeed, rather than staff asking ‘Where was Oxfam?’ in this scenario, Leggett believed they should recognise ‘the fact that we count for very little on the big stage’.

Oxfam has played, and will continue to play, only an insignificant role in promoting social change in the countries in which we work abroad... we should not deceive ourselves into thinking that we can have anything but a minor impact on the issues that concern us... It is ironical, therefore, to note the suggestion “that NGOs can help governments to stand up to the IMF/World Bank” when the evidence suggests that our voice does not even amount to a whisper.<sup>82</sup>

Leggett was equally sceptical as regards the suggestion that Oxfam could use its operational visibility to influence government development policies. Indeed, since the state was (with the exception of Tanzania, perhaps) ‘the principal protagonist in the process of exploitation of the peasants and workers’, any form of relationship with governments threatened to involve Oxfam ‘in the structures which express domination’. Leggett referred scathingly to the situation in Kenya where parastatals were increasing in number – despite the country’s capitalist orientation – as part of a ‘mechanism of accumulation and extraction’ under Moi. Oxfam had to beware, therefore, being

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<sup>82</sup> I. Leggett, ‘Oxfam’s Future Work in Africa’, 14 July, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986.

'seduced' by powerful institutions (both national and international) responsible for 'policies and practices which have caused untold suffering, harm and destruction' around the world. Leggett warned that such institutions would not respond to the logic or morality of Oxfam arguments over their own vested interests; thus 'to cast in our lot with these organisations and institutions would be tantamount to changing sides... to join forces with those responsible for the wider predicament' in Africa. Instead, drawing a connection between Oxfam principles and history and the politics of identity and empowerment prevalent on the left during the 1980s, Leggett argued that Oxfam 'should stand united with those whose interests we claim to represent'.<sup>83</sup> Of course, since charity legislation prevented the organisation from challenging global structures outright with a political message, Leggett recommended that Oxfam should see its role as a 'defensive' one: this meant neither bypassing governments in a neo-colonial fashion nor working too closely with them. Rather, Oxfam was advised to focus its energy on exposing the negative consequences of official development interventions and corrupt or oppressive governance, and on conscientising communities to resist 'large dollops of international interference' (in the manner of the Tanzania programme) and to demand that their governments fulfil their responsibilities.<sup>84</sup>

Field staff from across Africa were, somewhat inevitably, as divided as the Africa Committee over collaboration with multilateral organisations and/or government institutions. Many were, like Leggett, concerned that donors and governments would take advantage of NGO willingness to engage, since including NGOs as a token of consultation on large schemes was a shortcut to 'popular' participation. 'By co-opting an NGO', argued one respondent, 'the large donors are "buying in" the people but without taking any other steps to change their style of operations or objectives'. More worryingly, 'co-operation will have been purchased at the price of not properly criticising the operations or activities of large agencies', and would jeopardise Oxfam's credibility with its existing partners. Conversely, other staff noted that 'no end of micro-projects will ever

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<sup>83</sup> The 1980s saw both right and left turn against the modernising national state, which was seen as despotic and overbearing, in favour of 'the local'. On the left, the task was to protect this space for indigeneity and minority identities through consciousness-raising and empowerment. Operational work threatened to act in a similar manner to the state by stifling the emergence of 'the local'. See R. Brubaker and F. Cooper, 'Beyond "Identity"', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2000), pp. 1-47; P. Gleason, 'Identifying Identity: A Semantic History', *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (1983), pp. 910-931; Ferguson, *Global Shadows*, pp. 95-96. Jan Vasina also documents the attempt of African historians to tell the 'real' history of Africa, as opposed to the story of how colonialism brought civilisation to the continent. J. Vasina, 'UNESCO and African Historiography', *History in Africa*, Vol. 20 (1993), pp. 337-352.

<sup>84</sup> I. Leggett, 'Oxfam's Future Work in Africa', 14 July, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986; Jennings, "'Almost an Oxfam in Itself'", pp. 509-530.

solve the problem of poverty', and if large-scale projects were going to take place anyway, it might be better to influence their direction. Furthermore, not all participants were convinced that large agencies or governments were as 'monolithic' as Leggett and others portrayed them. Those with a more nuanced view suggested that Oxfam should enter into dialogue with larger development bodies to modify their activities, acting as a catalyst for change rather than adopting what they considered to be Leggett's 'holier than thou' approach.<sup>85</sup> Fears that NGOs were being courted in order to contain criticism of structural adjustment were, therefore, balanced by hopes that Oxfam had the necessary leverage – due to their grassroots and operational work – with which to pressure for 'pro-poor' policies.<sup>86</sup>

Hence, when the Africa Committee meeting finally came around in October 1986, members were primed for a testing debate. The tone of the meeting was set early, however, as Swift was forced to defend his paper from accusations that he had suggested Oxfam should 'throw in its lot with the World Bank'. He countered that his paper was meant to emphasise that the organisation should seek areas of cooperation with donor agencies in ways that would not preclude Oxfam from retaining its focus on poverty. Nonetheless, much of the air had been taken out of Swift's argument in favour of scaling up by the fact that the increase in Oxfam income had recently slowed in a 'post-Ethiopia depression': indeed, the organisation expected a £3 million budget deficit for the year. Thus while many participants admitted that the increase in funding had 'cracked the mould' of Oxfam's approach to the continent and questioned what exactly Oxfam had achieved in Africa through small-scale projects, the drop in donations reduced the possibility that Oxfam could scale up to a size that would enable a greater degree of influence over official institutions and governments. At the same time, on an ideological level many were nervous that Oxfam would be acting in a neo-colonial fashion if they chose to become operational across the continent on the scale witnessed in Kenya. Members referred to Shears' submission to the Committee, which condemned the 'neo-colonialism' of Oxfam in Turkana – with its fully fuelled and adequately maintained landrovers and staff – 'taking areas over', 'replacing government' and threatening to permanently erode any local capacity and state involvement. This was considered

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<sup>85</sup> 'Minutes of a Sub-Group Meeting to Look at the Issues of Scaling Up and Working in Cooperation with UN and other Multilateral Organisations', 7-12 September, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986.

<sup>86</sup> J. Clark, 'Relationships with Multilateral Aid Agencies (MLAs)', September, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG 1/3/15 Folder 2: October 1987.

particularly problematic because regardless of its present maladies the Committee felt that the state in Africa remained a vital development actor (albeit impaired by structural adjustment). Moreover, in addition to undermining state capacity, bypassing the state threatened to perpetuate the ease with which the state was used as a 'mechanism of accumulation and extraction'. For if operational work provided palliatives, kleptocratic state elites would be free to avoid their responsibilities to the poorest or to continue to impose unsuitable and dangerous development programmes on unwilling populations. Somewhat counter-intuitively, therefore, while working alongside an authoritarian or kleptocratic government was not considered an appropriate response to the crisis in Africa, neither was bypassing the state, which would let the latter off the hook as regards its fundamental duties to its citizenry.<sup>87</sup> Unsurprisingly, minutes of the meeting would record 'caution' about Swift's paper and 'strong support' for Leggett's.<sup>88</sup>

Taking the temperature of the Committee, Brendan Gormley, a member of the Africa North Desk and soon to be Africa Director, concluded that the increase in Oxfam's income had brought about profound psychological changes in Oxfam as the organisation shook off both imagined and real constraints on the range of its activities and asked questions that went 'to the very heart of Oxfam's role as a development agency'. Meanwhile, the size of the crisis in Africa had provoked in countries like Kenya 'a response built around quantity': for the first time, Oxfam was 'taking initiatives and responsibility where before we looked for intermediaries that could do this for us'. Yet Swift and his supporters had, Gormley felt, 'cast [Oxfam] in the role of the orchestra on the Titanic – nice but ineffective, whereas we see ourselves as part foghorn, part life-raft!' Indeed, the crisis had convinced many within the organisation that Oxfam needed 'a clearer restatement of our focus on the poor and their participation in a process of development'; rather than working with large donor agencies and governments, they believed that the organisation ought to 'stand by the people... in conflict with the agendas of those [agencies] with whom we are considering working'. The tension between Oxfam 'values' of solidarity and empowerment and the practical urge to do more in the immediate crisis was acute: on one side were those who believed first and foremost that Oxfam must respond to need; if this meant Oxfam had to do more itself – as in Turkana –

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<sup>87</sup> Interview with author no. XIV, 21 September, 2014; Interview with author no. IX, 16 October, 2014; Interview with author no. III, 4 December, 2014; Interview with author no. II, 7 October, 2014.

<sup>88</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 21-22 October, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986.

then so be it. On the other were more ideologically minded individuals who felt it was important to consider *how* Oxfam responded. Doing so in a top-down manner was compared with neo-colonialism and was, in any case, felt to be damaging in the longer-term, since it would crush people's initiative and their chances of empowerment while at the same time excusing the state from its responsibilities.<sup>89</sup> The organisation faced a choice, therefore, between a 'materialist approach, which regards Oxfam as a doer and deliverer, "responding to need" and having to get bigger and bigger in order to respond to ever increasing need' and a 'human scale, third system approach', in which Oxfam was a facilitator for people to solve their own problems.<sup>90</sup>

Personally, Gormley believed that 'we can continue to put considerable store on the links between people, individuals and local communities, even if we cannot demonstrate their links with wider development processes, and [should] accept that Oxfam will at best play a modest role in most situations'.<sup>91</sup> Yet he was not doctrinaire about this approach, acknowledging that different opinions as to scaling up, operational work and working alongside multilateral aid agencies reflected the input of staff who faced markedly 'different situations, development needs and government characteristics in the countries where we work'. The nature of the host government was especially important, since scaling up often meant focusing on an 'inputs' approach, which, as the Committee had noted, would potentially strengthen the status quo.<sup>92</sup> Hence, Gormley recommended that the debate proceed with 'a country-specific focus', and John Clark, campaigns manager, was tasked with canvassing country offices on the issues raised during the meeting.<sup>93</sup> A year later, Clark concluded that there were nearly as many opinions on these issues as there were country offices. The 'idiosyncrasy', he suggested, was a result of the fact that Oxfam had neither a well-defined policy on the macro-economics and politics of development, nor an overall development philosophy with which to guide its country offices.<sup>94</sup> In response, Gormley would reiterate his own take on

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<sup>89</sup> B. Gormley, 'Oxfam in Africa', September, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986.

<sup>90</sup> B. Gormley, 'Oxfam in Africa', September, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986; B. Gormley, 'Oxfam's Work in Africa', October, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG 1/3/15 Folder 2: October 1987.

<sup>91</sup> B. Gormley, 'Oxfam in Africa', September, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986; B. Gormley, 'Oxfam's Work in Africa', October, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG 1/3/15 Folder 2: October 1987.

<sup>92</sup> J. Clark, 'Relationships with Multilateral Aid Agencies (MLAs)', September, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG 1/3/15 Folder 2: October 1987.

<sup>93</sup> B. Gormley, 'Oxfam in Africa', September, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986; 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 21-22 October, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986.

<sup>94</sup> J. Clark, 'Relationships with Multilateral Aid Agencies (MLAs)', September, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG 1/3/15 Folder 2: October 1987.

Oxfam's development philosophy, quoting at length from Marc Nerfin's article on the 'third system' approach to development (based on empowering people to make structural transformations in their own countries) in a paper tabled at the October Africa Committee meeting. Crucially, however, he accepted that Oxfam should remain flexible, acting as a local partner, implementing agency, crusader (active in policy formulation) and/or teacher depending on the circumstances in which it worked.<sup>95</sup>

Thus by 1986/87 Oxford had set, in a broad fashion, the direction of travel for the organisation towards a focus on the denial of rights faced by marginalised people (as opposed to intervention on a larger scale).<sup>96</sup> As Figure 8 demonstrates, Oxfam operational spending in Kenya would decline as a proportion of its grants budget around this time. From 45 per cent of Oxfam's overall spend in Kenya in 1986/87, operational spending would fall to 39 per cent in 1987/88 and to just six per cent in 1988/89. Though it would rise in the following two years, this was mostly due to spending on networking and facilitating local groups rather than large-scale interventions.<sup>97</sup> By 1991/92, operational spending had settled at around one fifth of Oxfam's grants budget in Kenya. Importantly, while operational expenditure was mostly static or falling in Kenya, Oxfam's overall expenditure in the country was following an upward trajectory; this shows that the *nature* of Oxfam spending was changing rather than merely the extent. Yet, as Gormley acknowledged, decisions in Oxford only formed part of the equation for Field Offices. In Kenya, the decline in operational spending began around 1985, *before* the Africa Committee offered its recommendations on the nature of Oxfam's work in Africa. Indeed, the shift away from 'operationality' in Kenya reflected the approach of a newly appointed Field Director, Nicky May, who came to Kenya in October 1985 with a more radical background than her predecessor. At the same time, however, May's approach was just as much based on her reading of changing political circumstances in Kenya, where the government was becoming increasingly hostile towards NGOs, and towards Oxfam in particular.

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<sup>95</sup> B. Gormley, 'Oxfam's Work in Africa', October, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG 1/3/15 Folder 2: October 1987.

<sup>96</sup> This was earlier than many other NGOs, such as CARE, which remained focused on service delivery and technical responses until the mid-1990s. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, pp. 198-201.

<sup>97</sup> The thesis discusses these interventions shortly.

## ‘AFTER BURNING THEM THEY SCRAPED THEM UP WITH BULLDOZERS’

Government antagonism towards Oxfam was ensured by the organisation’s tireless efforts to provide relief and raise awareness after the torture and massacre of Degodia pastoralists by Kenyan security forces at Wagalla airstrip in Wajir around 9 February, 1984. The massacre itself was, according to Campbell, a devastating instance of government ‘hostility towards nomadic people as a whole and [its] tendency to use brutal methods to maintain stability rather than reconciliation and good development policies’.<sup>98</sup> As David Anderson has discussed more recently, Moi frequently used collective punishment to ‘discipline’ the north, and government officials there acted with impunity during his presidency. In November 1980, for instance, the ambush and murder of a government officer near Garissa prompted the Provincial Commissioner, Benson Kaaria, to threaten that the entire Somali population of the district ‘will be eliminated and Kenyans will be left living in peace’. A few days later, all men in the Bulla Karatasi area were rounded up for ‘screening’ nearby. Meanwhile, the military rampaged through the settlement, raping, looting and burning homesteads. Hundreds of innocent people were killed, with many half-dead thrown callously into the Tana River.<sup>99</sup> Such aggressive and murderous behaviour became almost routine in the north of the country by the time of the failed coup attempt in 1982, and would only intensify thereafter as the President sought to stamp his authority across the country. Moreover, by appointing trusted members of the Ogaden clan into his Cabinet and armed forces, Moi ensured that intra-ethnic conflict escalated, providing officials with the perfect opportunity to blame and punish the Degodia clan, who sought to challenge the President’s allies.

Indeed, on 9 February, 1984, a Degodia attack against their ethnic rivals provided an opportunity for the District Security Committee to initiate a brutal collective punishment operation against this ‘troublesome’ group. Almost immediately, the armed forces started rounding up Degodia at Wagalla airstrip, and by 11 February around 5,000 Degodia were held captive. Many would be violently interrogated by their captors: as Anderson relates, one detainee recalled that the armed forces ‘were constantly beating us... the whole day they were beating us’. Left in the hands junior army officers, the treatment of detainees would get progressively worse, and they were soon forced to strip

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<sup>98</sup> ‘Annual Report Kenya and South Sudan’, 16 January, 1985, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/11 Folder 1: January 1985 – April 1985.

<sup>99</sup> *The Standard*, 9 November, 1980.

before being subjected to torture.<sup>100</sup> At its most extreme, this included burning detainees alive. (Oxfam would later receive photographic evidence of these crimes from local contacts, who alleged that at least 60, and as many as 80, Degodia were immolated in the presence of high-ranking government officials, their bodies then ‘scraped up’ with bulldozers.) When the detainees rioted in desperation at their treatment, the army panicked and fired automatic rifles blindly across the airstrip. Oxfam’s Africa Committee was confident based on eyewitness reports that at least 400 men died in this one incident, though they feared that the number could have been as high as 1,400.<sup>101</sup> Alone, this murderous act left upwards of 10,000 women, children and elderly people destitute; but to compound the punishment, the government and its marauding armed forces also impounded cattle and destroyed wells to prevent local people being able to eat or drink. Moreover, nearby hospitals were ordered to discharge Degodia patients without treatment, or were closed outright in order to stop detainees who managed to escape custody from receiving treatment for their wounds. Soldiers were even heard to boast about how they crucified with four-inch nails any Kenyan Somalis who had escaped.<sup>102</sup>

As word of these atrocities began to leak out of Wajir, aid agencies like Oxfam rushed to try to help those in need. The government was, however, much more concerned with covering up the massacre than with helping those in need, and so denied relief agencies permission to enter the region and refused all requests for emergency supplies.<sup>103</sup> The government line was that ‘inter-tribal feuds’ were to blame for the violence reported in the region and that the security forces deserved praise for their efforts to restore peace and order. Meanwhile, a friendly editorial in the *Kenya Times* regretted ‘that some local leaders and the foreign press have set it upon themselves to distort the truth about the situation in Wajir... deliberately exaggerat[ing] the magnitude of the conflicts [in] false claims’. Thus the allegation that 5,000 locals were rounded up and tortured was purported to have originated with ‘a small group of Kenyan enemies based in London’ who were using the British media, and the BBC in particular, to feed the world on ‘false and negative information’. In defence of the government, the paper

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<sup>100</sup> Anderson, ‘Remembering Wagalla’, pp. 658-676; ‘Minutes of the Africa Committee’, 12 April, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/10 Folder 1: January 1984 – April 1984.

<sup>101</sup> Anderson, ‘Remembering Wagalla’, pp. 658-676; ‘Minutes of the Africa Committee’, 12 April, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/10 Folder 1: January 1984 – April 1984.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with author no. V, 12 January, 2015; see also ‘Tour Report, Wajir, Rhamu and Mandera’, 9-11 May, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation for similar allegations.

<sup>103</sup> For instance, when the American Medical and Research Foundation (commonly known as AMRF or AMREF) asked the Ministry of Health for supplies, they were told none could be provided.

argued that famine relief had been distributed in the region for many years and that the area had been 'honoured with personal visits from the President himself'. Local leaders were enjoined to 'set a good example by telling the truth and joining hands with the government in bringing about harmony' in their area.<sup>104</sup>

Disregarding this warning, on 21 March the MP for Wajir West alleged in Parliament that security forces 'arrested more than 5,000 men and put them into concentration camps... in the real sense of the word... [since] all the people were stripped naked and kept there for five consecutive days being persistently denied water and food' while others were 'killed through beating, shooting, and some of them were burned alive'. Moreover, those who remained alive after five days 'were collected in military and police vehicles and dumped far away from the town where they could not get any medical treatment'. Noting that the Provincial Commissioner had 'sworn that he is going to wipe out the entire population of Somalis in the North-Eastern Province', the MP alleged that 'there is genocide going on in my district'.<sup>105</sup> In response, on 27 March the Minister of State for the Office of the President responsible for security (Justus ole Tipis) made a statement acknowledging that 57 men had died in a peace-keeping 'operation'. The operation was, he said, necessary because ethnic leaders who 'specialised in perpetrating clanism [sic] for their own selfish ends... [had] encourage[d] and equip[ped] bandits to attack other clans for political reasons'. He concluded that 'the government's commitment to law and order is firm. It will, therefore, not help anybody to challenge that commitment for disruptive ends'.<sup>106</sup> Bravely ignoring this veiled threat, the MP for Wajir East shouted that the ministerial statement 'was written by murderers'.<sup>107</sup> At this point, any further debate on the issue was shut down.<sup>108</sup>

As time wore on, the government found that it could no longer simply refuse all offers of external help, since that made it look suspiciously negligent. Instead, officials played for time: thus while Tipis gave assurances that Oxfam would be allowed into the area at the end of March, meetings in the Office of the President with regard to the

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<sup>104</sup> *The Kenya Times*, 2 March, 1984, KNA, Wajir District Development Plan, SA/7/5.

<sup>105</sup> *Kenya Hansard*, 21 April, 1984, pp. 45-49; *Kenya Hansard*, 27 March, 1984, pp. 136-138.

<sup>106</sup> *Kenya Hansard*, 27 March, 1984, pp. 146-148.

<sup>107</sup> *Kenya Hansard*, 28 March, 1984, pp. 235-238.

<sup>108</sup> Ole Tipis would make a final statement on 12 April, admitting that 381 men had been taken to Wagalla for 'screening and interrogation', and that when they attempted to escape 29 were killed. The remaining 28 victims were, he argued, killed when they resisted the armed forces. *Kenya Hansard*, 12 April, 1984, pp. 817-820.

necessary documentation descended into obstruction and obfuscation.<sup>109</sup> Throughout April there followed numerous reports of women and children only now coming in from the wilderness to try to find food, but any proper assessment of the situation remained impossible as access to the area continued to be cut off. Reaching the limits of his patience, David Campbell thought about flying to Wajir without permission, but just as he began to prepare for the trip his contacts in the area were interrogated, followed and then thrown out of the district and ordered to return to Nairobi by the District Commissioner. Soon after, Oxfam's proposals for a relief programme were turned down: in fact, the DC ordered that all non-governmental feeding efforts should cease immediately and that their resources should be handed over to the government.<sup>110</sup> Fortunately, Oxfam was able to transfer around £3,000 to a local missionary, Sister Annalena, for rehousing the destitute, but to do any more was impossible for the time being. Even conversations on the telephone were considered risky as Campbell sought to bide his time and avoid being thrown out of Kenya.<sup>111</sup> Nonetheless, behind the scenes Oxfam briefed Ambassadors and High Commissioners as well as the BBC and Amnesty International on the arrests, torture and killings to try to 'stir things up' and galvanise the diplomatic community into action.<sup>112</sup>

Frustrated with the inability to act, however, in early May Campbell spoke to Michael Harris, who gave the Field Director permission to travel to Wajir regardless of the consequences for Oxfam.<sup>113</sup> Relieved to finally be able to do something, Campbell loaded up a landrover and drove for over 300 miles, but was stopped by police at Habeswain on the border of Wajir district. There, Campbell and his cargo were held overnight without explanation. The following day, the police received instructions from Nairobi that Campbell was to be turned around; to make sure he did not attempt to return, they were ordered to escort the Oxfam Field Director until he reached Isiolo. On his arrival in Nairobi, Campbell reported to Oxford that the military operation was still on-going and

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<sup>109</sup> 'Telephone Conversation with Campbell', 29 March, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation.

<sup>110</sup> Official impunity meant that food confiscated in such a manner was then sold for massive profits to starving locals or across the border in Somalia. 'Report from Wajir', 1 May, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation.

<sup>111</sup> 'Telephone Conversation with Campbell', 9 April, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation.

<sup>112</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Campbell to Mr. Somerville', 6 April, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation; 'Letter from Amnesty International to Oxfam', 14 May, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation.

<sup>113</sup> Harris was, according to Black, never one to protect Oxfam at the expense of people in need. Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, p. 192.

that a European presence worried the government more than anything else.<sup>114</sup> Accordingly, Oxfam – along with AMREF – continued to press for diplomatic action. The government would hold out against the lobbying and international broadcasts until the ‘operation’ was concluded later in the month. Soon after, Kaaria was replaced in an effort to appease domestic and international criticism and Oxfam was finally allowed to visit the area to start an emergency-feeding programme.

Unfortunately, it quickly became clear that little had changed in the district. Security personnel were still told to shoot armed pastoralists on sight, and the DC was particularly interested in being involved in the selection of ‘needy’ families to benefit from Oxfam relief.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, Campbell felt it necessary to work with him until the latter trusted Oxfam enough that they would be able to operate freely.<sup>116</sup> Predictably, this meant that early efforts at food distribution were spasmodic and only effective within a 30-mile radius from Wajir.<sup>117</sup> Only after continued pressure by Oxfam and other donors through embassies, the press and the radio did the government consent to Oxfam starting a larger, operational, restocking project in Wajir. In July, Oxfam allocated £51,000 to re-house, feed and restock widows of the Wagalla massacre, a relief effort that contrasted with government efforts to settle victims of state violence; yet even this was of limited impact, reaching only 30 widows.<sup>118</sup> All of the recipients would, however, make a successful return to pastoralism.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> ‘Telex from Campbell’, 3 May, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation.

<sup>115</sup> It was widely known at the time that 20 lorries of relief had just been sold in Somalia, as well as a consignment of WFP food. ‘Tour Report, Wajir, Rhamu and Mandera’, 9-11 May, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Tour Report, Wajir, Rhamu and Mandera’, 9-11 May, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation.

<sup>117</sup> The DC denied that dangerous levels of malnutrition existed in the area (despite evidence that 50 per cent of children in Wajir were malnourished), blaming foreign propaganda. He also consistently argued that only chiefs and District Officers be allowed to select recipients of relief. ‘Report on Wajir’, 18 June, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation; ‘Letter from Ms. MacAskill to Mr. Campbell’, 23 June, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation; ‘Minutes of the Africa Committee’, 19 July, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/10 Folder 2: July 1984 – October 1984.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Wajir Restocking of Widows’, 3 July, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation; ‘Wajir: Relief for the Victims of the Massacre’, 3 July, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation; ‘Letter from Mr. Campbell to Mr. Somerville’, 3 July, 1984, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/2/3/1/7 Wajir Situation; ‘Annual Report, Kenya’, 22 January, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/12 Folder 1: January 1986 – April 1986.

<sup>119</sup> ‘Kenya Biannual Report’, 10-11 January, 1991, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12 Folder 6: Kenya Biannual Report, November 1989 – October 1990.

## 'BEWARE OF SUSPICIOUS FOREIGNERS'

Inevitably, relations with the government were strained by the episode: Campbell noted in his last annual report that Oxfam's involvement in Wajir had 'earned us the considerable displeasure of the President's Office' at a time when Moi was attempting to consolidate his power through KANU and was removing potential challengers to his rule.<sup>120</sup> Thus when Nicky May took over from Campbell in October 1985 she faced immediate government obstructiveness as regards work permits for Oxfam expatriates.<sup>121</sup> Around the same time the NGO sector and Kenyan churches were becoming increasingly vocal in opposition to the President's effort to subvert democracy by replacing the secret ballot with the queue voting system. This earned all NGOs the opprobrium of the state, and as Moi ramped up his attempts to control civil society May and Ian Leggett reported to Oxford on the 'renewed scrutiny by the Kenyan Government of the activities of NGOs'.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, there were indications that NGO funds would now have to be channelled through District Councils, and that NGOs would have to declare in advance how much they were spending and where. Understandably, May and Leggett feared that the 'freedom of action of NGOs will [soon] be heavily curtailed', and they were especially concerned that the deterioration in NGO-state relations 'could have serious repercussions on the type of partners Oxfam can work with', particularly as threats against NGOs considered 'subversive' became more frequent and the government successfully co-opted others.<sup>123</sup> Anxiety would only increase as Ministers lined up to criticise NGOs and called for 'coordination', and Moi himself suggested that the government would like to exercise control over the allocation of NGO funds.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> 'Annual Report Kenya and South Sudan', 16 January, 1985, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/11 Folder 1: January 1985 – April 1985.

<sup>121</sup> The permits were granted over three months late and only 'after much harassment'. 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1985 – November 1986', 21 January, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 2: January 1987.

<sup>122</sup> 'Africa South Sub-Committee', 22 October, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986; 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1985 – November 1986', 21 January, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 2: January 1987.

<sup>123</sup> For instance, the 'women's' NGO, *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* ('women's progress') was subsumed within the state apparatus around this time. 'Minutes of the Africa South Sub-Committee', 22 October, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 1: October 1986; 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1985 – November 1986', 21 January, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 2: January 1987; Kanyinga, 'The Politics of Development Space in Kenya', in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, p. 81.

<sup>124</sup> S. Ndegwa, 'Civil Society and Political Change in Africa: The Case of Non-Governmental Organizations in Kenya', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 35, No. 1/2 (1994), p. 25.

Nor were these fears unfounded: behind the scenes the Cabinet met in late 1986 to discuss 'the recent and present upsurge in the numbers of NGOs and their activities'. The 'upsurge' was considered a 'matter of concern politically and in terms of the country's security'. Particularly troubling was the 'unmonitored manner in which the NGOs are setting themselves up... without the approval or involvement of the Government'. As well as operating outside government development plans, Ministers condemned NGOs for taking all the credit for their work – 'as opposed to associating the Government to it' – thereby threatening government legitimacy. Moreover, and without any sense of irony, Ministers noted the fact that NGOs receiving large sums of money from overseas posed a security risk to the country 'as the funds could easily be misappropriated and misapplied'. 'It is quite possible', the memorandum argued, 'that they [NGOs] may be agents of international espionage networks'. Accordingly, the Cabinet was asked to give its approval to legislation that would allow for the supervision and regulation of NGO activities in order to ensure that NGOs operated only in an apolitical 'gap-filling' manner and only in close cooperation with the state on social problems (such as juvenile delinquency, alcoholism and drug addiction) rather than their political causes.<sup>125</sup> It would be another four years before this legislation was finally brought forward at the peak of civil society clamour for multipartyism, but in the meantime a commission involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Treasury set out to investigate the role, activities and privileges of NGOs.<sup>126</sup> In fact, the Foreign Ministry requested all government departments to provide information on NGOs, including the location of their headquarters, the size of their staff, the programmes they were involved in and copies of their annual reports. This was to enable the Ministry to 'monitor' NGO activities in the country.<sup>127</sup>

For Oxfam, the increasing 'tension in relations between the Government and international agencies' and lingering mistrust over Wajir meant that its operational agreement with the government would not be renewed in 1986 despite negotiations starting well in advance of the deadline. Ostensibly the result of the government examining the terms on which NGOs operated, in reality the delay was due to 'the GOK

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<sup>125</sup> 'Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)', Cabinet Memorandum by the Minister for Culture and Social Services, 29 August, 1986, KNA, NGO Constitutions, AMP/8/39.

<sup>126</sup> 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1985 – November 1986', 21 January, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 2: January 1987.

<sup>127</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Muriithi (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to Permanent Secretaries', 20 September, 1985, KNA, NGO Constitutions, AMP/8/39.

[government of Kenya] seeking to assert [its] control'. Luckily, a covering letter from the Treasury allowed Oxfam to continue to operate legally for the time being.<sup>128</sup> Other organisations were less fortunate: Catholic church development programmes based on the Freirian psycho-social method in the four most radical dioceses (Meru, Lodwar, Marsabit and Mombasa) were dismantled in a similar fashion to the CDES in the aftermath of the coup attempt in 1982. Government officials also encouraged paranoia about NGO activities to spread across the country: in Kajiado the District Social Development Officer wrote to his colleagues warning that NGOs were 'making [a] move in the district with the intention of recruiting women[']s groups'. Since only the government could 'advise our women[']s groups on where to invest their money', meetings between the latter and NGOs were denied unless permission was received from the Commissioner for Social Services.<sup>129</sup>

In the prevailing climate May conceded that it was 'difficult for NGOs to speak up on national issues'. Expatriate agencies like Oxfam faced particular criticism, she wrote, 'in an attempt to divert attention from internal issues' such as the emergence of *Mwakenya*, difficulties between Moi and the Kikuyu elite over a resurgence of interest in Mau Mau and high levels of inflation and unemployment.<sup>130</sup> At the same time, the government continued to arrest political opponents, while the President held rallies across the country to register (through intimidation) new members of KANU, and used threats of exclusion from the party to tame dissent (since employment and government beneficence often relied on party membership). State repression on this scale created a level of anxiousness among NGO staff that was unprecedented for Kenya. As one interviewee recalled, Oxfam staff – in common with much of the Kenyan public – began to 'look over their shoulders' to see who was listening before being critical of the government; fortunately, a particular giveaway for special branch agents was their predilection for long-wheelbase Peugeots.<sup>131</sup> In the hope of facilitating better relations with the government, Oxfam submitted to political pressure and became a member of the Kenya National Council of Social Services in 1987. This was to no avail, however, for

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<sup>128</sup> 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1985 – November 1986', 21 January, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 2: January 1987.

