

OUR CHILDREN LIVE WITH ANIMALS, DRINK THEIR MILK AND EAT THEIR MEAT: THEY ARE HEALTHY

The voices of pastoralist women in a One Health project



Photo: courtesy by Alessandro Demarchi (TriM)

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ONE HEALTH: Multidisciplinary approach to promote the health and resilience of pastoralists' communities in Northern Kenya

Locality: Central area of North Horr sub-County, Marsabit County

Technical brief: Education field mission of October-November 2018

by Gabriella Comberti and Talaso Shamo

ONE HEALTH: HEALTH TO PEOPLE – HEALTH TO ANIMALS – HEALTH TO ENVIRONMENTS

FIELD MISSION TECHNICAL BRIEF: ONE HEALTH AND PASTORALIST WOMEN

By the authors: This brief draws from the daily field-notes¹ derived from a collective exercise of discussion, sharing and capacity building in North Horr. Acknowledgments are due to (in alphabetical order): Guyo Hama, Kame Wato Kofo, Abdikadir Guto Kurewa, Abdirizak Mohammed, Alberto Salza, Isako Sori, assisted by the driver Boru. We acknowledge, for this brief, the contribution by Alberto Salza about anthropology and human ecology issues. All imprecisions and mistakes are to be attributed to the authors, who thank all women inside the project area for their responsiveness, patience and accuracy in providing information.

Project title: “ONE HEALTH: Multidisciplinary approach to promote the health and resilience of pastoralists’ communities in Northern Kenya”

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¹ A day-by-day document titled “North Horr Field Notes AET” is available c/o the Kenya Desk Office of CCM: it contains all the fine details and considerations gathered and elaborated during the Anthropology-Ecology and Education field mission of October-November 2018.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gender role reversal is a Gabra foundation myth: then a woman had power over men, while nowadays the most important elders (*d'abela*) don their gowns like women. For the pastoralists in the One Health project area (mainly Gabra) women are at the epicentre of aggregation and dispersal. Pastoralist men may diminish women, yet they consider them responsible for the basic dilemma of their existence: the ambivalence of a nomadic life, where women have the asymmetrical role of producers of producers (see *INTRODUCTION*).

The pastoral semi-arid lands, like the OH project area (PA), request a strict management of resources, women included. For pastoralists, girls are a blessing because they divert to the bride's family some livestock of the bridegroom's, becoming a capital-redistribution mechanism; besides, by such a dowry, livestock's and clans' genic pool is shuffled. This influences the health status of both people and animals; furthermore it prevents overgrazing due to livestock accumulation over one territory only.

An OH project should deal with gender problems because the imbalance in expended energy by men vs. women may influence the health of people, animals and environments (*Chapter 1*). Specific health-info and training packages should be delivered during outreaches to women and children to form household units who may detect problems from their very insurgence, above all about the environment. The fact that women are less mobile than men makes them good agents for management of local environmental resources, if gender biases about empowerment be bypassed by education (par. 1.2 – *GUIDELINES*).

Regarding women, the demography of the PA is complex. According to the 2009 census, the ratio M/F of the North Horr town is 1.46, males exceeding women by far (par. 2.1). The OH Education volunteer, seeing the impossibility to follow school activities because of ongoing exams, diverted her attention to the gender problem in the field, acquiring a database in which insert the pastoralist women's point of view about health. Pastoral women are difficult to interview, because of restrictions by both project personnel (unbalanced in gender) and male pastoralists (biased in gender), but a Gabra married woman is the 'Queen of the House': her hut (*mana*) is her prized possession – her very identity. Gabra women are an example of a situation where the fluidity of males is complementary to the agglutination of women in semi-settled camps, where the biological function of reproduction is extended to the social activities of nutrition and protection, in the process of rearing and educating children (par. 2.2).

Notwithstanding the project used feminine metaphors to explain the One Health paradigm (hearth, braids, camel cords), a pathway to Gabra women's health is still to be cleared. Because of men's power over women, gender biases lead to women's death when health practices and decisions are involved (par. 3.1).

The Gabra reluctance to talk about diseases and the topics about One Health have been discussed in the Anthropology-Ecology report, to which the authors of this brief participated.² In addition to that, we gathered women's voices about the health of people (with a window on children, delivery and weaning, in par. 3.2.1), livestock and environment, with particular reference to climate change (*Chapter 3* and par. 3.4) and a special focus on water management; there it emerged a diffused non recognition of the relationship of water with disease (par. 3.4.1). Animal health, being all livestock uniquely a men's property, is of little concern for Gabra women, although they recognise that it is better to provide medicines for animals instead of curing people (par. 3.3).

Considering our data, without a leap in scientific knowledge women inside the PA appear to be cut off decision making still. Redressing this situation is outside the scope of the OH project, but women are necessary to divert part of the human and economic resources from an only-men-and-livestock attitude, with all-male committees that deal with water-control and schedules, firewood cutting, petty business. All these activities (and many more) can be successfully tackled better by women than men (or together, which is the best solution); this is valid from water distribution to settlement pollution, from firewood controlled marketing to nutrition quality, if not quantity (par. 3.5 – *GUIDELINES*). The One Health project should dedicate a special focus on women, and not only in the domain of delivery and children rearing.

Gabriella Comberti, CCM volunteer, and Talaso Shamo, field interpreter/assistant

²Salza A (ed.), *Don't Ask, Don't Tell. One-Health Seeking Behaviours among Pastoralists in a Semi-arid Land*, Technical report, CCM, Turin 2019.

INTRODUCTION

Gabra men (*d'ira*) say that women (*nad'eni*) are 'half'; they say women are 'children' (*intala*). They exclude women from political and ritual activities. They denigrate feminine things. Yet they regard their most prestigious men, the *d'abela* ritual agents, as women: with due time, a Gabra camel herder becomes an elder with a feminine identity.³ For instance, the *d'abela* traditionally wear a white sheet at their waists, that is fixed on the left side, like a woman's dress. Even the powerful hat of the elders (*duubo*)⁴ must have its seam positioned on the left, the women's side. That is why the *d'abela* are the only men to smear their left shoulder with blood during ceremonies.

Gender role reversal is central in the Gabra foundation myth, according to a folktale:

Once upon a time, Banoye was mother of all people. She presided over meetings. She was clever and wise. Her word was law. But she began to make unreasonable demands. First, Banoye told people to move camp. When they began to load their camels, she came running and cut the ropes, making the loads fall to the ground. "I thought I told you not to move camp!", she said. Then she commanded people to gather the fallen loads, put them on again and prepare to move. Everybody was confused.

Then Banoye commanded to take all camels out for grazing. But when they drove the animals to pasture, she told to bring them back. When they returned, she commanded to go, and so on. The people started to complain among themselves.

One day, Banoye ordered to make her a special pair of leather sandals, with hair on both sides. People had no idea where to find such hide, because skin has hair on one side only. Banoye also demanded a bag full of fleas. Now everybody was in panic: these were impossibilities. To reach a solution, they consulted some prophets (*raga*), but not even they came to an answer. Then arrived a boy, an orphan, who enquired about the matter. The elders tended to ignore him, but eventually explained their problems.

The boy said: "Getting a bag of fleas is simple: take the dung of a donkey and put it in a bag; then tie the bag above the hearth in the hut. By morning it will be full of fleas. As for the sandals, that is also easy: cut off a donkey's ears, both sides of which have hair, and make sandals out of those".

The elders agreed and did so, but Banoye did not stop making absurd demands. So the elders went back to the boy, asking for advice about stopping such a vexing mother for good. The orphan told them to go to the meeting shade-tree, a *d'adacha* [*Acacia tortilis*]. "There you dig a deep hole", he said. "Over it, place a stiff cowhide, and cover it with grass. Then, put Banoye's stool over the trap, and call her to a meeting".

This they did, and when Banoye sat, she fell into the deep hole. As she fell, Banoye shouted to all women: "When your husband calls you, do not respond the first time, but tell him you did not hear. And when you go to pee, do it next to the hut, do not go far from the hut!".

As a landscape feature, the hole remains to this day at Liban, in Ethiopia, and is called *Qile Ako Banoye*, 'The Deep Hole of Grandmother Banoye'.⁵

The story is laden with polysemic meanings. We can start with the symbolic reversal of gender (not sex) characteristics: once-powerful women are made powerless and low (inside a hole, with a double allusion to gynaecology and pit latrines), while helpless and incompetent men have to call an orphan (a person without a mother and a father, a paradox in the strict patriarchal social set of bonds, but free from the power of women) for advice (to stupefied elders) and creative solutions. The story places women at the centre of the social problem of aggregation and dispersal (the 'fusion and fission model' of pastoralists)⁶, of making and moving camps, of in-and-off livestock movements. Women embody the collective ambivalence for nomadic life, where intense clan bonds fight against compulsory fragmentation, due to the erraticism of rain and pasture. Notwithstanding the fact that, in actions, Gabra men diminish all women, yet, in songs and stories, they consider women responsible for the basic dilemma of their existence.

³ Wood JC, *When Men are Women: Manhood Among the Gabra Nomads Of East Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1999; p. 5.

⁴ See Comberti G, "Sijui Kuchora, I do not know how to draw". *Image perception of One Health in schools and health facilities in the sub-County of North Horr*, Technical report, CCM, Turin 2019; p. 4.

⁵ *Ibidem*; pp. 6-7, adapted.

⁶ See Salza A (ed.), *op. cit.*; par. 2.4.

The advice from Banoye to all Gabra women binds them to stay as near as possible to their new 'realm': the household, with a single defence from their husbands: pretending not to hear their orders. Nowadays Gabra say: "*Wara jecum nad'eni*", 'home means woman'. Considering that "Never leave the disaster zone" is a survival imperative, because it enhances visibility and rescue chances,⁷ the Banoye story tells Gabra women that they are not supposed to go far from their huts, otherwise they would definitely fall under the power of men, who will order them to housewife chores only. In fact, from interviews and focus group discussions conducted by researchers in Gabraland, the respondents mentioned their role as women: "Reproductive roles and taking care of children, washing and cleaning, e.g. clothes, hut floors, etc.; fetching water and firewood; also helping in caring for livestock, construction of huts, cooking for the family and so on".⁸ From these findings, women's roles among pastoral communities have a negative influence on women's empowerment. Women around North Horr have a lot of work to carry out within a household and may not have time to engage in any economic activity that can empower them.

