

# **NOMADS' DIALOGUE**

**DEVELOPMENT INSTEAD OF RELIEF**

Wendy Wilson, Ph. D.  
Asmarom Legesse, Ph. D.



*Bazo Abahi of the Herders' Cooperative of Niamey, Niger, and Maasai women of the Albalbal project, Tanzania, meet and compare crafts.*

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**NOMADS' DIALOGUE:  
DEVELOPMENT INSTEAD OF RELIEF**

**A Meeting of Herders, Farmers, and Artisans from East and West Africa  
Held in Ndutu, Tanzania**

**Wendy Wilson, Ph.D.**

**Asmarom Legesse, Ph.D.**



African  
Development  
Foundation

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Dr. Asmarom Legesse** is Professor of Anthropology at Swarthmore College. He is the author of the acclaimed book, *The Gada System*, a study of the Boran people of northwest Kenya. Dr. Legesse lectures throughout the United States and abroad on the subject of nomadism and environmental management. He is currently working on a book on desertification. Dr. Legesse was an advisory member of the Herders' Workshop Planning and Coordinating Committee.

### Cover Photo:

Maasai herders watch proceedings of Workshop members at Ndutu.

## FOREWORD

From time immemorial man has had the need and desire to share and record significant events in his life. The rock paintings, the village griot, the hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt, and the six o'clock news. All try to capture time -- to draw the audience into an experience. But whether the media selected to communicate the event is simple or high technology, something is lost in the transmission. That something is the actual experience of being there.

**Nomads' Dialogue: Development Instead of Relief**, is the African Development Foundation's record of a workshop that was charged with enthusiasm, discovery, curiosity, and empathy. When trying to convey the affective elements of an experience, writers realize the limitation of words. What follows are selected excerpts from over 120 hours of audio tapes and the writers' comments, observations and summations, a formidable task when drawing from such a rich and diverse reservoir. As in the Workshop design, the substance rests with the herders ... It is their story, their experience.

The Workshop raises questions which present more challenges to participants and development practitioners. Are the grantees who attended this extraordinary gathering harbingers of emerging development aspirations among herding communities, or anomalies? Are they the role models that will be emulated by those living in their communities and regions? Are their projects stimuli for other herding communities? Will the new ideas they encountered at the Workshop be applied in their communities? Are they the voices that their respective governments, international donors and development practitioners need to hear as projects are planned and financed?

Unanswered questions have always been the stimuli for exploration and change. And so it is appropriate that at the conclusion of the Workshop, both participants and development practitioners left with questions and issues to ponder and pursue.

This report captures one small and *special* segment of time that records the Foundation's ongoing relationship with its grantees of nomadic origin. We will continue to support their aspirations as they seek to improve their quality of life. We will ponder the questions and issues and explore the possibilities in partnership with them, and the others that will follow.

**Leonard H. Robinson, Jr.**  
President

**Sandra J. Robinson**  
Director of Program and Field Operations  
West Africa and the Sahel

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Layout and Design: Teixeira Nash



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To imagine an international meeting of nomads and other herders on the plains of East Africa is one thing; to actually make it happen is another. Many sacrifices were made, many risks were taken, and much time and patience were invested toward the implementation of the HERDERS' WORKSHOP, as well as the resulting **Nomads' Dialogue** book and film. We would like, therefore, to express our gratitude to those persons and institutions without whom the **Nomads' Dialogue** would not have been possible.

We must first of all thank the Government of Tanzania and, in particular, the Honorable Jackson Makweta, former Minister of Agriculture and Livestock in Dar es Salaam for their willingness to host the Workshop, and for efficient and expansive support in facilitating the entry of ADF grantees into Tanzania, many of whom received their visas at Kilimanjaro Airport. The former Ambassador of Tanzania, His Excellency Asterius M. Hyera, and his staff in Washington also contributed much appreciated counsel and support.

The governments of Senegal, Mali, Somalia, and Niger all gave crucial assistance in facilitating the travel of their nationals, and participated through the representatives who attended the Workshop activities in Arusha and Ndutu. Likewise, the Ambassadors and staff in Washington were most helpful in coordinating travel, communications with the Foreign Ministries, and offering suggestions during the planning stages of the HERDERS' WORKSHOP.