<sup>129</sup> 'Letter from Mr. Oluoch to Social Development Assistants', 29 August, 1986, KNA, NGO Constitutions, AMP/8/39.

<sup>130</sup> *Mwakenya* (a Swahili acronym meaning the 'union of nationalists to liberate Kenya') was a dissident underground organisation committed to overthrowing the corrupt and 'neo-colonial' Moi government. See Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 162-163.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with author no. XII, 5 December, 2014; Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014.

once NGOs such as Amnesty International spoke out on government human rights abuses – taking advantage of the opportunity provided by Moi’s need to negotiate large aid packages with the West – the government became even more suspicious of NGO activities and developed an acute sensitivity to any kind of criticism. Indeed, as punishment for NGO outspokenness over human rights violations, the state forced NGOs to re-register, closed private airstrips and withheld radio licences in order to interfere with relief and development work.<sup>132</sup>

During Nicky May’s first few years in Kenya the context in which she operated – both as regards the Kenya government’s suspicion towards the organisation after Wagalla (and towards NGOs generally), and with regard to the debate in Oxford about Oxfam activities in Africa – not only defined the major strategic issues that she and Oxfam sought to address but also indicated the tactical limitations on their ability to do so. Thus May concluded that while it was politically difficult to address ‘the root causes of poverty and exploitation’ in Kenya, it was particularly problematic to do so through the operational style that she had inherited from David Campbell. May understood that high-profile ‘operationality’ would expose Oxfam to increased government surveillance and would attract state pressure to direct resources in a manner that suited government objectives, since the added strain placed on government finances by IMF conditions in the mid-1980s meant operational NGOs faced growing demands to provide services and infrastructure in collaboration with the state, and to channel their money through the treasury.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, large-scale development projects were increasingly falling prey to corruption around this time. The Turkwell dam project (discussed in chapter one) was the most obvious example: dangerous for thousands of pastoralists, it was, nonetheless, financially rewarding for Moi and his allies and so proceeded without regard to those who populated the area.<sup>134</sup>

Moreover, after digesting the implications of the debate in Oxford, even those who had advocated Oxfam operational work acknowledged by this stage that operating alone in pastoral areas prevented the organisation from rooting the project within the community: on a large scale, ‘activities like re-stocking... remain something done to

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<sup>132</sup> ‘Annual Report for Kenya, December 1986 to November 1987’, 27 January, 1988, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/16 Folder 1: January 1988.

<sup>133</sup> ‘Annual Report for Kenya, December 1986 to November 1987’, 27 January, 1988, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/16 Folder 1: January 1988.

<sup>134</sup> ‘Minutes of the Africa Committee’, 27 January, 1988, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/16 Folder 1: January 1988.

pastoralists... with little direct involvement by them, and no improvement in their ability to organise themselves for development'.<sup>135</sup> They also allowed the state to avoid its responsibilities. May agreed with such an analysis, and – along with Leggett and Peter Wiles – was one of a cohort of Oxfam staff committed to the ideals of empowerment and solidarity rather than charity.<sup>136</sup> She thus argued that Oxfam should 'be working with and for the poorest' to 'encourage processes of change which enable them to take control of the improvement of their quality of life'. Assessing the context in Kenya, she concluded in the same language as Gormley that Oxfam would not 'make much impact on the huge issues of population, land and unemployment'. Rather:

Our limited resources should be used in ways that assist communities to develop their own responses to these problems, whether in small scale community based initiatives, advocacy, strengthening social organisation etc.

'The theme underlying our work', she continued, 'should be the process of development'; this necessitated 'a shift from largely technical solutions to supporting and strengthening local social organisations, more input into human development and creating awareness'. In turn, this required 'a shift away from Oxfam operational projects to closer work with local partners... [and] pressure groups...' who worked on issues of policy and legal rights. As regards pastoralism, May considered it vital to continue working in the sector, but hoped to tie together (for the first time) Oxfam's efforts in the sector with the issue of rights denied to other marginalised Kenyans (such as women, small-holders in Western Kenya, landless people and the urban poor), moving from

the technical, operational approach to more concentration on strengthening social organisation, to enable pastoral people to adjust to the modern economy on their own terms, and make their own demands on GOK and agency development services.<sup>137</sup>

Though she was broadening the scope of Oxfam's work, May was, therefore, returning to the pre-drought tactical model for Oxfam work in Kenya, focused as it was on the effort to challenge the state to fulfil its developmental mandate through 'the process of

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<sup>135</sup> R. Hogg, 'Building Pastoral Institutions: A Strategy for Turkana District', Report to Oxfam, June, 1986, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>136</sup> May had, in fact, worked previously with War on Want and possessed a diploma in community development. Interview with author no. XII, 5 December, 2014.

<sup>137</sup> 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1985 – November 1986', 21 January, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 2: January 1987; 'Priorities for Oxfam's Work in Kenya', no date but likely 1986/7, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 4.

empowerment'.<sup>138</sup> In such a way, the Kenya programme would be consistent with Oxfam principles and values as articulated by Leggett and Gormley *et al* in the Africa Committee debates.<sup>139</sup>

Nonetheless, the radical rhetoric coming out from Nairobi was actually considered somewhat naïve by many in Oxford. After reading May's recommendations, the Africa South Sub-Committee noted that while operational work was risky in the context of a breakdown in relations between the government and NGOs and the 'emergence of a party and President asserting their supremacy more firmly', too strong 'a move within the programme to concentrate on animation work' was equally dangerous. Although members accepted that it was necessary on occasion to take risks and did not reject animation or empowerment work outright, they were anxious that an 'almost exclusive focus on such work could leave Oxfam in a difficult position, particularly in view of Government-NGO relations' and Oxfam's position in the aftermath of Wagalla.<sup>140</sup> In response, Ian Leggett admitted to the Committee that 'the present demand for unquestioning loyalty to the Kenyan leadership had affected the atmosphere in which Oxfam works' and that numerous partners were anxious about working towards empowerment, but he attempted to calm their nerves by assuring them that the Kenya programme's support for animation work was not exclusive and that 'the Nairobi staff [are] proceeding very cautiously'.<sup>141</sup> In fact, May was forced to pull the Kenya programme back from a more radical tactical shift towards empowerment work in 1987. As she admitted in her annual report:

With the general paranoia on the part of the GOK about the development activities of NGOs in the rural areas it has been difficult at times to pursue a strategy of dialogue and empowerment of local communities – for example a workshop run by a project partner on community development methodologies was disrupted by Special Branch...<sup>142</sup>

It was, therefore, simply too great a risk to pursue conscientisation and empowerment openly in Kenya at this time. By adopting wholesale a radical empowerment programme

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<sup>138</sup> Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, p. 14.

<sup>139</sup> 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1985 – November 1986', 21 January, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 2: January 1987.

<sup>140</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa South Sub-Committee', 21 January, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 2: January 1987.

<sup>141</sup> 'Desk Officer's Report', 13/14 October, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/15 Folder 2: October 1987; 'Minutes of the Africa South Sub-Committee', 21 January, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 2: January 1987.

<sup>142</sup> 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1986 to November 1987', 27 January, 1988, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/16 Folder 1: January 1988.

in Kenya, Oxfam would not only be endangering lives but also its entire operation in the country, on which hinged the longer-term strategy of cajoling the state to take responsibility for its citizens.

Consequently, while May reaffirmed her support for the ‘process of animation’ among groups that had been ‘marginalised into poverty’, and still sought to wind down the operational side of Oxfam’s work as much as possible – to more easily resist pressure to ‘allow our scarce resources to be spent on providing services which should be the government’s responsibility’ – she came to realise that ‘animation work may better be supported through the medium of a more technical looking project’, which would provide an ‘umbrella for wider community development activities’ by maintaining the superficial ‘complementarity of NGO and GOK efforts for development’.<sup>143</sup> Other staff also noted that it was ‘easier to cloak what [Oxfam was] doing in a... humanitarian agenda’ or as a relief intervention, because this fooled the ‘many vested interests in the people remaining passive and not questioning their own development’.<sup>144</sup> Without articulating it in such a way, Oxfam would thus adopt the ‘onion skin’ approach documented by Alan Fowler in his work on the Undugu organisation in Kenya. Fowler describes the approach as the use of an ‘outer layer of welfare-oriented activity to [protect] inner layers of material service delivery that act as nuclei for a core strategy dedicated to transformation’.<sup>145</sup> Similarly to Undugu, Oxfam would attempt to disguise (or at least make easier to swallow) the more controversial elements of its programme by layering relatively small-scale and unthreatening technical measures and observable inputs on top of empowerment work; this served to distract (or attract) local officials – taking advantage of their technical training and the temptations of patronage politics – thereby maintaining political space and enabling the NGO to work closely with the community on animation and empowerment.<sup>146</sup> Indeed, by layering development activity in such a way, local officials or politicians were less likely to perceive Oxfam actions as contrary to their

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<sup>143</sup> ‘Annual Report for Kenya, December 1986 to November 1987’, 27 January, 1988, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/16 Folder 1: January 1988.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with author no. XII, 5 December, 2014; Interview with author no. XIII, 4 December 2014; Interview with author no. II, 7 October, 2014; ‘Pastoral Steering Committee Meeting’, 5 August, 1988, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>145</sup> According to Fowler, ‘NGOs must implement transformation-oriented activities and should adopt methods camouflaged by whatever packaging and labelling is required to cloud their actual intent. Naturally, this approach is not publicized as such or otherwise alluded to for what it is: transformation by stealth.’ A. Fowler, ‘Non-Governmental Organizations as Agents of Democratization: An African Perspective’, *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1993), pp. 334-335.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with author no. II, 7 October, 2014; Fowler, ‘Non-Governmental Organisations and the Promotion of Democracy in Kenya’, p. 288.

interests and had more to lose than ‘unwelcome’ empowerment if the NGO withdrew, since service delivery promised to placate groups that otherwise might have sought other patrons.<sup>147</sup>

Hence, Oxfam in Kenya remained tactically pragmatic as well as value-driven in terms of strategy. While the organisation as a whole sought to move away from disputed ‘neo-colonial’ operational work, those on the ground accepted that its ideologically-driven empowerment agenda stood no chance of success under a government determined to stamp out dissent. To enable at least some empowerment work to filter out from the Kenya programme, it was vital that Oxfam work with the prevailing system in Kenya. Staff were keenly aware that peripheral benefits for elites were often necessary to gain access to communities and to maintain the thrust of empowerment work. They understood that district officials were often ‘less interested in an overall... theory of development...’ than they were ‘persuaded, in the context of limited government resources, [that] if they could get an NGO to begin to do something, and for them to be associated with that...’ they could not only ‘keep tabs’ on what Oxfam was doing but also ‘claim the credit’ for the initiative. As one interviewee emphasised, Oxfam was stoic about the way such things worked: ‘everybody knew what had happened in [each] project; the fact that a politician turns up and claims glory... is irrelevant’. The important questions for Oxfam were ‘to what extent is government wanting to [become involved]... for its own political purposes and to what extent will it actually advance Oxfam’s concerns... Sometimes, one action will do both... Provided I am satisfied that [the activity] advances Oxfam’s concerns, I am not [necessarily] bothered that it also advances a particular politician or government’s concerns’. It was a balancing act: ‘essentially it’s the eighty-twenty rule. If I can get eighty per cent of what I’m looking for, and I have to give twenty per cent of the credit or profile or recognition [to the government] then I’ll do it’.<sup>148</sup>

Oxfam’s earlier water harvesting and restocking projects were, therefore, given a stay of execution, but May shifted their focus from ‘elite, top-down expatriate work’ towards ‘empowering pastoral people and their organisations to take control of their own

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<sup>147</sup> Reviews have found the use of leverage rather than service delivery alone to be helpful in achieving transformational aims. See Edwards and Hulme, *Non-Governmental Organisations*, p. 223; M. Kremer, P. van Lieshout and R. Went (eds.), *Doing Good or Doing Better: Development Policies in a Globalizing World* (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2009), pp. 241-244.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with author no. XI, 4 December, 2014.

development'.<sup>149</sup> Adrian Cullis was retained to manage this transition as regards the Turkana Water Harvesting project. As a review of the project notes, he had always been concerned at the 'lack of participation in the decision-making processes on the part of [project] members' and had previously attempted to work towards the formation of new pastoral institutions.<sup>150</sup> Cullis had, moreover, 'resisted the attempt to impose a "technical fix" on the situation'; yet

despite the efforts of the project manager... based on his own conviction that a slower more participative approach was vital, he was required by the previous Oxfam Field Director [Campbell] to proceed directly to the demonstration of the technical objectives... The consequence was that... institutional aspects were never systematically investigated or documented – an important handicap at the outset of the project...<sup>151</sup>

From late 1985, however, there was a concerted move within the project to take into account indigenous organisation and to strengthen local groups to manage their own resources and make claims on government structures. The 'demonstration approach', which focused on foreign technologies mainly imported from Yemen, gradually gave way to a more participatory approach as Cullis worked with local Turkana to strengthen and improve existing gardening skills and institutional arrangements. A member of staff involved in the project recalled that new staff were driven by a belief that pastoralism was the most appropriate system of production for arid environments and that pastoralists should be central to the development process; they were, accordingly, 'committed to pastoral empowerment [and] used Freirian approaches'. Dialogue with the community was particularly important to ensure 'accountability of both the project staff and the project to the community', while the project encouraged 'staff and community leaders to participate in... psycho-social training organised by the Lodwar diocese'.<sup>152</sup> For the time being, of course, it remained important to emphasise the technical inputs of the intervention ahead of this empowerment work: one staff member involved with the project noted that 'the strategy I usually used [was to] go for the low-hanging fruit, build relationships and trust, then nudge upwards'.<sup>153</sup> Fortunately, emphasising the technical input was fairly straightforward: over 4,500 people were directly involved in rainwater

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<sup>149</sup> 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1986 to November 1987', 27 January, 1988, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/16 Folder 1: January 1988.

<sup>150</sup> A. Cullis, 'Turkana Water Harvesting Project', February, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam COM/2/9/10 Folder 4.

<sup>151</sup> A. Martin and D. Gibbon, 'Turkana Waterharvesting Project: A Review for Oxfam and ITDG', July, 1987, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with author no. VI, 1 September, 2014.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with author no. VII, 15 December, 2014.

harvesting, and the improved gardens that resulted were reported to have 'increased the reliability and productivity of cropping, particularly in years of medium and poor rainfall'.<sup>154</sup> Nonetheless, the 'sensitivity of the project manager in considering [participation] with local groups... [also ensured that] their self-directing capabilities were built and strengthened'.<sup>155</sup> Oxfam would, in fact, soon hand responsibility for self-management of the project to a local co-ordinating body, which had been trained in community development.<sup>156</sup> The organisation continued to finance community animation workshops for the management board and local community until 1997 (at a cost of £143,000) in order to encourage them to take on broader development initiatives.<sup>157</sup> The management board took up the challenge: the project changed its name to the Lokitaung Pastoral Development Project in January 1989, reflecting a wider remit that included marketing, credit and animal health.

Meanwhile, the delay in the implementation of the Samburu restocking effort until 1986 meant that May had an opportunity to remodel the project to reflect her emphasis on 'low-level institution building using re-stocking as a vehicle'. In fact, she hoped that Oxfam could work directly with small groups and develop a committee of representatives to manage the work on a larger scale.<sup>158</sup> Thus the programme initiated 'community conscientisation activities' to try to 'make people aware of why they are doing what they are doing', and Oxfam held discussions with women on the issue of milk prices, which resulted in a proposal for regulation; women in the programme were also encouraged to form a committee to co-ordinate activities around the programme area and to reach out to the wider community.<sup>159</sup> Post-drought rehabilitation workshops later revealed that land issues and economic opportunity were the most pressing local issues. As a result of these discussions, Oxfam helped to create hides and skins outlets for women and many communities hired lawyers to advocate for pastoral land rights in Nairobi. Similarly to the water harvesting scheme, in 1987 Oxfam handed control to local

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<sup>154</sup> 'NGO Initiatives in Risk Reduction: Case Study no. 13: Rainwater Harvesting', DfID and Red Cross, *NGO Initiatives in Risk Reduction*, March, 2001; Grants lists 1962/63 to 2003/04. As yet uncatalogued at the Bodleian Library.

<sup>155</sup> A. Martin and D. Gibbon, 'Turkana Waterharvesting Project: A Review for Oxfam and ITDG', July, 1987, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>156</sup> 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1986 to November 1987', 27 January, 1988, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/16 Folder 1: January 1988.

<sup>157</sup> 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1987 to October 1988', 27 January, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/18: January 1989.

<sup>158</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Field Committee', 22 January, 1986, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/12 Folder 1: January 1986 - April 1986.

<sup>159</sup> 'Pastoral Steering Committee Meeting', 5 August, 1988, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

committees and women's groups who would monitor families restocked under the programme and identify priorities for their own development.<sup>160</sup> Accordingly, the Samburu approach fitted more closely to May's assessment of the need for empowerment among pastoralists than the technical approach to restocking seen in Turkana.<sup>161</sup>

Nevertheless, because of Oxfam's history in the region, it proved 'difficult for Oxfam to change the perception of itself from an agency which gives things to an agency which helps people to analyse their situation'.<sup>162</sup> In both Turkana and Samburu, it quickly became clear that moving beyond well-meaning rhetoric about community-driven development was, as a result of this perception, immensely difficult. As Peter Kisopia, Oxfam's Pastoral Programme Officer at the time, admitted, the dynamic between Oxfam and the community was always unbalanced, even in empowerment work:

Yes, people learned new skills in rainwater harvesting, but to what extent were those activities productive or sustainable by themselves? If the *jembes* [hoes] broke, Oxfam either repaired or replaced them. No one was looking at the subsidies that Oxfam was putting in, or asking what would happen if Oxfam withdrew.<sup>163</sup>

Moreover, rhetoric on institution building and working with 'traditional' groups was not matched by an appropriate level of understanding of the history or present condition of those groups: restocking committees were, for instance, dominated by individuals from around fixed trade centres, thus hardly representing traditional institutions. Furthermore, in a concession to the Kenyan 'system', the local chief often had an input in the selection of these groups.<sup>164</sup>

Later reviews would also criticise the Samburu restocking effort and the Turkana Water Harvesting projects for shifting too far towards institution building, thereby restricting their physical achievements. This was seen to be problematic since in order for pastoral institutions to prove sustainable, they had 'to serve some more tangible purpose than merely to exist...'.<sup>165</sup> These projects faced additional criticism for their refusal to engage more directly with the Kenya government; but May defended Oxfam's approach

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<sup>160</sup> 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1986 to November 1987', 27 January, 1988, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/16 Folder 1: January 1988.

<sup>161</sup> 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1985 – November 1986', 21 January, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 2: January 1987.

<sup>162</sup> 'Pastoral Steering Committee Meeting', 5 August, 1988, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>163</sup> Quoted in Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, p. 15.

<sup>164</sup> Hogg, 'NGOs, Pastoralists and the Myth of Community', p. 135.

<sup>165</sup> Hogg, 'NGOs, Pastoralists and the Myth of Community', p. 140.

at the time by arguing that government ‘policy towards the arid pastoral areas appears to be based on an agriculture-centred view of development and suspicion of the more mobile “primitive” [mode] of living of the pastoralists’. ‘Under the Group Ranch Representatives Act’, she wrote,

land registration... rapidly gives way to demarcation of individual farms for the richest and most powerful, thus cutting off the poorer community’s access to the best grazing land... The land, where good, is often farmed by down-country agriculturalists, where unsuitable for this it may be used as collateral for credit or for speculative purposes. The pastoral way of life is further squeezed by settlement schemes (GOK’s attempt to find land for its growing and dispossessed agricultural population); and by irrigation projects.

May continued: ‘We feel there is a need to put forward positive images of pastoralism as the only rational use of the arid areas... to correct an imbalance in the perceptions... of GOK officials’, but this did not mean working directly together with a government hostile to NGOs and convinced that pastoralists were ‘primitive’.<sup>166</sup> As one interviewee remarked, ‘[Nicky] occupied the position that NGOs were good at pioneering [projects] and government should be rolling [programmes] out for the mass population’. ‘There was’, they continued, no ‘refusal to co-operate with government... but relations were fairly distant’.<sup>167</sup>

Indeed, at the national level, ‘the position of Oxfam in Kenya [remained] tenuous’.<sup>168</sup> Oxfam operated throughout the final years of the 1980s in a *de facto* fashion under the same privileges as granted previously, but the ‘continued suspicion of NGOs, and generalised tension... on the part of both the administration and the party, mean that we must continue to observe protocol... scrupulously’. In a confidential note to Oxford (no copies of which were to remain in Kenya in any form) May further elaborated on the context: ‘increased repression of criticism... censorship and self-censorship of the press; rapid constitutional changes to suit executive policy [and] increased centralisation of power in the hands of the President’ made it ‘harder to analyse the general situation and challenge injustice... without seeming to threaten security or be unpatriotic’. She recorded that ‘people in the rural areas have been warned to beware of suspicious

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<sup>166</sup> ‘Annual Report for Kenya, December 1986 to November 1987’, 27 January, 1988, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/16 Folder 1: January 1988.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with author no. XII, 5 December, 2014.

<sup>168</sup> ‘Minutes of the Africa South Sub-Committee’, 26-27 January, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/18: January 1989.

foreigners’, and permits were now required for any meeting with local groups.<sup>169</sup> May also reported on widespread government-led human rights abuses, the rigging of elections in 1988 – to remove the “old guard” of politicians from Kenyatta’s time’ and produce a ‘docile Parliament’ befitting Moi’s attempt to make KANU supreme over the legislature – and the way in which Kenya was increasingly ruled by directive from the President through KANU, District Commissioners (who ‘controlled everything from development to defence’), the police and ‘youthwingers’.<sup>170</sup> In Oxford, May’s report was read with trepidation: Kenya was, discussants agreed, a classic example of ‘autocratic decline’, whereby autocracy undermined popular participation in decision-making and ‘the elite gear things into the meeting of their interests at the expense of those of the majority... all in the name of development’.<sup>171</sup> ‘Any wrong step, however slight’, the Africa Committee noted, ‘may mean expulsion’.<sup>172</sup> Thus May was advised to do her best to keep Oxfam’s work low profile.

For the most part the Field Director was successful in this regard; in fact, there was only one direct threat to Oxfam’s position in this period, and it occurred a year earlier when May conducted a survey in anticipation of an Oxfam programme for participatory development in Wajir. At the time, the DC (recalling Oxfam’s earlier efforts in the district) was less than pleased with the questions she asked about animal deaths and malnutrition, but he allowed May to submit a ‘sanitised’ version of her findings to the Provincial Commissioner, justifying an Oxfam programme in concert with AMREF and others.<sup>173</sup> A more critical report regarding the lack of investment by public and private bodies in the region was sent to Oxford. Soon after, Oxfam’s Field Officer visited Wajir and, in the usual fashion, paid a courtesy call on the DC while he waited for May to drive up from Nairobi. Immediately he noticed that the usual cordial, if formal, atmosphere was missing. Instead, he sensed hostility and irritation on the part of government officials he encountered. When he finally met with the DC, the Field Officer was told in no uncertain terms that he was not to leave Wajir or to continue with his work. Moreover, the DC

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<sup>169</sup> ‘Annual Report for Kenya, December 1987 – October 1988’, 26-27 January, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/18: January 1989; ‘Annexe to the Annual Report’, tabled at the Africa Committee, 26-27 January, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/18: January 1989.

<sup>170</sup> ‘Annexe to the Annual Report’, tabled at the Africa Committee, 26-27 January, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/18: January 1989.

<sup>171</sup> ‘Towards a Human Rights Policy in Africa’, 6-7 July, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/19: July 1989.

<sup>172</sup> ‘Minutes of the Africa South Sub-Committee’, 26-27 January, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/18: January 1989.

<sup>173</sup> Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, pp. 19-20; Interview with author no. XII, 5 December, 2014.

ordered the Field Officer to call May and tell her not to travel to Wajir without the explicit permission of the Office of the President. The Field Officer, fearing arrest, did as he was told, but May was already en route and was, in any case, nonplussed as to why the government would not wish her to visit Wajir. She hoped that, whatever the issue, she could argue her case in person with the DC.

When May arrived in Wajir, she and the Field Officer were escorted to meet the DC, who had assembled his security committee of departmental heads, police officers and members of the intelligence services. In front of this threatening cabal, the DC accused May of writing damaging untruths about the state of Wajir and blaming the government for the people's suffering when the true cause was drought. Without waiting to hear what the Oxfam staff had to say for themselves, he ordered them out of the office and told them to stay in Wajir overnight. Unsurprisingly, May and her Field Officer both feared what would happen if they stayed overnight in Wajir, and their suspicions were confirmed by a contact in the government who suggested they needed to leave quickly. Together, they fled Wajir and returned to Nairobi. Their contact in the government would reveal later that the reports on the situation in Wajir had been placed in the wrong envelopes: the critical version had thus been dispatched to the Provincial Commissioner (while the sanitised version ended up at Oxfam Head Office). In retaliation, the DC had arranged to throw Oxfam out of Wajir in full view of the assembled press, a potential propaganda coup for a government looking to blame external forces for unrest in the country.<sup>174</sup>

The test of how far Oxfam's relationship with the state had been damaged by the episode arrived soon after. In late 1987 the short rains failed totally in North Eastern Province, creating a 'potentially serious situation in and around Wajir'. Oxfam acknowledged that 'due to historical factors' and the fact that the situation coincided with the first stage of national elections, its response had to be prepared 'with the utmost sensitivity'. Regardless of Oxfam's efforts, the Office of the President refused to allow the organisation into Wajir.<sup>175</sup> As a confidential report on the political and economic context in Kenya commented,

state repression of pastoralists continues... in North Eastern Province drought led to many livestock deaths and a growing number of destitute people in distress... [but] the government seemed more concerned about security and its international image

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<sup>174</sup> Interview with author no. XIV, 21 September, 2014; Interview with author no. XVII, 13 November, 2014; Interview with author no. XII, 5 December, 2014.

<sup>175</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa South Sub-Committee', 27 April, 1988, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/16 Folder 2: April 1988; 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 27 April, 1988, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/16 Folder 2: April 1988.

than it did about the plight of the people concerned, and refused to allow outside assistance into the area.<sup>176</sup>

Fortunately, the rains came not long after, resolving this potentially serious disagreement; but Oxfam would not be allowed to return to the district officially until 1992.

Predictably, therefore, the prevailing attitude at the time – particularly amongst Oxfam’s national staff – was one of cynicism towards the occupants of the state apparatus, who were too busy supporting the ‘culture of “big men eating”’ and repressing widespread popular disaffection to have any commitment to poverty alleviation.<sup>177</sup> Yet there were signs of a softening of attitudes among staff: as one Oxfam employee noted, NGOs ‘can call [the government] illegitimate or undemocratic but... they are there... [and] the potential for increasing Oxfam’s impact is greater if [the organisation] can create an effective working relationship with the government’. Indeed, if – as May acknowledged – development in pastoral regions (as elsewhere) was ‘as much a matter of educating government officials as local [people]’, many felt the organisation needed to improve its work as an interlocutor between the state and society.<sup>178</sup> As Jimmy Betts had stressed 20 years previously, this could only realistically happen if institutionalised channels of communication were opened up with government: otherwise, however loud at the village level, the voice of the marginalised was not going to be heard in Nairobi.<sup>179</sup>

Thus when the restocking and water harvesting projects ended in 1987/88 Oxfam found itself ‘at a watershed in planning our involvement in [the pastoral] sector over the next few years’.<sup>180</sup> The 1989-1993 strategic plan for Kenya noted this opportunity and reflected on the fact that the roots of poverty in pastoral areas were located ‘up-country’ – whether in policies that encourage settlement, negative attitudes on the part of planners, or the exploitation of pastoral resources for tourism or the benefit of the elite – but that ‘growing awareness of the need to address important policy issues had no outlet’. Consequently, May’s successor, Karen Twining, began to invest in Oxfam’s public communications capacity and worked to create a national pastoral organisation – The Pastoral Steering Committee (PSC) – that could enter dialogue with receptive government

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<sup>176</sup> ‘Annexe to the Annual Report’, tabled at the Africa Committee, 26-27 January, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/18: January 1989.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with author no. XXI, 28 April, 2015.

<sup>178</sup> Interview with author no. XI, 4 December, 2014.

<sup>179</sup> Hogg, ‘NGOs, Pastoralists and the Myth of Community’, p. 142.

<sup>180</sup> ‘Annual Report for Kenya, December 1986 to November 1987’, 27 January, 1988, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/16 Folder 1: January 1988.

officers on the development challenges in pastoral areas.<sup>181</sup> The PSC, which started out as a 'loose network of Oxfam staff and partners', soon expanded to include members from pastoral districts right across the country, and sought to provide a forum at national level in which issues of concern to pastoralists could be raised and debated. Meanwhile, *The Pastoralist* – a newsletter formed by the PSC – discussed past and present development interventions, advocated community development techniques and lambasted absentee MPs who voted against their constituents' interests.<sup>182</sup> In light of government 'sensitivities', concerns were raised in Oxford that the PSC was 'a bit of an ambitious initiative at this stage', and that it could draw 'undesirable attention to the whole sphere of pastoral work'. But Leggett asserted that its members 'were fully aware of the disadvantages of drawing undue attention to itself'. Moreover, he averred, the pastoral programme was 'learning from previous experience not to work in a vacuum but to... obtain district officials' support'. Furthermore, the PSC – funded by Oxfam but not run by the organisation – could engage in 'dialogue with government that will not compromise Oxfam or the PSC members' individually.<sup>183</sup>

The balancing act of engaging government while 'keeping [it] at arms' length' remained at the forefront of Oxfam staff concerns in the last years prior to the reestablishment of multipartyism in Kenya. Oxfam's 'representative function' – lobbying, networking and coordination – was considered 'increasingly important to influence the context in which our programmes operate'.<sup>184</sup> Consequently, when staff realised that an isolated pressure group such as the PSC was having limited impact in Nairobi, they set about bringing pastoralists, development practitioners together with government officials at the 'grassroots'.<sup>185</sup> For example, in 1989 the organisation involved the District Agricultural Officer in the extension of the community-based approach to water harvesting demonstrated at Lokitaung to Kakuma. The Kakuma Pastoral Development

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<sup>181</sup> Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, p. 16.

<sup>182</sup> Notable articles in *The Pastoralist* include: A. Sheikh, 'Community Development: The Key to Democracy', Issue 1, March, 1993; J. Munyes, 'Drought and Famine in Turkana', Issue 1, March, 1993; 'STOP PRESS: Motion to Stop Sub-Division of Group Ranches Rejected', Issue 2, November, 1993; E. Ethuro, 'Who do They Represent?', Issue 3, April, 1994; and 'The Need for Public Debate on Land Reform', Issue 5, February, 1995.

<sup>183</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa South Sub-Committee', 26-27 January, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/18: January 1989; 'Kenya Annual Update: November 1988 – October 1989', 11-12 January, 1990, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/20 Folder 1: January 1990.

<sup>184</sup> 'Kenya Biannual Report', 10-11 January, 1991, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12 Folder 6: Kenya Biannual Report, November 1989 – October 1990.

<sup>185</sup> 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1987 to October 1988', 27 January, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/18: January 1989; 'Minutes of the Africa South Sub-Committee', 26-27 January, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/18: January 1989; 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1985 – November 1986', 21 January, 1987, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/13 Folder 2: January 1987.