Not that pastoralist women have low impacts on the economy. Even if women are not allowed to perform some of the status roles within the community, for example the milking of camels,⁹ they are in charge of livestock rearing. After that, though, they lose control over livestock and livestock products for sale (the husband keeps the money after sales), even if all respondents declared to have access to milk and meat for their own and their children's needs.

The unbalanced economy is highlighted by the fact that women are not allowed to own property in the community, or inherit property either from their husbands or fathers. During initiation, boys are given some property like animals but girls are not given any.¹⁰ Women are also not allowed to go out for long hours especially by themselves; furthermore, they are not allowed to attend rituals like the sacrifice offering (*sorio*), which is a communal prayer.¹¹

In North Horr (October 31), Talaso ('Tuesday'),¹² co-author of this brief and a 21-year-old literate woman, said:

Girls and women are excluded from ceremonies; for instance, during the *sorio*, elders, men and boys are blessed by smearing the blood of a sheep on their forehead, but never a girl. No songs are dedicated to a newly born girl, while with a boy celebrations might last up to four days. When I asked my dad the reason of this gender negative difference, he answered: "You girl shall have a time of celebration and special ceremonies during your wedding day, and only then".

Talaso is not married. In the Gabra perspective, she is not a woman, yet.

⁷ Maolucci E and Salza A, *Surviving. Istruzioni di sopravvivenza individuale e di gruppo* (2nd ed.), Hoepli, Milano 2018; p. 42.

⁸ Yampoi PN, "Factors influencing women empowerment among pastoral communities: a case of Gabra community of Marsabit County, Kenya", Masters in Project Planning and Management of the University of Nairobi, Kenya; 2014; p. 39; available at <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ab53/4722a9811893d755e26e7ff7fc5528b3f968.pdf>; lastly visited on February 2019.

⁹ The Middle East, the Sahara-Sahel belt and the Horn of Africa support a high population of dromedaries (*Camelus dromedarius*); they have one hump while, in Central Asia, proper camels (*Camelus bactrianus*) have two. About Africa, notwithstanding the difference, the use of the English word 'camel' is prevalent, even in scientific literature.

¹⁰ Yampoi PN, *op. cit.*; pp. 59-63.

¹¹ Ceremony in which animals are sacrificed and their blood is smeared on all camels and male members of the household, that must be present together with the family head and his first son, compulsorily. The *sorio* happens at least 3 times a year, but many circumstances may elicit it, from rites of passage to rain or peace pleas; see Tablino P, *The Gabra. Camel Nomads of Northern Kenya*; Paulines Pub. Africa, Limuru 1999; Appendix 1g; pp. 328-330; and Salza A (ed.), *Don't Ask, Don't Tell. One-Health Seeking Behaviours among Pastoralists in a Semi-arid Land*, Technical report, CCM, Turin 2019; par. 2.3.

¹² The Gabra give new-born babies the name of particular events at birth, of physical characteristics or simply the name of the day; the second name is the patronym. For details and a list of translated names, see Tablino P, *op. cit.*, Appendix 1g; pp. 366-375.

Chapter 1 – F GENDER

1.1 – VALUEING A BRIDE, EVALUATING A WOMAN

The pastoral environment in arid and semi-arid lands requests a strict management of resources, women included. In opposition to agriculturalists who sometimes kill the new-born females to skip the economic impossibility to provide a dowry, for pastoralists girls are a blessing. As reported by many male informants in the PA around North Horr: “To marry, you need at least three camels – two males and one female – that must be given to the bride’s father, who cannot be of the same clan as yours. The bride-wealth is compulsory: if you do not manage to fulfil the payment, the coming children would belong to the clan of the mother, interrupting your genealogy”.

Demography is the best indicator for any development project: if it is successful, bio-social conditions among the receivers should improve, and thereafter the population, in quantity and quality. This is not a specificity of the pastoralists’ way of life, though. Like in any other Social-Ecological System (SES),¹³ throughout the PA around North Horr demography is implicitly connected to gender problems and inequalities. Economically speaking, in the PA-system women have an asymmetrical role: besides assisting men in livestock production (the pastoralists’ assets), they are producers of producers.¹⁴ This means that they are not appreciated by their economic yield or capacity of labour, but for their procreative power. Their energy investment – both in pregnancy and delivery (biology domain) and in child rearing plus husband managing (culture domain) – is not reciprocal nor balanced if compared to men’s involvement in physical stresses.

That is the core reason why an OH project should deal with gender problems: the imbalance in expended energy by men or women may influence the health of people, animals and environments. There is no need to emphasise the role of women in tending sick people throughout the world; besides that, pastoralist women like the Gabra deal with very young animals, keeping them alive and healthy near their settlements, tending them in specific pens (often made out of stones to protect lambs from the scorching sun and from dying out of heat and thirst); that way – from the beginning of life onwards – they directly help increase the nomadic herds (entrusted to men), a must in the pastoral economy; as a third asset, Gabra women deal with trees (firewood and fodder leaves) and herbs (also for curative purposes) more than men. They are collectively tending the environment.¹⁵

In pastoral societies, women traditionally represent a capital-redistribution mechanism. This is because the ‘bride-price’ (a misleading and antiquate anthropological term for ‘dowry’, that must be substituted by ‘bride-wealth’) is to be paid by the groom’s family, while lineage and hereditary axis remain patrilineal. Being valid among the Gabra some exogamic rules (extra-clan marriages, even if not strict), a marrying girl moves in the environment a part of the male patrimony of the groom’s family, because the bride-wealth is mainly constituted in livestock. This economic asset goes to the bride’s family, where the livestock genic pool is shuffled and redistributed, in symmetry with the clan’s pool of the two families. An eugenic practice like this influences the health status of both people and animals: our Western soft conscience might be distraught by genic-based strategies, but pastoralists know what they are doing in arid lands. Indeed, their complex operation of a wedding additionally prevents the risk of overgrazing in a determined area, that would occur if the livestock be accumulated by inverted dowry (female to male) on a small territory by one male owner and his male descendants; more so if we consider the possibility of polygamy granted to the Gabra by the rare *masaanu* (co-wives) practice.¹⁶

¹³ A Social-Ecological System (SES), is a bio-geo-physical unit plus its associated social actors and institutions.

¹⁴ Meillassoux C, “Essai d’interprétation du phénomène économique dans les sociétés traditionnelles d’auto-subsistance”, *Cahiers d’Études Africaines*, No. 4, Paris 1960; Italian transl. in Palmieri P (a cura di), *L’economia della savana*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1975; p. 41.

¹⁵ Besides what gathered in the field in 2018, this information derives from a decennial experience of Gabriella Comberti and Alberto Salza (Anthropology-Ecology expert of the One Health mission in 2018) with the pastoralist groups around lake Turkana, at less than 90 km from North Horr; the authors thank Salza for providing the anthropologic framework and information for this brief.

¹⁶ Tablino P, op. cit.; pp. 97 and 316.

The fact that a woman is not fully married – and her children are to be considered illegitimate – until her husband’s family pays dowry to the last animal, makes Gabra women the motor to a continuous cultural shuffling and rearrangement, because the bride takes values and customs (‘colours’ among the neighbouring Turkana)¹⁷ of her groom’s clan. In many pastoral societies of eastern Africa, as soon as the bride gets to her husband’s hut, she gives out all her ornaments (identity signs), sits on a skin with the colours of her new family, and gets dressed in her new identity. She ‘changes skin’ – as we might say remembering our pastoral past – by means of a multidimensional change of status and lineage.¹⁸ Understanding this, we can highlight the fragility of the male assumption of ‘genetic patrilineage’, a fake concept that intends to obscure the genetic input from women. Furthermore, the bride-wealth is a weapon of control by elders (owners of livestock) to youth (waiting to marry); this separates the age at marriage, with men a generation older than women. In the past, the fact used to be economically and genetically sound (pastoralists are imbued with genetics), but nowadays it is socially explosive.¹⁹ As the Maasai, savanna pastoralists, say: “I am not so foolish as to mix marriages”.²⁰

Following this systemic gender scheme, pastoral men tend to be involved in the quantity of life (number of animals or wives, levels of security and safety, distance, age-set obligations, money), while women are in charge of the quality of life. First of all come children-rearing and education (traditional and formal), to eventually involving all family inter-clan relations, like visiting relatives or marriage matchmaking. Women provide their households with water (distant errands), energy (firewood-gathering) and health (medical plants and ethno-medicine). The hut building is shared with men who provide the poles, but the day-by-day hut erection is fully in the hands of women: at the end, a hut is covered with faded cloths that were women’s dresses, and this qualitatively controls the variations and extremes of climate.

Simplifying, we may say that the traditional knowledge of men tends to maintaining the present by the knowledge of the past (some elders are considered meteo-stations because of their memory of climatic events), while women are totally concentrated on getting a better present, in order to guarantee the future of their children, a form of insurance for women too. Around North Horr, women want to know what the tomorrow brings and how the climate is going to be, because it is in that future environment that their children shall be operative. Among pastoralists, women are positive towards change: procreation is a creative, progressive and augmentative process. When we discussed about the Sun/Moon year of the Gabra at Hori Guda (October 31), the focus group was composed only by men, and they had a somewhat blurred idea of the traditional calendar system. A woman cut us short: “Modern, educated people do not use this time-system any more”, she said.

Male pastoralists have a fixed target: accumulating livestock to get more wives and children, augmenting their genic diffusion. In the same context, women have mobile strategies and tactics, because they intend (maybe unconsciously) to guarantee a decent life to themselves and their children by behaviour flexibility and environmental adaptability. Women are the managers of the present and the future, by means of change, adaptation and demography: evolution.

1.2 – GUIDELINES

As it was highlighted by the Anthropology-Ecology mission, the One Health project is unbalanced in two domains: environment and women.²¹ Traditionally, women are in charge of some very delicate chores inside the environment, e.g., household water-procurement and firewood gathering. Their children, even if under school age, help them; girls more than boys, but both are fully involved in environment-managing while tending the shoat herds left near the olla for sustainment, a type of livestock more prone to overgrazing when bound to a limited pasture area, like it happens around the semi-permanent or permanent settlements where women reside. Therefore, we suggest the OH project to enhance the ecologic scientific knowledge in women and children.

¹⁷ Barrett AJ, *Turkana Iconography. Desert Nomads and their Symbols*, Kijabe Printing Press, Kijabe 1998; p. 18.

¹⁸ Salza A, “Basta con il ‘C’era una volta””, *Tuttoscienze - La Stampa*, No 945, October 11, Turin 2000; p. 4.