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The official observers at the Workshop deserve a special note: Moctar Lamine, President, Islamic Bank of Niger; Fran Farmer, Family Planning, Nairobi; Paulette Nichols, Africare, Niger; Tammy Hultman, Africa News Service, North Carolina; Michael Brown, Sahel Consortium, Washington; George Taylor, AID Director, Niger; the Honorable Zana Ousmane Dao, Minister Representative pour Administration Territorial et Developpement a la base, Mali; Dr. Malick Faye, Minister Designate for the Ministry of Animal Resources, Senegal; Dr. Abdou Nababa, Niger; and, Mr. Malam Gaga Zouladaini, Niger. All of them attended at their own cost, and the support that their sponsoring organizations and governments provided is much appreciated. Their presence was important to all of us. Certainly, the Nomads realized the significance of having these special visitors there, who had obviously traveled great (and sometimes quite uncomfortable) distances. We cannot mention this group without mentioning our sincere feelings of loss at the passing away of our dear colleague, Dr. Suzanne Bernus. Her presence at Ndutu meant a great deal to all of us.

The staff of ADF are characteristically hardworking and committed people. In the instance of the Workshop, as well as in the preparations for the resulting book and video, it can be said that these qualities came shining through and made the critical difference. We would in particular like to acknowledge Leonard H. Robinson, Jr., ADF President, for his willingness to take the risk on such a new and different venture; to Sandra Robinson, Director of Program and Field Operations, for her unyielding commitment, immense energy, and unending patience; Caroline Byrd, Administrative Assistant to the Office of Programs and Field Operations, for her untiring work at the Ndotu Lodge and her commitment and dedication to the completion of the Herders' projects; and to James Beauter for the expertise and professionalism he brought to our task. His steady counsel and careful management during our stay in Tanzania were invaluable.

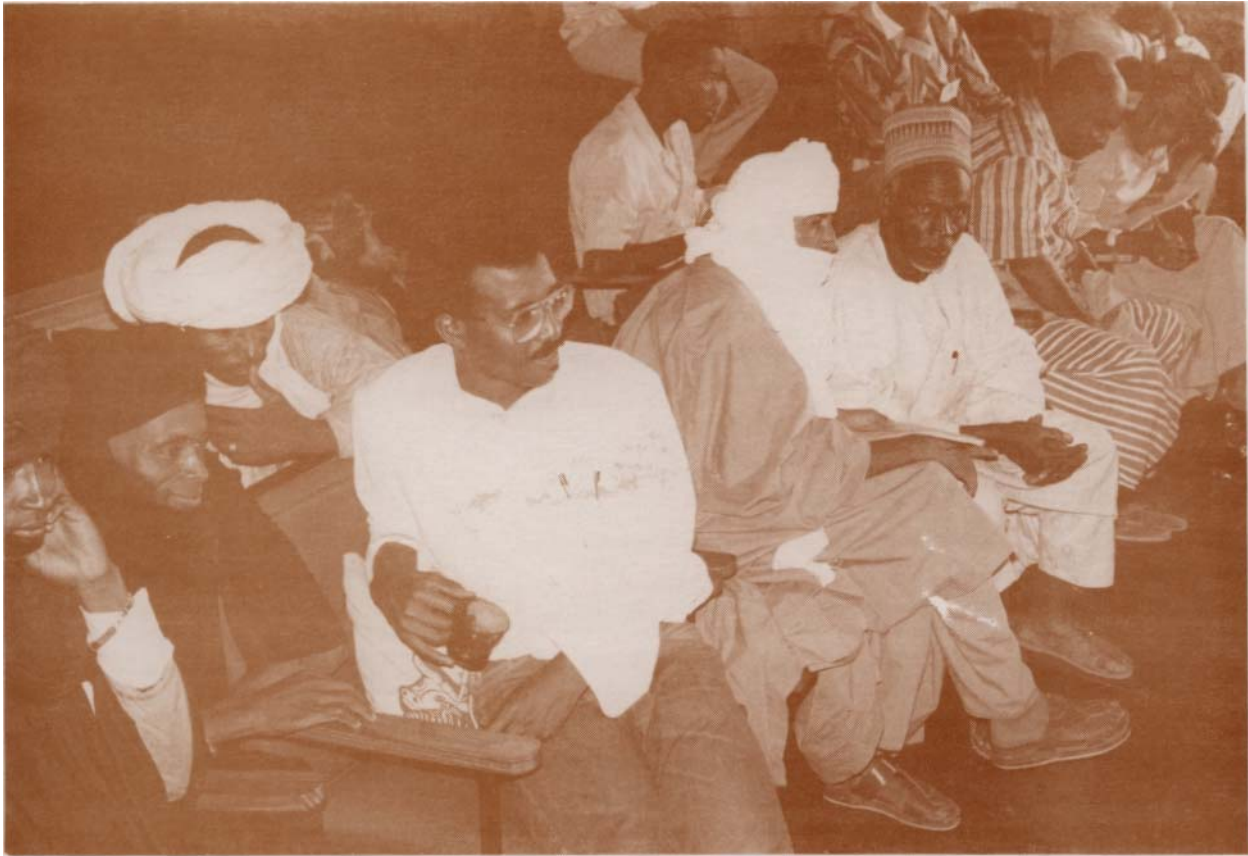
For the work of the ADF Country Liaison Officers, who worked tirelessly around the clock: Joseph Kuria, Kenya; Gilbert Maeda, Tanzania; and Ousmane Maiga, Mali, will always be remembered for the support that they gave to the grantees. Special thanks must be extended to the Ethiopian and Air Afrique Airlines.