Project aimed to improve traditional sorghum gardens and build on existing pastoral institutions, and would receive over £125,000 between 1989 and 1997.<sup>186</sup> Meanwhile, in Samburu, Oxfam staff were careful 'to involve or inform the district administration of all we do', particularly as regards the fight against the exploitation of pastoral communities by traders. As a result of this increased dialogue Oxfam faced 'no major difficulties with the animation approach', which successfully raised hides and skins prices from three to 42 shillings.<sup>187</sup> Oxfam also cautiously stepped up its 'development education' training (DELTA), used to 'challenge accepted values of development and help communities to decolonise ideas that development comes from outside, consists of handouts [sic], and is dependent on institutions rather than people'.<sup>188</sup> From 1989 to 1991, over 15 per cent of staff time was devoted to such training. This coincided with the employment of two pioneers of the development education movement in Kenya: Adelina Mwau and Peter Kisopia had worked under the umbrella of the Catholic Church until the latter was forced to disown the process of education as too politically radical.<sup>189</sup> A Programme Officer at the time noted the overall transition in Oxfam's methodology:

In the beginning Oxfam did not believe in working with the government... they were seen as oppressors... and it [the state] looked at NGOs as a threat to the regime [because they were] creating awareness and rocking the boat... There was [also] a... divide between the local community and the government... the government offices [were] no go zones [for] local people, so even if they had problems they feared going to these offices, they were so bureaucratic, executive... We tried to break that fear to bring closer the communities and the government... At first government [asked] what is Oxfam doing here? You give us the food, we distribute it... [However], slowly, through these programmes, Oxfam designed a methodology not starting from the top, but starting from the grass roots government officials, bringing them in through the [programmes]... Soon [we] got the support of government officials at the grassroots...<sup>190</sup>

The approach appeared to have paid off when, in 1990, the government singled out Oxfam for its expertise on ASAL areas and invited the organisation to sit on its newly created ASAL taskforce. It was possible, of course, that the invitation was a cynical

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<sup>186</sup> 'Kenya Annual Update: November 1988 – October 1989', 11-12 January, 1990, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/20 Folder 1: January 1990; 'Kenya Biannual Report', 10-11 January, 1991, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12 Folder 6: Kenya Biannual Report, November 1989 – October 1990.

<sup>187</sup> 'Annual Report for Kenya, December 1987 to October 1988', 27 January, 1989, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/18: January 1989.

<sup>188</sup> The DELTA method came to Kenya in the mid-1980s, introduced mainly by the Catholic Church in reaction to the repressive political climate.

<sup>189</sup> 'Kenya Biannual Report', 10-11 January, 1991, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12 Folder 6: Kenya Biannual Report, November 1989 – October 1990.

<sup>190</sup> Interview with author no. IX, 16 October, 2014.

manoeuvre to co-opt one of the foremost organisations working on pastoral areas into the government apparatus. Regardless, Oxfam's increasing commitment to pushing for policy change ensured that the organisation would not refuse a seat at the top table. The new Country Representative wrote that the 'unique opportunity to inform government policy with the mandate of our pastoral partners' was too good to pass up.<sup>191</sup>

## 'DANCING WITH THE STATE'

Oxfam had, therefore, begun to re-engage tentatively with the Moi state by 1990. The contrast with the late 1970s and early 1980s is marked; yet the shift in approach is not as surprising as it might seem at first glance, however, because the variety of different tactical approaches Oxfam took in Kenya masked overall strategic continuity. At a time when many NGOs saw their existence as a direct and overdue challenge to an out-dated institution, Oxfam believed in building the responsiveness of the state (or at least doing nothing to damage the ability of the state to respond) as a long-term strategic objective. Under Moi, the Kenyan state was predatory, corrupt and often violent towards its citizens – all of the things that made donors wince from offering bilateral assistance. For this reason Oxfam would look for alternatives to working directly with the government as it had done for the majority of the Kenyatta era. To use Christy Lorgen's metaphor of 'dancing with the state', during the Kenyatta period Oxfam had attempted to 'lead' the dance with the state; during the early Moi era, the state was attempting to choreograph the movements of civil society, and sought to push virtuosos off the dance floor permanently. In such a scenario, Oxfam made the tactical judgement to absent itself from the 'dance'. Where previously the organisation had worked alongside the Kenyatta regime in a 'supply-side' reform effort – cajoling the government to take accountability and responsibility to its citizens seriously – in the Moi era, government suspicion of anything remotely challenging to the authority of the state rendered this approach unsuitable.

In this context, Oxfam hoped to build the capacity of Kenyan citizens to take its place in the dance with the state. In alighting on such an approach, the organisation was

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<sup>191</sup> 'Kenya Biannual Report', 10-11 January, 1991, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12 Folder 6: Kenya Biannual Report, November 1989 – October 1990; 'Minutes of the Africa South Sub-Committee', 2-3 July, 1990, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/21: July 1990.

responding not only to the local environment, but also to a fundamental shift in its values away from technical and modernisation work and towards empowerment and conscientisation. Thus while the desperate crises that affected Turkana, Samburu and Wajir in the early 1980s emboldened the Field Director to bring a more operational Oxfam into existence, once the crises had passed Oxford and Nairobi (under a new Field Director) agreed that Oxfam should focus on the 'demand-side' of development in Kenya. Influenced by the conscientisation movement, Oxfam rejected the temptation to scale up and attempt to solve problems unilaterally with the patronage of large IFIs, as this would come at the cost of imposing technical and 'quick fix' solutions on the unwilling 'objects' of development. Crucially, however, both sides of the operational versus empowerment debate came from the left-liberal tradition that prescribed remedial action by the state, and so were in agreement that Oxfam had to influence the state in a more responsible direction, whether through independent operational work or by conscientising those on the ground. The debate concerned tactics, not strategy; in short, it asked how Oxfam could best achieve its strategic goals: from the top-down or the bottom-up?

Notwithstanding the different approaches taken to development work in Kenya, therefore, – whether working to empower local communities, to distribute relief and encourage rehabilitation during emergency situations or acting to bring local government officers and citizens together in different forums – Oxfam continued to believe that the state had the ultimate duty and responsibility for those it represented. Exhibiting the pragmatism that so often enabled Oxfam to continue to push its values, the organisation for a time combined the operational and empowerment approaches in order to best match circumstances on the ground in Kenya. Using technical projects as a cloak, Oxfam sought to encourage local communities to challenge unresponsive state institutions and demand better representation. Latterly, Oxfam sought to take advantage of committed government staff to influence policy away from elite interests and towards those of Kenya's marginalised citizens. Though the risks of such an approach were widely known and understood, by the late 1980s it was clear that policy change was a fundamental requirement in pastoral areas, and, having exhausted the alternatives, working around the state was no longer an option. Thus while many NGOs and IFIs continued to threaten the Kenyan state, in a manner which would have pleased Jimmy Betts Oxfam set out once more to directly engage the state to increase its accountability to marginalised Kenyans. In doing so, the organisation pre-empted the development community's embrace of

'good governance' after 1989 and the World Bank's own *volte-face* on the need for an effective state in its 1997 report, *The State in a Changing World*.<sup>192</sup> Unfortunately, as Kenya lurched between natural disaster, economic turmoil and political crisis in the early 1990s the opportunity for influence over policy grew only as quickly as the risks involved, for Moi resorted to increasingly desperate times with increasingly desperate measures. How Oxfam navigated this risk-reward dilemma is the subject of the following chapter.

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<sup>192</sup> World Bank Group, *World Development Report 1997: The State in a Changing World* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997).

## Chapter Four

### 'OF COURSE IT'S CORRUPT... BUT [IT'S] ABOUT WORKING WITH THE GRAIN' – OXFAM IN KENYA, 1991-2002

Beneficiaries here I come / Donor with a tidy sum; / Help me be a good provider /  
Open up your mouths much wider; / All will gain, that is the notion / You get cash, I  
get promotion; / Shun the mean facilitator / What he brings is less and later; /  
Participation too's a mess / You do more and they do less; / What good calling you  
clients and actors? / Better cash from benefactors...

Extracts from 'A Bureaucrat's Plea to the Poor', by Robert Chambers, Institute of Development Studies,  
1996.

*The following chapter describes how Oxfam responded to the complexity of the crisis enveloping Kenya in the 1990s. Moi's attempt to informalise the state and instrumentalise disorder after he was forced to succumb to demands for multipartyism by external creditors presented an early difficulty for the organisation. Indeed, state-inspired violence and corruption challenged Oxfam hopes that the Moi state could be made responsible for its citizens. Moreover, violent ethnic conflict combined with drought and flood to send Kenya into complex emergency situations on three occasions between 1990 and 2002. On these occasions Oxfam had to respond on an unprecedented scale, raising fears that it was once more replacing the state whose capacity and responsibility it hoped to build. Importantly, however, the chapter describes how the relief operations provided Oxfam with the standing and leverage to lobby the state, particularly on pastoral issues. Two projects that were considered promising in this regard – the Wajir Pastoral Development Programme and the Arid Lands Resource Management Project – are described in detail to show how Oxfam endeavoured to make the most of its newfound standing in Kenya. The penultimate section of the chapter concentrates on the pernicious implications of becoming more closely involved with the development-politics nexus at the apex of government, while the final section comments on the 'circularity' of development failures in Kenya as well as of Oxfam responses to the failure of development in Kenya, emphasising the importance of historical inquiries into development and its actors.*

As the Berlin Wall tumbled in late 1989, signifying the end of the Cold War and the 'triumph' of Western liberal democracy, fractures were also forming in the edifice Moi had constructed in support of his authoritarian regime in Kenya. Having eroded the elite intra-ethnic consensus that had underpinned Kenyatta's presidency, the President faced pressure from leading figures in politics and civil society for the reform of Kenya's

constitution and the repeal of the provision for single-party rule (clause 2A).<sup>1</sup> The anger at government abuses was, however, spread widely throughout Kenyan society: thus when high-profile figures organised a rally demanding the return of multipartyism, Kenyans attended in their thousands.<sup>2</sup> Despite the upsurge in popular anger with the regime, Moi was able to suppress demands for multipartyism until December 1991, when – under pressure from a coalition of foreign donors who threatened that Kenya’s aid tap would be turned off if the country did not make a quick transition to liberal democracy – he finally repealed constitutional clause (2A). The President had, in fact, calculated that it would be easier to manipulate and control a weak democracy than to run a patronage system with no money.<sup>3</sup> He also understood that multiparty democracy provided an opportunity as well as a threat: since votes were liable to flow down ethnic lines, the President could whip up ethnic hostility to divide and rule his country.<sup>4</sup> Gone, therefore, was Kenyatta’s ‘ideology of order’; in its place Kenyans experienced the instrumentalisation of disorder and the informalisation of the state along the lines postulated by Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz.<sup>5</sup>

Unsurprisingly, much of the tentative enthusiasm Oxfam had for engaging with the state following the apparent ‘opening’ of Kenyan politics was dimmed in a clash with the stark reality of Kenya’s descent from a prebendal to a predatory state. Indeed, the organisation feared that the use of ethnicity for ‘disruption and exploitation’ by ruthless politicians had exposed the ‘fragile nature of nationhood in Kenya’.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the NGO Coordination Act (finally passed in mid-1992) was seen as a clear signal of the Moi regime’s continued disdain for civil society, and Oxfam was concerned that it would ‘act as a controlling rather than a facilitating tool’ at a time when ‘tolerance of questioning, let

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<sup>1</sup> Particularly noticeable in these campaigns were members of the Kikuyu elite hitherto marooned outside Moi’s patronage networks. They were supported by civil society actors, in particular lawyers and churchmen, angered at the human rights abuses of Moi’s government and its clumsy attempts to rig the 1988 election results.

<sup>2</sup> The protest took place on 7 July, or *saba saba* in Swahili (7/7).

<sup>3</sup> New aid deals worth \$350 million had been suspended for six months. Moreover, he recognised quickly that donors were far more interested in democracy as an institution than as a process. Brown ‘From Demiurge to Midwife’.

<sup>4</sup> Kalenjin allies would act as Moi’s proxies, reviving calls for *majimboism* and inciting ordinary Kenyans to force potential opponents and ‘foreigners’ – defined by their ethnicity – to return to their ethno-regional ‘homeland’. Branch, *Kenya: From Hope to Despair*, pp. 199-202. See also Widner, *The Rise of a Party-State in Kenya*, pp. 156-157; S. Mueller, ‘Dying to Win: Elections, Political Violence, and Institutional Decay in Kenya’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2011), pp. 102-103.

<sup>5</sup> Branch and Cheeseman, ‘Democratisation, Sequencing and State Failure’, p. 4; P. Chabal and J. P. Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Oxford, James Currey, 1999). Cohen, ‘Foreign Aid and Ethnic Interests in Kenya’, in Esman and Herring (eds.), *Carrot, Sticks, and Ethnic Conflict*, pp. 99-101.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Oxfam Kenya: Strategic Plan, August 1992 to July 1995’, July, 1992, Personal Archive of Karen Twining; Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 243.

alone dissent, [was] diminishing'.<sup>7</sup> As the Oxfam strategic plan for 1992-1995 remarked, 'the present political atmosphere is unlikely to be more conducive for the alleviation of poverty or [to] open up room for common people to voice their grievances'; 'the potential for fruitful collaboration remains limited'. Moreover, the 'lack of accountability... pervasive corruption, the absence of commitment to poverty alleviation' and the incitement of violence meant that some staff were 'reluctant to work too closely with government structures'.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, there were still many within the organisation who hoped that some level of engagement with the state was possible. The strategic plan reflected this concern, conceding that 'for development initiatives to be sustainable the people themselves *and their government* must be responsible'. Putting the excesses of Moi and his cabal aside, it continued, 'the Government does have the advantage of a nationwide presence, and within its ranks there are many excellent individuals, frustrated by lack of resources to do any work'. Importantly, this was both a pragmatic acknowledgement that without a responsible state apparatus development was likely to stall *and* a reflection of Oxfam ideas about the 'responsible' state, which dated back to the early 1960s in Kenya and had their longer-term origins in the organisation's left-liberal consciousness.

In the early 1990s, the contradiction that was the 'opening' of Kenyan politics thus brought Oxfam anxieties around engagement with the Kenyan state to the fore. The organisation continued to have faith in the potential of the state as a central development actor, but was uncertain as to whether the 'opening' of Kenyan politics was an opportunity to engage a more 'responsible' state or, as the actions of Moi and his cronies suggested, a mirage much like the early years of the Kenyatta and Moi regimes. Whereas other governments, such as Nyerere's in Tanzania, had seemingly adopted Oxfam values and so made the decision to support the state apparatus a straightforward one, in Kenya, the resilience of the predatory state placed the Oxfam ideal of a responsible state at odds with its aims to empower people to have control over their own development. For, if Oxfam worked with the state, it could not be certain that the state would take responsibility for its citizenry; nor could it be certain that its support would not inadvertently legitimise government interventions that were, in fact, anti-

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<sup>7</sup> 'Confidential Briefing: Political, Social and Economic Round-up', 10-11 January, 1991, Personal Archive of Karen Twining; 'East Africa Desk Report', January, 1991, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/22: January 1991 – March 1991.

<sup>8</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya: Strategic Plan, August 1992 to July 1995', July, 1992, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

developmental (such as the settlement of pastoralists in the 1960s and 1970s). Alternatively, if Oxfam worked only with local groups, it would undoubtedly be sacrificing the opportunity (dangled tantalisingly in front of the organisation by promises of improved governance) to have a significant impact on Kenyan development through encouraging the state to be responsible for its citizens; furthermore, it would almost certainly be entrenching the divide between the Kenyan state and civil society that it sought to combat. Predictably, perhaps, the response of the strategic plan to this ideological and practical conundrum was a pragmatic judgement that 'Oxfam cannot afford to ignore the government, [and] may be most effective where there is a possibility of influencing policy' but that it should endeavour to 'create pressure from the grass roots as well as from the top'.<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, as so often the case in Kenya, events would soon overwhelm Oxfam plans and debates. Within a month of the final draft of the strategic plan being written the Africa Committee heard that the humanitarian situation in Kenya had deteriorated substantially. The reasons for the deterioration were threefold: drought in the north, an influx of refugees, and internal violence as national elections drew near.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, because elections were looming, the government was reluctant to admit to these problems 'for fear that it would reflect badly on the performance of the ruling KANU party'.<sup>11</sup> As a result, the President would delay his appeal for aid until June 1992, hindering the response of international organisations such as WFP – which needed government permission to act – and the response of NGOs that sought to transport and distribute food donated by WFP and others. Crucially, Oxfam's own response was held back by the fact that staff were reluctant to consider substantial operational emergency work – caricatured as heavy-handed, expatriate and anti-developmental – for fear that it would hamper the organisation's development programme. Significantly, institutional memory of the last major emergency efforts in Kenya in 1984 had all but disappeared by the early 1990s.<sup>12</sup> What little knowledge of the 1984 efforts remained mostly concerned

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<sup>9</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya: Strategic Plan, August 1992 to July 1995', July, 1992, Personal Archive of Karen Twining. My emphasis.

<sup>10</sup> 'Minutes of the Africa Committee', 2 July, 1992, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/1/3/23 Folders 1, 2 & 3: July 1991 – July 1992.

<sup>11</sup> P. Wiles, M. Buchanan-Smith, J. Umbima, 'Oxfam's Emergency Programmes in Kenya, 1992-1993', October, 1993, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>12</sup> There had been two Country Representatives and Deputy Country Representatives in the interim period and the major Kenya programme plans since 1987 omitted any reference to the possibility of emergency work. The relationship between Oxfam's ideology and its institutional memory would benefit from further study. Unfortunately, there is not the space here for such a digression.

operational difficulties and the pervasiveness of government corruption. At the same time Oxfam had also been warned by its one remaining staff member in Wajir to hold back from working there due to the political sensitivities in the region following Oxfam's involvement in the aftermath of Wagalla.<sup>13</sup> For a time, therefore, the Kenya programme reflected only a 'partial interpretation of Oxfam's mandate, with a bias against emergency work'.<sup>14</sup>



Map 3: Oxfam projects 1991-2002. 1 = Relief intervention, Wajir (1992); 2 = Relief intervention, Turkana (1992); 3 = Relief intervention, Samburu (1992); 4 = Relief, intervention, conflict (1994); 5 = Wajir pastoral development project (1994); 6 = Drought mitigation project (1999).

<sup>13</sup> A Somali monitor of the 30 restocked families from 1984.

<sup>14</sup> P. Wiles, M. Buchanan-Smith, J. Umbima, 'Oxfam's Emergency Programmes in Kenya, 1992-1993', October, 1993, Personal Archive of Karen Twining; Interview with author no. XXI, 28 April, 2015.

Regardless of the delay, Oxfam was still one of the first NGOs to respond in a significant fashion to the unfolding emergency situation, particularly in the north (see Map 3). In fact, the overwhelming scale of the emergency scenario in Kenya soon ensured that the ideological sticking points and debates over its remit from the 1970s and 1980s were set aside, and Oxfam returned, for a time, to its original rationale – to avert famine. From Wajir, the restocking monitor reported that the failure of the long and short rains in 1991 and the machinations of politicians forcing ‘foreign’ pastoralists out of Garissa and into Wajir had increased the pressure on pasture and water supplies. Around 43 per cent of children were malnourished, while 80 per cent of small stock, 70 per cent of cattle and 30 per cent of camels had died. Oxfam provided its first grant in March 1992 to support food distribution to 750 families through the Wajir Volunteer Group (WVG). This was followed by a supplementary feeding programme and nutritional surveillance work. Overall, Oxfam’s food distribution through WVG reached around 1,260 families each week from April to July.<sup>15</sup> In addition to feeding, Oxfam worked on improving local water supplies by de-silting pans and improving shallow wells. Meanwhile, the organisation also funded an income generation and relief project – based on the creation and distribution of homemade *dufful* mats – for displaced women around Wajir town. The project assisted over 2,000 families in Wajir alone, and nearly 500 more were reached in three settlements nearby. The cost of these combined efforts was around £200,000. Of course, in the context of the crisis in the district the direct impact of Oxfam’s operational interventions was limited; yet its lobbying work in Nairobi helped to bring the drought to the attention of the Kenyan media and put pressure on the government to intervene, which it did soon after.<sup>16</sup>

As Oxfam scaled down its operation in Wajir the drought crisis spread to Samburu and Turkana. In both regions the drought was more prolonged and intense than the one experienced in 1984, with some areas suffering over 80 per cent livestock losses.<sup>17</sup> As regards Samburu, Oxfam was aware that the area had lacked good rains since 1989 and had granted around £15,000 to local Catholic missions to distribute rations to 1,800 families. An in-depth assessment of the situation in June 1992 convinced staff of the need

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<sup>15</sup> After Oxfam lobbied for assistance from other NGOs, GTZ (the *Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* or German Agency for Technical Cooperation) took over responsibility for the region in mid-1992 and Oxfam’s involvement was reduced.

<sup>16</sup> P. Wiles, M. Buchanan-Smith, J. Umbima, ‘Oxfam’s Emergency Programmes in Kenya, 1992-1993’, October, 1993, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>17</sup> Livestock disease – particularly East Coast Fever – was hugely problematic as herders migrated over longer distances in search of better pasture.

to take on an emergency operation, and the organisation made an initial grant of £58,700 for a general food distribution scheme in Baragoi. The grant (of which £40,000 was reimbursed by the Overseas Development Administration) allowed for the purchase of oil to supplement grain donated by WFP. Further grants totalling £123,844 (with £51,500 from the ODA) extended the programme over the coming months, and between 50,000 and 60,000 pastoralists received over 3,000 tonnes of relief food and 141 tonnes of oil across 28 distribution centres from July 1992 to late 1993. Later reviews noted that the operation had started just in time to head off a serious famine situation as June and July saw the beginnings of severe malnutrition. Unfortunately, the efforts in Samburu did slightly delay intervention in Turkana, where locals had taken to calling the drought 'Nakwaakoyo', meaning 'white bones noticed everywhere'. There, Oxfam would distribute over 13,000 tonnes of relief food to around 370,000 pastoralists across 111 distribution centres from October 1992 to June 1993.<sup>18</sup>

Crucially, the relief interventions in Samburu and Turkana were influenced by the neighbouring Uganda programme and so the approach taken to distribution in both locations was based on the idea of saving livelihoods as well as lives.<sup>19</sup> Rather than working solely with the most destitute and acting as a palliative, Oxfam aimed to provide relief to all pastoralists (except for those with salaries) in order to stop them from slaughtering their animals and thereby permanently blocking their return to pastoralism. The method of distribution Oxfam used in both regions was based on the idea of pastoralists' 'entitlement' to food security, an entitlement they lost when their livestock died and they had nothing to exchange for food. It was not enough, according to this interpretation, to feed people in the short-term when they had already lost their food security; rather, feeding needed to protect pastoralists' entitlement to food over the longer-term. Distributed food was, therefore, understood as an asset that could be exchanged for livestock or to meet social obligations: it had value beyond that of individual consumption.<sup>20</sup> In addition, in order to meet its developmental mandate to

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<sup>18</sup> 'Economic Impact Assessment of Oxfam's Relief Operation in North Turkana, Kenya, 1992/4', 1 October, 1994, Personal Archive of Karen Twining; P. Wiles, M. Buchanan-Smith, J. Umbima, 'Oxfam's Emergency Programmes in Kenya, 1992-1993', October, 1993, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>19</sup> In contrast to the approach taken in Kenya, around this time the Uganda programme was focused on the cancellation of Uganda's external debts. Interview with author no. XI, 4 December, 2014. See also Anderson, 'Oxfam, The World Bank and Heavily Indebted Poor Countries', in Rugendyke (ed.), *NGOs as Advocates for Development*, pp. 96-125; T. Callaghy, 'Networks and Governance in Africa: Innovation in the Debt Regime', in T. Callaghy, R. Kassimir and R. Latham (eds.), *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa: Global-Local Networks of Power* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 115-148.

<sup>20</sup> 'Food Distribution in Turkana: Oxfam Report', January, 1995, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

empower local communities, Oxfam argued that working in ways that recognised and reinforced community structures was vital. Its approach thus focused on transparency with beneficiaries over ration rates and in the distribution itself, using uniform scoops and registering all members of a household so that larger families did not suffer. Women were also chosen as recipients of relief to support their traditional role within the family. Finally, Oxfam operated using a large network of widely dispersed distribution centres to suit the scattered pattern of the pastoralist population and to reduce the distances that recipients had to travel. This prevented the build up of large concentrations of pastoralists, which often led to settlement and the spread of disease.

Oxfam's novel approach to distribution was, however, extremely expensive and jarred on an ideological level with the WFP, which took a much narrower view of the purpose of relief interventions. WFP considered that blanket distributions encouraged dependency, despite the fact that distributing food before a pastoralist became destitute meant that they retained the ability to return to the pastoral sector, ultimately regaining their independence. Since the WFP was the main food donor, Oxfam faced a significant shortfall in relief allocations. Furthermore, for reasons beyond Oxfam's control (most importantly WFP and CARE's inability to deliver even the agreed levels of food) it was never possible to meet the target for distribution: 12 kilograms of cereals, 1.8 kilograms of beans and 0.6 kilograms of oil per person, per month. Instead, the amount of maize distributed in Samburu fluctuated between 1.5 and 8.5 kilograms per person, per month. In February and March 1993, for instance, only 20 and 15 per cent (respectively) of the full allocation was delivered by WFP and CARE (which organised primary transportation within Kenya). Oxfam thus had to supplement the rations in Samburu from its own budget and ODA grants. In Turkana the gap between the Oxfam and WFP assessments was even starker: WFP provided food for 230,000 people but Oxfam wanted to feed 374,000, and in any case only 34 per cent and 28 per cent of the agreed allocation arrived from WFP in February and March 1993. Fortunately, Oxfam was able to make up most of the shortfall by purchasing nearly 4,000 tonnes of maize using an £800,000 grant from the ODA.<sup>21</sup> Though perhaps not as effective in protecting livelihoods as saving lives due to the delayed response and limited distribution, Oxfam's interventions did reduce the market

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<sup>21</sup> 'Turkana Programme Report', May, 1993, quoted in 'Food Distribution in Turkana: Oxfam Report', January, 1995, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

price of maize and slowed the slaughter of productive animals as well as improving the health status of the populations.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, Oxfam also responded to 'eruptions of violence which [had] all the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing' in Western Kenya. The organisation had received reliable reports that hundreds of people had been killed in politically motivated ethnic clashes from October 1991, with more than 100,000 people displaced by marauding ethnic militias. From March 1992 to January 1993, therefore, Oxfam made seven grants totalling £60,041 for relief and rehabilitation work. The funds provided for food, utensils, blankets and transport costs for the thousands in temporary camps on the border of Nyanza and Rift Valley. Oxfam could not work operationally, however, due to the 'political sensitivities' involved, instead supporting church-based relief work. Even this was controversial, and the government's obstruction of relief workers' access to displaced people hampered most humanitarian efforts. Lobbying and communications work on the clashes was also restricted because the root cause of the problem – 'the GOK's policies and actions' – meant that any misstep could lead to expulsion.<sup>23</sup>

Predictably, these relief efforts caused a rapid expansion in the expenditure of the Kenya programme, from £438,000 in 1991-92 to £1.7 million in 1992-93.<sup>24</sup> (See Figures 9 and 10.) By this time there were more than 100 staff employed by Oxfam in Kenya, 93 of whom were employed in the field in Turkana (66), Samburu (20) and Wajir (7). This represented a four-fold increase from the immediate pre-emergency period and a three-fold increase within a year.<sup>25</sup> There was, moreover, little chance of the emergency situation abating quickly, as Moi's re-election in December 1992 meant that the political and economic situation in Kenya continued to deteriorate: 'dirty tricks, insecurity and increasing ethnic polarisation have characterised Kenyan politics over the past eighteen months', noted the Oxfam 1993 annual report. With the 'government free to pursue its course unchallenged... [and] politicians who indulge in inflammatory statements... politically-inspired tribal clashes have [only] increased in scope and severity leaving death,

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<sup>22</sup> P. Wiles, M. Buchanan-Smith, J. Umbima, 'Oxfam's Emergency Programmes in Kenya, 1992-1993', October, 1993, Personal Archive of Karen Twining; 'Economic Impact Assessment of Oxfam's Relief Operation in North Turkana, Kenya, 1992/4', 1 October, 1994, Personal Archive of Karen Twining; P. Wiles, M. Buchanan-Smith, J. Umbima, 'Oxfam's Emergency Programmes in Kenya, 1992-1993', October, 1993, Personal Archive of Karen Twining; 'Food Distribution in Turkana: Oxfam Report', January, 1995, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>23</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Programme: Annual Report, 1993', May, 1994, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/7: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report, 1993.

<sup>24</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Programme: Annual Report, 1993', May, 1994, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/7: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report, 1993.

<sup>25</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Country Office Staff List', October, 1993, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

suffering and fear in their wake'. Meanwhile, corruption and economic decline (inflation was running at 47 per cent) meant that social services were collapsing. Combined with poor rains and ethnic violence, the inadequate provision of faulty seed, for instance, meant that the crop deficit for the country was between four and five million bags of grain. Accordingly, 1993-94 was also dominated by emergency work: the organisation distributed £5.5 million in food aid to Samburu and Turkana alone. It also worked to aid those displaced by ethnic clashes, establishing the NGO Council Ethnic Clashes Coordination Network, which brought together churches, NGOs, the UNDP and other relevant bodies to coordinate responses in the regions most badly affected. Oxfam's overall expenditure in Kenya reached £8 million, representing ten per cent of the overall global income of the organisation that year.<sup>26</sup>

Facing fiscal ruin and the loss of patronage resources under pressure from donors and IMF conditionalities, Moi would attempt to appropriate a portion of the vast swathes of humanitarian aid entering the country. Having first met with a representative of the FAO in 1991 to discuss the looming humanitarian crisis in three of Kenya's districts, Moi would soon inflate the number of districts in need to 17. Middleton and O'Keefe note that as a result of Moi's pleas over \$121 million worth of cereals, oil and pulses was brought into Kenya between 1992 and 1994 by the WFP alone, and they allege that a proportion was likely distributed to constituencies less out of humanitarian need than as a bribe to allied politicians and blocs of voters.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, the £800,000 grant to Oxfam from ODA was forthcoming after the visit of Lady Chalker, Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Kenya in February 1993. Twining suspected that the ODA only stepped in to supplement the WFP allocation 'as part of a positive political line towards Kenya' on behalf of the British government, but in the midst of the crisis, and convinced of the importance of its blanket approach, the Country Representative could not afford to be picky.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, Middleton and O'Keefe overstate their argument that the drought crisis was not out of the ordinary and that 'a chronic emergency of insecurity and ethnic violence was treated as if it was a sudden and acute emergency' in order to covertly assist the Kenya government. Firstly, Oxfam had their own monitors on the ground to assess the levels of need and each told a consistent story of desperation and

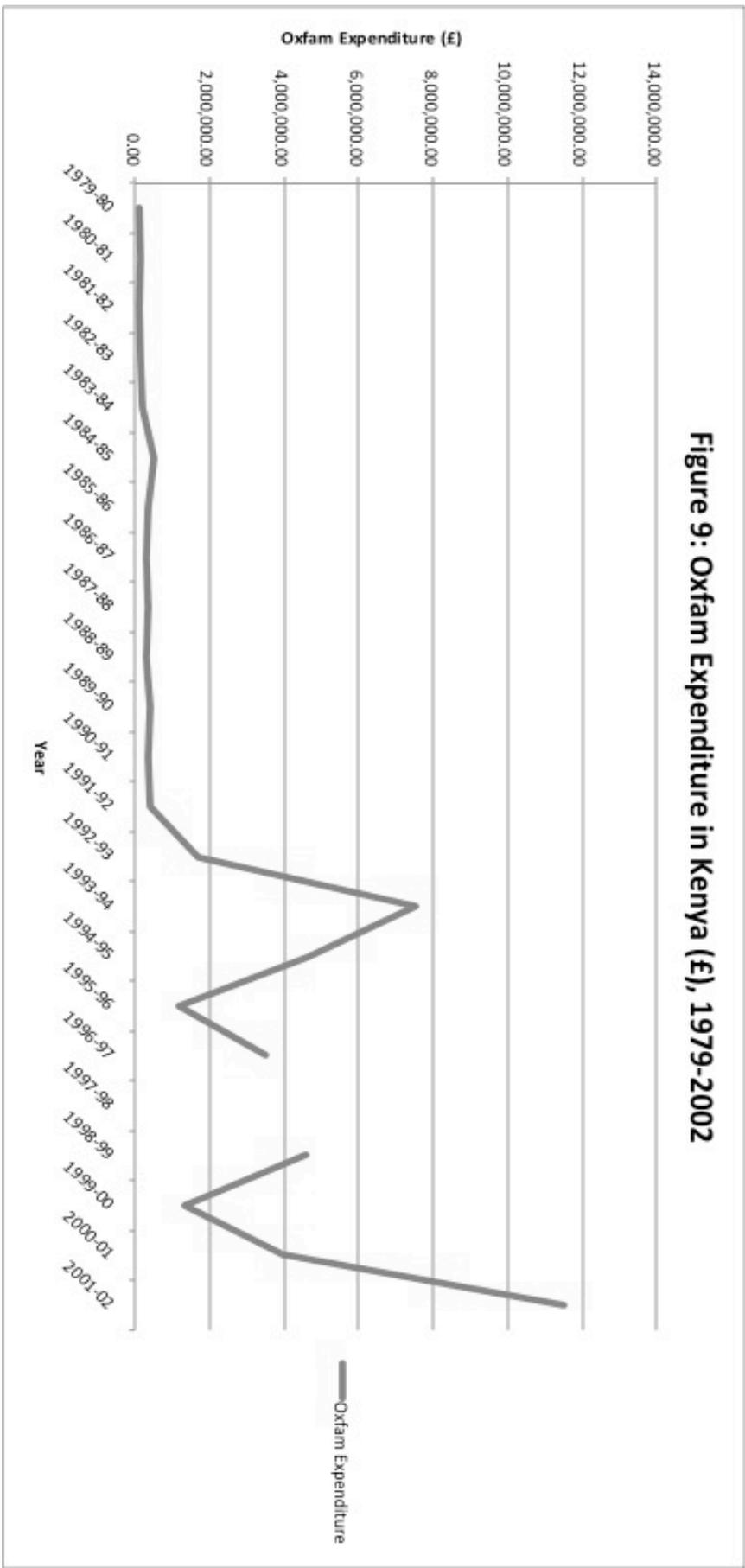
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<sup>26</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Programme: Annual Report, 1993', May, 1994, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/7: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report, 1993.