¹⁹ Salza A, *Atlante delle Popolazioni Umane*, UTET, Torino 1997; p. 212.

²⁰ Sankan SS, *The Maasai*, East African Literature Bureau, Nairobi 1971; p. 90.

²¹ Salza A (ed.), *op. cit.*; par. 4.4.1.

Apart from school programme assistance in the PA,²² specific environment-health informative and training packages with field exercises should be delivered to women and children in their camps, the same way we sustain animal and human health outreach activities that dispense medicines and health-related information. Following these activities, it should be advisable to form household units (women and children, plus very old men) who specifically help the OH project management in detecting, understanding and redressing environment problems from their very insurgence. The fact that women are less mobile than men makes them good agents for control and management of local environmental resources.

As far as economics is concerned, around North Horr women's independence is going to be built around associative initiatives that might generate income like the VICOBA (Village Community Banks) or the women's registered groups that deal with 'tourism & lodging'. For instance, we cite some field notes:

At North Horr (October 30): "Talaso identifies some women's groups. She gets in touch with one of the participants to *Chalbi Young*, a registered group (with constitution, treasurer, chairperson etc.); they are just starting their activity, which in future shall deal with a lodging to provide accommodation with water (a well) and housing (they have a plot already). They are contributing 100 Ksh (one €) per person per month in order to start their business. They have already called VSF-G for financial support. All of them are married and with children: even Talaso's mother is among them.

Women and their children might become good eco-tourism guides, if properly trained, or excellent entrepreneurs in trade or handicraft, if provided with funds. The OH project management must be aware, though, of the gender biases in the pastoral culture (and not only, as it happens in Kenya like elsewhere). Advocacy and protection, so dear to humanitarian aid – above all when dealing with women – sometimes interfere with the factual independence of the 'victims'. For instance, VICOBA activities target mainly women in settled centres: this may alienate power from nomadic men who, in the long run, shall take over the money anyway (converting it in booze or goods, it makes no difference to their spouses), because of their progressive sedentarisation in towns to check women's business and profit. A similar case happened among the western Turkana, a neighbouring pastoral community; women were helped by AMREF to form a cooperative, in order to better sell on the market the quantity of milk their husbands allocated them for the purpose of health and education expenses for their children; when the business became profitable, men took over the cooperative – as by power customs – and the women remained without either the milk and the money. In a tactical paradox, a Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)²³ should be obtained from men, in order to have a chance to properly inform and organise women. If humanitarian advocacy pushes them too far and too fast, without proper progression to independence, pastoralist women may become collateral victims, at the end.

This leads us to these women's empowerment. The issue is not explicit among the OH project's objectives, but there are few doubts that the women's condition around North Horr is going to be rapidly changing in the near future, with vast influences on the health of people (e.g., better child nutrition and enhanced health facility referral), livestock (e.g., improved shoats' quality and quantity in the market) and environment (e.g., settlement hygiene, better management of resources and enhancement of early-warning systems). Most of anything, education shall change PA's women, as reported by Pingua Nancy Yiampoi:

At confidence level of 95% and confidence interval of 10%, this study concludes that education was ranked first to have the highest influence on women empowerment among [Gabra] pastoral communities. The second one is property ownership, followed by property access and then traditional practices. Gender roles were found to have the least influence on women empowerment among pastoral communities, as these roles have remained more or less the same even among empowered pastoral women.²⁴

²² See Comberti G, *op. cit.*, where the teaching of science in the North Horr area is detailed by the OH project Education expert.

²³ To implement a FPIC activity, see among others: AA VV, *Free Prior and Informed Consent. An indigenous peoples' right and a good practice for local communities. Manual for project practitioners*, FAO, Rome 2016; available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6190e.pdf>; last retrieval in March 2019.

²⁴ Yampoi PN, *op. cit.*; p. 64.

The influence of formal education on women empowerment was tested in North Horr by the above cited study. The field data may give us also an idea of the discrepancy in the M/F ratio in school attendance by girls in the area. The 72% of respondents had not achieved any formal education; the 26% had achieved primary education as their highest level; only the 2% of women that achieved secondary education, and only they, were aware of gender rights, owned and controlled some properties and were involved in decision making as well. Formal education was found to be the most influential objective and the main step that is necessary towards women empowerment among Gabra pastoral communities.

As a tool for the OH project personnel (where gender unbalance in ratio and positions must be redressed) we borrow from the above mentioned study – titled Factors Influencing Women Empowerment Among Pastoral Communities: a Case of Gabra Community of Marsabit County in Kenya – a ‘key informant interview guide’:²⁵

1. Name the different type of gender roles within Gabra community.
2. How do women view their roles? Empowering or discriminating?
3. How is the concept of women empowerment viewed within this community?
4. Name traditional practices that empower women. How does it empower women?
5. Name traditional practices that tend to discriminate women in this community.
6. How do women overcome barriers associated with traditional practices?
7. Are women involved in decision making at household and community level?
8. Do women have access to, or own any properties within a household?
9. Do women face any challenges in property acquisition, access or control?
10. In your own words, do you think property access or ownership by women has any influence on their empowerment?
11. How is the school enrolment of girls compared to that of boys, both at primary and post primary education level?
12. How are the lives of educated women different from the illiterate ones?
13. How does formal education contribute to women empowerment?

The authors are afraid that this battery of questions may be of difficult understanding to non-educated women inside the PA, but each question may be transformed in an oral game (citing or eliciting riddles, proverbs, songs) with pre-prepared explanations for each theme. Submit the elaborated questions to respondents (all women you meet during the OH project activities, aside from men as much as possible) and obtain their informed consent. Only then pastoralist women might feel free to answer questions about empowerment. While processing data, though, remember the Borana proverb: Garrin wanjetu, yaadi taka, firin gargar, “Even people who share the same opinions have different individual thoughts”.



Photo 1: The authors prepare their field schedule in North Horr (courtesy by Demarchi)

²⁵ Yampoi PN, *op. cit.*; Appendix 4; p. 80.

Chapter 2 – SIDE MISSION TO WOMEN

2.1 – QUEENS OF THE HOUSEHOLD

The authors are fully aware that, in the context of pastoralism, it makes little sense to deal with women outside the fully comprehensive unit of the combined, cooperative and complementary domain that is the household. Therefore, the following brief intends only to give a voice to one of the elements of the household that is more difficult to reach, because of restrictions by both project personnel (unbalanced in gender) and male pastoralists (biased in gender). This without separating women from the household unit. Regarding women, the demography of the PA is complex. According to the 2009 census data, the North Horr sub-County has an average density of 1.1 inhabitants/km². Within the project area, the demography of the selected locations (see table 1) is surprising: males account for 55% and females for 45% of the total population. The sex ratio of the Marsabit district population is 1.2, but it is even slightly higher (1.46) for the North Horr town.²⁶ Males exceed women by far throughout all locations, with high percentages in the M/F ratio in Gas/Gallas and Eel Hadi.

LOCATION	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
North Horr	6597	5560	12157
Kalacha	4181	3783	7964
Dukana	4152	3845	7997
Gas/Gallas	3139	1921	5060
Balesa	1922	1874	3796
Eel Hadi	1549	936	2485
Malabot	942	815	1757
TOTAL	22482	18734	41216

Table 1: Demography of OH project main localities in North Horr sub-County (source: Kenya National Census 2009)²⁷

At the moment, we have no statistics on the differential rate of M/F births (absolute datum) versus M/F deaths caused by pastoral accidents versus deliverance problems (relative datum). For the overall situation of numeric unbalance, we suggest to consider also the gender biases by Gabra pastoralists in exposing women to 'open' non-Gabra activities like a focus group or census questionnaires, but all these demographic discrepancies must be properly investigated. In terms of age brackets, according to a chart seen on October in the Kalacha Hospital,²⁸ the highest number of persons fall under 15 years of age category, while the lowest number regards the under-1-year category. Based on these demographic data (to be validated and continuously updated), the total number of households can be estimated at more than 15,000, with a range from 5 to 6 people per household.

In a potentially polygynic society like the Gabra, the above described ratio would see many males without a spouse, an almost impossibility for pastoralists who count on genic perpetuation of livestock and clan members as *the* status symbol (mobile capital). At the other extreme, Gabra women are the 'Queens of the House' (static possession): her house (*mana*) is a Gabra married woman's prized asset – her very identity – to the point that the sentence summing up the complex marriage rituals is *mana fuud'a*, 'taking a house'.²⁹ Men and women cooperate in fetching the necessary materials for a hut, but the actual construction, care, cleaning and repair of the house are exclusive responsibilities of the wife, who takes them as an honour to her femininity. The household is the indivisible, compounded unit of husband, wife (or wives, each with a

²⁶ Hazard B, Adongo C, Wario A, Ledant M, *Comprehensive study of pastoral livelihoods, WASH and natural resource management in Northern Marsabit*, Research Report IFRA; Nairobi 2012; p. 13; available in <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01790835>; lastly retrieved in March 2019.

²⁷ Reported by Abdikadir Guto Kurewa (2018), in Salza A (ed.) (2019), *op. cit.*; par. 3.3; about demography around North Horr, see also Hazard B *et al.* (2012); pp. 12-17.

²⁸ Salza A (ed.) (2019), *op. cit.*; par. 4.2.2.

²⁹ Tablino P, *op. cit.*; pp. 313-314.

hut of her own to administer) and children, plus some disabled/old relatives. This socio-psychologic unit is based on sharing, reciprocity, compatibility and complementarity, like any other society in the world. Some anthropologists, like Robin Fox, go to the point of affirming that the elemental (wrongly defined 'natural') family unit is not a husband and a wife, but a mother and her unmarried children. This association is considered "basic, while the conjugal association of the nuclear family is derivative". There is nothing like a 'natural family'.³⁰ Gabra women are an example of a situation where the fluidity of males (bound to continuous movement) is complementary to the agglutination of women in semi-settled camps, where the biological function of reproduction is extended to the social activities of nutrition and protection, in the process of rearing and educating children.³¹

Warning note: The Project Area (PA, see map 1 at 2.1) is at the centre of the North Horr sub-County. Therefore, the PA has an homogeneous population, the Gabra pastoralists, with few insertions in the major centres. In the sub-County the ethnic composition is more complex, with Daasanach around Ileret; El Molo, Samburu, Turkana and others around Loiyangalani, while Rendille occupy most of the south-eastern land of the sub-County, with Borana enclaves; in the Gabra areas live the Watta, a relic population of former hunter-gatherers, plus many passers-by, included Somali and Ethiopians of various origin.