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The assistance and extra hours invested by Teixeira Nash, the Foundation's Public Affairs Officer and Editor; and of Janis McCollim, Executive Assistant to the ADF President, are also appreciated. All of those mentioned above contributed extra effort and assistance which made this project possible.

The authors express their gratitude to the members of the Advisory and Planning Committee, who spent long hours, both in the U.S. and in Tanzania, working for the success of the HERDERS' WORKSHOP. In particular, special thanks is extended to Dr. Aliou Boly, who without his management skills and support, this effort would not have been possible.

We ask the pardon of anyone we may not have mentioned here. Our indebtedness to the Herders themselves, for what became, and continues to be a memorable and exciting experience, is immeasurable. Any faults and errors in the following pages are our own, and we hope they will not detract from the reader's appreciation for the stimulating event that was the *NOMADS' DIALOGUE!*



*Workshop members take a break between presentations.*

# HERDERS' WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT LIST

## ADF Grantee Participants

### MALI

#### The Agro-Nord Project

Mme. Hawoy Baby Mohamed  
Ould Mohamed Houmedata  
Aga Algamarat

#### The Tassaqt Project

Abou Ag Assabit  
Youssouf Ag Mohamed  
Alhabib Ag Elmoukafi

### NIGER

#### The Attawari N'Adrar Project

Mohamadou Hamed Lamin  
Assaid Sidi Mohamed

#### The Herders' Cooperative of Niamey

Bazo Abahi  
Douro Gana'ii

#### The Dakoro Herders' Cooperative

Macao bii Gao  
Amadou bii Gao  
Agola Bouda

#### The Mini Mini Cooperative

Ahmoudou Mohamedoun  
Ibra Galadima

### SENEGAL

#### The Dialambere Project

Mme. Sinthiou Dickel Pame  
Baba Koita  
Djidere Balde

#### Keur Boumy Project

Thierno N'Diaye  
Meissa-Celle N'Diaye

### SOMALIA

#### Himilo Project

Siraji Abdullahi Osman  
Salat Osman Horor

#### Daryeel Project

Abdi Hevbe Elmi

#### Jelib-Marka Project

Aweis Moalin Maye  
Abdi Osman Aboroni  
Yusuf Hagi

### TANZANIA

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	Director, Program & Field Operations
	Former Vice President
	Workshop Manager & Former Sahel Regional Manager

## INTRODUCTION

Why bring African herders, farmers, and artisans from different parts of the continent together? How can you have a meeting of Maasai, Tuareg, Fulani, and Somali peoples? What would they talk about? Are they literate? What language would they use to communicate with each other? What would such a meeting accomplish? These were some of the questions that inevitably came to mind when the idea of such a meeting was presented. A meeting of scholars and experts on African development is natural and expected. A meeting of the beneficiaries of development is a most unusual idea. But it is an idea that grows naturally out of the grassroots philosophy upon which the African Development Foundation (ADF) is built.