<sup>27</sup> Middleton and O'Keefe, *Disaster and Development*, pp. 54-68.

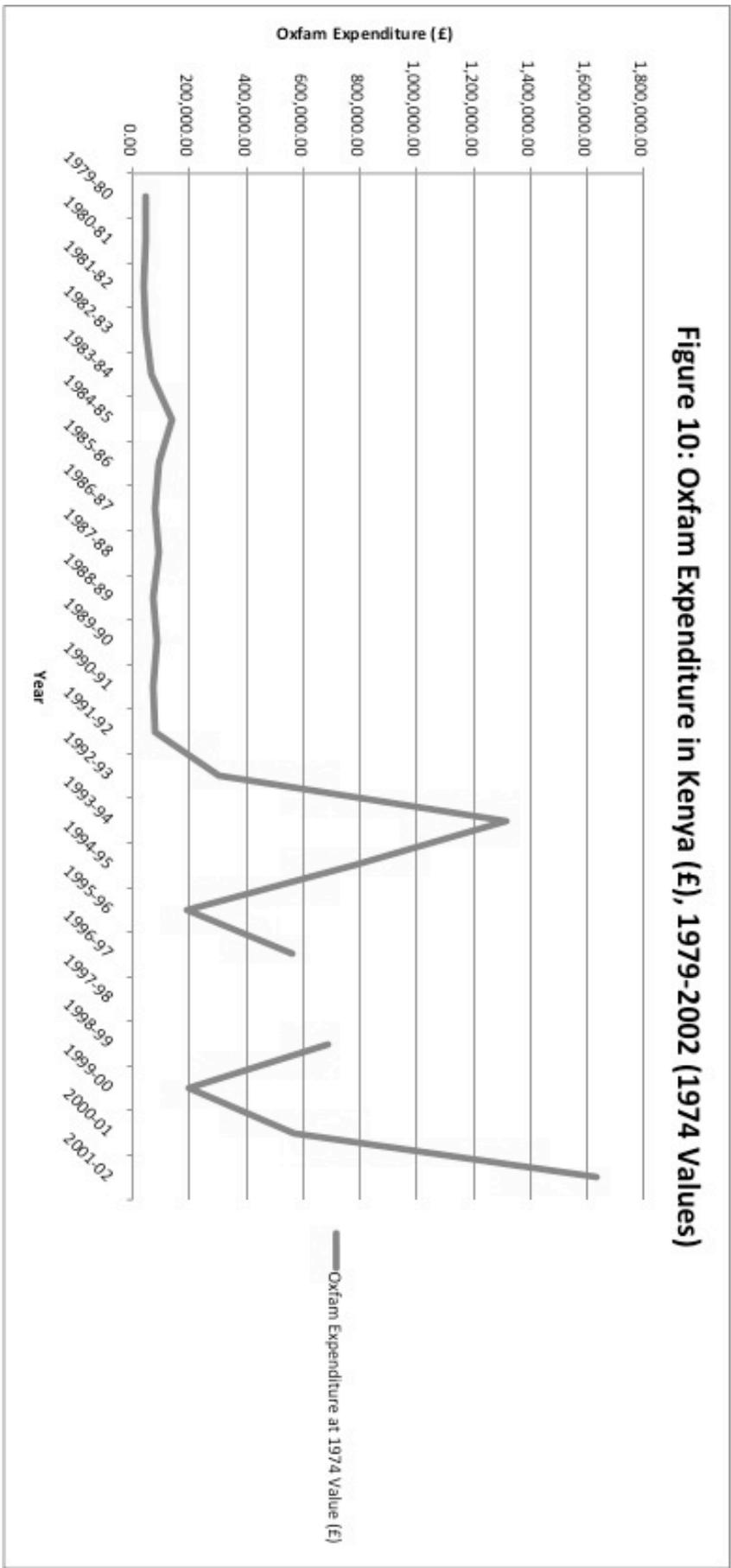
<sup>28</sup> 'Turkana Programme Report', May, 1993, quoted in 'Food Distribution in Turkana: Oxfam Report', January, 1995, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

**Figure 9: Oxfam Expenditure in Kenya (£), 1979-2002**



Source: Grants lists 1962/63 to 2003/04. As yet uncatalogued at the Bodleian Library. See also: 'Oxfam Kenya Programme: Annual Report, 1993', May, 1994, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/7; Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report, 1993; 'Oxfam Kenya Annual Report, 1994-1995', July, 1995, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/8; Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report 1994-1995; 'Developing New Directions for Oxfam in Kenya: Annual Report, May 1995 - April 1996', January, 1996, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/9; 'Developing New Directions for Oxfam in Kenya, Annual Report 1995-1996', Annual Report, 1996-1997; 'Consolidating Oxfam Strategic Directions in Kenya', June, 1997, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/10; Annual Report 1996-1997, 'Consolidating Oxfam Strategic Directions in Kenya', Annual Report, 1998-1999: 'Orienting Programme Action towards Policy Work for Greater Impact', April, 1999, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/13; Annual Report 1998-1999, 'Orienting Programme Action Towards Policy Work for Greater Impact', HECA Annual Regional Report, 1999-2000', November, 2000, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/54; HECA Annual Regional Report 1999-2000; 'HECA Programme, Annual Impact Report, 2001-2002', May, 2002, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/55; HECA Programme Annual Impact Report FY 2001-2002. The gap for 1997-98 is due to a missing annual report.

**Figure 10: Oxfam Expenditure in Kenya (£), 1979-2002 (1974 Values)**



Source: Grants lists 1962/63 to 2003/04. As yet uncatalogued at the Bodleian Library. See also: 'Oxfam Kenya Programme: Annual Report, 1993', May, 1994, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/7; Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report, 1993; 'Oxfam Kenya Annual Report, 1994-1995', July, 1995, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/8; Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report 1994-1995; 'Developing New Directions for Oxfam in Kenya: Annual Report, 1995-1996', January, 1996, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/9; 'Developing New Directions for Oxfam in Kenya, Annual Report 1995-1996', Annual Report, 1996-1997; 'Consolidating Oxfam Strategic Directions in Kenya', June, 1997, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/10; Annual Report 1996-1997, 'Consolidating Oxfam Strategic Directions in Kenya', Annual Report, 1998-1999: 'Orienting Programme Action towards Policy Work for Greater Impact', April, 1999, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/13; Annual Report 1998-1999, 'Orienting Programme Action Towards Policy Work for Greater Impact'; 'HECA Annual Regional Report, 1999-2000', November, 2000, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/54; HECA Annual Regional Report 1999-2000; 'HECA Programme, Annual Impact Report, 2001-2002', May, 2002, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/55; HECA Programme Annual Impact Report FY 2001-2002. The gap for 1997-98 is due to a missing annual report.

suffering. Thus even if the grant from ODA was a political gesture, Oxfam distributed the funds in areas in need as defined by its own monitors rather than Moi's political calculations.<sup>29</sup> (The question of whether such aid allowed the Moi state to direct its own relief in a political fashion is one that in the midst of crisis, Oxfam staff had to ignore.) Secondly, while the crisis did have long-term causes such as insecurity and ethnic violence, the drought situation was itself severe. Though the drought had been developing for more than two years by 1991 – and Oxfam admits that it should have acted sooner – the difficulty is judging the appropriate time to intervene since the onset of crises in pastoral regions in particular is rapid. The final slide into famine occurs very suddenly since nutritional status is protected for a time because of the availability of meat from dead and dying animals. As herds deplete, famine conditions develop quickly.<sup>30</sup> In such a way a crisis can be chronic but have a sudden onset period.

Moreover, although Moi and his administration grasped at humanitarian assistance as a 'decent alternative to development aid' over these years, authors should take care not to tar all humanitarian aid with the same brush. Oxfam understood that 'the advent of multi-party politics... meant the politicisation of relief aid at local levels' and sought to avoid its distribution programmes 'wearing political labels'. It was fortunate in one sense in that Turkana and Samburu were solid KANU areas; hence there was 'less likelihood of the emergency programmes becoming political footballs'. But the organisation also took important steps to avoid its aid being used as patronage. Indeed, noting the politicisation of relief by the government, the organisation endeavoured to direct its relief work from the ground up rather than the top down. Thus Oxfam's relief interventions set out to prove that 'community mobilisation' was possible even within an emergency programme, something the organisation felt was 'misunderstood or overlooked by those who see relief work as responding only to the physical needs of an individual and not to the overall growth of a community'.<sup>31</sup>

Oxfam encouraged community mobilisation during the relief work by electing relief committees at open village meetings to liaise with the organisation on screening

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<sup>29</sup> Questions would, however, be asked much later about the appropriateness of some of Oxfam's early intervention work and its links with the political ambitions of certain Oxfam staff (as opposed to the government). This issue is dealt with in more detail below.

<sup>30</sup> Middleton and O'Keefe, *Disaster and Development*, pp. 54-68; M. Buchanan-Smith, 'A Review of Oxfam's Approach to Relief Food Distribution in Samburu and Turkana Districts of Kenya, 1992/93', October, 1993, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/5/5/8 Folder 2: Kenya, 1992-1993.

<sup>31</sup> P. Wiles, M. Buchanan-Smith, J. Umbima, 'Oxfam's Emergency Programmes in Kenya, 1992-1993', October, 1993, Personal Archive of Karen Twining; 'Turkana Programme Report', May, 1993, quoted in 'Food Distribution in Turkana: Oxfam Report', January, 1995, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

and registration, to ensure the security of food and to organise its distribution. Staff hoped that such work would build the capacity of local groups while also '[guarding] against the relief effort being captured by powerful interests within the community' such as chiefs or elders.<sup>32</sup> Predictably, the approach caused some difficulties with local government officers, who 'resented their control over relief being usurped'. This was most apparent in Turkana, where there were 'a few incidents of chiefs disrupting the relief operation, for example by misappropriating sacks of food'.<sup>33</sup> Others sought to dominate the committee and behaved in a 'dictatorial' fashion: in one location an assistant chief nominated 18 people for the committee including himself and allied members of the administration. When Oxfam insisted that the decisions be taken at a baraza, the people themselves rejected most of the assistant chief's suggestions.<sup>34</sup> As one monitor recorded:

The system protected individuals against the power of the chief. It was the system which was challenging the status quo and standing up for [people's] rights, not the individuals.<sup>35</sup>

While far from perfect (some resisted women members vehemently, while many members volunteered because they wanted to get extra allocations or continued to provide food to the chief and his family before anyone else) the relief committees gave communities a level of independence that they had never had before and helped to challenge the enormous political power wielded by government officials who used their control over relief resources to buy loyalty and electoral support.<sup>36</sup> As a review of the interventions recorded, 'the district authorities... played a very small role in this relief operation... At community level the relief operation has tended to by-pass government officers [and] the chiefs who normally play a key role in relief distributions... in favour of relief committees of which they are not a member'.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the undoubted success of the programme both practically and in terms of mobilising communities to take control of their survival, Oxfam wrestled uncomfortably

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<sup>32</sup> M. Buchanan-Smith, 'Oxfam's Relief Operation in Baragoi, Report to ODA', July 1993, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/5/5/8 Folder 2: Kenya, 1992-1993.

<sup>33</sup> P. Wiles, M. Buchanan-Smith, J. Umbima, 'Oxfam's Emergency Programmes in Kenya, 1992-1993', October, 1993, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>34</sup> The community accepted only three of the assistant chief's recommendations. 'Food Distribution in Turkana: Oxfam Report', January, 1995, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>35</sup> 'Food Distribution in Turkana: Oxfam Report', January, 1995, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>36</sup> 'Food Distribution in Turkana: Oxfam Report', January, 1995, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>37</sup> P. Wiles, M. Buchanan-Smith, J. Umbima, 'Oxfam's Emergency Programmes in Kenya, 1992-1993', October, 1993, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

with the consequences of such 'bypassing' for the state in Kenya. If, as the strategic plan pointed out, development in Kenya required that 'the people themselves *and their government* must be responsible', then the 'increasing international reliance on NGOs to perform major relief and welfare functions' was concerning. Although the organisation acknowledged that the 'increased bypassing of national and local government structures may be justified in the short-term when... agencies are faced with weak and corrupt structures', it feared that 'the continued exclusion of government... when the government is already weakened by the impact of the structural adjustment programmes... must create a vicious circle with [the] further atrophying of government structures'. Accordingly, Twining wrote in mid-1994 that 'over the next year we need to address the question of operationality, and ask hard questions about our past and future pastoral development work'.<sup>38</sup> There was, as one report into the emergency interventions concluded, 'a long term strategic issue here for Oxfam'.

Will Oxfam (along with other NGOs) be the major providers of emergency relief assistance in Kenya for the foreseeable future? This appears to be a role which CARE has been happy to adopt. Should Oxfam follow this route or decide to investigate strategies which, in the long-term, could strengthen the capacity of government structures...? This latter approach would have to be planned carefully at central and local level, involving government officials... [and] would need to be underpinned with support to Kenyan NGOs and popular structures... which can monitor the performance of the government officials and have the strength and confidence to complain and lobby if things go wrong. This latter route could be seen as a contribution to strengthening civil society and accountability within Kenya.<sup>39</sup>

Fortunately, if emergency work posed a dilemma for Oxfam in the early 1990s, it also provided an opportunity, for, as Twining noted, 'Oxfam's profile is much higher in Kenya than two years ago, due mainly to our emergency work'. As Swift had predicted ten years previously, large-scale operational work would open doors for the organisation: contemporary reports noted that the organisation's response in emergencies was important 'in earning credibility, which then gets [us] time for advocacy'. To an extent, therefore, while MPs and chiefs bought votes, 'Oxfam Kenya buys its way into decision-making...'.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the prominence of Oxfam's programmes in the arid lands meant Oxfam was 'increasingly viewed as a leading NGO in this area' and earned Oxfam the ear

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<sup>38</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Programme: Annual Report, 1993', May, 1994, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/7: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report, 1993.

<sup>39</sup> P. Wiles, M. Buchanan-Smith, J. Umbima, 'Oxfam's Emergency Programmes in Kenya, 1992-1993', October, 1993, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>40</sup> 'Kenya: Food Aid and Livelihoods Programming', 8 August, 2002, Oxfam 'O' Drive File, Oxfam Office, Nairobi.

of influential officials in the Office of the President.<sup>41</sup> Oxfam was, in fact, the only NGO invited to Parliament to witness the debate on a motion in favour of the abolition of subdivision of group ranches in 1993. Somewhat unsurprisingly, the motion failed to pass: Twining wrote that the government still saw pastoralism as ‘incompatible with the goals of the modern nation-state’, and preferred farms, which could serve as ‘collateral for speculation on mirror-fronted sky-scrapers in Nairobi’.<sup>42</sup> But the Country Representative was not unhopeful of a change of attitude, and organised meetings with the World Bank and other donors on land tenure in ASAL areas while continuing to try to cement ‘closer relations’ with the Office of the President. At the same time, the organisation also helped to set up new pastoral organisations in the mould of the PSC to generate momentum for change from the ground up. Thus the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) and the Kenya Pastoralist Forum (KPF) would receive Oxfam support in the early 1990s.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, after the passage of the NGO Act, Oxfam took something of a leadership role in the lobbying effort to amend the legislation and to remove some of its more controlling elements, either lobbying itself or funding others – such as the NGO Network – to challenge the legislation.<sup>44</sup> The lobbying effort was effective: many of the most odious conditions of the act, such as the absolute executive and judicial powers bestowed on the responsible Minister, the lack of recourse to the court system for disputes and the short re-registration period, were watered down subsequently. After its registration under the act in March 1993, Oxfam was also represented on several committees of the NGO Council (a body established under the act comprising all NGOs in Kenya), opening a new channel for raising, debating and addressing NGO concerns in Kenya, and Oxfam’s Country Representative was elected by fellow members of the NGO Council to take one of the two international NGO positions on the Government NGO Board – the body involved in the registration of NGOs under the new legislation.<sup>45</sup> The

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<sup>41</sup> Between January 1994 and June 1995 the numbers receiving relief food dropped from 230,000 to 197,000 in Turkana and 60,000 to 38,000 in Samburu. The food aid required – around 20,000 tonnes and worth just over £3.2 million – was sourced mainly from WFP, but one quarter came from the ODA. Non-food allocations totalled a further £1.4 million. See ‘Oxfam Kenya Annual Report, 1994-1995’, July, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/8: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report 1994-1995.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Oxfam Kenya: Strategic Plan, August 1992 to July 1995’, July, 1992, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Oxfam Kenya Programme: Annual Report, 1993’, May, 1994, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/7: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report, 1993.

<sup>44</sup> The NGO Network was a collection of local and international NGOs brought together by shared hostility towards the NGO Act. Oxfam supported the grouping financially from 1991.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Oxfam Kenya Programme: Annual Report, 1993’, May, 1994, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/7: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report, 1993; Interview with author no. VIII, 6 November, 2014; Interview with author no. XI, 4 December, 2014; Interview with author no. XXI, 28 April, 2015. See Ndegwa, *The Two Faces*

tactical shift from 'reaching the poorest' under May to a more broadly 'rights based' programme under Twining was underway, made possible by the emergency situation, which had strengthened Oxfam's hand in negotiations with the state.<sup>46</sup>

Of course, not all members of the Kenya staff were convinced by the move to a 'software' approach made possible by Oxfam's higher profile. A regional meeting of Oxfam staff in November 1993 asked whether, given the actions of the government in supporting – if not initiating – ethnic cleansing, Oxfam could ever in good conscience work with the government to 'mop-up government created conflict'.<sup>47</sup> The new Country Representative (from late 1994), Adam Leach, was, however, convinced that the course set by Twining was the right one. He believed that 'change depends on the quality and extent of our exposure and information and our ability to influence policy development' at the heart of government, not 'low level efforts on basic needs', and he mourned the 'insufficient efforts to understand and identify scope for establishing effective collaboration at different levels of government' caused 'by differing attitudes within the team to working with Government (some being opposed and others being willing at certain levels, and other [sic] keen to explore relations)'.<sup>48</sup> To 'address structural problems in [a] Kenyan society... crumbling from within', he argued, required Oxfam to move further beyond institutional support to other NGOs and towards involvement in policy debate and 'increasing dialogue with government'. 'Action on policy issues' and the integration of project work with efforts to promote institutional development were considered 'a crucial step forwards for Oxfam in Kenya'.<sup>49</sup>

At the same time, the new Country Representative – who had grown up in Kenya – made no secret of his own distaste for the Moi regime. In his first annual report he was scathing about the 'misuse of state power... the use of force and [the] manipulation of ethnic tensions in key areas throughout the Rift Valley' as well as the 'abuse of human rights' by the regime, including police torture, the abuse of the legal process and the 'repression of all forms of potential opposition to the Government with harassment of

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of *Civil Society* and Kanyinga, 'The Politics of Development Space in Kenya', in Semboja and Therkildsen (eds.), *Service Provision under Stress*, for more information on the NGO Act.

<sup>46</sup> 'Developing New Directions for Oxfam in Kenya: Annual Report, May 1995 – April 1996', January, 1996, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/9: Developing New Directions for Oxfam in Kenya, Annual Report 1995-1996.

<sup>47</sup> 'East and Central Africa Regional Meeting', 8-12 November, 1993, Personal Archive of Karen Twining.

<sup>48</sup> 'Annual Report, 1997-1998: Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya', June, 1998, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/12: Annual Report 1997-1998, 'Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya'.

<sup>49</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Annual Report, 1994-1995', July, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/8: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report 1994-1995; 'Oxfam Kenya Five Year Strategic Plan, May 1996 – April 2001', November, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/8/8 Folder 2: Kenya; 'Oxfam Kenya Five Year Strategic Plan Annual Revision, May 1997 – April 2002', November, 1996, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/8/8 Folder 2: Kenya.

individuals... churches and NGOs'.<sup>50</sup> Leach also authored two confidential reports to Oxford on 'state sponsored, politically motivated social violence in Kenya', which went further in their criticism of the regime, linking the maltreatment of ordinary citizens with the political interests of the elite and denying government rhetoric on the ethnic hostility behind the clashes. He alleged that Kenyans were 'under threat from a powerful elite intent on retaining power and capable of devastating impacts on the economic and social welfare of Kenyan society'. Thousands of people faced, he wrote, being 'forcibly removed to other places in Kenya as part of concerted Government action to disperse people... through the so-called "ethnic clashes"'.<sup>51</sup> The interests of 'the wealthiest and most powerful members of the ruling elite', he argued, were 'well served by [such] social conflict and... this has been sanctioned, at times even perpetrated, by the state'. Thus the Country Representative considered 'widely documented statements about the inevitable fragmentation along ethnic lines by President Moi' as 'evidence for deliberate attempts to destabilise society in Kenya'. Moreover, he suspected that displacement and destabilisation was 'part of a strategy for [the] progressive clearance of ethnic groupings (chiefly Kikuyu) whom the Moi Government either mistrusts politically or simply wishes to expel from areas traditionally regarded as pastoralist – or both'. Considering the efforts by Moi to 'ensure the economic ruination of specific areas... known or feared to be in opposition to the ruling elite', Leach felt it was mistaken to accept 'simplistic explanations about ethnic divisions in Kenya'. Indeed, he believed that the description of social conflict as 'ethnic clashes' was 'misleading and dangerous' since the term 'simply deflects attention from the real nature of political abuse'.<sup>52</sup>

Yet while Leach was unswerving in his condemnation of Moi and his state apparatus, it was precisely *because* of the 'degeneration of governance' in Kenya that policy work and support for Kenyan institutions was so vital. Grave damage had been done

to the nature of governance in Kenya... [and to] the nature of leadership, the objective interests of citizens, and observance of universal values... Contemporary political behaviour has raised profound concern about the appropriateness and relevance of outmoded political models (which derive mainly from claims about

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<sup>50</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Annual Report, 1994-1995', July, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/8: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report 1994-1995.

<sup>51</sup> A. Leach, 'State Sponsored, Politically Motivated Social Violence in Kenya', 17 February, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/7/17/9: PAC Preparation.

<sup>52</sup> A. Leach, 'State Sponsored, Politically Motivated Social Violence in Kenya', 17 February, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/7/17/9: PAC Preparation.

nationhood) and the breakdown of a centralised bureaucratic system of government in favour of political 'clientelism' and preference for patronage and prejudice.

'Growing social conflict, economic decline, and political abuse has', he wrote, 'frustrated significant impact by conventional development approaches, including small-scale development project activities'. This posed 'major challenges to an operating style characterised as principally "developmental"'.<sup>53</sup> As Kenya became 'more vulnerable to ineffective governance' in the 1990s, Leach considered that 'the seeds of stability, prosperity and egalitarian (participatory) social order must come from civil society'. But civil society was not a 'panacea for the evils of the state' nor a replacement for it, since many NGOs were dominated by the urban middle class and were not representative of the most marginalised of Kenya's citizens. Rather, Leach believed that NGOs such as Oxfam – given an 'institutional mandate' by civil society and deriving as they did from notions of the 'intrinsic rights of citizenship to engage in collective action to ensure that the state exercises its proper functions' – were vital for creating 'common ground between the state and its citizens'. In such a way, Oxfam could 'play a very valuable role in bringing together civil society organisations, government and others to bring about real changes in policy and practice' on development, disaster management, land reform, food security and conflict. If Oxfam could influence and collaborate with government departments, it would, he thought, not only 'enhance effective and cost effective implementation of our activities', but also, ensure 'the productivity of the GoK staff who otherwise would remain inactive'.<sup>54</sup> The informalisation of the Kenyan government thus demanded 'not only a humanitarian response but also a greater political awareness among NGOs'.<sup>55</sup> Oxfam would not, he concluded, 'become the provider of a single form of assistance (funds, operational work, non-funding support)', but would work towards 'a more holistic analysis of the nature of vulnerability'.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Five Year Strategic Plan, May 1996 – April 2001', November, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/8/8 Folder 2: Kenya; 'Oxfam Kenya Five Year Strategic Plan Annual Revision, May 1997 – April 2002', November, 1996, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/8/8 Folder 2: Kenya.

<sup>54</sup> 'Annual Report, 1998-1999: Orienting Programme Action towards Policy Work for Greater Impact', April, 1999, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/13: Annual Report 1998-1999, 'Orientating Programme Action Towards Policy Work for Greater Impact'.

<sup>55</sup> A. Leach, 'Basic Rights and Conflict in Kenya: The State, the Market and Civil Society – What is Happening in Kenya?', January, 1996, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/7/17/10: Basic Rights & Conflict in Kenya: The State, the Market & Civil Society – What is Happening in Kenya?; 'Annual Report, 1997-1998: Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya', June, 1998, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/12: Annual Report 1997-1998, 'Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya'.

<sup>56</sup> 'Annual Report, 1998-1999: Orienting Programme Action towards Policy Work for Greater Impact', April, 1999, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/13: Annual Report 1998-1999, 'Orientating Programme Action Towards Policy Work for Greater Impact'; 'Oxfam Kenya Five Year Strategic Plan, May 1996 – April 2001', November,

Accordingly, Oxfam would no longer work on *either* the ‘supply’ side *or* the ‘demand’ side of the development equation in Kenya; instead, it would work both sides simultaneously. By taking advantage of new opportunities to engage with the state and work on the ‘supply’ side of the development equation the organisation hoped to maximise its potential developmental impact; by working on the ‘demand’ side of the equation with local groups and civil society, Oxfam sought to minimise the risk of anti-developmental unintended consequences resulting from engagement with the state alone. Under Leach, the Kenya programme would, therefore, strengthen its focus on developing the capabilities of communities, local organisations and government agencies, while endeavouring to influence policy formulation with Oxfam experience and by ‘enabling impoverished and marginalised people to speak for themselves’.<sup>57</sup> Leach was, in fact, combining the tactical approaches Oxfam had used throughout its time in Kenya with the same overarching strategic goal – to bring about policy change and a state more responsive to its most marginalised citizens.

Nonetheless, for all the hopeful discussion of Oxfam’s potential impact, the organisation still had to be ‘careful about official... perceptions of [its] work’. While past ‘misunderstanding’ between Oxfam and the government had, the Country Representative argued, been partly ‘a result of lack of dialogue and openness’, ‘demand’ side work could easily be construed as political activism.<sup>58</sup> Oxfam could not challenge the Moi regime publicly on the continued instance of politically motivated ethnic clashes, corruption and land rights, for instance, without risking the lives and livelihoods of its local staff, many of whom were followed quite brazenly by the security forces in the mid-1990s.<sup>59</sup> For the time being, Oxfam continued to provide humanitarian assistance to those displaced by violence: at Enosupukia, Thessalia, Longonot, Embakasi and Bungoma, Oxfam assisted thousands of families by providing food, construction materials, blankets and tools,

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1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/8/8 Folder 2: Kenya; ‘Oxfam Kenya Five Year Strategic Plan Annual Revision, May 1997 – April 2002’, November, 1996, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/8/8 Folder 2: Kenya.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Oxfam Kenya Five Year Strategic Plan, May 1996 – April 2001’, November, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/8/8 Folder 2: Kenya; ‘Oxfam Kenya Five Year Strategic Plan Annual Revision, May 1997 – April 2002’, November, 1996, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/8/8 Folder 2: Kenya.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Annual Report, 1998-1999: Orienting Programme Action towards Policy Work for Greater Impact’, April, 1999, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/13: Annual Report 1998-1999, ‘Orientating Programme Action Towards Policy Work for Greater Impact’.

<sup>59</sup> One local staff member was warned by her civil servant husband to leave Oxfam if it took any stand that could be conceived of as being political. Interview with author no. XVI, 22 September, 2014; Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014; ‘Developing New Directions for Oxfam in Kenya: Annual Report, May 1995 – April 1996’, January, 1996, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/9: Developing New Directions for Oxfam in Kenya, Annual Report 1995-1996.

though government officials often refused to allow the organisation access to the temporary camps. It also worked with the ethnic clashes network of the NGO Council to coordinate responses to conflict across the voluntary sector. But Leach rejected donor expectations that NGOs should continue to provide humanitarian assistance 'in the absence of any action to alter the political context in which Government operates' as 'tantamount to hypocrisy [sic] or calculated disregard for the interests of ordinary people in Kenya'. He was critical of the international community for the 'total absence of any adequate official or other public statement both about the reasons for the displacement of people and their subsequent dispersals and [for the lack of] effective condemnation of the Kenyan government despite the granting of substantial official assistance [around \$83 million] two weeks before the 1994 dispersals took place'. The 'absence of official condemnation', he argued, 'must therefore be seen as an acquiescence to the behaviour of the Government of Kenya... bent on manipulating social order for... political ends'. Donors were also criticised for the enforced implementation of macroeconomic policies that had encouraged the 'retreat of the state in key social services with [an] attendant decline in [the] notion of [the] state as [the] servant of local people', and for their lacklustre commitment to 'good governance', which left 'powerful individuals free to manipulate government apparatus for their own interests'.<sup>60</sup>

Although Oxfam could not agitate loudly for policy change, it did increase its support to local institutions that expressed the demands of ordinary people against 'terminal spoils politics' and the 'overbearing power' of the state. During Leach's tenure over £100,000 per year was spent on enabling local NGOs to challenge the state on rights issues. A Programme Officer noted in 1996 that 'as is the case everywhere in Kenya, most of the problems... [are] a result of human rights abuse... We realise the need to help these communities understand their rights and organise them to take active part in advocating for change'. Supported organisations included the Kenya Land Alliance (KLA) and Kituo che Sheria.<sup>61</sup> Working through partners such as these and focusing on socio-economic as opposed to political rights did not insulate Oxfam completely from government interest, of course: many of the organisations Oxfam supported were associated with the

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<sup>60</sup> A. Leach, 'State Sponsored, Politically Motivated Social Violence in Kenya', 17 February, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/7/17/9: PAC Preparation, 17/2/95.