The danger is to 'tribalise' the OH project, giving it a strong Gabra connotation and raising discontent among the other socio-cultural groups, that feel to be cut off its benefits. In these areas projects are economic and, above all, political assets. The authors (one is a Gabra) are aware of the problem, and never refer to the project as a 'Gabra-related' social or health activity. On the other hand, the authors cannot avoid the fact that *all* the information gathered on the field in interviews and focus group discussions are of Gabra origin and refer to their culture. Therefore, throughout this brief, we relate about a Gabra pastoral environment and health-culture system, unless diversely specified.

Linguistic note: The Gabra people speak a Borana-related language, with influences from their proto-Rendille-Somali origin. According to Adano Wario Roba, the Gabra is Afro-Asiatic (Hamito-Semitic)→ Cushitic→ Eastern→ Lowland→ Oromo→ Southern→ Borana, with Gabra as a sub-language (dialect) like Orma, Waata and Munyo. Borana, the language used by the Gabra, is tonal: therefore its correct transcription is very complex. For the purpose of these notes, we utilise a simplified Kenyan standard transcription as found in literature.³² Sometimes, our informants and interpreters transcribed names, localities and words according to their spoken and written knowledge. Mainly, they tended to elide the last vowel (a short one), which might be a modern trend in Gabra linguistic pronunciation.

The phonetics in this brief follows the standard Swahili writing and pronunciation: vowels can be long (doubled in writing, when acknowledged by ear) or short, while particular consonants are, for instance, *q* (ejective and guttural, with a slight click-sound, sometimes written *k'*) or *d'* (implosive, also written *th*); some consonants used to be doubled in spelling – to underline their explosive sound – but now this is becoming obsolete; *v* and *z* are not used. We make no attempt in reporting any grammatical subtlety, like singular or plural forms.

2.1 – OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The general objectives of the authors' involvement in the Project "ONE HEALTH: Multidisciplinary approach to promote the health and resilience of pastoralists' communities in Northern Kenya" were about Education.³³ The main goal was to develop a qualitative picture about the approach to scientific matters by all people involved, from students to teachers, from OH personnel to nomadic pastoralists; eventually, it had to be reduced in time and scope because of constraints, in particular at the school time-organisation level. As reported in the mission field-notes:

At North Horr, October 15: The authors, accompanied by the Anthropology-Ecology field-mission team, go to the North Horr Primary School, hosting about 600 pupils. The team is introduced to the headmaster Konchola Tadi, who is willing to help, after an official permission be granted by the County education authorities. Problems can be

³⁰ Fox R, *Kinship and Marriage: An Anthropological Perspective*, Pelican Anthropology Library, Harmondsworth, 1967; pp. 36-40.

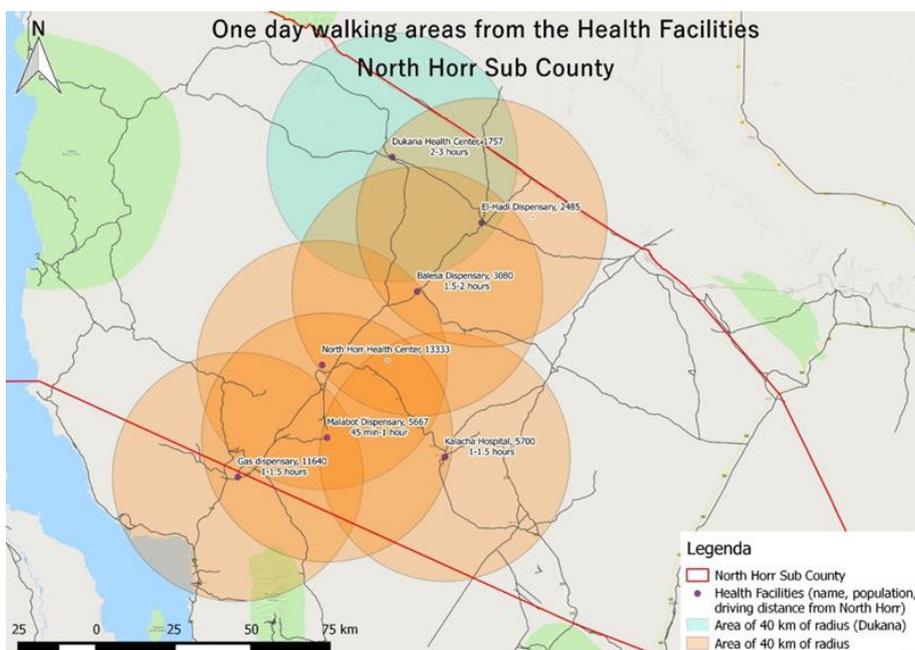
³¹ Bassi M, *I Borana, Una società assembleare dell'Etiopia*, Franco Angeli, Milano 1996; pp. 110-111.

³² Hakko Wario in 1993, Günther Schlee in 1978, and Paul Tablino in 1999.

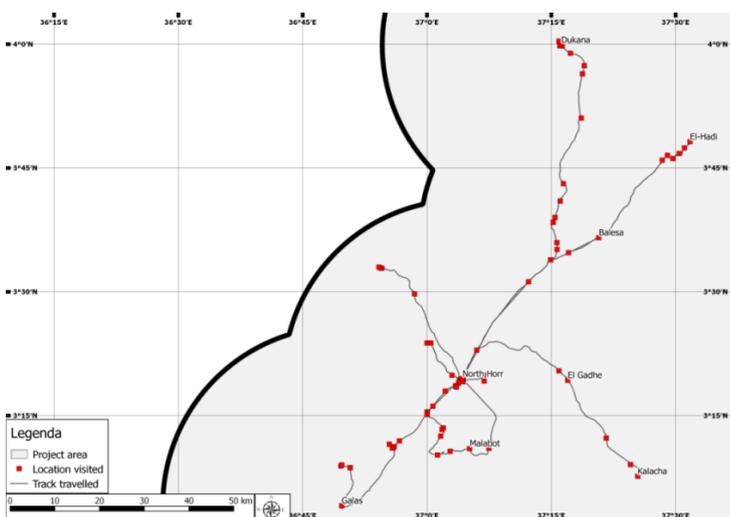
³³ See Comberti G (2019), *op. cit.*; Ch. 2.

the final exam session for Standard 8 students, starting at the end of October through November, in which all teachers are directly involved. In fact, the schools shall be closed to the public during the whole period of November, and preparations are needed at the end of October. Anyway, the headmaster manages to give us an opportunity to enter one classroom on October 23, but that is going to be the end of our involvement in all schools in the PA around North Horr.

Therefore, after the exercise in the North Horr Primary school, the volunteering Education expert was diverted to the Anthropology-Ecology team (that she already followed in the field, interviewing women with the co-author since October 12 at Goricha), who had gender problems in interviewing women. Being women, the author and the co-author of this brief, the interpreter/assistant Talaso Shamo, had the chance to access pastoralist women in the camps around North Horr, enhancing the database of the mission about feminine issues. This action was considered of great help. On the other hand, OH field methodology reckons on operational redundancy: in case some activities should be blocked for any reason, the expert is capacitated in shifting to another operational set without losing efficacy. With this methodology, the authors were able to follow the whole mission in all main settlements and health facilities of the PA (see map 2), acquiring a wider database in which insert the pastoralist women’s point of view about many topics related to gender and health.



Map 1: One Health Project Area, with catchment areas of 7 main health facilities (by DIST)



Map 2: Waypoints/tracks reached by the mission (by TriM)

The methodology followed by the authors was the same applied by the Anthropology-Ecology team, with personal interviews and focus groups discussions (FGD). The team used to split when reaching a location, a settlement or a temporary camp. Women would come to see what was happening, and then interviewed aside (often under scrutiny by some man of their family, if not the husband), or they were directly reached and talked to by the authors, who always gave a brief information about the project, its scope and methods, and how their words were going to be utilised for a deeper understanding of the relationship Gabra women had with health and disease of people, livestock and environment. One of the typical field situations is visible in photo 2, where the authors are at the right corner of a men's focus group in Eel Beso and talk to a woman who is scrutinised and checked by a man with his pastoralist's stick. The other men pay full attention to the Anthropology-Ecology team.



Photo 2: Side interview with a woman (at right) during a men's focus group at Eel Beso (courtesy by Kurewa

Chapter 3 – THE SOUND OF SILENCE: PASTORALIST WOMEN’S VOICES

3.1 – PATHWAYS TO A NUMBER 3

During a hot Sunday (October 14), following an idea of Abdikadir Guto Kurewa, assistant anthropologist to the Anthropology-Ecology team of the October-November 2018 mission, we elaborated a model based on pastoralists’ mobility. Like their mobile units, the OH project should move along four trajectories:

1. Pathway to health (human and animal)
2. Pathway to water and pasture (environment)
3. Pathway to communication and relationships (community)
4. Pathway to modernity (integration and empowerment)

The ‘pathway model’ makes use of the mental set of pastoralists, integrating the health of the nomadic/semi-sedentarized people in the project area, accompanying them from traditional practices to modernity. The question is: does it exist any specific One Health pathway for pastoral women?

The concept of One Health is based on the entanglement of three domains: health to people, health to animals and health to environments. The feedbacks of the three OH components are not linearly summed up ($1+1+1=3$), but multiplied ($1 \times 1 \times 1=1$), in order to keep the entanglement tight and evolving at all steps.³⁴

This tripartite unity suggested us, as an OH team, some metaphors to be used while explaining the project around North Horr. The first was developed in Kanacho, where we observed a young man preparing a rope: the braiding of 3 strands makes each strand more resistant, while the obtained cable is stronger than each single strand. A second metaphor was suggested by the teacher Guyo Hama of North Horr Primary school: the One Health project is like the fireplace, where each of the 3 stones (an ubiquitous arrangement in Africa and anywhere cooking is done on direct fire) is *always* necessary if you want to prepare something on. Finally, we were informed that a Gabra bridegroom must have 3 important things in the marriage, otherwise the wedding is not recognized by the community: the white turban (*sure*), sign of eldership; the white cloth (*woya adi*, *adi* for white), sign of a new life (since then the groom is supposed not to wear any cloth he has been wearing before; old clothes are being given away); the *ororo*, the pastoral stick.