All of the participants in the Workshop were community leaders. They represented all phases of the livestock management continuum as it obtains in Africa: nomadic herding, transhumant herding, and various types of sedentary agriculture that are, in varying degrees, combined with livestock breeding.

As grassroots leaders, the participants came with specific questions that they hoped to answer through exchanges with each other. They also came prepared to discuss the prospects, successes, and difficulties they experienced, and to learn about survival and development strategies that worked, and those that did not.

As a responsive agency, the African Development Foundation (ADF) had received numerous inquiries from community leaders in the Savannah and Sahelian zones regarding financing for locally-based development projects. By early 1988, several such inquiries had been investigated and reviewed, and ten projects were funded in pastoral communities or involving pastoral groups. In 1989, two additional projects followed. The Sahel Regional Manager, Wendy Wilson, and the former East Africa Regional Manager, Tom Katus, agreed that ADF was in a unique position to foster learning among the herders who were grantees. Basing plans on the Workshop idea that the Sahel Regional Manager had first introduced in 1985, a concept paper was developed and approved in early 1989.

The planning of the Workshop was carried out by an Advisory Committee consisting of African nationals who were specialists in the fields of applied anthropology, community development, cultural exchange and communications. The Advisory and Planning Committee (APC) then met periodically with Wendy Wilson, who served as the project manager for the Workshop. As planning progressed, it was agreed that the herders and farmers themselves would decide what should be discussed at the Workshop. It was agreed that the structuring of the Workshop would exploit project presentations, not as an end in themselves, but as vehicles through which more diverse and substantial information could be generated. Free discussion and minimal intervention by committee members were envisioned as the framework in which knowledge would be transmitted “laterally” between the participants themselves, rather than being handed down “vertically” from the learned to the semi-literate, from the expert to the novice, or from the funding organization to the grantee.

The Workshop was unique in that the site was deliberately chosen so that it would take place in Maasai country on the edge of the Serengeti Game Reserve. To this extent, it can be said that ADF’s Maasai grantees “hosted” the Workshop. The participants from

other countries visited the project site of Albalbal in Maasailand, and were able to inspect some of the project infrastructure, such as the cattle dip and water reservoirs installed near the Maasai Albalbal camps. This visit allowed for person-to-person contact and spontaneous information exchange about cattle and customs. Albalbal project leaders and advisory committee members were present to assist in translations.

The fact that the Workshop was held in the rural savannah, away from towns or villages, meant that all participants were directly confronted with the pastoral milieu. The grantees knew that in such a setting, *they* were the experts. The physical surroundings encouraged much discussion on pastoral ecology; grantees recognized various types of acacia and discussed the role of browse plants in the pastoral environment. The Savannah also called to mind important issues of conservation as herders from the West visited the Serengeti conservation area and recalled what the Sahel and savannah zones of Senegal, Mali, and Niger might have been like in the past.

The dialogue between participants was conducted across linguistic barriers: Maa, Wolof, Pular (Fulfulde), Tamachek and Somali; French and English were spoken throughout the meeting, but the presentations were most often made in the African languages.

A unifying factor for all participants, whether nomadic, semi-nomadic, or sedentary, was the experience of the drought. The dramatic ecological changes and the social hardships that ensued became points of reference as herders related the history of how their projects were started; the changes that their communities were facing; the solutions they had tried in the past and were currently creating. Each group related different strategies for the rehabilitation of economies that were often completely devastated by the drought. Issues of cultural integrity were seen by all participants as central to the process of locally controlled and directed change. Thus, the **HERDERS' WORKSHOP** was conceived and implemented on a common ground, one of shared concern and hope for a better future.



*Members of Attawari N'Adrar Livestock Project discuss drought conditions with Workshop Manager, Wendy Wilson (seated left front) and Siraji A. Osman.*