<sup>61</sup> The KLA, formed in 1999, advocates on behalf of the rural and urban poor, and raises the issue of government land being transferred into private hands. It was particularly influential in the constitutional review process in 2004. Kituo che Sheria is a legal rights organisation providing legal services to those who cannot afford representation.

opposition movement in Kenya, as were individuals with whom Oxfam had contact, such as Willy Mutunga (then chairman of the Kenya Human Rights Commission and today chief justice of Kenya) and Peter Anyang' Nyong'o (a prominent opposition MP). Hence, one senior official in the Office of the President warned a member of the Oxfam staff that he needed to 'get his mzungu [Leach] under control', while a junior Minister let slip (perhaps deliberately) that Leach was often followed to see who Oxfam was supporting.<sup>62</sup>

Despite these warnings, Leach pushed his team to try to find 'common ground between the state and its citizens', emphasising that some level of 'direct engagement with the government' was possible, in particular because 'there is a lot of good will within government (especially at departmental level) for the work of Oxfam and our potential for impact on poverty'.<sup>63</sup> Significantly, both Twining and Leach encouraged pragmatism and realism as regards working with the state apparatus and encouraged staff not to view the government as a monolith or to 'talk about government as a homogenous mass'.<sup>64</sup> The local Health Office in Wajir was, as one interviewee noted, a long way from land evictions in the Rift Valley.<sup>65</sup> Oxfam staff were advised to sound out 'key agents of change' within the state apparatus, and to search for individuals that the organisation could 'catalyse' into action through its advocacy: 'co-operation with these officials and linking them with the communities' was a strategic goal 'both to tap the existing expertise in government and also [to] open up lobbying channels'.<sup>66</sup> Often, another interviewee recalled, local officials were 'desperate to do something. They're sitting around in under-resourced districts where they have no fuel for a vehicle, no spare parts... [but] with a bit of material support, [they are] up and running'. For this staff member, engagement with the local administration 'debunked a lot of myths... that government was essentially hostile to the population... The assumption that they are not interested in working for the people... was wrong'. Instead, the question was to whom did they feel accountable. By encouraging 'relationships of accountability between people and government... in the delivery of services that people require', Oxfam hoped to develop on both sides 'the idea

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with author no. X, 3 January, 2015; 'Developing New Directions for Oxfam in Kenya: Annual Report, May 1995 – April 1996', January, 1996, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/9: Developing New Directions for Oxfam in Kenya, Annual Report 1995-1996.

<sup>63</sup> 'Annual Report, 1998-1999: Orienting Programme Action towards Policy Work for Greater Impact', April, 1999, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/13: Annual Report 1998-1999, 'Orientating Programme Action Towards Policy Work for Greater Impact'.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with author no. II, 7 October, 2014.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with author no. II, 7 October, 2014.

<sup>66</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Five Year Strategic Plan, May 1996 – April 2001', November, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/8/8 Folder 2: Kenya; 'Oxfam Kenya Five Year Strategic Plan Annual Revision, May 1997 – April 2002', November, 1996, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/8/8 Folder 2: Kenya.

that they [the government] should be able to provide these services'.<sup>67</sup> There was a feeling that Oxfam should 'help the government be seen to deliver in areas where it has not [previously] and to restore some level of public trust... in government'. There was, too, an acknowledgement that the task was sometimes a 'muddy' one:

Of course it's corrupt... and we know that most MPs will give contracts to cousins, but school classrooms still get built... I'm not saying that's right, but for the first time people are seeing something which they never saw before... [it's] about working with the grain'.<sup>68</sup>

To borrow from a recent book on the failings of 'good governance' attitudes towards development, Oxfam was seeking out 'islands of effectiveness' within the Kenya government, and such an approach has always required a hefty dose of realism.<sup>69</sup> As in the 1960s, Oxfam was less concerned with the precise characteristics of the state than with the state as an integral development institution. Thus staff had nothing good to say of the Moi regime, but felt that if different parts of the state apparatus, with a mixture of support and cajoling, would engage with Kenyan citizens, the latter's concerns could filter into policy-making. Indeed, Oxfam had long understood that beneath the grandiose façade, the Kenyan state was highly personalised – dominated as it was by a small coterie of elites who took a keen interest in development initiatives – and could be influenced by those who appreciated the intricacies of its internal hierarchies. Oxfam's efforts in this direction were helped by the employment of two former government officers – Mohammed Elmi and Mohammed Mursal – who had worked for the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Livestock Development in Wajir. Both knew of the darker side of the Moi state: Elmi, for instance, had lost his brother in the Wagalla massacre.<sup>70</sup> But both were also committed to building a relationship between the state and its citizens and pushing the former to the centre of development interventions in marginal areas; and according to contemporaries their experience inside government meant they knew how to navigate its personalised apparatus efficiently and without compromising Oxfam.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with author no. XVI, 22 September, 2014.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with author no. II, 7 October, 2014.

<sup>69</sup> B. Levy, *Working with the Grain: Integrating Governance and Growth in Development Strategies* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>70</sup> Elmi's brother was a civil servant in Wajir, and was never seen again after heading to work on the day of the incident.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with author no. II, 7 October, 2014; Interview with author no. VIII, 6 November, 2014; Interview with author no. XXI, 28 April, 2015; Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014; Interview with author no. XIV, 21 September, 2014.

## ‘YOU CAN’T TALK ABOUT DEVELOPMENT IF YOU DON’T INVOLVE THE GOVERNMENT’: THE WAJIR PASTORAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The first programme that took the interlinked issues of community empowerment and government accountability to scale started on the back of Oxfam’s drought intervention in Wajir. As discussed previously, Wajir was a tense and marginalised part of Kenya following the *Shifita* conflict and the Wagalla massacre. Indeed, after Wagalla even those services formerly provided through enforced settlement began to be withdrawn as the state imposed cost-sharing for health and education, and handed boreholes over to communities to manage – an impossible task for people lacking the skills and training necessary to do so.<sup>72</sup> By the early 1990s, in the grip of a devastating drought and heightened insecurity – as a result of the collapse of neighbouring Somalia and increased ethnic tension in the early stages of multipartyism – Wajir was not only worse off than Kenya’s agricultural heartlands, but also most other ASAL regions. Its local infrastructure was sorely deficient – Wajir had only one fifth of the average length of roads per 1,000 square kilometres for the nation (40 km per 1,000 sq km); its literacy rate was 12.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 69 per cent; while under five mortality stood at 339 per 1,000 – seven times the national average.<sup>73</sup>

Witnessing the devastation in the district, in 1992 Karen Twining identified Elmi and two other local development workers who were involved with the Wajir Volunteer Group and the Nomadic Primary Health Care Programme (funded by UNICEF) and offered funds for them to undertake a year of participatory training and research in order to help Oxfam develop its long-term strategic plan for work in the district in anticipation of a project in the region from April 1993. (With their contacts in government, Elmi and his colleagues were also able to smooth the path for Oxfam to return to the district after a five-year absence. The timing was apposite: after inter-clan violence threatened to spiral out of control in 1993 and a UNICEF pilot was killed, Oxfam would be the only international NGO to maintain its presence in the district.) The plans drawn up by those involved in the participatory process reflected Oxfam’s commitment to ‘supporting the

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<sup>72</sup> While the enforced settlement of pastoralists during the 1970s was devastating to many pastoral communities, it had at least meant some effort was made by the government to provide services. Yet from the early 1980s economic adjustment and increased government hostility meant such services were no longer justifiable on any level. Interview with author no. XIV, 21 September, 2014.

<sup>73</sup> This was unsurprising given that the number of doctors per 100,000 people stood at two (the national average was 15). Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, pp. 10-12.

pastoral sector rather than modernising it' and criticised earlier efforts at commercialisation and settlement.<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, they were unlike anything Oxfam had attempted before. The Wajir Pastoral Development Project (WPDP) was designed in three phases to cover a nine-year period from July 1994. The first phase sought to 'bring about change within Wajir through involving all stakeholders in the development process', including government and voluntary actors. The project planned to work in the areas of animal and human health, water development, restocking and income generation; but capacity building was at the heart of all these technical interventions, as Oxfam sought to reinforce local institutional capacity – both governmental and in the form of pastoral associations and local NGOs – in order that pastoralists could 'manage development on their own terms, and exercise claims on the state with respect to the full range of their rights'.<sup>75</sup>

By 1995, the targets set by Oxfam for the first phase were well on their way to being met: to overcome the lack of essential drugs needed to treat common animal diseases, Oxfam funded the erection of five drug stores in Wajir Bor, which would sell drugs at a reasonable price and use the profits to create a revolving fund to purchase drugs and stock the store. Meanwhile, to combat the paucity of knowledge on both human and animal health, Oxfam – in collaboration with willing government officers – aimed to train 80 *daryelles* (Somali for 'caretakers') in the first phase. These *daryelles* would then travel with each group of pastoralists providing advice and treatment while the group was far away from medical centres in towns. 35 *daryelles* were trained within the first year. As regards water development, Oxfam provided the cement and whitewash necessary to cap 300 wells (reducing the need to de-silt them), while the owner of the well provided the labour and other materials for the construction. Altogether, Oxfam supported the capping of 162 wells in the first year, and maintained 36 communal water pans. (The target for the first three-year phase was 200 wells and 50 water pans.) In terms of restocking, during the first year 42 families were restocked with 30 goats and burden animals (out of an overall target for the first phase of 300), while 92 (of 200) families were given burden animals to enable them to return to pastoral life. With regard to income generation, the planned credit scheme for local women had not started by

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<sup>74</sup> 'Building Pastoral Associations in Wajir: Oxfam's Experience', Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Pastoral Programme, Box No. 4, File: Wajir, 2001.

<sup>75</sup> 'Developing New Directions for Oxfam in Kenya: Annual Report, May 1995 – April 1996', January, 1996, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/9: Developing New Directions for Oxfam in Kenya, Annual Report 1995-1996; Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, pp. 10-12.

1995, but discussions with local groups had led to the formation of the requisite structures through which the credit scheme would be implemented, and training had been provided to several women's groups.<sup>76</sup>

Alongside these technical interventions, Oxfam had also helped communities to form five pastoral associations (PAs) by 1995. To do so, the organisation brought communities together in meetings to discuss their development needs (sometimes literally by providing transport to pastoralists who would not otherwise have made the meetings). These meetings, at which women and nomadic pastoralists were encouraged to speak up, helped to define the outputs for the overall project and allowed the pastoral associations to take the initiative in achieving these goals. Each association was thus involved in all aspects of the ensuing project, managing essential services and engaging with other stakeholders: they identified and supervised the *daryelles*; built and maintained the drug stores (including setting the pricing for essential drugs and operating the bank account of the revolving fund); supervised the water inputs; and purchased and distributed the animals to families they selected (with Oxfam checks to stop any ethnic favouritism or nepotism). Importantly, Oxfam urged the associations to form across clan lines in an effort to bridge the ethnic polarisation of the region, which was being manipulated by self-interested politicians and was causing inter-ethnic violence to escalate. Moreover, the organisation encouraged (albeit slowly) the equal representation of women in these associations and guarded against their domination by local elites by helping members to draft constitutions that emphasised accountability. Four larger local organisations were also supported by the project: the WVG, the NPHC, the Wajir Association for the Disabled (WAD) and the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC). Each organisation ran its own activities, such as the provision of shelter and income generation for women by making traditional Somali *dufful* mats, the maintenance of wells and the improvement of local sanitation, education on disability and the rehabilitation of disabled people in the region, and the creation of reconciliation workshops and seminars on peace education.

To take the WPDC as an example, Oxfam's initial approach was to support the work of local groups and traditional institutions in Wajir by arranging meetings such as Women for Peace, Youth for Peace and the Council of Elders for Peace. These were designed as opportunities to discuss problems of conflict as individuals or members of

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<sup>76</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Annual Report, 1994-1995', July, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/8: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report 1994-1995.

groups that were not clan based. The meetings were formalised in 1995 in the WPDC, a sub-committee of the powerful District Development Committee (DDC). The WPDC brought together women, elders, businessmen and young people from the district with the local authorities and security forces and served as an umbrella forum for the co-ordination of peace work. It undertook research on historical problems, linked groups with educational institutions and employment opportunities and encouraged communities to mobilise for peace.<sup>77</sup> Under the leadership of the DC, the committee combined traditional approaches to conflict resolution with the juridical authority of the state in order to bring together different perspectives on governance and justice into a form that would be respected by a large cross-section of society. As Birch notes, in one instance the government accepted the continuation of traditional symbolic payments for wrongdoing as long as elders made efforts to locate those culpable and take them to court. In turn, the elders accepted their responsibility for as long as the police did not enter into communities in an arbitrary fashion to try to find the culprits. On a separate occasion, elders were even able to resolve a dispute dating back to the *Shifita* conflict. Oxfam would fund the WPDC and meetings between relevant stakeholders throughout the duration of the WPD. <sup>78</sup>

Meanwhile, the employment of former government staff and the inclusion of government officials in all important discussions sent a signal to the state that Oxfam was willing to pursue a constructive relationship at a time when many NGOs were hostile to the Moi regime. Consequently, 'a supportive relationship was established with the local administration and the relevant GOK ministries' in Wajir.<sup>79</sup> As Elmi noted in 1995, the 'deliberate cultivation of [this] relationship... is [not] only for coordinator and resources sharing [sic] but is based on the realization that Oxfam or any single organization/programme for that matter will never be able to meet needs in the district and therefore the need to share and communicate our experiences and approaches'.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, as part of its commitment to influence the policy environment within which it

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<sup>77</sup> A. Leach, 'Basic Rights and Conflict in Kenya: The State, the Market and Civil Society – What is Happening in Kenya?', January, 1996, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/7/17/10: Basic Rights & Conflict in Kenya: The State, the Market & Civil Society – What is Happening in Kenya?

<sup>78</sup> A. Leach, 'Basic Rights and Conflict in Kenya: The State, the Market and Civil Society – What is Happening in Kenya?', January, 1996, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/7/17/10: Basic Rights & Conflict in Kenya: The State, the Market & Civil Society – What is Happening in Kenya?; Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, pp. 70-73.

<sup>79</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Annual Report, 1994-1995', July, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/8: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report 1994-1995.

<sup>80</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Annual Report, 1994-1995', July, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/8: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report 1994-1995.

operated, in May 1995 Oxfam helped to create a new coordination forum for the district to help the people gain access to government representatives. The District Pastoral Steering Committee (DPSC) was, like the WPDC, a sub-committee of the DDC and received representation from the veterinary, livestock, health, agriculture, water and social development departments, along with co-ordinators from Oxfam and other NGOs such as NPHC. Oxfam hoped that the DPSC would help to influence government policy towards pastoralists by providing perspectives from that sector, while also maintaining forward momentum when the inevitable and frequent changes in government staff threatened to derail progress. The DPSC would, moreover, provide pastoral associations with support and training, giving the latter an opportunity to voice their concerns to government staff, who would hopefully transfer the message up the chain to the DDC.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, Oxfam encouraged the pastoral associations to combine to form a District Pastoral Association (DPA), which would increase the volume of their demands and recommendations.

In keeping with Leach's advocacy of a 'more holistic analysis of the nature of vulnerability' in Kenya, the WPDP thus recognised that building people's material resources would only prove useful if their capacity to sustain those resources was strengthened; that in places of acute poverty focused interventions may satisfy donors but do little to alleviate suffering since they are often undermined by failure in other sectors; and that linking interventions together means they can begin to subsidise each other over time. Together with its 'transformative' approach – the 'intention to address policy and institutional change as well as service delivery' – these factors were an important part of the reason why DfID (then ODA) offered to provide 75 per cent of the funding for the first phase and 90 per cent thereafter.<sup>82</sup> 'The key thing which the Wajir project offered', noted one DfID official, 'was [the opportunity] to get a better balance between delivering tangible benefits to poor people and achieving wider-level change'. Significantly, this was the first time that Oxfam had received donor support for its long-term work as opposed to emergency interventions. Also unique was the scale of the funding: the budget for the first phase was £1,136,384; for the second phase the budget was £1,113,832; and for the final phase it was £911,024.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> 'Oxfam Kenya Annual Report, 1994-1995', July, 1995, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/8: Oxfam Kenya Programme Annual Report 1994-1995.

<sup>82</sup> The remainder was to be provided by Oxfam and Comic Relief.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, p. 62.

At the close of the first phase of the project in 1997, reviews undertaken by Oxfam and external consultants were largely positive. One noted that the project

improved the supply of human and animal health care services to nomadic pastoralists; provided credit facilities and livestock to women's groups and destitute pastoral families; improved the quality and availability of education services to pastoral families; enabled private and communal water supplies to be developed and maintained; contributed to greater security, law and order in the area; and sought to influence the wider national policy and legislative framework in order to create a more enabling environment for a thriving and resilient pastoral economy.<sup>84</sup>

Indeed, in partnership with government medical workers, the full cohort of *daryelles* – 80 in total – had been trained by 1997, along with 60 traditional birth attendants. Not only did this mean that medical assistance was at most half a day's walk away, it also encouraged government staff to recognise that training and related tasks formed part of their responsibilities rather than an invitation to charge 'rents'. Consequently, direct channels of communication were established between pastoralists and representatives of the state. Access to water had also been improved by the completion of 200 wells, 50 shallow pans and three new boreholes, allowing pastoralists to remain in the wet grazing area (as opposed to permanent water points which were liable to degrade) for two extra months. In terms of income generation, women's groups were receiving repayment of around 102 per cent of the loans distributed, generating more than 3,000 shillings per woman, per year. Meanwhile, restocking reached close to 700 households – 93 per cent of whom were re-instated into pastoral society – and of the 500 destitute families who would not have been restocked through traditional means, only 24 per cent continued to receive food aid, compared to 63 per cent outside project sites.<sup>85</sup> Those in project sites also lost fewer stock (around 18 per cent of their holdings – worth Ksh. 37,233) than those outside (around 29 per cent – Ksh. 58,951), and 22,000 fewer animals died compared with non-project sites due to the correct use of quality drugs. In addition, project beneficiaries consumed 65 per cent more milk than those outside the project, with 86 per cent reporting that they were better off in terms of food consumption thanks to the input of credit. Unsurprisingly, households in project sites reported that their quality of life and ability to withstand drought had improved, contrasting with non-

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<sup>84</sup> O. Odhiambo, S. Holden and C. Ackello-Ogutu, 'Economic Impact Assessment Report, WPDP', 1998, quoted in Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, p. 6.

<sup>85</sup> 'Wajir Pastoral Development Programme: Project Status Report', May, 1997, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Pastoral Programme, Box No. 4, File: Wajir, 2001.

beneficiaries, who thought the opposite.<sup>86</sup> Crucially, all of this was achieved with only very minimal contact with the communities since the pastoral associations were mostly very effective: as Leach recalled, 'the whole project was about galvanising local action and providing the opportunities for people to take that action on their own or in conjunction with formal institutions'.<sup>87</sup>

Somewhat inevitably, however, the creation of pastoral associations threatened to generate tension with local chiefs, who saw their control over external resources reduced and felt that the balance of power was being tilted towards local people. The Kutulo PA, for example, faced difficulties when the local chief set the membership fee at Ksh. 1,000 in order to discourage anyone other than himself and local shop owners from joining. His was a deliberate attempt to subvert the purpose of the PA into a profit-making venture by limiting participation to those who supported his aim of controlling the drugs coming from Oxfam (which would have been sold by members of the association at a profit to poor pastoralists). When Oxfam called a meeting to discuss the issue, it was revealed that the PA had only 12 members; rangeland pastoralists also made it clear that they had not been receiving the designated share of government maize and other food relief because of the chief's manipulations. As a result, fresh elections were held to determine the proper membership of the PA; but thereafter the chief did everything in his power to stop the association from functioning. First, he demanded that the drug store be built next to his office (in order to both gain access to the drugs and so that he could use the new building as an upgrade on his office); when the newly elected PA refused and suggested a new plot, he rejected the idea. Only when the chief was arrested and imprisoned for a variety of misdemeanours could the association build the drug store in their preferred location. Upon his release, the chief would continue to forbid the PA to meet in his absence, and he manipulated elections (often holding them more than once) to place his favoured candidates as chairmen of the association. Predictably, Kutulo was the poorest performing of the five associations established in the first phase of the project. The other PAs – Khorof Harar, Riba, Wajir Bor and Wargadud – performed better, in part because while there were sometimes tensions with chiefs over finances and elections, the latter were either much less involved in the day to day running of the

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<sup>86</sup> O. Odhiambo, S. Holden and C. Ackello-Ogutu, 'Participatory Economic Impact Assessment of Pastoral Development Work: A Case Study of the Oxfam Wajir Pastoral Development Project – Kenya', OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/7/17/11: Participatory Economic Impact Assessment of Pastoral Development Work, Case study of Wajir Pastoral Development Project, Kenya, 1996.

<sup>87</sup> Quoted in Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, p. 51.

associations or were newly appointed and thus less threatened than the chief involved with Kutulo. Furthermore, the power of chiefs declined following the advent of multipartyism as clan leaders promised to bring far more voters to the polling booths; this had the effect of boosting the confidence of PAs *vis à vis* the chiefs.<sup>88</sup>

Yet at the same time as multipartyism reduced the power of chiefs, it also had the unwelcome effect of encouraging MPs to pressure the provincial administration into creating new locations or sub-locations, thereby placing increased strain on the already fragile environment. The rationale behind the creation of new locations was political, for each new administrative unit came with a plethora of official positions – chief, assistant chief and administrative police for example – that could be distributed as patronage to newly powerful clan leaders in return for votes. Hence, between 1992 and 1996 the number of locations and sub-locations increased from 62 to 170. But whereas previous settlements had often followed the discovery or establishment of new water points, new locations were in unsuitable regions, and so required external intervention to drill boreholes; these boreholes then reduced the availability of pasture for nomadic pastoralists.<sup>89</sup> When Oxfam encouraged PAs to challenge these new locations, MPs and chiefs complained to the Provincial Commissioner that the organisation was setting up an alternative government in Wajir, forcing Oxfam to step back.<sup>90</sup> Unfortunately, therefore, self-interest combined with the patronage system and the pressure to deliver Parliamentary seats for KANU (and Presidential votes for Moi) to ensure that upward accountability was more important for local chiefs and MPs than was downward accountability to their constituents. Accordingly, the second phase of the project not only sought to achieve much the same outputs as the first phase, but over a much larger area – Wajir district (100,000 beneficiaries) as opposed to Wajir Bor and Wajir Town (40,000 beneficiaries) – but also sharpened its focus on increasing the participation of communities in ‘the institutions which influence their lives’. As the project manager for this phase noted, ‘Oxfam is only temporary here – it is the government that will last...

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<sup>88</sup> ‘Building Pastoral Associations in Wajir: Oxfam’s Experience’, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Pastoral Programme, Box No. 4, File: Wajir, 2001.

<sup>89</sup> Whereas between 1940 and 1996 the number of official settlements had increased from four to 45, between 1996 and 2002 the number increased from 45 to 71. New boreholes were often drilled using ‘emergency’ funds from UNICEF, World Vision and the World Bank. R. Walker and H. Omar, ‘Pastoralists Under Pressure: The Politics of Sedentarisation and Marginalisation in Northeast Kenya’, held at Oxfam Office, Nairobi (2002).

<sup>90</sup> It was difficult for pastoralists themselves to successfully oppose the new water points because opposition could be painted as hostility to the incumbent MP or the particular clan or sub-clan that stood to benefit from the new location. Interview with author no. VIII, 6 November, 2014.

[but] we want the government to be as responsive as possible, to ensure that all these things which communities have started are supported'.<sup>91</sup>

Thus Oxfam continued to promote the DPA and the PSC, funding a visit by the former to Nairobi to discuss their work with senior staff in central government. The latter, meanwhile, is generally regarded to have had an effect on the DDC and its District Development Plans: as Birch notes, while the plan for development in Wajir between 1994 and 1996 repeated the traditional caricatures of pastoralists – that they are unable to manage stock levels or the environment – and concluded that their ‘migratory nature’ is a major ‘constraining factor to development in the district’, the plan that followed in 1997 showed a different attitude. It highlighted instead the need to manage recurrent drought situations, insecurity and the provision of credit, and referred to the importance of measuring the ecological sustainability of schemes to promote irrigation, water development and settlement.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, the WPDC was soon scaled up to become a national initiative – coordinated by Oxfam in collaboration with the Office of the President and other agencies involved in peace work – and approaches developed in Wajir were used to great effect to influence national policy on conflict.<sup>93</sup> Together, the WPDC, DPA and PSC helped to ‘institutionalise’ Oxfam’s approach to pastoral development in Wajir and guarded against individual biases and the frequent turnover of government staff.

Regrettably, the second phase of the WPDP was undermined by the onset of critical emergencies, including drought in 1996-97, flooding in 1998, and drought and conflict in 2000. Following the first two of these emergencies, a population of close to 200,000 people required rations and medical assistance to combat a severe outbreak of malaria and malnutrition. At the same time, between 60 and 80 per cent of shoats, 30 to 50 per cent of camels and ten to 15 per cent of cattle had died. Much of the remaining agricultural land and crops had also been ruined by the floods, as had water supplies, which were contaminated by floodwater and sewerage.<sup>94</sup> Oxfam first responded with food relief for around 30,000 people from September to December 1996, purchasing 1,200 tonnes of maize, 240 tonnes of beans and 60 tonnes of vegetable oil locally with funding from the ODA. When the short rains failed in 1997, the project was expanded to

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<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, p. 84.

<sup>92</sup> Birch and Shuria, *Perspectives on Pastoral Development*, p. 78.

<sup>93</sup> The following section describes this in greater detail.

<sup>94</sup> ‘Tour Report’, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/5/5/8 Folder 3: Kenya, 1993-1998.

reach 105,000 people (4,200 tonnes of maize, 640 tonnes of beans, 210 tonnes of oil) with support from WFP. Overall expenditure in 1996-97 was over £4.6 million. In 1998, Oxfam expanded its operation further to deal with flooding, reaching over 220,000 people in Wajir and neighbouring Mandera.<sup>95</sup> The scale of the relief effort raised fears among staff concerning the 'potential for official interference with Oxfam work'; but there were no recorded instances of government meddling.<sup>96</sup> Instead, the local administration was mostly concerned with keeping control of the 'corrupted', and thus 'insufficient', distribution effort in Wajir town.<sup>97</sup> By contrast, reviews of the Oxfam effort would note that the relief food became a critical component of the local diet and contributed to a fall in malnutrition rates during 1997. The food distribution also stabilised food prices, ensuring that fewer livestock were killed or sold.<sup>98</sup>

Inevitably, however, these responses stretched the Oxfam team – already working on a similar scale relief project in Turkana – and 'significantly slowed the pace of the development programme' in Wajir because certain activities such as restocking, PA meetings and training were not possible.<sup>99</sup> Nonetheless, the WPDP retained forward momentum: Oxfam's 1998 annual report notes that 122 *daryelles* and 87 TBAs had been trained in the nine locations in which the organisation was now operating, while 65 new wells and five new drug stores were constructed under the watch of four new PAs. The credit scheme, meanwhile, had increased its reach to 180 women's groups.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, Oxfam staff made efforts to integrate the emergency response with the WPDP: PAs helped to design the food distribution method (minimal targeting was used, similar to previous Oxfam interventions in Turkana and Samburu, in order to support livelihoods as well as save lives), register beneficiaries and monitor the distribution. This ensured that communities were active participants in the emergency response rather than passively

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<sup>95</sup> 'Annual Report, 1998-1999: Orienting Programme Action towards Policy Work for Greater Impact', April, 1999, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/13: Annual Report 1998-1999, 'Orientating Programme Action Towards Policy Work for Greater Impact'.

<sup>96</sup> 'Annual Report, 1996-1997: Consolidating Oxfam Strategic Directions in Kenya', June, 1997, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/10: Annual Report 1996-1997, 'Consolidating Oxfam Strategic Directions in Kenya'.

<sup>97</sup> In Wajir town the administration's distribution effort was 'sporadic, insufficient [and] corrupted by the fact that council officers and chiefs may be assumed to be a) using it for political ends and b) skimming in the process'. 'Tour Report', OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/5/5/8 Folder 3: Kenya, 1993-1998; Interview with author no. X, 3 January, 2015.

<sup>98</sup> M. Buchanan-Smith and D. Barton, 'Evaluation of the Wajir Relief Programme, 1996-98 (1999), Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi.

<sup>99</sup> 'Annual Report, 1996-1997: Consolidating Oxfam Strategic Directions in Kenya', June, 1997, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/10: Annual Report 1996-1997, 'Consolidating Oxfam Strategic Directions in Kenya'.

<sup>100</sup> 'Annual Report, 1998-1999: Orienting Programme Action towards Policy Work for Greater Impact', April, 1999, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/13: Annual Report 1998-1999, 'Orientating Programme Action Towards Policy Work for Greater Impact'.

receiving aid.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, as a result of their recommendations, emergency livestock purchases and re-distribution, food-for-work and cash-for-work projects accompanied the food distribution efforts.<sup>102</sup>

The second and third phases of the WPDP thus tried to retain consistency with the underlying aims of the project and the Kenya programme as a whole. During each phase Oxfam sought to advocate for the community management of resources, sensitive conflict management and the pastoral associations themselves, while also pushing for a national pastoral development policy that would enable the local structures it had created in Wajir to flourish, thereby empowering pastoralists to take control of their own development. The WPDP would expand horizontally in the later years of the 1990s as it was integrated within Oxfam's broader national pastoral development programme in Kenya. The knowledge and understanding gained over the first two phases was, therefore, transferred to Turkana and Samburu: experience with conflict in Wajir was used in both locations in 1998, for instance, while in Turkana Oxfam focused on building community organisations similar to the PAs in order that the communities could take responsibility for their own development needs.<sup>103</sup> The WPDP also helped to shape Oxfam's East African Regional Pastoral Programme (EARPP). The EARPP followed closely the model of the WPDP, seeking to build the capacity of pastoral populations in Ngorongoro, Karamoja, Wajir and Turkana using PAs to improve animal health and water supplies, to facilitate the improvement of pastoral livelihoods via restocking and credit inputs, and to increase pastoralists' access to basic services. Channelling these efforts vertically, Oxfam lobbied East African governments on issues of representation, land rights, peace and security, and support to pastoral livelihoods and hoped to encourage a

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<sup>101</sup> 'Annual Report, 1996-1997: Consolidating Oxfam Strategic Directions in Kenya', June, 1997, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/10: Annual Report 1996-1997, 'Consolidating Oxfam Strategic Directions in Kenya'.

<sup>102</sup> The drought also demonstrated clearly the impact of WPDP: across the project there was a 19 per cent reduction in demand for food aid when compared with non-project households. In addition, only 7 per cent of project households moved to a town centre, compared with 56 per cent of non-project households. O. Odhiambo, S. Holden and C. Ackello-Ogutuu, 'Participatory Economic Impact Assessment of Pastoral Development Work: A Case Study of the Oxfam Wajir Pastoral Development Project – Kenya', OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/7/17/11: Participatory Economic Impact Assessment of Pastoral Development Work, Case study of Wajir Pastoral Development Project, Kenya, 1996.