Our tripartite representation of One Health project was based by metaphors on somehow feminine issues: 3 ribbons, 3 fireplace stones, 3 wedding impositions on the bridegroom; we could have also used as a symbol the *beedo*, a very strong camel breast-band made of twisted sinews (*ribu*) or sisal rope – covered with raw hide-ribbons – that is used to harness the hut components on camelbacks. This is a woman’s chore, and every girl is given a new *beedo* by her mother on her marriage day.³⁵

Even more femininely, we might have considered a metaphor the *ch’ibra*, the fine braids that distinguish, since her wedding day, a married woman from any other girl or woman. Her hair is parted in half by a median line that goes from the forehead to the nape; then the hair is combed in small braids let loose to hang; only at the death of her husband, a woman shaves her hair and keeps it covered by a turban till the end of mourning.³⁶ All these pleasantries apart, the pathways to women’s health is still far to be cleared in the field, because of men’s strict power over Gabra women.

On October 31, in North Horr, we discovered that in Gabreland gender biases can bring to death when health practices and retarded decisions are involved. In the words of Talaso, co-author of this brief:

This is what happened to Kame, my 71 year-old paternal grand-mother. Last year, October 19, she was stung on her foot by a scorpion early in the morning. Scorpions and snakes are precise indicators of incoming rains: they go near watery places or the fireplace, showing the uncertainties in humidity and temperature they feel in the air.

Anyway, people of the *olla*³⁷ gathered to find and kill the scorpion (*qanjibu*) under one of the three stones of the fireplace [*sic*], but did not give much importance to it, even after a visit by the nurse (a relative). The male elders

³⁴ Full discussion of the pathway model in Salza A (ed.), *op. cit.*; paragraphs 2.4 and 5.2.

³⁵ Tablino P, *op. cit.*; p. 280.

³⁶ *Ibidem*; pp. 283-284

³⁷ Wrongly translated as ‘village’, it generally indicates a group of domed huts (from 2 to 30), in the same place, being not necessarily permanent; the word has also the meaning of ‘extended family’, like in this case.

prevented anyhow to treat the case at the North Horr Health Centre, saying that their culture was powerful enough to solve the problem as it always did before, no matter if you were a man or a woman. They gave her some packed milk and after a while Kame, a very healthy and strong woman, started shivering and drooling from her mouth. After two hours she was dead. When they went to bury my granny, rain started to pour down like never before.

The day she narrated this story, Talaso was excused for the afternoon session as an interpreter because she was being given glucose at the hospital for loss of fluids. Besides having malaria, probably our field mission over-exhausted her. She was surprised when the Anthropology-Ecology mission leader granted her the permission to leave and be treated at the hospital. She did not expect it from a man, and looked afraid to lose her job.

We strongly reaffirm the entanglement and inseparability of the three One Health domains but, in order to ease partial analysis of the views women have about the health of people, livestock and environments, hereafter we cite what we gathered in the field from the voices of Gabra women organising our notes per each health component. The minor importance and number of statements about livestock health – when compared with children and water, obvious domain of women – highlights that it is a component of One Health essentially left in men’s hands. Women’s voices may be sometimes muted by gender biases, but they come alive from some men’s statements and our direct observations (reported in square brackets).³⁸

Note: Contrary to most of anthropologic standard procedures, in this brief we decided to use the real names of informants. This may be useful if future missions intend to meet the same persons who were made aware about the OH project and are ready to assist. On the other hand, their generic statements are not exposing these informants to any risk, and we obtained, although informally, their prior informed consent. An altogether different situation may be created by the use of smartphones to get information about geo-localisation of resources and health issues, which are sensitive data. Throughout the Anthropology-Ecology mission of October-November 2018 we informed the people that some experts (*i.e.*, the incoming TriM mission) will be coming to set up a weather monitoring and an environmental decision support system about health. In the field we felt important that women be fully informed, other than males only.

3.2 – HUMAN HEALTH: WE ARE ALL VERY WELL

At Eel Boru Magatho (October 10), Barile (‘Dawn’) Guyo (M), 70-year-old: “I am the *aba olla*, here, the ‘father’ of these households. To go to the dispensary in Gas/Gallas we have to walk only two hours. But yesterday one of the women had breast problems just after delivering a baby. There is nothing in Gas, so I decided to send somebody to Malabot dispensary to seek for treatment. I had to hire the services of a motorbike, to reach Malabot. I paid, because, after God’s, the health of women is in men’s hands”.

At Goricha (October 11), Bokayo (‘Rain season’)³⁹ Rooba (F), 50-year-old, mother to 6 children: “Our men are far, tending livestock. I’m pleased to talk to you [showing a keen interest in the OH project]. The most common diseases in this *olla*? They are not important [shrugs]: malaria, stomach-ache, chest problems and few cases of pneumonia. Do my children have special problems? No, they are healthy, all of them [at a glance, they look so]. In case of need, I refer to Malabot dispensary, if my husband gives me the money”.

At Malabot Human Health Dispensary (October 11), Kurfa (‘Short’), a Community Health Volunteer (F): “Please, wait a minute outside, because I’m visiting a patient. [We are admitted] I know I’m not supposed to dispense medicines, but I do it out of necessity; I’m also a midwife. Today I treated a common cold case (*dagfof*), a headache and tested the blood for malaria with an India-made rapid blood test; see the tests in those carton boxes. I perform HIV tests too.

[We check the informing posters in the dispensary. A big poster contains photos of the uterus cancer, disease that may be common, but certainly not understood ‘under the skin’ by local women (men wouldn’t have anything to do with ‘feminine things’ like these, something that they abhor). Deliverance is visualized by another poster titled “Management of labour”. More: “Troubleshooting for pregnancy with IUCD” and a set of flipcharts about “Nutrition after deliverance”, dealing with breast feeding, mixed and artificial feeding, pumping breast milk and storing it in a fridge (!?). Images are inadequate, showing people quite far from the local model of gestures, postures and dress-

³⁸ Many of these sentences have been used also in the full CCM technical report by Salza A (ed.), *op. cit.*; for a full discussion about the three One Health components, refer to it.

³⁹ The Gabra use two words for rain: *bokaya* (physical) and *roob* (conceptual), this one being more of Borana use.

code. It is not clear if these informative materials are for the health personnel or they should be 'read' by unlearned pastoralists of both genders. The materials come from UNICEF, EU, UK-Aid, US-Aid].⁴⁰

- At North Horr (October 12), Salesa ('Born when the village had been long in the same place') Guyo (M), 74-year-old [Salesa's wife adds comments]: "For me, the camel is the animal number one: without camels you cannot have a wife. But wives can give you infections and sexually transmitted diseases [STD]. Women – and women only – can transmit sexual disease to men, never the other way about. If I get that disease, I am requested by the health workers to bring my partner to the health facility to be identified. No way, she is a woman; therefore, I prefer not to go and stay [with STD] without any treatment".
- At Kanacho (October 15), Chuluke ('Shining eyes') Molu (F), 50-year-old: "Whenever I am sick, I refer to North Horr Health centre. But I go there only if my husband gives me the money to pay for the medical service. If somebody of my family has a chronic disease, we ask for fundraising by our relatives [extended family], or take a refundable credit so as to facilitate the costs involved in seeking medical intervention. According to me, the most common diseases are malaria, diarrhoea, headache and backache, in descending order of importance".
- At Dukana dispensary (October 16), Isac Bett (M), nurse from Nakuru County: "The Gabra around here have strong cultural beliefs preventing access to health, like the compulsory husbands' permission for women to reach health facilities, the ritual calendar with unfortunate days, and so on".
- At Balesa dispensary (October 18), Pauline (F), nurse from the Meru area: "Among the many challenges I have here, I point out that women do not seek service for their delivering, but prefer the traditional birth assistants. I don't know why".
- At Kalacha referral hospital (October 19), Mr. Rotich (M), administrator: "As far as delivery services are concerned, the hospital and the traditional birth assistants [TBA] keep strict relationships, but there are also some cultural constraints: most doctors are male and that is preventing women to feel free and at ease during gynaecologic visits and deliverance. Most of the pregnant women referring to this hospital result in being anaemic, aggravating their conditions in case of problems during delivery. This lack of blood might come out of poor diets, because early pregnancy, according to the Gabra, may lead to the avoidance of certain foods, even meat, with consequent problems of anaemia.
- At Eel Gade dispensary (October 19), Safia Abduba (F), nurse: "Only the persons near the health facility refer to it because of the distance. Many pastoralists keep using the traditional medicine; e.g., a woman died out of a scorpion sting because she did not come to the dispensary to cure it, and eventually she died".⁴¹
- At Eel Beso (October 22), Shuka ('Beloved') Abudho (F), 40-year-old: "Cancer is becoming the most dangerous and feared disease. I heard that many people from the area died of this disease in faraway hospitals. At the moment the most prevalent disease is diarrhoea, because of people using the *lagga*⁴² as toilets and the faeces are eventually washed by rains into the hand-dug wells".
- At Hori Guda (October 27), Soori ('Light', a colour of camels) Kushi, 27-year-old: "When somebody of my family gets sick, my husband decides what to do about it, according to the Gabra cultural beliefs. Diseases? We are all very well. Not many diseases around. Only malaria sometimes is affecting us. Sorry, but now I've got to go to town to buy cabbages and onions before they get finished".
- At Hori Guda (October 27), Daro Roba (F), 30-year-old, no children, married to a widower with children [she is busy sewing the clothes for her hut; they are usually old pagnes⁴³ used for dresses, but these ones have bright colours, looking almost new; her husband checks the beginning of our interview, but realizing he already knows about the OH projects, he joins the other men]: "I am not aware of any human disease at the moment, here. Regarding decisions about family's health, my husband takes in his hand all business about it. In all cases, like malaria, stomach-ache, headache, backache, chest pain, we refer to the North Horr Health Centre".
- At North Horr (October 30), Talaso Shamo (F), 21-year-old, co-author: "Here there are three herbalist women who deal with people's health. One is in Dukana at the moment, for treating people: she was taken by motorbike to Balesa and proceeded to Dukana being called by some sick person. The second one is now in Qorka, a village some two-hour driving from North Horr; she is the sister of Qaballé ('Thin') [the VSF-G's and OH's cook]; they are Watta, a group of former hunter-gatherers that are now inserted inside the Gabra social system: their status is low, and many are ashamed to confess their origin lest of being despised because poor, that is with no livestock.⁴⁴ The third

⁴⁰ See pictures and visual perception analysis of these materials in Comberti G (2019), *op. cit.*, par. 3.5.