<sup>103</sup> 'Annual Report, 1997-1998: Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya', June, 1998, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/12: Annual Report 1997-1998, 'Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya'; 'Annual Report, 1998-1999: Orientating Programme Action towards Policy Work for Greater Impact', April, 1999, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/13: Annual Report 1998-1999, 'Orientating Programme Action Towards Policy Work for Greater Impact'.

favourable policy context across East Africa.<sup>104</sup> Hence, while the ‘tactical’ objective of the Wajir project – building representative community organisations – remained constant, the ‘strategic’ objective – for these organisations to become institutionalised and to define and drive the future of pastoralism – was expanded in scope. The success of this endeavour in Kenya would, to a certain extent, rely on Oxfam’s success in a related enterprise: the Arid Lands Resource Management Project.

### ‘A GOLDEN WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY’: THE ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT (ALRMP)

Oxfam had an opportunity to engage the Kenya government directly as regards pastoralism through the Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP), a World Bank initiative located at the heart of government, in the Office of the President. The ALRMP had three components: drought management, livestock marketing and infrastructure, and community development. Oxfam first worked with the project in 1993, when it was known as the Emergency Drought Recovery Programme (EDRP). Running from 1993 to 1996, the EDRP sought to stimulate recovery from the 1992 drought by funding the provision of livestock drugs, spare parts for boreholes, road building and the rehabilitation of health facilities.<sup>105</sup> At first, the relationship between Oxfam and the EDRP was *ad hoc*, as was the small amount of funding Oxfam provided to the scheme, but three things soon pulled Oxfam closer to the programme. First, the overlap between much of what the EDRP sought to do across the arid lands in Kenya and Oxfam’s work in Wajir (including conflict management, improving access to basic services, and building the capacity of government institutions and pastoral associations) convinced Oxfam the project was worthwhile. Second, the close personal relationship between Mohamed Elmi and Mahboub Maalim – the coordinator of the EDRP and later the ALRMP – opened doors for the organisation. Maalim had worked as the District Drought Co-ordinator for Wajir when Oxfam’s WPDP was first established, and Elmi’s positive moves towards the district authorities meant that the two formed a level of trust not often found between NGO and

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<sup>104</sup> ‘East Africa Regional Pastoral Programme PASF’, 4 November, 1998, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Pastoral Programme Box No. 2, File: Wajir Pastoral Development Programme.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Memorandum of Understanding Between Oxfam GB and Arid Lands Resource Management Project of the Office of the President’, no date, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Pastoral Programme Box No. 1, File: Pastoral Institution Capacity Building.

government staff. When Maalim was promoted to the Office of the President, he established the ALRMP and looked to Elmi to support the initiative from the non-government sector. Third, and most importantly, the location of the EDRP and ALRMP in the Office of the President meant the programme was important strategically for Oxfam's lobbying and advocacy efforts. The ALRMP thus offered an exceptional and unusual opportunity for partnership with the state – which Oxfam considered to be the 'key and meaningful agent for real change' in Kenya – at a time when most NGOs were in confrontation with it. The project provided an entry point for Oxfam into government structures and 'an avenue to champion its cause, mission and values'; it was, according to an Oxfam case study of the initiative, a 'golden window of opportunity to create a cultural connection into government... [to] pilot a new model of government operation and [to] influence the progress of development in the region on the largest scale'.<sup>106</sup> Through the ALRMP, Oxfam set out to achieve two goals: firstly, it wanted to make empowerment of communities (though without using the term) 'politically palatable in turbulent local politics'; secondly, it sought to place government at the centre of development interventions as the 'primary duty bearer' for its citizens.<sup>107</sup> Both objectives to a certain extent required 'an ever-closer working relationship with the GoK'.<sup>108</sup>

Oxfam funding to the project was limited, however, at around £300,000 per year. While not trivial, the sum pales into near insignificance when compared with the World Bank contribution to the project (around \$12 million per year). Yet the World Bank contribution was mainly financial and linked with broader budget support initiatives; Oxfam's focus, on the other hand, was on the practicalities of institution building in the arid lands, as Elmi and Maalim sought to make use of the lessons learned during the early stages of the WPDP.<sup>109</sup> The organisation also sought to engage local stakeholders in the development process and worked closely with some of the best civil servants in the country (hand-picked from other departments) to formulate policy and create committees and forums to institutionalise local community involvement in the development process. Indeed, with the blessing of the ALRMP, Oxfam helped to form a number of pastoralist institutions that would influence the trajectory of pastoral

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<sup>106</sup> 'Case Study of Oxfam GB's Partnership with the Arid Lands Resource Management Project, Government of Kenya', no date, Oxfam 'O' Drive File, Oxfam Office, Nairobi.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with author no. III, 4 December, 2014.

<sup>108</sup> 'East Africa Regional Pastoralist Programme Report, May 2001 – April 2002', Oxfam 'O' Drive File, Oxfam Office, Nairobi.

<sup>109</sup> 'Case Study of Oxfam GB's Partnership with the Arid Lands Resource Management Project, Government of Kenya', no date, Oxfam 'O' Drive File, Oxfam Office, Nairobi.

development in Kenya over the next decade. Most notable are the Kenya Livestock Marketing Council, the Pastoralists' Thematic Group and the Kenya Food Security Steering Group. To deal with each in turn: the Kenya Livestock Marketing Council was an umbrella body for livestock marketing associations created in ten arid districts as a result of a series of consultative regional workshops to review the livestock sector initiated by ALRMP in 1998. It provided a structure through which pastoralists could not only access the national market in livestock – enabling them to sell stock more easily in times of stress (and without the manipulations of local traders) – but also influence livestock marketing policy.<sup>110</sup> The government was persuaded to create these livestock marketing associations by the Pastoralists' Thematic Group, an Oxfam initiative that empowered pastoralists to contribute to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, a 15-year blueprint for national development.<sup>111</sup> As a review of the Regional Pastoral Programme noted, 'engagement in the PRSP has been an important policy success for Oxfam. The interim version of the PRSP made only passing references to pastoralist concerns... [but after work by Oxfam and the PTG] for the first time a national plan has included pastoral issues from the perspectives of the pastoralists themselves' and 'issues highlighted by the group have been reflected in the PRSP document'.<sup>112</sup> Meanwhile, the Kenya Food Security Steering group would help to institutionalise drought management practices as opposed to 'eleventh hour' emergency relief, which came too late in the drought cycle – after the socio-economic system of the area had already collapsed – meaning all that was left to do was hand out food.<sup>113</sup> Once Oxfam's lobbying on this issue caught the 'favourable attention of the President', drought contingency funds were set up in threatened districts and a district level early warning and rapid response system was established.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, when relief

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<sup>110</sup> 'HECA Annual Regional Report, 1999-2000', November, 2000, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/54: HECA Annual Regional Report 1999-2000; 'Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation', March, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/6/10/2: Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation, March 2002.

<sup>111</sup> 'Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation', 2002, Oxfam 'O' Drive File, Oxfam Office, Nairobi.

<sup>112</sup> 'HECA Programme, Annual Impact Report, 2001-2002', May, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/55: HECA Programme Annual Impact Report FY 2001-2002; 'Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation', March, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/6/10/2: Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation, March 2002.

<sup>113</sup> 'Institutional Capacity Building: Pastoral Institutions', c. 2002, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Pastoral Programme Box No. 1, File: Pastoral Institution Capacity Building; 'Evaluation Report of the Drought Mitigation Programme in Wajir, Moyale, Isiolo and Turkana Districts of Kenya: October 1999 – March 2001', January, 2002, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Programme Humanitarian Programme Box No. 2, File: Humanitarian Programme Reports, 2001-2002.

<sup>114</sup> 'Annual Report, 1996-1997: Consolidating Oxfam Strategic Directions in Kenya', June, 1997, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/10: Annual Report 1996-1997, 'Consolidating Oxfam Strategic Directions in Kenya';

efforts were unavoidable, the organisation convinced the government and WFP to adopt the community based food aid targeting method pioneered by Oxfam in Turkana, Samburu and Wajir in the early 1990s. In fact, the KFFSG would replace the WFP food balance sheet – which originally worked only with the UN and NGOs – with a system that placed the government at the centre of relief operations while utilising the local level expertise of NGOs to help with targeting.<sup>115</sup> It was widely acknowledged that ‘these outcomes would not have occurred without Oxfam advocacy and lobbying’ and the ‘close collaboration between Oxfam and especially the ALRMP in the Office of the President’.<sup>116</sup>

Oxfam reported proudly that it had built up a level of ‘credibility and trust’ with the government as regards pastoralism by working with the ALRMP, and it was recognised by the Office of the President as the ‘leading non-governmental organisation in drought management’. This ensured that its views on a range of issues were taken seriously and that its staff had ‘access to high-level decision makers’, who were ‘demonstrating a greater... commitment to, and understanding of, issues of pastoral development’.<sup>117</sup> The test of Oxfam’s influence came in 1999, when drought hit the arid lands. For its part, the organisation implemented a Drought Mitigation Programme at a cost of around £1 million, ensuring the availability of water for 620,000 people in Turkana, Moyale, Isiolo and Wajir by improving borehole infrastructure and other water facilities, creating contingency boreholes and tankering water to areas in need. Oxfam also ran an emergency livestock purchase scheme, buying weak animals with little market value and distributing the meat back to the poorest pastoralists. As a result of the project, livestock losses were less than ten per cent in most areas – as opposed to 60 or 70 per cent in 1996/97. Notably, however, reviews of the programme reported that the general situation had benefited substantially from the ALRMP’s lobbying efforts around drought management, relief targeting and early warning systems. For the first time the ‘mistrust between the government on the one side and other stakeholders... on the other, with regard to the approach to food insecurity... has been waning as dialogue through different forums such as the Kenya Food Security Steering Group has been rising’.

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‘HECA Programme, Annual Impact Report, 2001-2002’, May, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/55: HECA Programme Annual Impact Report FY 2001-2002.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with author no. III, 4 December, 2014, ‘HECA Annual Regional Report, 1999-2000’, November, 2000, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/54: HECA Annual Regional Report 1999-2000.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation’, March, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/6/10/2: Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation, March 2002.

<sup>117</sup> ‘HECA Annual Regional Report, 1999-2000’, November, 2000, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/54: HECA Annual Regional Report 1999-2000.

Crucially, while previous drought interventions saw donors and NGOs adopt ‘a parallel relief delivery system to that of the government’ because they did not trust the government to implement an objective relief intervention, the work of Oxfam and DfID alongside the government, ‘to influence its decisions and policies from within’, meant that the government and donors eventually agreed to combine their relief contributions (mainly maize and beans) and distribute relief through a single pipeline. This was a major departure from the system used in 1996/97, when the government used the provincial administration to distribute food relief based on considerations other than technical information available from the various early warning systems.<sup>118</sup> A former Oxfam staff member who was present for both emergencies recalled that previously around half of their time was spent trying to get the government to accept the need to distribute according to objective need rather than politics:

[The government’s] primary impulse is political... [their] understanding of the purpose of politics is... to negotiate a share of the spoils... The pressure to allocate relief to places that didn’t really need it was [acute]... The government official is not going to agree that some districts will have no relief... that’s not politically sustainable... All constituencies must get an equal amount of support because it is a public good... even if it’s 100 bags of beans given into the care of an MP to be distributed – obviously completely clientelist stuff – they just need to do something, otherwise they can’t do anything...<sup>119</sup>

The shift towards a combined pipeline for relief delivery was thus a significant departure on behalf of the government and donor organisations, and was based to a large extent on Oxfam and DfID’s argument that ‘in the long term, the government of the day in any country must be responsible... feed its people and... ensure that none of its citizens succumbs to the debilitating impacts of famine and destitution’.<sup>120</sup> To be clear, the government was somewhat forced to the table by its perilous economic situation, which rendered impossible any single-handed response to the drought crisis. The state needed the support of other stakeholders and was pressed by Oxfam and the ALRMP (along with reformers in the civil service such as Dr. Richard Leakey) to accept a multi-agency

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<sup>118</sup> ‘Evaluation Report of the Drought Mitigation Programme in Wajir, Moyale, Isiolo and Turkana Districts of Kenya: October 1999 – March 2001’, January, 2002, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Programme Humanitarian Programme Box No. 2, File: Humanitarian Programme Box No. 2, File: Humanitarian Programme Reports, 2001-2002.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with author no. XVI, 22 September, 2014.

<sup>120</sup> ‘Evaluation Report of the Drought Mitigation Programme in Wajir, Moyale, Isiolo and Turkana Districts of Kenya: October 1999 – March 2001’, January, 2002, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Programme Humanitarian Programme Box No. 2, File: Humanitarian Programme Box No. 2, File: Humanitarian Programme Reports, 2001-2002.

approach to the drought. At the same time, the partnership between Oxfam and government officials and agencies – for instance the District Water Offices in Wajir and Turkana – set a positive precedent for a multi-agency response and was considered an exceptional example of a government-NGO relationship.<sup>121</sup> Internationally, Oxfam was also making an impact on donor attitudes through the ALRMP: WFP would soon adopt the community based food targeting and distribution system across the region, while USAID began to redefine its drought management policy to stress improving livelihoods as well as saving lives.<sup>122</sup>

Furthermore, as a result of the credibility that Oxfam earned in its peace building work in Wajir and its lobbying efforts through the ALRMP, the organisation was able to secure the necessary institutional commitment from government officials to start a conflict reduction project in July 2000. Indeed, it was considered ‘very doubtful that the government would have allowed... such a programme without the credibility derived from such grassroots experience’. Funded by DfID at a cost of £660,000 over three years, the project sought to promote peace building processes that involved and empowered communities in ten arid districts. The underlying strategy was to build on customary institutions for negotiating peace by supporting district level rapid response initiatives, dialogue meetings, peace seminars and education, and by establishing frameworks for collaboration between government and communities in times of conflict. At the same time, the project hoped to push the government to create a national level framework for peace and security work co-ordinated by the Office of the President, to influence government to address the underlying causes of conflict (including land tenure and natural resources management) and to encourage the government to recognise customary institutions of conflict management. It also sought to train official and non-government actors in mediation and negotiation techniques and community policing, while conducting research and media work on the causes of and consequences of pastoral conflict.<sup>123</sup> By 2002, significant progress was noted at the district level, with

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<sup>121</sup> ‘Evaluation Report of the Drought Mitigation Programme in Wajir, Moyale, Isiolo and Turkana Districts of Kenya: October 1999 – March 2001’, January, 2002, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Programme Humanitarian Programme Box No. 2, File: Humanitarian Programme Box No. 2, File: Humanitarian Programme Reports, 2001-2002.

<sup>122</sup> ‘HECA Programme, Annual Impact Report, 2001-2002’, May, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/55: HECA Programme Annual Impact Report FY 2001-2002.

<sup>123</sup> ‘HECA Annual Regional Report, 1999-2000’, November, 2000, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/54: HECA Annual Regional Report 1999-2000; ‘HECA Programme, Annual Impact Report, 2001-2002’, May, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/55: HECA Programme Annual Impact Report FY 2001-2002; ‘Kenya National Pastoral

District Committees working on conflict prevention and providing early warning of escalating tensions. They also worked to establish rapid response strategies and used traditional methods of dispute resolution and conflict management (including compensation, restitution and punishment) as well as arms surrender, community policing and the recovery and return of stolen stock. The conflict programme was reported to have 'increased the community's confidence in the government'.<sup>124</sup>

At the national level, Oxfam helped to form the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management. The Committee included representatives from government (the Office of the President, ALRMP, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the police); non-government organisations (Oxfam, Caritas Spain, World Vision – Kenya and PeaceNet); UN agencies (UN Office for Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the UN Development Programme); donors (DfID, USAID, GTZ); religious institutions (National Council of Churches of Kenya, Kenya Catholic Secretariat, Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims); and regional organisations (Inter-Governmental Authority on Development and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Inter-Africa Bureau for Animal Resources). The Committee successfully mapped peace-building activities across the country and secured funding from DfID for a national institution for peace work.<sup>125</sup> The government's 'paradigm shift in policy and practice' regarding pastoral conflict – from tight control of every aspect of security and 'characterised by an indiscriminate use of force' to the recognition of traditional institutions and customary mechanisms of conflict management – was at least partly due to Oxfam's efforts to bring local groups and government together, boosting their confidence in formal and traditional institutions, respectively.<sup>126</sup> External reviewers concluded that, 'to the extent that there is currently a pastoral conflict management policy in Kenya, it is derived from the Wajir experience, to which Oxfam made a major contribution' and was also the result of Oxfam's willingness to engage (and compromise) with the state in a pragmatic fashion, not least through the ALRMP. Most importantly, however, this work was having an impact on the ground: assessments of the

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Policy Programme Evaluation', March, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/6/10/2: Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation, March 2002.

<sup>124</sup> 'HECA Regional Impact Report, 2000-2001', June, 2001, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/53: HECA Regional Impact Report, 2000-2001.

<sup>125</sup> 'Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation', March, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/6/10/2: Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation, March 2002.

<sup>126</sup> 'HECA Programme, Annual Impact Report, 2001-2002', May, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/55: HECA Programme Annual Impact Report FY 2001-2002; 'Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation', March, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/6/10/2: Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation, March 2002.

levels of insecurity in the arid and semi-arid lands spoke of 'a significant reduction in the incidence of conflict and insecurity in the arid districts... attributable, at least in part, to the collaborative efforts of government and the community peace committees', as well as to improving regional security and good levels of rainfall.<sup>127</sup>

The evidence above shows how Oxfam was able to fulfil, even if in a limited fashion, both of its objectives for the ALRMP, which, along with the WPDP, illustrated the possibilities of its tactical and strategic approach to development in Kenya. The organisation helped to give communities a say in conflict situations and convinced many ALRMP staff to 'quietly support empowerment as a driver for change', while also encouraging the government to adopt national drought and conflict management strategies and a more open resource distribution mechanism.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, Oxfam noted, 'policy makers themselves will attribute the changes relating to work in pastoralism to Oxfam'. The government's 'enthusiasm for collaboration with Oxfam' was reflected in the appointment of the organisation (through Mohamed Elmi) to the National Commission for Poverty Eradication in 1999.<sup>129</sup> Speaking of drought management, but applicable more broadly, a senior official in the Office of the President remarked that 'Oxfam has opened up perspectives and perceptions... that are new and valuable to the government. It doesn't get these from other non-governmental organisations'.<sup>130</sup>

Yet it would strain credulity to think that the Moi government – particularly in the run up to the elections in 1997 and 2002 – was interested only in ideas, and Oxfam was certainly not naïve about the government's motive in partnering with the organisation in the ALRMP. As a confidential Oxfam report noted, partnership was key for the government because the organisation was already located in the arid and semi-arid districts and its track record of grassroots work meant it had the ability to engage pastoral communities and win their trust. This ability was not matched in many other organisations, and certainly not in government; in fact, 'the government needed a way in,

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<sup>127</sup> 'Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation', March, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/6/10/2: Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation, March 2002.

<sup>128</sup> 'Case Study of Oxfam GB's Partnership with the Arid Lands Resource Management Project, Government of Kenya', no date, Oxfam 'O' Drive File, Oxfam Office, Nairobi.

<sup>129</sup> 'Annual Report, May 1998 – April 1999: Orienting Programme Action towards Policy Work for Greater Impact', April, 1999, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/13: Annual Report 1998-1999, 'Orientating Programme Action Towards Policy Work for Greater Impact'.

<sup>130</sup> 'HECA Programme, Annual Impact Report, 2001-2002', May, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/3/55: HECA Programme Annual Impact Report FY 2001-2002; 'Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation', March, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/6/10/2: Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation, March 2002.

and a way to gain credibility and trust' with pastoralists.<sup>131</sup> Clearly, not all government staff were 'as sympathetic to Oxfam's values' as some in the ALRMP. Thus Oxfam noted that 'as a seasoned [sic] international diplomat' the Permanent Secretary for Development in the Office of the President – with whom Oxfam wanted to engage on pastoral issues – 'talks a good game'. 'Nonetheless, she has not reached such a position without the correct KANU credentials and allies'.<sup>132</sup> Other government officials were known to have 'unseen relations with political groups' and Oxfam staff were warned 'not to use resources and relationships to create allegiances with local elites'.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, they were reminded that since independence 'efforts to speak up [as regards pastoralism] have been systematically crushed and silenced [and] this approach has become institutionalised'. Therefore, while for Oxfam 'partnership might assume a shared notion of public good with the government... the government might have a different sense of the partnership' at a time when Moi 'holds doggedly to power'. For the state,

[partnership] might serve as an effective delivery strategy for pushing its own acceptance among communities... [and] may serve to enhance its influence and strengthen its legitimacy within communities.<sup>134</sup>

Nevertheless, the fact that the ALRMP was simultaneously at the heart of government *and* slightly outside traditional government structures – and was itself possessed of a progressive mandate (and staff) – made it easier for Oxfam to laud its potential for influencing while at the same time denying any cost to the organisation's credibility as a result of its 'complicity with government'.<sup>135</sup> How far the ALRMP and other related initiatives were able to avoid falling prey to the whims of powerful individuals and a political system driven by patronage is the subject of the penultimate section of the chapter.

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<sup>131</sup> 'Case Study of Oxfam GB's Partnership with the Arid Lands Resource Management Project, Government of Kenya', no date, Oxfam 'O' Drive File, Oxfam Office, Nairobi.

<sup>132</sup> 'Tour Report', OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/5/5/8 Folder 3: Kenya, 1993-1998.

<sup>133</sup> 'Case Study of Oxfam GB's Partnership with the Arid Lands Resource Management Project, Government of Kenya', no date, Oxfam 'O' Drive File, Oxfam Office, Nairobi.

<sup>134</sup> 'Kenya Pastoral Programme – Capacity Building for Empowerment Case Study Report', no date, Oxfam 'O' Drive File, Oxfam Office, Nairobi.

<sup>135</sup> 'Case Study of Oxfam GB's Partnership with the Arid Lands Resource Management Project, Government of Kenya', no date, Oxfam 'O' Drive File, Oxfam Office, Nairobi.

## 'BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR': OXFAM AND THE DEVELOPMENT-POLITICS NEXUS

Oxfam was moving ever closer to the centre of the development-politics nexus in Kenya, a 'gate' guarded ruthlessly by the political and economic elite. The risks were obvious and not limited to issues of organisational credibility: in his report on capacity building with pastoralist communities in 1998, Peter Kisopia wrote that 'tackling development issues in a system which shuns any attempt to address them because they affect the ruling clique is worrying', particularly since the organisation was 'attempting to address very sensitive issues which would otherwise be left untouched because of fear'.<sup>136</sup> The government remained especially sensitive about NGOs 'mentioning the government negatively' or suggesting that political change was necessary. Oxfam thus had to be very careful to distinguish between politics and policy: the organisation could discuss policy on pastoral areas, but had to be cautious not to stray into criticism that could be construed as political.<sup>137</sup> Somewhat inevitably, though, Oxfam's higher profile advocacy work and capacity building with powerless communities, combined with its large scale emergency funding, encouraged 'gatekeepers' (and particularly MPs) to take a 'mixed' view of Oxfam. On the one hand, 'gatekeepers' wanted Oxfam to bring resources to their constituency. For, just as Oxfam would laud its achievements in influencing government policy, the government and elected representatives would laud their achievement in bringing Oxfam to a particular community. 'Ultimately', as one interviewee noted, 'it's about power and resources' and subverting 'what would be appropriate from a need and technical solutions perspective and trying to divert that from a political perspective':

If you're an MP, you want to be seen to bring those resources to your community... You want to be seen to be the MP to bring the borehole to your community, to bring the water, to bring the school, to bring whatever the service may be... An MP in Garissa wanted a borehole in that area [for example]. It was completely unsuitable from an environmental [perspective]... what it meant to pastoral trekking routes, what it was going to mean in terms of degradation of the land... [but the MP] wanted to be seen to bring a borehole to the people.

Pressure was more acute when there were bigger sums of money 'at stake'. During humanitarian interventions, for instance, 'the corruption around food aid was huge...

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<sup>136</sup> 'Annual Report, 1997-1998: Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya', June, 1998, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/12: Annual Report 1997-1998, 'Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya'.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with author no. IX, 16 October, 2014.

whether it's paying transporters [since] most of the transport companies are owned by MPs [or] siphoning off food for a local chief or an MP somewhere...'. Pressure would be applied in conversations and letters, by influencing communities to ask Oxfam for interventions or to challenge Oxfam's decisions, and through the medium of licensing and contract disputes.<sup>138</sup>

On the other hand, Oxfam was able to make use of a set of simple tactics to resist pressure and co-optation by MPs and the state, frustrating those who wished to manipulate incoming resources. Firstly, the organisation followed strict technical data on the need for distribution efforts and used this data when government Ministers and MPs asked the organisation why it was not working in Nyeri or Machakos for instance (two common examples). Secondly, Oxfam often played down the size of its interventions to make them less attractive to the questioner. Thirdly, staff avoided travelling with MPs or going to villages with a government introduction and resisted the temptation to bring news crews to the launch of projects. Oxfam was, of course, happy to give some of the credit to the government and its representatives (if and when they deserved it) in order to build communities' confidence in state structures and bolster government commitment to policy change.<sup>139</sup> Yet the potential for glory and resource appropriation was balanced by the possibility that Oxfam might also challenge accepted routines for resource distribution or ask difficult questions about development in the region. As such, the organisation inspired conflicted attitudes from MPs, who veered quickly 'between hostility [and] positive engagement'.<sup>140</sup>

Another important driver of this conflicted attitude was the fact that Oxfam had begun employing more staff from local areas to run its projects, and these staff members were becoming popular with local communities as a result of their involvement in emergency and development programmes. Consequently, a number of incumbent MPs feared that Oxfam staff might undermine their hold over the local electorate, which was based on the ability to bring resources and development initiatives from the central government. The fear was far from unfounded: two Oxfam staff members – Ekwee Ethuro

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<sup>138</sup> Indeed, in December 2000, Oxfam reported problems with the Turkana Tender and Transporters Association (TUTTA), which had encouraged a strike. 'A clique within TUTTA', noted the report, 'has political links'. 'Turkana Updates', December, 2000, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Programme, Humanitarian Programme, Box No. 10, File: Correspondence, Project Turkana; Interview with author no. III, 4 December, 2014; Interview with author no. IV, 6 January, 2015.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with author no. IX, 16 October, 2014; interview with author no. XX, 24 September, 2014.

<sup>140</sup> 'Annual Report, 1997-1998: Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya', June, 1998, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/12: Annual Report 1997-1998, 'Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya'.

(then Deputy Country Representative) and John Munyes (then Turkana programme manager) – resigned in 1997 to stand for election in Turkana, a district where resource distribution was highly politicised:

In Turkana it was all about the division of resources... you couldn't hire a truck if it wasn't on the list that the MPs gave you... [and] you couldn't employ someone if [the MP] hadn't approved it... The senior elite in Kenya [is] very good at manipulation... you would have a huge transport and loaders strike in Turkana... no one would take a single bag of maize on a truck... The MP would never appear at the front of that group, but you would know there was a lot of manipulation behind the scenes... [the loaders] would have been incited or even paid... it was all about control of resources... it was a feeding frenzy.<sup>141</sup>

Ethuro was successful in his election attempt for KANU in Turkana North, and was appointed as the Assistant Minister for Labour and Human Resource Development by Moi in 1998. He left KANU to join NARC in 2002 and was successfully re-elected as an MP, before joining the Party of National Unity in 2007 and holding his seat once more. In 2013 he was elected as the speaker of the Kenyan senate. Munyes was defeated in 1998, but had been associated with FORD-Kenya (despite vying for the KANU ticket) in a solidly KANU region and faced a hugely powerful opponent in Japheth Ekidor. Ekidor had built a powerbase in Turkana North since his election in 1979, and, according to the *Daily Nation*, had been returned to Parliament at every election thereafter 'not so much due to his popularity but his ability to intimidate potential rivals and voters'.<sup>142</sup> (In 1995, Ekidor had even bitten off the ear of a Turkana County Council Chairman when the latter challenged one of the MP's decisions.) Munyes was certainly intimidated during the campaign: the *Daily Nation* reported that he was unable to go to some areas of the constituency due to harassment and threats from chiefs, while a number of interviewees recalled that he was ambushed at least twice during the campaign with the intention of scaring him off.<sup>143</sup> Munyes was, however, successful in 2002, standing for FORD-Kenya. He was re-elected in 2007 and was appointed Minister for Water and Irrigation in the coalition Cabinet of 2008. In 2013, Munyes was elected as the senator for Turkana. Other Oxfam staff soon followed the example of Ethuro and Munyes: in 2002 Adelina Mwau (Programme Officer) was nominated as an MP and today serves as the Deputy County Governor in Makueni. In 2007 Mohamed Elmi was elected for the Orange Democratic Movement in Wajir East. He

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with author no. XVI, 22 September, 2014; Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014.

<sup>142</sup> 'Former Oxfam Official to Test Ekidor's Might', *Daily Nation*, 8 September, 1997, Daily Nation Archive, Nairobi.

<sup>143</sup> 'Former Oxfam Official to Test Ekidor's Might', *Daily Nation*, 8 September, 1997, Daily Nation Archive, Nairobi; Interview ENN 23/10

was then appointed to the Cabinet as Minister of Development for Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands in 2008. Abdirahman Ali Hassan was also elected to Parliament for ODM in 2007 in Wajir South constituency. In Turkana South, Josephat Nanok was elected on an ODM ticket in 2007 and became governor of Turkana in 2013. Other high-profile ‘ex-fammers’ include Halakhe Waqo, appointed as the first Secretary of the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) in 2013.

Association with Oxfam was clearly no hindrance to political ambitions, therefore. One former Oxfam staff member, now an MP, discussed the issue openly and admitted that ‘once they [Oxfam staff] went for politics... they had a big edge over anybody [else]. I worked for ten years in [my district]... so when the time came and I was standing... I was a household name’.<sup>144</sup> Numerous other interviewees, meanwhile, spoke of the way that in certain districts – particularly Turkana and Wajir – ‘you couldn’t not know them’ as a voter.<sup>145</sup> Others cautioned that work done for Oxfam did not *cause* electoral success, but was itself a consequence of employees’ educational attainment, their motivation to help communities and their desire to challenge unhelpful government policies – characteristics that made these individuals highly likely to be competitive in elections regardless of their work for Oxfam. (In fact, Oxfam deliberately chose to employ individuals who could take on a leadership role with local communities, in order to encourage the latter to challenge the status quo.) Furthermore, when elections came around, communities often did not have many candidates to choose from – Turkana in particular was a classic ‘one-horse town’ – and Oxfam employees were precisely the type of people who could be tempted to enter politics, motivated by the desire to serve their community. According to this interpretation, it was almost inevitable that a number of Oxfam employees would end up as MPs.<sup>146</sup>

Nonetheless, it was clear to many contemporaries that ‘individuals who worked [for Oxfam] gained personal credit and reputation *because of the work*, and were *trading on that*’.<sup>147</sup> The question of how far Oxfam staff took advantage of their work for the organisation takes on a different complexion in Wajir and Turkana, however. In Wajir, there is a much greater sense of ‘greatness’ being thrust upon Oxfam staff, and particularly Mohamed Elmi. Having spoken to Elmi and to those with whom he worked

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<sup>144</sup> Interview with author no. VIII, 6 November, 2014.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with author no. II, 7 October, 2014.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with author no. III, 4 December, 2014.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with author no. II, 7 October, 2014. My emphasis.

closely at Oxfam and in Parliament, it is noticeable that he had no real desire to enter Parliament, but was pressured to do so by the community in Wajir. Indeed, Elmi's standing in the community was so high as a result of his work for Oxfam and his previous work as a medical practitioner for the government that elders cajoled him to seek election, saying 'you're our son, you're going to go there and do this for us'.<sup>148</sup> On the other hand, in Turkana there was a different dimension at work. One Kenyan employee, who worked for Oxfam in the pastoral regions for nearly 20 years, recalled that the recurrent relief efforts in the region since independence ensured that 'if you give a Turkana food, you are the best of friends regardless of whether you have good leadership qualities or not'. As Oxfam coordinators, Ethuro and Munyes received requests for food aid and conveyed news of their acceptance; consequently, the Turkana attributed both 'the acceptance of that request and the action that comes out of it' to these individuals (and to Nanok in the early 2000s). Thus 'because of Oxfam's relief intervention... [Ethuro and Munyes] were seen as our sons who have brought us food in tonnes'.<sup>149</sup> The coordinators were even nicknamed *Apa a Ngibaren* or 'fathers and providers of stock', as they were considered to have turned on the resource tap. All interviewees with experience in the district concurred with this assessment:

He who is seen to bring the resources is automatically in a position of power... which is exactly why it is no coincidence that pretty much all the senior office holders in Turkana worked for Oxfam... Oxfam for a long period of time... was pretty much the only serious supplier... the only long-term presence in that district... Someone like John Munyes... was driving out on trucks to distribute food relief... and of course [at] the next election he is elected.<sup>150</sup>

Importantly, former staff spoke of the difficulty people had in differentiating between the individual and the organisation: 'the people there... cannot differentiate that you are the programme coordinator and Oxfam [as an organisation] is bringing [the relief]... they see you as our saviour, our son'.<sup>151</sup> Another staff member who worked for a number of years in Turkana recounted that:

The link in Turkana between the resources, the power, Oxfam and politics was really close because it is such a resource poor environment... and there were so few international and civil society organisations [there]... It was very difficult for people... to disaggregate John Munyes as the Project Officer who works for Oxfam... [from

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<sup>148</sup> Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with author no. IX, 16 October, 2014.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014.

<sup>151</sup> interview with author no. XX, 24 September, 2014.

someone] who is bringing hundreds of tonnes of food relief. What people wouldn't necessarily know is how those resources are allocated... It would be wrong for them to think that Munyes had personally brought it to them... but it would be very easy for them [the Oxfam staff member] to represent it in that way, and it would be very easy for the community to believe that even if they [Oxfam staff] didn't represent it in that way. And given that politics is all about the delivery of benefit (that's the purpose of politics in Kenya... you get there in order to be able to eat something... ideally your community will eat something as well) you wouldn't have any other way of understanding what leadership was, other than that this particular concrete benefit... came to me [as a result of this man].

In contrast to Elmi in Wajir, there is a fair degree of concurrence among former Oxfam staff that Ethuro and Munyes 'always intended to be where they are now'.<sup>152</sup> One alleged that while 'Oxfam were very visible in Turkana – we had cars with Oxfam logos on them, we had two projects and then a relief operation – Ekwee and Munyes... capitalised on that'.<sup>153</sup> Another spoke of those in Turkana 'using food to be popular so that they will find it easier to go to Parliament'.<sup>154</sup> The drought crises in the 1990s were particularly useful for those envisaging a campaign. It was 'on the back of that for the most part that the likes of Ekwee and Munyes... established their platform'. Indeed, it was claimed that 'Ethuro... exploited [the situation] massively... [he] exploited resources, and there was evidence that he had used vehicles [to campaign], for example'.<sup>155</sup> According to one interviewee, Ethuro 'was clearly... doing consultancies for other organisations when he was being paid by Oxfam... and there was no doubt that he was electioneering...'.<sup>156</sup> Given these factors, it is unsurprising that voters would choose to elect their Oxfam 'sons' into government.

More concerning for Head Office in Nairobi was the question of from where the money for the campaigns was coming. Election campaigns in Kenya are prohibitively expensive, helping to entrench the position of incumbents who are able to mobilise state resources for their re-election drive. One Oxfam staff member who visited Turkana in the mid-1990s alleged that: 'these people [in Turkana] were doing their accounts on a coconut tree; nothing from these accounts I am getting from Turkana are real... nothing was happening with the programme... [but] because of the drought they got money year in, year out'. According to this interviewee, the Turkana programme 'was a cash machine for the managers, for the politicians... and the books did not add up...'. When the staff

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<sup>152</sup> Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with author no. XXI, 28 April, 2015.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with author no. XX, 24 September, 2014.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with author no. X, 3 January, 2015.

member attempted to visit the programme, permission was delayed for over a year – partly, they argued, because of the relatively high position of authority that Ethuro held at Oxfam at the time. When a visit finally took place, an arduous journey ended in disappointment: ‘they had burned all the finance records’. Nevertheless, for this interviewee, it was still fairly clear that ‘[Ethuro] campaigned with Oxfam money’ and had been running an election campaign rather than the development and relief work. Moreover, the visit and discussions with local beneficiaries had confirmed the suspicions of many staff that ‘relief itself was used as a campaign tool [in the manner of] “I am the one bringing the food, and you can vote for me” ...’.<sup>157</sup>

Placing aside the issue of the misuse of Oxfam relief – something that cannot be proven and was, as has been mentioned, not even necessary for staff to be seen as the ‘saviour’ of their region – Oxfam staff were unanimous that getting individuals such as Ethuro and Munyes into Parliament could actually be interpreted as a sign of success for the organisation. For this was an NGO seeking ‘islands of effectiveness’ within the state and looking for individuals with whom Oxfam staff could engage. What better, then, than Parliamentarians, Ministers and Cabinet members schooled in Oxfam ideas? Thus it was considered ‘not a bad thing if some MPs have a real understanding of profound poverty, of inequality... that they will have received being a member of staff at Oxfam’.<sup>158</sup> In fact, ‘Oxfam saw it as quite a good thing at the time... we thought they had been sufficiently indoctrinated with our ways of thinking... we thought they would be on the right side’.<sup>159</sup> Unfortunately, whether the MPs continued to work towards Oxfam values once elected was a different question entirely. One interviewee asserted despondently that ‘when somebody becomes a politician in Kenya... all those good values evaporate slowly’.<sup>160</sup> ‘It’s something about Kenya’s political system’, noted another, ‘the pressures on you to behave in a certain kind of way [to participate in patronage politics] are extraordinary’.<sup>161</sup> A third cautioned that

You have to be careful what you wish for... One of our objectives was to promote the representation of people from marginalised communities in decision-making positions... From that point of view [Oxfam was] remarkably successful... The problem is you can’t necessarily control what they do when they get there...<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Interview with author no. XV, 23 October, 2014.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with author no. XI, 4 December, 2014.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with author no. XX, 24 September, 2014.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with author no. IX, 16 October, 2014.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with author no. II, 7 October, 2014.

<sup>162</sup> Interview with author no. XVI, 22 September, 2014.

Notably, it is alleged that when Ethuro and Munyes got to Parliament, they ‘fought the government to give them relief’ rather than the early warning, drought management and community based development that they had once advocated with Oxfam. Food relief was, of course, an easier sell to communities and guaranteed more votes.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, in 2012, Ethuro and Nanok were arrested and charged with incitement to violence after the murder of 41 police officers in Baragoi.<sup>164</sup> They were alleged to have implied that it was desirable to ‘bring death or physical injuries’ to police officers in Turkana County, and had defended the actions of the Turkana as a response to a ‘state sponsored attack’; gone, therefore, were efforts to build bridges between the state and pastoralists. Yet because they were within the precinct of Parliament when they spoke, Ethuro and Nanok were able to escape prosecution.<sup>165</sup> Meanwhile, Nanok was one of 12 governors asked to step aside by President Kenyatta in 2015, with allegations of graft by the EACC including the payment of Ksh. 14 million to a contractor to build a bridge that does not exist.<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, regardless of motive, each member of Oxfam staff who has crossed into Parliament has faced problems of inertia amongst government staff, a civil service that barely functions and the daunting task of persuading half of Kenya’s MPs that they do not actually need food relief.<sup>167</sup>

Predictably, the entrance of Oxfam staff into politics caused ‘significant political turbulence and uncertainty for Oxfam’ and ‘put Oxfam at some risk’. The organisation certainly experienced government hostility over Munyes’ resignation to challenge Ekidor, which came directly after relief work was wound down in Turkana and at a time when ‘the political environment was very sensitive and Oxfam was being accused of political activities’.<sup>168</sup> These accusations were, unsurprisingly, related to the activities of Munyes and Ethuro, who had organised a cross-border meeting in Lodwar with Ugandan officials

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<sup>163</sup> interview with author no. XX, 24 September, 2014.

<sup>164</sup> John Munyes – who was also present at the time – was not arrested, but was summoned to CID headquarters.

<sup>165</sup> ‘MPs Refuse to Take Plea in Cases’, *Daily Nation*, 20 November, 2012, available at: <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/politics/MPs-refuse-to-take-plea-in-cases/-/1064/1624598/-/u56yoq/-/index.html> [accessed 18 December, 2014]; ‘Court Throws Out MPs’ Incitement Case’, *Daily Nation*, 21 November, 2012, available at: <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Court-throws-out-MPs-incitement-case/-/1056/1625732/-/s2337mz/-/index.html> [accessed 18 December, 2014]

<sup>166</sup> ‘Sh. 14m Graft Probe Against Turkana Governor Still Under Way: EACC’, *The Standard*, 28 May, 2015, available at: <http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/thecounties/article/2000163477/sh14m-graft-probe-against-turkana-governor-still-under-way-eacc?pageNo=1> [accessed 18 December, 2014]

<sup>167</sup> Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014.

<sup>168</sup> ‘Annual Report, 1997-1998: Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya’, June, 1998, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/12: Annual Report 1997-1998, ‘Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya’.

without the knowledge of Leach or other members of the organisation. (It was alleged in the aftermath that Ethuro in particular ‘was electioneering... He organised [the] cross-border meeting... without telling anyone... He clearly was doing this for his own advancement’.<sup>169</sup>) Threatened by Ethuro’s increasing popularity, the incumbent MP in Turkana North – Emmanuel Imara – sensed an opportunity to block the candidacy of his potential rival, and so reported the cross-border meeting to the President. In and of itself, organising meetings with foreign officials and inviting them onto Kenyan soil without the government’s permission was a serious *faux pas*; but the situation was made worse by the deliberate actions of Imara to heighten the tension. Thus whereas the meeting was organised by the Kenya Pastoralist Forum – the replacement for the PSC in Kenya – Imara reported that the meeting was a front for the activities of the Kenya Patriotic Front, a guerrilla terrorist group created by Koigi wa Wamwere and based (unfortunately for Oxfam) in Uganda. Although both had the acronym KPF, it would have been difficult for Imara to mistake a pastoralist discussion group for a guerrilla terrorist group; by all accounts his report to the President was a desperate attempt to have Oxfam, and more importantly Ethuro, thrown out of the region.<sup>170</sup>

As the elections drew near there was more than enough paranoia at the heart of government around guerrilla campaigns and opposition movements to trigger a stern response. The mention of the KPF and the discussions with Ugandan officials was of sufficient concern for Moi to personally telephone Oxfam’s Country Representative. In a tense telephone call – during which Moi did most of the talking – the President questioned why Oxfam was supporting opponents to his government and ordered Leach to stop any meetings within two hours. Leach thought it best not to argue the point and complied with the President’s demand; he also closed the entire Turkana programme soon after: ‘given political sensitivities’, he wrote, the organisation needed ‘time to rethink strategy in the region’.<sup>171</sup> In the event, Oxfam was fortunate that its international profile was high and a portion of its recent work was in collaboration with DfID; this meant that Moi was reluctant to throw the NGO out of the country. (A local organisation would, in all likelihood, have been disbanded immediately.) Another factor in Oxfam’s

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<sup>169</sup> Interview with author no. X, 3 January, 2015.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with author no. VIII, 6 November, 2014; Interview with author no. XIV, 21 September, 2014; Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014; Interview with author no. X, 3 January, 2015; Interview with author no. XV, 23 October, 2014; Interview with author no. XX, 24 September, 2014.

<sup>171</sup> ‘Annual Report, 1997-1998: Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya’, June, 1998, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/12: Annual Report 1997-1998, ‘Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya’.

favour was that it was a major provider of resources to areas such as Turkana.<sup>172</sup> Accordingly, while the MPs might feel threatened and government ‘would shake you a little bit to shut you up... they want to work with you because you are still an important development actor “out there” [in marginalised areas]’.<sup>173</sup> In addition, Oxfam’s contacts within the Office of the President through the ALRMP helped to calm the situation by making clear to anyone who would listen that the organisation did not involve itself in politics.<sup>174</sup> Thus after extensive dialogue with the government about Oxfam plans and activities, and after providing assurances that ‘all activities in our project areas [would be] carried out in collaboration with the relevant government departments’, the organisation was allowed to re-open its Turkana programme in 1998.<sup>175</sup>

Sadly, although having allies in the Office of the President helped to smooth over the difficulties in Turkana, the ALRMP itself was not as insulated from the development-politics nexus as Oxfam had hoped. When it was first established, the ALRMP worked in truly marginalised areas of Baringo, Garissa, Isiolo, Mandera, Marsabit, Samburu, Tana River, Turkana and Wajir, and Oxfam anticipated that the project would take clientelist conversations out of development in the arid lands.<sup>176</sup> However, interested Ministers soon expanded the programme to reach semi-arid areas, allegedly in order to benefit politically (from the opportunity to provide patronage) and financially.<sup>177</sup> Thus, when the Vice Presidency for Integrity (INT) – which investigates allegations of fraud and corruption in World Bank-financed projects – undertook a forensic audit of ALRMP activities in seven Kenyan districts in 2009, it found that 62 per cent of expenditures between 2006 and 2008 were suspected fraudulent or questionable, equating to Ksh. 511 million.

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<sup>172</sup> This was especially important after NORAD left the region when Norway broke ties with the Moi government in the early 1990s.

<sup>173</sup> Interview with author no. VIII, 6 November, 2014; Interview with author no. XIV, 21 September, 2014; Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014; Interview with author no. X, 3 January, 2015; Interview with author no. XV, 23 October, 2014; Interview with author no. XX, 24 September, 2014.

<sup>174</sup> Those who wished to campaign for election to parliament had to resign their position, a factor that helped Oxfam’s cause.

<sup>175</sup> ‘Annual Report, May 1998 – April 1999: Orienting Programme Action towards Policy Work for Greater Impact’, April, 1999, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/13: Annual Report 1998-1999, ‘Orientating Programme Action Towards Policy Work for Greater Impact’.

<sup>176</sup> Oxfam continued to work together with the ALRMP as a ‘crucial partner’ until 2010. ‘Oxfam GB, Kenya ASAL Programme Strategy’, c. 2007, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Programme Peace Building, Box No. 1, File: Partners’ Narratives and Financial Reports, 2005-2007.

<sup>177</sup> In phase two of the project in 2003, 11 districts were added: Kajiado, Kitui, Laikipia, Makueni, Mbeere, Mwingi, Narok, Nyeri, West Pokot, Tharaka and Trans Mara. Six more semi-arid districts would be added in 2006: Kilifi, Kwale, Lamu, Malindi, Meru North and Taita Taveta. Interview with author no. IX, 16 October, 2014.

(Unsurprisingly, the project was suspended and closed in 2010.)<sup>178</sup> A joint INT and Kenyan Internal Audit Department (IAD) review later reduced the amount to Ksh. 340 million, or approximately 45 per cent of audited funds. Nonetheless, if even the reduced level of misappropriation had been experienced across all the districts involved in the project, for those two years alone the amount defrauded from the scheme would have reached Ksh. 1 billion. The INT report did, indeed, conclude that fraud was ‘systemic’ and involved possible collusion with accountants in district treasuries (who signed cheques for individual projects), staff in Kenyan commercial banks (who retrospectively altered cheques and bank statements to suit those defrauding the scheme) and even Kenya Revenue Authority officials. Given that many of the staff of the ALRMP had been with the project since its inception, the evaluation team also considered it entirely possible that the financial mismanagement of the project – including the misuse of funds from Oxfam and other donors – was prevalent across the whole timespan of the project.<sup>179</sup>

Somewhat ironically, the project had been moved in 2008 from the Office of the President to the newly created Ministry for the Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands, headed by Mohamed Elmi. It fell to Elmi, therefore, to defend the project in Parliament in 2012. This he did by denying any personal knowledge of misappropriation and by asserting that the funds suspected of misuse amounted to a mere four per cent of the project outlay. (The figure has since been dismissed as ‘a gross distortion by any reasonable calculation’.)<sup>180</sup> Elmi was, of course, expected to toe the government line as a Cabinet Minister. Moreover, his own time at the head of the project did not overlap for more than a month or so with the audited period of the project, so

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<sup>178</sup> World Bank Group Integrity Vice Presidency (INT), ‘Forensic Audit Report: Arid Lands Resource Management Project – Phase II’, July, 2011, available via Google cache of [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDOII/Resources/Kenya\\_Arid\\_Lands\\_Report.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDOII/Resources/Kenya_Arid_Lands_Report.pdf) [accessed 12 December, 2014]. See also AfriCOG’s publication on the issue: ‘Kenya’s Drought Cash Cow: Lessons from the Forensic Audit of the World Bank Arid Lands Resource Management Project’, December, 2012, available at [http://www.africog.org/sites/default/files/ALRMP\\_Report\\_final.pdf](http://www.africog.org/sites/default/files/ALRMP_Report_final.pdf) [accessed 12 December, 2014]. See also INT and IAD, ‘Redacted Joint Review to Quantify Ineligible Expenditures for the Seven Districts and Headquarters of the Arid Lands Resource Management Program Phase II (ALRMP II) for FY07 & FY08’, 18 November, 2011, available at [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDOII/Resources/GOK\\_WB\\_Redacted\\_Joint\\_Report.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDOII/Resources/GOK_WB_Redacted_Joint_Report.pdf) [accessed 12 December, 2014].

<sup>179</sup> The fraud itself took numerous forms, including kickbacks to managers in return for granting development funds to particular districts. In such cases cash was often given to managers immediately when the cheque that they had written for a project had cleared. Suspected fraud also included the use of invoices instead of receipts for claiming reimbursement, bid rigging in favour of well-connected suppliers, payment ahead of the receipt of goods and ‘double dipping’. ‘Double dipping’ meant that finance from donors such as the UNDP, the European Union and Oxfam was claimed despite the World Bank already covering the expenditure. INT, ‘Forensic Audit Report’, p. 16; AfriCOG, ‘Kenya’s Drought Cash Cow’, pp. 11-16.

<sup>180</sup> AfriCOG, ‘Kenya’s Drought Cash Cow’, p. 25; INT, ‘Forensic Audit Report’, p. 6.

there is no suggestion that he knew of or condoned the fraudulent misuse of funds. In such circumstances, and with his personal investment in the project and his knowledge of how important the ALRMP was to those on the ground in the arid districts, it is perhaps no surprise that Elmi chose to defend the project. At the same time, others more closely involved with the day-to-day workings of the ALRMP found it untenable to continue their work: 'once you're really aware of the corruption... within government, the diversion of resources, [and] the bribes...' and have witnessed the 'very ugly incidents around where resources were going and... who was diverting resources where', 'it becomes impossible to work [there]'. Tellingly, this interviewee left the project in the early 2000s.<sup>181</sup>

Nor was the ALRMP the only high-level initiative supported by Oxfam to go awry in this manner: the organisation had also been involved with the launch of the National Poverty Eradication Plan (NPEP) in 1998. The NPEP was a 15-year plan for poverty reduction, improved service coverage and broad-based economic growth. Oxfam participated in the first national stakeholder workshop and hoped to influence the government's attitude to poverty eradication by encouraging 'people-oriented policy changes'.<sup>182</sup> However, later evaluations argued that the programme 'fuelled the [Moi] regime's political patronage system, both at the national and district levels... [serving] to strengthen existing power relations'. According to evidence obtained from more than 50 interviews, beneficiaries of the Ksh. 126.5 million spent under the scheme by 2003 'tended to be KANU associates who were linked to the programme by their patrons... In most districts, government officials and local politicians used the programme to strengthen their own power hold and to reward political clients'.<sup>183</sup> Oxfam's conflict initiative would also find itself temporarily bogged down by the political machinations of the late Moi regime: in late 2001 it was reported that there was 'some unhappiness' in the Office of the President about aspects of the conflict work. In October, Moi unilaterally cancelled a meeting of the National Steering Committee, an act that threatened to derail

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<sup>181</sup> In particular the interviewee remembered there being 'a lot of question marks' about the World Bank team leader, Dr. Christine Cornelius, whose role had been to ensure that the project abided by the conditions of the agreements between the Kenya government and World Bank. The interviewee recalled 'a lot of talk about resources being diverted and whether [Cornelius] should have been allowed to manage that project... not least because she was married to a Kenyan-Somali'. Interview with author no. IV, 6 January, 2015.

<sup>182</sup> 'Annual Report, 1997-1998: Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya', June, 1998, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/4/12/12: Annual Report 1997-1998, 'Action to Achieve Impact on Poverty in Kenya'.

<sup>183</sup> D. Patrick, H. Els and F. Wanyama, 'The Emergence of Multilevel Governance in Kenya', Working Paper No. 7, Interdisciplinary Research Group on International Agreements and Development, 2005, pp. 7-10; see also J. Campbell, 'International Development and Bilateral Aid to Kenya in the 1990s', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (2008), pp. 262-263.

its vital peacebuilding work.<sup>184</sup> Later, it emerged that the President was particularly unhappy about the high-profile role the NCCK was taking in the Committee and in proposals for new conflict management projects, and wished to see the group excluded.<sup>185</sup>

Thus, for all the success that Oxfam had in nudging the government to make changes in its approach to pastoral development, emergencies and conflict, and despite its indirect victory in having its staff elected to Parliament, when Adam Leach left Kenya in 1999 he wrote sombrely that ‘the state of governance in Kenya is as bad as it was in 1994 with little real prospect of changing’. At the root of Kenya’s ills remained a ‘plunder regime’, which rendered institutions ‘barely able if genuinely concerned [to deal] with the needs of citizens’. The NGO sector in Kenya had also, he wrote, been undermined by corruption and mismanagement, making it ‘vulnerable to the very excesses of which the government is accused’.<sup>186</sup> One step forward – whether in the encouragement of pastoral associations, as regards livestock marketing or in terms of peace and conflict management and humanitarian responses – had, therefore, been followed for the most part by two steps back as the tentacles of patronage and corruption leached the resources and, more importantly, the credibility from many of the best initiatives such as the ALRMP, and compromised many of those MPs and officials in whom Oxfam had invested time, training and faith. Yet if Oxfam’s impact on Kenyan development was less than it had hoped for, it should be noted that the impact of the Kenya programme on the organisation had been profound. In particular, Oxfam’s work with pastoralists – both emergency and developmental – helped to shape the approach the organisation took to conflict work and methods of drought response across the region.<sup>187</sup> Moreover, though the impact on the Moi government was minimal, Oxfam’s work during the 1990s laid the foundations for work with a new government under President Kibaki on issues such as livestock management, pastoral livelihoods, peace and conflict management, drought management and humanitarian interventions.

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<sup>184</sup> ‘Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation’, March, 2002, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/6/10/2: Kenya National Pastoral Policy Programme Evaluation, March 2002.

<sup>185</sup> The NCCK, of course, was one of the foremost opponents to the Moi regime in the early 1990s and continued to act as a gadfly to the state. Interview with author no. VIII, 6 November, 2014.

<sup>186</sup> ‘CR Final Report, September 1994 – April 1999: Managing Change at a Programme Level’, April, 1999, OxA, MS. Oxfam PRG/3/7/17/8: Managing Change at Programme Level, 1994-1999 CR Final Report, April 1999; Interview with author no. XI, 4 December, 2014

<sup>187</sup> Interview with author no. III, 4 December, 2014.

## EPILOGUE – ‘CIRCULARITY’

When Moi left office there was a great deal of hope within Oxfam that things would finally change. Staff noticed almost immediately that the government was much more responsive to NGO requests for meetings and information, and policy formation under Kibaki appeared much more open to influence by the NGO sector. Where Moi had sought to reinforce the bureaucratic-executive state and a steep pyramid of power with the President at the apex, Kibaki articulated a desire to restrain the executive presidency; where Moi had seen NGOs as a threat to the security of the state, Kibaki brought civil society actors into government decision-making via district development planning: the NGO-state divide had become increasingly blurred.<sup>188</sup> (Indeed, Oxfam’s influence can still be traced in the Kibaki regime’s legislation on ASAL development, emergency response and conflict management.) Regrettably, however, the promise of wielding real influence (if they stepped inside the ‘tent’) served to neuter or co-opt many of the previous regime’s most vociferous opponents. Consequently, the blurring of the NGO-state boundary allowed the President to concentrate his efforts on developing high-potential areas of agricultural land while entrenching the Mount Kenya Mafia at the pinnacle of the patronage networks vacated by Moi.<sup>189</sup>

Hence, for Oxfam, the ‘marked change in the political landscape’ had made little tangible difference on the ground by the mid-2000s: ‘on the whole, institutions of government are still not responsive to poor people’s concerns, and ethnic-based and patronage politics persist... [pervading] all aspects of political, social and economic life’.<sup>190</sup> Meanwhile, as the political elite ‘continue to capture public institutions and resources to serve their own interests’, drought in the ASAL areas in 2005 and 2006 exposed the alarming ‘absence of the apparatus of the state’. This continued absence, Oxfam warned, left ‘historical grievances open to political manipulation... without restraint or redress’ (a chilling note considering the post-election violence that would take place in 2007 and

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<sup>188</sup> J. Brass, ‘Blurring Boundaries: The Integration of NGOs into Governance in Kenya’, *Governance*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2012), pp. 209-235.

<sup>189</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, pp. 252-262.

<sup>190</sup> ‘Oxfam GB, Kenya ASAL Programme Strategy’, c. 2007, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Programme Peace Building, Box No. 1, File: Partners’ Narratives and Financial Reports, 2005-2007; ‘Oxfam GB in Kenya, National Change Strategy Document, 2008 – 2011’, April 2008, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi, Kenya Programme Peace Building, Box No. 1, File: Partners’ Narratives and Financial Reports, 2005-2007.

2008).<sup>191</sup> Nonetheless, 'prior to the 2007 general election, Oxfam's assumption was that change in Kenya was broadly linear...'.<sup>192</sup> 'One thing we really underestimated' recalled one member of staff, was 'how government works, or doesn't [work]... It felt like politics was everything, because of Moi... [and] the enemy is clear and you can all unite around that. But actually you haven't really been able to build in your mind a proposition of how it would work afterwards...'.<sup>193</sup> The events of early 2008 led the organisation to rethink any notion of linear improvement under Moi's successor.<sup>194</sup> In fact, as ethnic conflict spiralled out of control, Oxfam wrote of the 'circularity' of the Kenyan situation, whereby insecurity, the lack of basic rights, and systems of patronage and ethnic segregation in business, politics and education served to consolidate the self-serving actions of those with access to power and resources, and to benefit those capable of maintaining the status quo based on exclusivity.<sup>195</sup>

Yet if there was a certain circularity to the failure of development in Kenya, there was circularity also in Oxfam's response. Without framing it in such a way, Oxfam's approach in the 1990s had been a combination of each of the different methodologies the organisation had used in Kenya over the previous 30 years. The cajoling of the state to be 'responsible' was thus reminiscent of the early Kenyatta years; while the efforts to encourage grass roots demands and empowerment, the emergency operationality and the questions raised by such intervention were redolent of the programme in the late 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, similarly to the way that concerns about engagement with the Kenyatta state had been dampened by the optimism of the 1960s, Oxfam's hopefulness in the multiparty era of the 1990s encouraged the organisation to work alongside the state more closely than at any point since the Kenyatta era. Thereafter, just as Oxfam's disillusionment with the Kenyatta government had come to the surface as the latter revealed its true nature in the later years of the 1960s, the organisation's disillusionment in the late 1990s came after its high-level engagements succumbed to the intense politicisation of development in Moi's Kenya. Continuing with the theme of

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<sup>191</sup> 'Oxfam GB, Kenya ASAL Programme Strategy', c. 2007, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Programme Peace Building, Box No. 1, File: Partners' Narratives and Financial Reports, 2005-2007.

<sup>192</sup> 'Oxfam GB in Kenya, National Change Strategy Document, 2008 – 2011', April 2008, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi, Kenya Programme Peace Building, Box No. 1, File: Partners' Narratives and Financial Reports, 2005-2007.

<sup>193</sup> Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014.

<sup>194</sup> 'Oxfam GB in Kenya, National Change Strategy Document, 2008 – 2011', April 2008, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi, Kenya Programme Peace Building, Box No. 1, File: Partners' Narratives and Financial Reports, 2005-2007.

<sup>195</sup> 'Oxfam GB, Kenya ASAL Programme Strategy', c. 2007, Oxfam Archive, Lavington, Nairobi: Kenya Programme Peace Building, Box No. 1, File: Partners' Narratives and Financial Reports, 2005-2007.

circularity, much as Moi's ruthless governance in the 1980s suppressed the appetite for direct engagement with the Kenyan state among Oxfam staff, in the late 2000s the unabashed criminality of elements of the government also discouraged Oxfam from working too closely with the Kibaki administration. Furthermore, on both occasions, an organisation founded on faith in the state as the key developmental actor lost its sense of direction and faced serious questions over its orientation: thus while Oxfam became operational during the 1980s, in the 2000s the organisation adopted an equally technocratic approach, concentrating on finding technical 'solutions' to Kenya's development problems. In each period, the focus on implementing physically and environmentally appropriate interventions – as opposed to challenging the political structures that condemned many Kenyans to poverty – disappointed many staff versed in Oxfam values that conceptualised development as about more than drilling boreholes and distributing equipment.<sup>196</sup> To complete the circle, in 2012-2014 the Kenya programme was undergoing a shift back towards a focus on influencing government, although this time utilising the devolved powers at county and constituency level under the new constitution. The complex interaction between 'values', 'pragmatism' and the political, economic, social and historical context in which the organisation works continues to define Oxfam's role, therefore, and although a rough circular pattern is discernible when taking a long-view of its interventions, the forces that forged this pattern and all of its intricacies are specific to Oxfam in Kenya. Thus it would be unwise to generalise outwards from this specific example; as argued above, broad generalisations and ahistorical assertions about NGOs are unable to fully capture the complexity of NGOs and their diverse roles in development across the globe.

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<sup>196</sup> Interview with author no. XVII, 23 October, 2014; Interview with author no. VIII, 6 November, 2014; Interview with author no. II, 7 October, 2014.

## Conclusion

### ‘THE ORCHESTRA ON THE TITANIC?’ – OXFAM IN KENYA, 1963-2002

‘What is meant by success? Reaching project milestones? Having an impact at community level? Raising awareness of a theme? All [of these]? Success is a rather grand word in my view... [My] project probably [had] little lasting impact [whereas] the impact on individuals’ lives was, I think considerable. Isn’t that what projects are really about?’

Extract from interview with author no. VI, 1 September, 2014.

‘The failure of development overall [was disappointing]... We weren’t tackling the most intransigent problems... [and] we talked a lot about reaching the poorest, but we probably didn’t.’

Extract from interview with author no. XXI, 28 April, 2014.

The question of whether Oxfam was akin to the ‘Orchestra on the Titanic’ as regards its work in Kenya elicited a variety of responses from former Oxfam staff; but most settled into one of two camps, as illustrated by the quotes above. Indeed, three decades after the Africa Committee divided over what Oxfam had achieved in Africa, the major fault line of that period – between those who celebrate the organisation’s minor triumphs and those who lament the fact that Oxfam has been unable to contribute to development more broadly – is still evident. This speaks, of course, to the unavoidable subjectivity of judgements as regards the ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of NGO development initiatives. For this reason, the foregoing has focused instead on the *role* an NGO like Oxfam fulfils in the grand scheme of Kenyan development, and has sought to analyse the mechanisms, dynamics, structures and discourses of Oxfam approaches and operations in a particular context. In doing so, it has shown that Oxfam did not adopt an inappropriate, ‘off the shelf’ solution for Kenya, but instead weighed up the shifting development context in the country and defined its role accordingly.