⁴¹ See a similar episode happened to the grandmother of one of the authors in paragraph 3.1 of this brief.

⁴² A dry riverbed with subalvear rain-water, where most wells and boreholes are dug.

⁴³ Typical African textiles of rectangular shape; they once were in calico, but nowadays are in synthetic fibres.

⁴⁴ The Watta are still considered, like the Ndorobo among the Samburu and the Okiek of Kerio, the masters of the local nature-spirits; many of them are smiths or herbalists.

herbalist, mother of Qaballé, is in town at the Hori Guda settlement, but she retired because of age; her daughter took her place in giving out traditional medicines.

I myself did not make use of any herbalist's drug, but once I put on a charm against the evil eye. It is a flexible plant that can be divided and tied around somebody's left arm together with a small piece of women's black scarf containing substances like salt and special herbs for prevention from or cure of the evil eye. When you feel to be all right, you may remove it".

3.2.1 – PREGNANCY, DELIVERY AND CHILDREN

At Dukana Dispensary (October 16), Isac Bett (M), nurse from Nakuru County: "Most patients are coming from Dukana town; we receive about 30 patients a day, mostly women and children. Dukana is on the road from Ethiopia and can get a variety of foodstuff, more than in North Horr, but people stick to their diet (mainly milk, which is nourishing, but not always available) because women do not know how to prepare something easy like *uji* [a very light porridge with milk, sugar and fat], or beans and maize-meal, foods that are too expensive. Children may be fed only with tea and milk (*chai*). Even sugar can be banned 'for fear of diabetes'; even if they do not know the direct biomedical relationship with the disease, the word spread about into the community".

At Eel Beso (October 22), Shuka ('Beloved') Abudho (F), 40-year-old with 7 children [Two other older women are present, but do not participate: our purpose is to investigate the weaning of Gabra children, e.g., when and if boys and girls are weaned the same way, to better understand the supposed malnutrition in children]: "Among us pastoralists, weaning may happen even at a late age, 3 or 4 years, which is good: mother's milk is safe and nourishing, but the health condition of the mother should be checked. I heard that some mothers give children soft food like spaghetti, *ugali* [maize-meal] with milk, and rice, but I never used this kind of food. I instead breastfed my children until they were grown. The age difference between my first and last born?⁴⁵ They are born 19 years apart: the first is a female and is 23; she already is a teacher at Kalacha secondary school, and married with a baby boy, while the last born is four-year-old".

At Hori Guda (October 27), Soori ('Light', a colour of camels) Kushi, 27-year-old with 2 children (F) [two other girls join from a neighbour]. "In case a mother is sick, women from other neighbouring families take care of the children during her treatment. I delivered my first child at the hospital, being advised by a nurse; but the second at home".

At Durte (October 29), seven women in an FGD, Aado Umuro (30-year-old with 4 children; first born is 15, last born 2), Kame ('Thursday') Bashuna (30-year-old, 5 children, first born 11 years, last born one month) and Aado ('Sunday') Molu (not speaking, going and coming during the interview in order to attend her child); four women are joining later, but are not identified [all around, 10 children attend the meeting, listening].

Bashuna: "I had a recent pregnancy and happy delivery. Talk to me, please. All of us delivered at home, in the traditional way, being assisted by a TBA" [According to Kame Wato Kofo, Community Health Supervisor (CHS) of the OH project – who recently delivered her first born – the Traditional Birth Assistants are trained at the North Horr Health Centre about twice a year, depending on trainers' availability; TBAs also may accompany some women with delivery problems to the hospital: in that case they might receive some incentive, in order to build "morale and co-participation" in health-seeking behaviour programmes].

Collective voices: "There are no diseases among our children [the condition of children around us is good]. "Well, sometimes even our children might get sick. You can see by yourself how good the condition of the children all around is, but, speaking in general, everywhere in the world children get sick, maybe something quite simple like a cough (*dofof*) or a running nose". "When fever (*kando*)⁴⁶, or cough are not strong, I use traditional medicines". "I deal with colds and running noses by using hot-water and a cloth: inside the water I put some leaves of a tree called *balsafi* [unidentified], that we plant in front of our huts. And children breath its fumes under the cloth". "I use also a kind of seed called *fitto* [unidentified], for running nose, headache and cold, the same way".

About rules for health and safety for children: "We don't want our children to get diseases or being harmed, so we instruct them to be careful with fires, check for scorpions in collected firewood, pay attention to motorbikes on the road, and not to go to the wells lest they might fall into them". "But we do not prevent children to go near sick

⁴⁵ By that figure, simple calculations allow us to understand the interval in births and, thereafter, the weaning time; here we have 7 children in 19 years, with an average of 2.7-year interval, but we do not know if other children died in the meantime, a very sensitive questions for the Gabra, a question we decided not to ask; the method was developed after the suggestions by Abdirizak Mohammed, interpreter/assistant to the Anthropology-Ecology field mission of October-November 2018.

⁴⁶ A word used also for malaria in humans and camels alike (so Gabra believe); this means that the concept of fever is well present in pastoralists' health-culture.

animals, because they are living with livestock, they drink their milk, they eat their meat. They are healthy”.⁴⁷ [Mothers tell stories of wild animals to children, like everywhere; the most common characters are the hyena (*worabes*), fool and stupid, and the jackal (*gethal*), cunning and clever.⁴⁸ All children are suspicious with the foreigners – one even starts crying – but eventually they all get confident and one reaches the author with his hand]. “Now we have to interrupt this interview because we must go and fetch water at the well”.



Photo 3: School children in Balesa enjoying the first rain shower after drought (courtesy by Kurewa)

3.3 – ANIMAL HEALTH: MEDICINES FOR LIVESTOCK ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN FOR US

At Goricha (October 11), Bokayo (‘Rain season’) Rooba (F), 50-year-old, mother to 6 children: “Our animals have some diseases: for instance, lungs or liver problems. Ah, we have ticks around, but they only affect camels, not human beings. Young shoats are also affected by eating the *itha* shrub [*Commiphora* sp.], because they develop wounds on their lips by its poisonous thorns. [While we are leaving] Medicines for our animals are more important than those for us people: bring them”.

At Kanacho (October 15), Chuluke (‘Shining eyes’) Molu (F), 50-year-old, with a younger female [an older woman joins the meeting, but she does not contribute to the discussion]: “We are not scared about diseases, in particular the ones of animals; I don’t like to see any of my animals sick, because me and my family depend on them, and sometime we sell them to get some income. You see, animals are like our farms. Whenever the animals are sick, we have to go to North Horr town centre to seek for medicines for livestock, because there are no veterinary posts anywhere. However, if we manage to diagnose the disease, for example *malla*,⁴⁹ we use traditional medicines like tobacco (*tambo gesse*) which is dissolved in water and fed to the sick camel. If we don’t know the kind of disease, then our men go to the pharmacy, explain the symptoms and get prescriptions and drugs from the vet shop. All animals are important: I have no preference”.

At Hori Guda (October), Daro Roba (F), 30-year-old, no children, married to a widower with children [she is busy sewing the clothes for her hut; they are usually old pagnes⁵⁰ used for women’s dresses, but these ones have bright colours, looking almost new; her husband checks the beginning of our interview, but when realising he already knows about the OH projects, he joins the other men]: “There is a plant, here, that affects the health of our livestock: it’s the *algarroba*; it is causing diarrhoea, but only to shoats. In case, we treat them with salt and water.⁵¹ Our animals are very far, in Darathe, towards Ileret, where a police station is based. Therefore I keep here only 8 goats for my household’s needs. And they are all well, I am not worried about any specific disease. All people and

⁴⁷ The concept of zoonosis is refused in many pastoral communities around North Horr; see Salza A (ed.), *op. cit.*: “Zoonosis, as diseases transmitted by livestock to humans and *vice versa*, are not fully recognised by pastoralists, excluding anthrax and Rift Valley fever, notwithstanding brucellosis is everywhere; reason given: “Animals are our life, they cannot harm us”; p. 5 and par. 5.1.

⁴⁸ See Appendix A.

⁴⁹ An undetermined camel disease that makes the animal very weak, gradually having teary eyes, dropping ears, joints making noise (dehydration or hydatidosis?).

⁵⁰ Typical African textiles of rectangular shape; they once were in calico, but nowadays are in synthetic fibres.

⁵¹ Apparently, this is a traditional cure, but it may derive from the diffused use of oral rehydration solutions (ORS) for children in health facilities (the informant is a woman), reinforcing the concept of the inseparability of human/animal health among the Gabra.

animals are well [she looks uneasy and displeased to talk about diseases]. Sorry, for the moment I am impolite, but next time you come I'll prepare tea for you".

At Eel Beso (November 04), Gumato ('Friday') Elema (F), 57-year-old with 5 children: "I don't know the reason why animals get sick. Maybe because animals do not know what they eat; they eat anything, and after some days they get some disease. I have no knowledge of the causes for bloating in shoats, but I use Omo powder to induce burping and gas exit: It works. If I don't have Omo, I use the milk from the sick animal instead. You see, when animals are sick, we use traditional remedies, but in case of prolonged diseases my husband calls by phone North Horr for assistance. Some veterinary is going to come.

3.4 – ENVIRONMENT HEALTH AND CLIMATE: CHANGES

At Goricha (October 11), Bokayo ('Rain season') Rooba (F), 50-year-old, mother to 6 children: "I saw some changes in the climate, and grasses and trees followed them. In these days there are less trees and pastures, especially for our camels. As a result, the camels feed on *algarroba* (*Prosopis juliflora*)⁵² which doesn't satisfy them enough. Everybody knows about the clouds and wind as signs of rain, this is common knowledge. We tell signs of rains from the changes in the clouds which darken or become mixed with white clouds. The wind from the north is also another indicator for the rains in this season. But, even if it rains, the soil does not yield enough pasture for the animals as it used to do before. The reading of the entrails of a goat is also an important way to predict the incoming of rain. However, while there are specialists who are knowledgeable to check the animal intestines for signs of rain [she laughs] nowadays we don't believe in this traditional practice any more".

At North Horr (October 13), Ibrae ('Sunday') Jillo, 58-year-old (M) with 2 wives, father of 2 boys and 2 girls, adult literacy teacher: "Abandoned plastics reach the trees, therefore their leaves cannot breathe properly and the plants may sicken and die. Nothing like that with the traditional wooden or fibre containers (*kaddada*). They were made by women, and now women are the most responsible for abandoning plastic bottles, polluting streets, houses and huts".

At Kanacho (October 15), Chuluke ('Shining eyes') Molu (F), 50-year-old: "Talking about the change in the environment and the climate, though droughts have been there since the past, the present conditions are getting worst. A number of different types of grasses were in plenty and these included: *lamisho*, *agagaro*, *buyo* [unidentified]. Now these types of grasses are still available, but they are not in plenty as they used to be. In this arid land – when I was a child – there was a lot of pasture for all the animals. Myself, I was looking after my family's shoats. Grasses and leaves may come back with the rains, but in smaller quantity. At the moment, all animals are far because of lack of pasture. Now they are as far as Koromto, Gallas, Galana, Sarimo, and Darathe [Derati], among other places. Here we keep two milch camels, some goats and sheep in the *olla*, just to provide milk.⁵³ Sometimes, these animals lack milk because of no pasture and, as a result, I have to buy milk from North Horr. A shame. Signs of rain? The most important warning sign of rain is the singing of the *bararato* bird⁵⁴ and the reading of the entrails".

At Eel Hadi (October 18), some men who worked for *Welt Hunger Hilfe*, a German NGO: "We are trying to import agriculture to this forsaken place. We are thinking about vertical multi-storied gardening and greenhouses for fresh vegetables. Women shall take care of them".

At Balesa dispensary (October 18), Pauline (F), nurse from the Meru area: "Some women are starting to introduce new foodstuff like beans, watermelons, pumpkins and the like. They grow them as a start-up activity. According to my experience as a farmer, soil in Balesa is supposed to be good for agriculture, but local women are still far from success, here".

3.4.1 – WATER: NO DISEASES COME FROM WATER

In the pastoralist's view, rain and grass are men's worries: as soon as signs of rain appear in the sky, the male youth are sent as scouts (*abuuru*) in search of renovating pasture after the rains.⁵⁵ Gabra used to have

⁵² An encroaching plant, acacia-like, imported from Brazil for reforestation purposes; being unpalatable, it is now a problem in the semi-arid lands of Kenya; full discussion in Salza A (ed.), *op. cit.*, paragraphs 4.4.1 and 4.5.1, and Choge SK *et al.*, "The Status and Impact of *Prosopis* sp. in Kenya", KEFRI, Nairobi 2002.

⁵³ As repeatedly noted during our field mission, small areas of riverine woodlands are used in dry seasons as a reserve for the limited number of livestock necessary to feed the settled families, usually composed by old people and women with children.

⁵⁴ A rare unidentified small bird, variously described as black and white, brown or yellow, calling at night; see Tablino P, *op. cit.*; p. 280; we made it the hero of a story to introduce climate and the water cycle in the North Horr primary school; see Salza A (ed.), *op. cit.*; Appendix A, and Comberti G, *op. cit.*; par. 2.3.

various early warning signs: the ‘camel evening posture’ (crossing hind legs and waving tail-indicator of good rainy season); the ‘bull sign’ (deserting the herd and refusing to mate: a bad omen); the ‘sheep staring up the sky’ (a bad sign), plus astronomical interpretations of the position of stars and directions of the wind.⁵⁶ All these warning signs are men’s business, and were not reported by women during our mission. They, at the start of a potentially extra dry season, might just report that too many ants (*quranja*) and big houseflies are spotted in the homestead.

The situation changes when we move from rain to water. Contrary to a widespread prejudice, the burden of fetching water for pastoral communities is not left to women only. There is a clear distinction between watering animals and providing water for household’s consumption (domestic). The first activity is generally left to men, who are outside settlements with their livestock, while water for people and the few milch animals left at home is a women’s task. In any case, there is a great flexibility of behaviour, a pastoral characteristic. For instance, getting out of North Horr to Gas/Gallas (October 10) we met Elema (‘Born while people are milking’), a 58-year-old man busy fetching two 20 l jerry cans of water for his family from a hand-dug well in *lagga* Burra. The same day, at Boru Magatho we met two women fetching water inside a deep (8-10 m) rehabilitated well of the type used to water animals by a human chain of 4 or 5 pairs of men. These wells, distributed throughout all the One Health project PA, are called *tula*, “because they are deep wells with a lot of water, that must be lifted up [*tulu* means ‘hill’]”. These deep wells (the water is down at 8-10 m during droughts) are also known as ‘singing wells’. Being operated’ by 3 to 5 person-pairs, one on top of the other, the flow of water from the table is controlled by the rhythm of the singing human chain-elevator. From that comes their name, but there is no poetry in this all-day-long water-fetching. The widespread use of this water-lifting technique is confirmed at Kancharo (October 12), where we see dromedaries and shoats being watered from a singing well. The environment is oasis-like, with palms and tall acacias of many species. This rehabilitated well (its walls are consolidated with concrete) is used both by people and livestock. The water in the shoat-trough is quite green and smelly. Inside the camel well, where they are now busy, three couples of men (no women around) lift the water with plastic containers (20 l jerry-cans, modified) to an intermediate semi-circular reservoir, whence the flux of water to the trough is controlled by a person with a cloth stopper. The lifting couples sing while taking water, so that their rhythm controls the inflow to the trough, *on demand* (man with the stopper) and *just in time*, like in a Japanese car factory (avoid storage and waste). Some 30 camels are presently being watered (see photo 4).



Photos 4, 5 and 6: ‘Singing wells’ at Kancharo (left) and Dukana (centre and right) (courtesy by Kurewa)

⁵⁵ Tablino P., *op. cit.*; p. 275.

⁵⁶ See Hazard B *et al.* (2012); p. 47, Table 9.

Come as it may, water is an element that Gabra treat with nonchalance (never show that you are thirsty!). Outside towns, water is a toilsome daily chore: you and your animals have to drink it alike, no room for pleasantries like hygiene, clearing or boiling. Mud provides flocculation and that is fine, but “there is no use to teach your children to wash their hands if afterwards they have to drink a kind of water where human feet and animal paws mix” (at Dukana wells, October 16). Beware with our prejudices about hygiene, health and ethics: Gabra do not see the people/livestock difference.

At Kanacho settlement, very sparse (October 15): On our way to approach the village, a number of women are returning leading a long pack of donkeys loaded with plastic jerry-cans, for all households. They are returning from the Hori Guda spring, in North Horr. The spring, with permanent water,⁵⁷ is about 12 km far: they left in the morning, and now is about sunset. The Soga triangular hill is visible on the west.

At Dukana, Abdullahi Abdi well (October 16), an unidentified woman is fetching water at the top reservoir, fed by 3 men who previously watered their livestock (photos 5 and 6): “The well gets full of sand after rains; so we have to reopen it every season; our men shall take care of it. The same water we lift for animals is the one used by people [an old man, not necessarily her husband, comes close to check what is going on, but he does not interfere and goes to help tying the cans on donkeys]. I and the other women of my *olla*, Kubi Qiltipe, fetch two 20 l jerry-cans per household, taking turns with the other families remaining at home. Transport is made by donkeys; each carries 2 jerry-cans. This water is used for drinking, cooking and washing. That is why some women have to come every day. The distance is 4 hours, one way. Only shifts among women can sustain such a continuous flow of water to the *olla*. In the household we are my husband, me and 7 children: therefore 40 l are quite insufficient even for one day.

At Balesa (October 18), from our field notes: “The huts are in the middle of a yellow sand plain with prevalence of *sarim* grass. Along the way, women are scooping water out of rain pools in the road tracks. One of them shouts while we are passing: ‘Watch out! You’re spoiling our water!’”.

At Eel Beso (October 22), Shuka (‘Beloved’) Abudo (F), 40-year-old with 7 children (2 F and 5 M): “Other women and I collect water from the hand-dug wells of the *lagga*. That is the good drinking water (*bisan qabanayo*). It is the one I use for my family. Our animals go and drink at the borehole, whose water is salty. Because only 5 of the rehabilitated wells by VSF-G are permanent [the others get covered by sand after rains], we would like to have a water kiosk. I got used to disinfecting water with chlorine tablets, but sometimes I’ve to make do of water without any treatment, because there is currently nobody in the dispensary to distribute the tablets. We only get them during the outreach programs undertaken by the North Horr Health Centre, once in a month.

At Hori Guda (October 27), from our field notes: “We walk to a hand pump, broken down.⁵⁸ Women and girls are fetching water directly from the well, only 2 m deep. Water is good for human consumption. We taste it: it is even too sweet, probably lacking minerals to make it potable (bacteria not checked). Two elders ask us to replace the pump, that lasted 12 good years. A bit further there is a concrete cistern, where women are washing clothes. The water table is really very high and this might be a problem for human and animal health, because all waste goes back to it immediately, without sufficient sand filtering”.

At Durte (October 29), women in an FGD, Aado Umuro (30-year-old with 4 children), Kame (‘Thursday’) Bashuna (30-year-old, 5 children) and Aado (‘Sunday’) Molu (not speaking, going and coming during the interview in order to attend her child); 4 unidentified women are joining later: “Water [*bisan*] is not related to the health of animals and people alike”. “Water cannot be bringing diseases: it is a good thing”. “Diarrhoea? Diarrhoea might be there, but we do not know its causes” [they have to interrupt the discussion because it is almost sunset, and they must fetch water]. “I carry water on my shoulders, because we do not possess any donkey.⁵⁹ It’s a can of 20 litres”. “I carry my drum tied to a rope and leaning on my back, like this [the Gabra’s is a distinguished way if compared to other African women, who use the top of their heads]”. “Our well, Eel Dallacha [see the cover picture], is less than one walk-hour far” [at the well, some camels try to drink, but a man chases them away; then he starts washing his motorbike, quite near the well].

At Eel Beso (November 04), Gumato (‘Friday’) Elema (F), 57-year-old with 5 children: “You take malaria drinking dirty water”. Christine Aado (‘Sunday’) Shande (F), a CHV: “Even if furnished of mosquito nets, the pastoralists see no relation of malaria with water, because they think mosquitoes live in the grass, not near or in water”. An

⁵⁷ See analysis and images in Salza A (ed.), *op. cit.*; par. 4.4.3, photos 15-18.

⁵⁸ According to hydrogeologists and water engineers, more than 40% of the million hand-pumps of Africa is malfunctioning, out of order or broken down; see Carter RC, Harvey E, Casey V (WaterAid, UK), “User financing of rural handpump water services”, IRC Symposium *Pumps, Pipes and Promises*, 2010; fig. 1.