Moreover, at no time did Oxfam exclude politics from its analysis of poverty in Kenya. Given Oxfam’s very political history, the fact that it undertook to examine and remedy the political causes of poverty in Kenya should not, perhaps, be particularly shocking. Yet to date, where researchers have managed to pull away from studying

statistics regarding the number and cost ratios of NGO projects, they have fallen into a different type of generalisation, a generalisation that suggests that NGOs serve to depoliticise causes of poverty located in the decisions taken by national governments and Western donors. Thus authors such as James Ferguson and Arturo Escobar have been fixated on 'development paradigms' and 'power-knowledge dyads'. Through discourse-analysis they have identified NGOs as a constituent part of a Western-dominated development 'machine', whereby the discourse and instrumental effects of development interventions (both promoted by NGOs) serve to legitimise Western capitalist hegemony while simultaneously buttressing submissive 'southern' governments and their 'comprador' elites. Such studies do, of course, have utility: they have asked timely and pertinent questions about the unseen role that international organisations can play in the politics of the global south. Nonetheless, as is the nature of paradigms and overarching theories, they are somewhat static and lack the historicism necessary to fully articulate the variegated role that NGOs actually play in the development of the global south. The role of NGOs in national development and the areas of congruence and conflict between NGOs and state apparatuses have been theorised to breaking point either by extrapolating from a small sample across a short period of time (as Ferguson did for CIDA in Lesotho) or by making predictions about the expected behaviour and impact of these organisations from (among others) Hegelian, Weberian or Gramscian social theories about state-civil society interactions.

Generalising in such a fashion only takes the field so far, however, for just as neighbouring states may have vastly divergent ideological foundations and attitudes towards development and civil society, so do outwardly similar NGOs – or even the different country offices of larger NGOs such as Oxfam – have different approaches to development and diverging perceptions of the appropriate role of the state. State and civil society then impact on each other in a reflexive fashion: for, as development interventions make some form of impact on the host nation, so does the host nation impact upon the NGO and the role it adopts in development. As regards Oxfam in particular, this thesis has argued that the Field Director and the periphery could help to shape policy, both on the ground and in Oxford. As a result of its responsiveness and flexibility, the NGO could be described as 'plumbers without borders' in one nation at the same time as it appeared to be a radical and subversive political agency in a neighbouring country. To avoid the potential paralysis of continual contextualisation, though, the thesis

adopted a dynamic perspective, acknowledging that the role NGOs occupy depends for the most part on three factors: firstly, the values the NGO upholds (their mandate, understanding of development needs and perceptions of the role of the state); secondly, the necessary pragmatism of development organisations (their need to operate, financial circumstances, and relations with the host government); and thirdly, the combination of said values and pragmatism with the political, economic, social and historical context in which the NGO is active. Together, these factors define the role that an NGO adopts in each country. Importantly, this dynamic perspective does not postulate conclusions, but instead requires historical and empirical investigation; rather than 'magic bullets', 'COMPRANGOS' or any other catchy designation, NGOs are best understood as an arena within which the ideological and practical tensions regarding development are internalised, debated and resolved. Our knowledge of this process, even for one NGO, is extremely limited; the thesis contributes, therefore, to a wider endeavour to test the predominant theories of social science empirically and, above all, historically.

## OXFAM AND THE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE IN KENYA

Despite its capitalist orientation, the state loomed large in Kenyan development right across the period under examination. The challenge and purpose of independent nationhood was felt to be synonymous with the idea of national development, and this justified the concretisation of the colonial 'developmental state' apparatus alongside many other (less savoury) elements of the colonial state, including the powerful provincial administration and the ruthless suppression of dissident voices. But the appropriate role for the state in development was (and remains) an ideological and political battleground, and Oxfam believed it could have some influence on the outcome. For President Kenyatta, the issue of development was characterised as a question of morality; he preached that hard work and self-interest were the true drivers of development, economic growth and the trickle-down of the fruits of independence.<sup>1</sup> He rejected any notion of redistribution and dismissed arguments in favour of intervening to resolve the disparities of wealth and opportunity evident between Kenya's ethnic groups and social classes. Oginga Odinga, on the other hand, felt that there was little morality to be found

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<sup>1</sup> Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 63.

in watching the poor struggle to pull themselves up by the bootstraps of non-existent boots. Yet for both Kenyatta and Odinga, the morality of development was closely intertwined with issues of ethnicity and politics: the need to serve ethnic support bases rhetorically and practically in order to retain their political support influenced these national and ethnic leaders to come to very different conclusions about the appropriate role for the state in Kenyan development. Accordingly, Kenyatta's promotion of individualism matched well with Kikuyu culture, while Odinga's 'communocratic' prescriptions dovetailed with Luo philosophy. More importantly, to Kenyatta it was clear that the Kikuyu would best entrench the economic and political advantage that they had acquired during the later years of the colonial period if 'welfarism' and redistribution could be avoided after decolonisation, and if development was instead oriented towards economic growth above all else. In contrast, by the mid-1960s Odinga's support-base comprised outsiders, both politically and economically, and those who needed a 'leg-up' to benefit from independence. These diverging interpretations of national development and the role of the state helped to shatter the fragile elite and ethnic consensus on which KANU was based, and which had been thought so vital to the independence cause.

Subsequently, service provision became increasingly politicised and directed by ethnic concerns. Of course, the provision of services had always been a political issue: the conflict between Kenyatta and Odinga revealed that it was far more than a 'neutral' obligation on behalf of the state towards its citizens. But after the split at the top of Kenya's elite, the provision of services would perform a marked political function: in deciding where to locate development projects, boreholes, schools, medical facilities and other services, Kenyatta's government could reward allies and punish enemies; the state could create jobs, improve the quality of life and facilitate access to agriculture for its favourites and supporters, while at the same time casting a watchful eye over suspect populations or denying opponents any place in Kenyan development. The doctrine of 'African Socialism' was intended to conceal Kenyatta's capitalist leanings and the fact that his growth-centric development model more-than-conveniently served his political interests; but it was also an attempt to obscure the political action performed by the government through development interventions and to silence alternatives to Kenyatta's development apparatus as advocated by Odinga and others. To do so, it combined modernising rhetoric with a smattering of African 'tradition'. Yet more than that, 'African Socialism' was designed as an 'anti-politics machine' doctrine: by reducing poverty to a

technical issue, prescribing 'neutral' and 'scientific' solutions to that poverty, and condemning and silencing opponents to such interventions by labelling them as 'backward', it was an attempt to shore up the bureaucratic-executive Kenyatta state.

Ferguson has postulated that development agencies fail to incorporate a political dimension into their understanding of development and thus inevitably support and facilitate this entrenchment and expansion of state power. By prescribing and funding 'neutral' and technical solutions to poverty, Ferguson alleges, development agencies not only remove politics from the causes of poverty, but also provide cover and legitimation for the spread of the bureaucratic developmental state machine as a response to underdevelopment. In Lesotho, the development apparatus supported by external agencies was revealed to be 'a machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power which incidentally takes "poverty" as its point of entry'. The developmental interventions themselves were found to have had minimal impact on poverty: production targets were missed, living standards stagnated and popular participation was limited; however, this failure itself only justified increased state intervention, surveillance and control over areas in which the state formerly had a limited presence. In such a way, the instrumental effect of development interventions – the expansion of governance into areas formerly weakly governed – drove its constant renewal ahead of any limited evidence of development.

In an ostensibly similar manner, the state in Kenya defined a development vision – African Socialism – and used this to justify policies favourable to its political and ethnic heavyweights, to expand its control over recalcitrant populations and to expand its reach into formerly weakly governed areas (particularly in the north and east). As Ferguson might have predicted, Oxfam supported the expansion of the bureaucratic state apparatus into 'backward' areas of Kenya throughout the 1960s. Indeed, Jimmy Betts and his colleagues encouraged the Kenyan state to be active in 'modernising' Turkana and other arid regions at a time when the state was content to do the minimum required to maintain control and order. Ferguson would also have predicted that the reason for Oxfam support had nothing to do with any coercion on the part of the state; Betts and Oxfam initiated contact with the state and pestered the government to work alongside the NGO on modernising development projects. The Kenyatta state itself had little interest in coercing NGOs – they fitted well into the President's *harambee* development philosophy and were mostly left alone before the 1980s. Yet contrary to Ferguson's 'anti-

politics machine' idea, Oxfam's support and encouragement for the Kenyan state in development was not a result of the organisation *depoliticising* poverty or reducing it to a technical issue. Rather, the organisation acted as a partner to the Kenyan state because it identified with a political agenda strongly in favour of the central developmental role of the state, but – with its knowledge of the local political and developmental context – it did not trust the Kenyan regime to live up to expectations. Consequently, Oxfam intended to induce a responsible state apparatus, and incorporated this very political purpose into its projects.

### 'DEVELOPMENT? IT'S HISTORY'

Why Oxfam chose to work alongside the state in Kenya during the 1960s has much more to do with its origins and history than with any overriding 'anti-politics machine' discourse. Oxfam was formed at a time when NGOs were just beginning to stress that politics and government action (or inaction) was the root cause of suffering, both at home and abroad. But equally, this was a period when state planning for welfare and development was widely accepted as a necessity in order for change to occur on a meaningful level. In an era defined by grandiose reconstruction and development programmes (most notably the Marshall Plan) and state planning (exemplified during the Second World War and by the formation of the British welfare state in its aftermath) the assumption was that the state should have control over development policy and provide social services. At home, the promise of the NHS and the extended network of state support was that, influenced by science and technology, the state could solve problems of poverty and distress for British citizens. Abroad, the 'second colonial occupation' promised colonial citizens not only economic development but also welfare and an improved quality of life in an attempt to bind them to the nation-state (and to the imperial centre); development was about making citizenship worthwhile. Hence, those on the liberal-left, which included Oxfam and many contemporary NGOs, adopted an agenda that upbraided governments for poverty and suffering whilst accepting that remedial action, as opposed to temporary palliatives, could only come from an interventionist state. Given this background, it is unsurprising that Oxfam had an ideological bias towards

the state when it entered developing nations such as Kenya – for what was the purpose of the decolonised state if it was not to be the arbiter of national development?

Accordingly, Oxfam hoped to facilitate the expansion of the developmental state in Kenya. But its Kenya programme was more than a politically naïve attempt to support the state in its fundamental task of alleviating poverty. In fact, it aimed to encourage the Kenyan state to behave in a way that would reduce exploitation and promote equality; it aimed to make citizenship work for the whole of the Kenyan population as opposed to merely those fortunate enough to be Kikuyu or to live in Central Province. Oxfam was not, therefore, blind to the political implications in supporting the expansion of the Kenyan state as Ferguson suggests for Lesotho. In the latter case, CIDA facilitated the expansion of state power unintentionally, but inevitably, once it characterised development as a technical and apolitical issue. Nor was Oxfam *blinded by* any ideological harmony with the Kenyan state as Jennings discovered in Tanzania. There, Oxfam became convinced that it was helping to facilitate a community-led style of development when it was, in fact, supporting the expansion of an authoritarian state. In Kenya, on the other hand, Oxfam worked alongside the Kenyan state not because of ideological harmony with Kenyatta's development project itself but because it felt that the poverty it witnessed was the result of the narrow concentration of state-led development efforts on economically productive and politically important areas. Betts and his colleagues were critical of development run along such exclusivist lines and wished to act as a gadfly to the state to encourage socio-political change in the form of a more responsible state apparatus. Project case studies show that Betts and others considered the facilitation of a particular form of *etatization* as one of their primary purposes. Above all, they wished to expand the geographical horizons of the Kenyan state in the hope that it would be compelled to adopt a national structure for its development interventions.

Oxfam projects with government participation did, of course, serve to expand the state's reach into weakly governed areas as Ferguson predicted. However, although Oxfam de-politicised state expansion, it was confident that expanding the reach of the state would not result in a one-way power relationship in the manner implied by Ferguson. As Cooper has shown, history provides numerous examples wherein state-led development (whether colonial or post-colonial) encourages claims to be made on the state through a newly powerful discourse of entitlement. Citizens faced with a developmental state (whether rhetorical or real), according to Cooper, have a much

greater claim over their representatives and institutions than those marginalised by the total absence of the state. The mobilisation of development by anti-colonial nationalists during the decade before independence had revealed this to be the case in Kenya and elsewhere. Oxfam was not extending state power inadvertently or because it believed the state was neutral, therefore, but rather because it hoped that the act of expansion would place pressure on the state to *become* a more neutral development actor. Moreover, because the expansion of state power was far from an instrumental effect of Oxfam projects, it was not a permanent condition of its development work in Kenya; on the contrary, direct support for the state was a temporary intended effect encouraged by the organisation's political understanding of poverty and the role of the state in its eradication. This meant disengagement was easier when the success of such an approach was called into question in the late 1960s.

Thus while Jennings comes to a similar conclusion to Ferguson – lamenting that even where development is made political, as in Tanzania, NGOs end up reinforcing state expansion and control – this thesis shows that one can no more generalise from Oxfam's efforts in Tanzania than from Ferguson's example of development work in Lesotho. For, by the late 1960s, the idea that Oxfam could affect the development orientation of the Kenyan state no longer held much credibility within the organisation. The Kenyatta state had become increasingly authoritarian, elitist and corrupted, and it showed no signs of listening to Oxfam urgings around development in marginalised regions. Indeed, outsiders were no longer merely 'backward' and redeemable through development; they were ethnic opponents, irredeemable as a result of their tribal origins. The possibility of encouraging a more responsible developmental state through direct engagement with the government was reduced accordingly. Around the same time, the influence of conscientisation within the organisation raised questions about the appropriateness of top-down modernisation. Such an approach became increasingly unpalatable for the organisation in an ideological sense just as the practical success of the method was also called into question in Kenya. Whereas the ideological shift towards conscientisation bound Oxfam and the Tanzanian state closer together, encouraging Oxfam to interpret *Ujamaa* through the rhetorical prism created by the conscientisation discourse and concepts such as 'empowerment' and 'popular participation' (thereby reducing the technical failings in its development interventions to a secondary place), conscientisation ideology challenged everything Oxfam had achieved to date in Kenya. It emphasised,

rather than disguised, the failure of its policies there and encouraged separation from the Kenyatta state.

Although Oxfam's ideological underpinning served to encourage the organisation to regard politics and development from a single – statist – perspective, therefore, faith in the remedial power of the state did not imply unquestioning support for the Kenya government's development efforts, and Oxfam avoided becoming dominated by the state to the extent that Jennings found for Tanzania (where the ideological connection between the state and organisation as regards empowerment was particularly strong). Instead, when direct support for the state was shown to have been unsuccessful – in the sense of convincing the state to take on responsibilities for its marginalised citizens – Oxfam would pull back from its close relations with the Kenya government. After Moi (a man with close ethnic ties to 'backward' pastoralists) acceded to the presidency, there was some hope within the organisation that the state would take a more responsible, 'national', stand on development. It soon became clear, however, that the new President saw his primary task as reorienting state-led development towards the Kalenjin areas of the Rift Valley. In an era of low growth, zero sum economics would mean that the 'losers' from development were just as numerous as under Kenyatta. Moi's *Nyayo* philosophy, by emphasising continuity, also attempted to silence opposition to his politicised development apparatus. For both Presidents, development was as much about ensuring political control as it was about improving Kenyans' quality of life.

Despite the Kenyan state's steadfast refusal to adopt a more inclusive approach to development, Oxfam declined to help facilitate the collapse of the state as an institution by acting as a 'magic bullet'. Its staff understood that by accepting responsibilities for service provision and bypassing the state they would be, in effect, supporting the external agenda of privatisation masquerading as structural adjustment. Consequently, the operational response to the drought crisis in 1984 was praised for saving lives but criticised as a way of promoting development. Indeed, informed by the Kenyan experience, Oxfam refused to pick up the costs of neo-liberal restructuring, and instead set about encouraging Kenyan citizens to challenge the state to do more with its limited resources. As it had done in the 1960s, Oxfam would continue to advocate for increased state responsibility, but this time from below. The powerful rhetoric of conscientisation only partially disguises strategic continuity: Oxfam persisted in its role as a gadfly to the Kenyan state into the 1970s and 1980s, though it acted in a more indirect fashion by

'conscientising' others to call on the state to fulfil its developmental functions. Hence, while the strategic goal remained the same, Oxfam shifted its tactics to work on the demand side of development. Slowly, a rights-based framework would become the organising motif for the organisation. Seeing individuals as 'rights-bearers' and governments as 'rights-protectors' tied poverty, politics and development together in a relief-rights-development continuum, and Oxfam would attempt to give expression to the different groupings of civil society that had been 'marginalised into poverty'.

At a time when development space in Kenya was becoming increasingly politicised, such an approach was fraught with difficulty. Oxfam was seen to be challenging the state on a number of political and economic fronts: mobilising populations to counteract the control the state had over development threatened state hegemony; encouraging people to change their attitude to the dominant political-economy in the country challenged the security of the state and its elite; helping to form local organisations threatened the state's ability to insulate itself from the populace; while its very presence and its membership of an NGO sector flush with donor funds (while the state was circumnavigated) inevitably questioned state legitimacy. For these reasons, during the 1980s there were a number of occasions where Oxfam came into conflict with the Moi state. Its activities, particularly in Wajir, saw the state respond with obstruction, harassment and threats, though its attitude was somewhat schizophrenic since Oxfam brought resources into the country. Highly attuned to the politics of development in Kenya, Oxfam attempted to take advantage of government confusion and the personalised nature of Kenyan politics by camouflaging its politically questionable activities behind the more technical and 'welfarist' discourse first used during the 1984 drought in order to promote 'transformation by stealth'.

Yet, at the same time, Oxfam feared that older political logics would not disappear just because an authoritarian regime was challenged from below; staff felt that momentum for change needed to be maintained at the highest levels of government. The reintroduction of multipartyism in Kenya convinced many within the organisation that the chance of creating more enlightened state-citizen relations was upon them. The Wajir Pastoral Development Project was an innovative attempt to encourage the state and its citizens to solve problems collaboratively, and was felt by many within the organisation to be a method that could be adapted for Oxfam operations across the globe. Furthermore, while most NGOs avoided or attacked the Moi regime, Oxfam went 'back to the future' in

engaging more directly with those at the apex of the Kenyan state to encourage reform from above. But the organisation did not adopt the missionary fervour of ‘good governance’ converts, who mistakenly presumed that economic and political liberalisation would prove to be mutually reinforcing and placed impossible expectations on recalcitrant regimes.<sup>2</sup> Instead, Oxfam staff understood that they needed to continue to work ‘with the grain’ in Kenya. This did, of course, open the organisation to the politics-development nexus at the heart of a government desperate for patronage resources as incumbent elites feared for their future. Indeed, rather than serving to take some of the ethnicised patrimonialism out of development interventions, the ALRMP and a number of its higher profile local employees were sucked into the political machinations of the late Moi regime. Nonetheless, from a ‘with the grain’ perspective, there were grounds for optimism in both cases: the ALRMP helped to encourage long-overdue policy changes as regards pastoralism, while the successful election of Oxfam staff to Parliament offered greater potential for Oxfam ideas and ideals to influence government policy.

In dealing with Oxfam in Kenya, therefore, it is clear that the organisation behaved in a textbook fashion: it did not apply a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution in Kenya, but acted instead as an NGO should behave, adopting a programme to fit the needs and context in the country while keeping one eye on global moments of transition as regards the modalities and architecture of development. In particular, rather than adopting a technical view and excluding politics from its analysis, Oxfam understood the political causes of poverty and hoped to nudge the Kenyan state to become *developmental* in the ideal sense of the word. Of course, this meant the state was supported and expanded its reach, but Oxfam hoped that any element of control this gave the state would be balanced by its increased responsibilities towards citizens included for the first time in the national project and empowered to challenge the state to fulfil its functions. In fact, Oxfam constantly weighed up its support for the state as an institution against its understanding of politics in Kenya. It remained pragmatic, altering its approach to best suit the context across the period, but valorised the state as *the* permanent fixture in national development as opposed to NGOs and IFIs, which were considered at best merely temporary influences on its direction. The overriding introversion and authoritarianism of the Kenyan state challenged Oxfam perceptions, however, and

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<sup>2</sup> Their neoclassical assumption ran as follows: liberalisation of the economy creates growth, growth creates economic winners, and that these winners join forces politically to defend the liberal economy and strengthen democracy.

ensured that long-term change was unlikely. Moreover, while Oxfam may have floated like a butterfly, it stung like one also – which is to say not at all. The organisation was only a minor irritant to the Kenyan state, for a long while buttressed externally by the West, and its attempts to encourage reform in the 1990s became caught up in corruption and electoral politics.

Nevertheless, historicised in this way, development interventions take on a much messier appearance than theories of Western hegemony and the ‘anti-politics machine’ suppose. Indeed, the conclusions of this thesis raise questions regarding the relativized nature of African sovereignty. By focusing on a specific set of interventions made by an external agency and the reactions of those who represent the sovereign state, the foregoing has helped to document the interactions between the domestic and international realms that form the dynamic sovereign ‘frontier zone’.<sup>3</sup> The thesis has shown that Oxfam supported the central role of the state as regards development, but nonetheless challenged state sovereignty by leveraging its financial support on the reduction of ethnic and political favouritism as regards the distribution of development resources. At the same time, the state sought to selectively engage with Oxfam to maintain the inflow of resources while defending its sovereign right to make development contingent on ethnicity and political support. At no point did Oxfam cross a fictitious ‘sovereign line’ in a truly neo-colonial fashion, however; rather, the thesis highlights that sovereignty is a transnational zone of (somewhat asymmetrical) contestation. Of course, deconstructionalist conclusions such as these are somewhat predictable given the historian’s preference for close, textured analysis of sources that refer to discrete contexts. Yet this thesis has attempted to show how historians can perform a useful interdisciplinary function by problematising and testing overarching social theories and by moving development history away from the backward projection of contemporary theories about the form and function of development and towards a ‘collaboration between general models’ and patterns of development interventions and ‘the specific set of [unique] phenomena which actually occurred’.<sup>4</sup> Finally, and more broadly, iconoclasm as regards grand theories of development may be one solution to the dwindling momentum of the contemporary development endeavour.

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<sup>3</sup> G. Harrison, ‘Debt, Development and Intervention in Africa: The Contours of a Sovereign Frontier’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2007), pp. 189-209.

<sup>4</sup> Hobsbawm, ‘From Social History to the History of Society’, p. 29.

## WORKING 'WITH THE GRAIN' AND THE END OF 'THE BIG IDEA'

Today, international development is increasingly characterised as wasteful and inappropriate. A number of developed nations – including Canada and Australia – have subsumed their international development departments within foreign and trade ministries and are beginning to embrace 'philanthrocapitalism', a doctrine that asserts that donations should be treated as investments rather than gifts. Meanwhile, the ability of NGOs to engage with the political causes of poverty at home and abroad remains as controversial as it was in the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> Worn down by the failure of grandiose promises to End World Hunger or Make Poverty History, however, the general public in the West offers little in the way of resistance to the slow erosion of international commitment to the development effort. The oft-repeated 'success, scale, fail' cycle has proved particularly disheartening: this is the process by which an exciting new development idea – successful in one location – receives massive publicity and an influx of donor funding, expands quickly to other locations, and ultimately fails to have the same impact.<sup>6</sup> The urge to scale up is, of course, an admirable one, but it is based on a somewhat naïve hope that an approach that works in one country can be unfurled across the developing world.

Brian Levy has recently criticised the 'breath-taking combination of naiveté and amnesia' that has encouraged an approach to development based predominantly on reverse engineering from Western democracies and abstracting from small-scale successes.<sup>7</sup> Modernisation, structural adjustment and good governance have all failed in the attempt to transfer 'best practice' models to low-income countries because they have ignored the messy reality and political nature of development in each local context. Instead, argues Levy, positive changes are more likely – even in hostile environments – through minor tweaks to policies and institutions that create 'islands of effectiveness' within a 'sea of dysfunction'. These serve as platforms for cumulative gains in

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<sup>5</sup> Recently, Oxfam was hauled over the coals for its anti-austerity message in the UK. 'Oxfam: MPs shocked by "disgraceful" political campaigning', *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 June, 2014. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10888966/Oxfam-MPs-shocked-by-disgraceful-political-campaigning.html> [accessed 10 June, 2014].

<sup>6</sup> For instance, on the basis of limited evidence, Deworm the World received \$600 million from pharmaceutical companies. Randomised control trials would reveal later that the impact of deworming was not immediately apparent. See <http://www.evidenceaction.org> [accessed January 12, 2015]; D. C. Taylor-Robinson, N. Maayan, K. Soares-Weiser, S. Donegan, P. Garner, 'Deworming Drugs for Soil-Transmitted Intestinal Worms in Children: Effects on Nutritional Indicators, Haemoglobin and School Performance. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, No. 11 (2012), pp. 1-114.

<sup>7</sup> Levy, *Working with the Grain*, p. 7.

development over the longer-term.<sup>8</sup> In some cases, as Levy acknowledges, this necessitates alignment with powerful elites and an acceptance that those elites will attempt to reap personal benefits from that relationship. Though such an approach ‘comes perilously close to condoning corruption’, Levy argues from experience that the alternative in many low-income countries is stagnation and predation as resources dwindle. In the West, meanwhile, NGOs might work best by working with the grain towards closing down tax havens, writing off un-payable debts and making global institutions more representative of the ‘global south’.<sup>9</sup> NGOs are advised to eschew high-minded and unachievable promises of fundamental reform in favour of agnosticism as regards the process of development.<sup>10</sup>

For Levy, taking a flexible approach, working with the grain and integrating politics in the heart of analyses of poverty offers the best chance of successful interventions, and may well sustain the momentum of the development endeavour. This thesis has shown that such an approach is not novel: Oxfam, though undoubtedly influenced by global moments of transition – whether the headiness of the early independence era, the shift towards empowerment and identity politics or moves towards human rights – remained firmly tethered to the local context in Kenya. Although the organisation was bound into a single strategic outlook based on its faith in the state, it worked ‘with the grain’ and adapted its tactical approach to local circumstances, seeking schemes that were a ‘good fit’ for Kenya and heightened the potential for incremental reforms.<sup>11</sup> A broader endeavour to historicise development, to deconstruct its grand theories and to improve our knowledge of the precise contours of past development interventions may thus help to challenge the notion that there is one blanket ‘solution’ to poverty, thereby countering the understandable frustration at the inability of development organisations to find it

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<sup>8</sup> Levy, *Working with the Grain*, p. 210.

<sup>9</sup> Although ‘developed’ nations donate around £86 billion per year to developing nations today, debt servicing requires developing nations to repay around £400 billion to rich nations each year, while tax evasion and illicit financial activity – including trade misinvoicing – meant the developing world lost a record £640 billion in 2012, and £4.2 trillion between 2003 and 2012. For sub-Saharan Africa, such illicit outflows averaged around 5.5 per cent of GDP, and this calculation of ‘reverse aid’ discounts the hidden wealth transfers that occur when developing countries compete for global investment by driving local wages down. Petras and Veltmeyer, ‘Age of Reverse Aid’, pp. 281-293; ‘OECD Aid Statistics’, available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/> [accessed 8 April, 2015]; ‘World Bank International Debt Statistics’, available at <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/international-debt-statistics> [accessed 8 April, 2015]; Global Financial Integrity, ‘Illicit Financial Flows From Developing Countries: 2003-2012’, available at <http://www.gfintegrity.org/report/2014-global-report-illicit-financial-flows-from-developing-countries-2003-2012/> [accessed 8 April, 2015].

<sup>10</sup> Levy, *Working with the Grain*, p. 197.

<sup>11</sup> Levy, *Working with the Grain*, pp. 135-203.

after more than six decades of trying. In such a way, it is quite possible that the future of development depends on an improved understanding of its past.

## List of Abbreviations

ALIN	Arid Lands Information Network
ALRMP	Arid Lands Resource Management Project
AMRF	American Medical and Research Foundation
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
CARE	Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere
CDES	Christian Development Education Service
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DC	District Commissioner
DDC	District Development Committee
DELTA	Development Education and Leadership Teams in Action
DfID	Department for International Development
DFRD	District Focus for Rural Development
DPA	District Pastoral Association
DPSC	District Pastoral Steering Committee
EACC	Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission
EARPP	East Africa Regional Pastoral Programme
EDRP	Emergency Drought Recovery Programme
EEC	European Economic Community
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FFHC	Freedom From Hunger Campaign
FTCs	Farmer Training Centres
GEMA	Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association
GOK	Government of Kenya
GTZ	<i>Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i> or German Agency for Technical Cooperation
IAD	Internal Audit Department
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INT	World Bank Group Vice Presidency for Integrity
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union

KANU	Kenya African National Union
KAU	Kenya African Union
KCA	Kikuyu Central Association
KFFHC	Kenya Freedom From Hunger Committee
KLA	Kenya Land Alliance
KNA	Kenya National Archives
KNCSS	Kenya National Council of Social Services
KPF	Kenya Pastoral Forum/Kenya Patriotic Front
KPU	Kenya People's Union
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
NCCK	National Council of Churches Kenya
NFD	Northern Frontier District
NPA	New Policy Agenda
NPEP	National Poverty Eradication Plan
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance/Overseas Development Administration
ODM	Overseas Development Ministry
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OxA	Oxfam Archives
PAs	Pastoral Associations
PC	Provincial Commissioner
PSC	Pastoral Steering Committee
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WPDC	Wajir Peace and Development Committee
WPDP	Wajir Pastoral Development Project
WVG	Wajir Volunteer Group

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*County Council Meru, ACC*

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*Department of Social Services Kajiado, JK & JT*

*Department of Social Services Machakos, KC*

*District Agriculture Office Garissa, RF/3*

*District Agriculture Office Isiolo, ACL*

*District Agriculture Office Kiambu, MG*

*District Agriculture Office Kisii, DJ*

*District Agriculture Office Kitui, MW*

*District Agriculture Office Machakos, DAO/MACHAKOS & KD*

*District Agriculture Office Meru, DAO/MERU*

*District Commissioner Garissa, DC/GRS & RE*

*District Commissioner Isiolo, ACM & DC/ISO*

*District Commissioner Kajiado, DC/KAJ & JD*

*District Commissioner Kapsabet, DC/KAPT*

*District Commissioner Kisumu, HT*

*District Commissioner Kitui, DC/KTI & MV*

*District Commissioner Lamu, CE & DC/LAMU*

*District Commissioner Meru, DC/MERU*

*District Commissioner Nakuru, DC/NKI*

*District Commissioner Wajir, DC/WAJIR & SA*

*District Commissioner's Office Kiambu, MA*

*District Commissioner's Office Lodwar, DC/LDR & DC/LDW*

*District Commissioner's Office Meru, AAU*

*District Co-operative Office Meru, AAW*

*District Culture Office Kitui, AAS*

*District Social Services Office Meru, ACB*

*District Trade Office Isiolo, ACJ*

*District Water Office Isiolo, ACH*

*General Files relating to Agriculture, AGR & AN*

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*Ministry of Co-operative Development, TR & CSS*

*Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, AE*

*Ministry of Health, BY & MOH*

*Ministry of Local Government, JA*

*Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, KP*

*Ministry of Water Development, RP*

*Municipal Council Mombasa, AS*

*National Youth Service Headquarters, ARK*

*Office of the President, KA*

*Provincial Agriculture Office Garissa, PS*

*Provincial Commissioner Coast Province, CA & CO*

*Provincial Commissioner Eastern Province, BB & PC/EST*

*Provincial Commissioner North Eastern Province, PC/GRSSA*

*Provincial Commissioner Nyanza Province, PC/NZA*

*Provincial Commissioner's Office Nairobi, JW*

*Provincial Commissioner's Office Nakuru, PC/NKU*

*Provincial Director of Agriculture Embu, PDA/EBU*

*Provincial Planning Office Embu, AAG*

*Provincial Veterinary Office Coast Province, CL*

*Provincial Water Office Garissa, RB*

*Vice President's Office and Ministry of Planning and National Development, ABM*

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