⁵⁹ The availability of donkeys and jerry-cans is a limiting factor for all long-range pastoralists; this is unconsidered by social workers and should be better investigated.

unidentified woman: "Sometimes we get chlorine tablets to purify water for human consumption: I use them, if available, for all kind of water, even the one from the well". Another one: "We may stay without chlorine supply up to 3 weeks, but we get no diseases from non-purified water. Diarrhoea comes from food, not water. As far as animals are concerned, no disease comes from water".

3.5 – GUIDELINES

The Gabra reluctance to talk about diseases and the topics about human, animal and environmental health – and consequent suggestions about them – have been discussed at length in the Anthropology-Ecology mission report, to which the authors of this brief participated, both in the field activity and following data elaboration.⁶⁰ After considering what we heard on the ground, we have to admit that, without a leap in scientific education and knowledge, women inside the OH project PA appear to be at the moment cut off in any decision making. Redressing this situation is outside the scope and objectives of the OH project, but prevention and control about environment, pollution and, above all, water management can successfully be tackled better by women than by men. We have already discussed about the environmental power of Gabra women (see 1.2) and how men accuse women about plastic waste pollution in the PA's towns, while leaving in their hands any chore concerning the cleaning of the house.⁶¹

Women are necessary to divert part of the human and economic resources from an only-men-and-livestock attitude, that led some years ago to the formation of a number of Environmental Management Committees (EMC) around North Horr. They dealt mainly with the management of pasture, encouraging the community and the pastoralists to graze far away from towns during the wet season so that they would be able to utilize the unused pasture closer to the settlements as a buffer-zone during the dry season. The cutting of trees for firewood became a strict rule, but this augmented to the extreme the already hard work of women, who now have to walk long distances in search of deadwood, or make do with dry twigs: this may mean less energy for cooking, and a reduced cooking time may lead to a minor digestibility of foods like maize-meal (becoming a staple food with other grains); a further feedback with negative outputs is then triggered about the nutrition and health of children, among the others.

Because of having become a long-distance errand, firewood-gathering may be an economic asset of women in the bush, who may sell it to town-dwellers. This remunerative activity is controlled, though, by means that are not in the power of Gabra women at the moment: smartphones and transport. From our field notes:

Returning from Daga Boji (November 03): "It is just before sunset. Guyo, the driver, notices some women along the road with their burden of firewood to be sold in town. After an hesitation and asking for our leader's permit, he stops, reverses and eventually loads firewood and women in the back and on top of the car. He reports that they have been waiting the whole day for a lift: they are without any water now, and the battery of the smartphone of the young man who led them to the road is out. Night is incoming. We start back. Guyo and us are blessed even when we reach their household in North Horr town centre. We have to reconsider the standard procedures and legal rules about taking passengers and goods aboard NGOs' cars: humanity first. A suggestion: carry always some extra water for the people on the road".

All in all, water remains the domain where women have more freedom of movement and decision. Hereafter we are going to provide some guidelines about water management enhanced by women.

According to the WHO (1996), community management means that the beneficiaries of water supply and sanitation services have responsibility, authority and control over the development of their services. 'Responsibility' implies that the community takes ownership of the system, with all its attendant obligations and benefits/liabilities whilst 'authority' indicates that the community has the legitimate right to make decision about the system. 'Control' implies that the community has the power to implement the decisions they make confronting the system.⁶² In the North Horr area's main centres, a few years ago were implemented the 'Water Users Committees' (wuc), with the mandate to manage domestic water sources.

⁶⁰ Salza A (ed.), *op. cit.*; paragraphs 4.2.1. 4.3.1 and 4.4.4.1.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, par. 4.4.4.2.

⁶² Cited in Hazard B *et al.* (2012); p. 50.

We suggest the OH project management to insure a rapid insertion or increase of a number of women in such committees, to prevent the reiteration of the all-male traditional water-management system called abaherega. In the past, water management was mainly concerning wells (dug and maintained by men) and not springs (natural and free to all). The organization of water services was centred on livestock consumption and not on domestic utilization. This involved designing a schedule about livestock access to which watering point, on which days, and after how long the animals should return to that specific watering point. Responsibility for this kind of schedule was left to the abaherega, a man whose name means 'father of the schedule'. The abaherega is still present in the entire Gabra society and is responsible for water management for livestock consumption. Although the abaherega does not concern himself with domestic water use and management, he is still consulted in any case of dispute or called to assist in resolving issues around domestic water.⁶³

We should design a figure symmetrical to the abaherega, a woman with the knowledge and power to deal with domestic water management. For instance, the abaherega would not even get near the problem of sanitation and toilets (do you remember the mythic 'Great Mother' Bonoye and her advice to women about domestic waste disposal in our INTRODUCTION?), although this issue is strictly connected to water. With an increasing population and a high water table, the latrines of North Horr fill up very quickly, with very high risks of faecal water/soil pollution and serious health threats to both people and animals.⁶⁴ That is the reason why it is important to insert women inside the town committees dealing with the environment. They have a day-by-day knowledge and treatment of the domestic water problems. These are becoming the most important in Gabraland: somehow, the pastoralists' traditional way 'from-well-to-well' is being eroded by boreholes, settlement and modernity. These are women's business, even if at the North Horr Centre (November 06), Ibrae ('Sunday' for males) Wato, a CHV, informs us: "During outreaches in the bush, we provide information about hygiene, disease prevention and such. I teach women to thoroughly wash their hands and children. Recently: there was a free distribution of washing soap for six months, but most women used it to wash clothes. Only in some areas, e.g. Qorqa, women appear to follow the correct practice".

Photograph 7, from an educational flipchart of a French NGO active in the project area, highlights the minor and prejudiced role that is foreseen for an 'evolved woman' in Africa about hygiene. The message is simple: wipe your child's arse (a naked little devil defecating everywhere) and then wash your hands. This image is absurd and degrading: even with an endemic scarcity of water, African women cope with keeping their huts as clean as possible and would never tolerate such a dirt around their household. The woman, by her attire, is not a pastoralist any more, and her periurban environment looks desperately filthy. The women around North Horr deserve a better destiny. The One Health project should assist them.



Photo 7: Involuntarily reaffirming women's role (courtesy by Comberti)

⁶³ Hazard B et al. (2012); pp. 68-69.

⁶⁴ See text and pictures in Salza A (ed.), *op. cit.*; par. 4.4.4.2.

FINALE: *Beauty and the Beast*

At North Horr, October 22. Tomorrow morning there is the *Almado* ceremony. It marks the beginning of the New Year according to the Gabra. All elders (*d'abela*) of one clan would sit in a row in front of their house (*mana*) drinking fermented milk brought to them by children. They will take the white beverage from a *ch'iich'o*, a beautiful oval small container woven with the fibres from the bark of two rare plants: *ergamsa* (*Asparagus africanus*, whose leaves are used in ointments by local women to stimulate the growth of hair) and *qarari* (*Sterculia africana*, a deciduous tree that gives the name to Karare, a location near Sibilo); the lid of *ch'iich'o* is called *kaddada*.

The *ch'iich'o* is very important and every married woman hangs it in the place of honour among the display rack on the back-wall of her hut. We are informed that one elder cannot attend the ceremony because he is leading the herds to a faraway graze-land. He shall be substituted by his wife: all in all, a *d'abela* is the top of Gabra male adulthood, but he wears his gown in a woman's style. His wife, before attending the ceremony, would don her *malmal* headdress to be beautiful in the eyes of men and God alike. The *malmal* is an elliptical chaplet made of strips of aluminium twisted around a core of *ergamsa* plaited fibres, indicating a married woman; according to group affiliation it may be decorated with buttons and beads stitched on *ergamsa* cords.

Tomorrow she will drink milk with men, but beware: during the *Almado* ceremony, other women cannot be fooling around. If a pregnant woman is to be seen at the place, she should be killed on the spot, according to the old tradition. As they say here: "*Woo injed'ini, woo jed warabesi*", 'Do not say *woo*, say *woo*: the hyena taught people the correct way to howl'. For the moment, there is only one way to learn proper behaviour: the one of the beast.

APPENDIX A – CHILDREN’S FOLKLORE

A story from Talaso (North Horr, November 02):

“I used to tell this story – that I learned from my now dead grandmother – to my brothers. They are twins. The first one is called ‘Sunday’ because of his birthday; obviously, the second born had to be ‘Monday’, even if born after few minutes. Monday is an inauspicious day, even if not like Wednesday.

Once upon a time, there were Hyena and Jackal living as neighbours. Hyena had two children, while Jackal had four; Hyena had all sort of livestock, while Jackal had only a dog and a cow. A drought was coming to the land, so Jackal, very cunning, told Hyena, quite foolish: “We have better go looking for water and pasture, otherwise we shall all die”. So Hyena called by all her children and took off at a brisk pace, leaving her animals alone; Jackal left her children behind, instead. After a while, they got thirsty. Hyena was desperate, having to care for her children. So Jackal moved around and sniffed water at the bottom of a deep well, the one the Gabra call *tulu*, because fetching water from there is very hard, pushing *okolla* [buckets made out of rawhide] all the way up: it is like climbing a hill, a *tulu*. Jackal called Hyena: “I am the one who found water, but you and your children are the ones to fetch it, don’t you think it’s a good deal?”

Hyena, being so stupid, agreed because she was so thirsty and worried for her children. Therefore the three of them entered the deep well, jumping. They reached the water and started drinking, while Jackal watched them. Water was passed up to him by Hyena. But when Hyena tried to get out of the well, she found it too deep and slippery. Hyena and her children could never get out of the well. Jackal laughed and took back to their homestead. She called her children and the dog and went to steal all Hyena’s livestock. Hyena was never to be seen again, and Jackal and her children lived happily thereafter.

Here we report a lullaby (with tentative translation) from Talaso and Kame (North Horr, November 03). According to Kame, at the moment she is feeling by her breasts that her first recently-born child is crying because he is hungry. She picks up the smartphone and gets the thing confirmed. Absolutely.

Ijole ijole haoh ijole

Ijole boranati haoh ijole

Nami Buke tiy dane haoh ijole

Mata kiyo barbathe haoh ijole

Nami achi gathemu haoh ijole

Buke tiyo fakata haoh ijole

Ijole ijole

Baby oh my baby [both genders]

Oh my baby of Borana.

Oh my baby Buke (nickname) there is a person to beat my child

who is making me angry;

this person coming from far

resembles Buke, my child.

Baby, oh my baby.



Photo 8: Interviews at Kanacho (courtesy by Kurewa)