

## Network on Forced Migration in Latin America

The first meeting of the Network on Forced Migration in Latin America was held on 16-19 March 1998 in Villeta, Colombia, hosted by Javeriana University. As the coordinating institution of the Network, the Refugee Studies Programme has received funds from the European Commission within its Latin America - Academic Training (ALFA) programme, to organise three meetings between representatives of each of the Network's member institutions. These meetings have two objectives; firstly, to establish a programme of mobility of postgraduate students between the European Union and Latin America, as well as between countries within Latin America; and secondly, to devise projects of multidisciplinary, collaborative research between network member institutions.

A draft version of a proposal for a programme of mobility was one of the outcomes of the second meeting, hosted by Intermediate Technology Development Group in Lima in July. The network also drafted a proposal for a programme of collaborative research, which will be finalised before the Network's final meeting scheduled for late 1998. This third meeting will be followed by a two-day workshop.

Members of the Network are: National University of Colombia (Colombia), Javeriana University (Colombia), San Carlos University (Guatemala), Federal University of Paraiba (Brazil), Intermediate Technology Development Group (Peru), Deusto University (Spain), University of the Basque Country (Spain), Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain), Centre for Development Research (Denmark), Trinity College, University of Dublin (Ireland) and the RSP, University of Oxford (UK). Network representatives come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds including social anthropology, economics, health sciences, law, political science and sociology.

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# Enclosures and exclusions: wildlife conservation schemes and pastoral tribes in the Middle East

by Dawn Chatty

Conservation schemes in Arabia continue to regard local populations as obstacles to be overcome - instead of as partners in sustainable conservation and development.

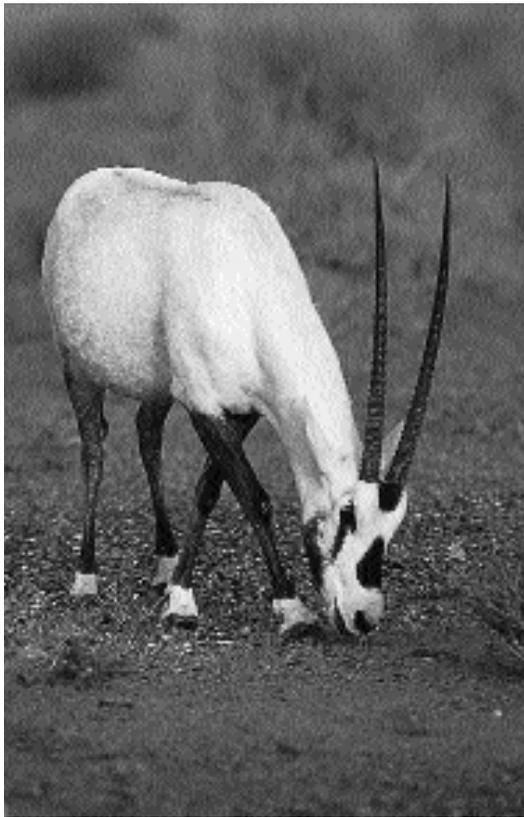
**W**ildlife conservation schemes, which aim to protect endangered fauna and flora, have a relatively recent history in northern Arabia. Their philosophical underpinnings, however, stem from a long African colonial and post-independence tradition. In East Africa and elsewhere, pastoral populations were long ago forced off their grazing lands in order to create parks for wildlife and tourists (Turton, 1987; Howell, 1987; McCabe *et al*, 1992). Conservation meant the preservation of flora and fauna and the exclusion of people, and indigenous peoples were often regarded as impediments, not only to the state's conservation policy but also to its general desire to modernise and develop.

There are numerous examples of such displacement in Africa, including farmers and pastoralists in Chad, the Maasai who were expelled from the Serengeti in Tanzania, and the Berber of the High Atlas region of Morocco. The study of the Ik, in perhaps the most grotesque example of the conservation process of forced removal and relocation, documented the consequences when a community was expelled from traditional hunting grounds in order to create the Kidepo National Park in Uganda. Obligated to adopt agricultural techniques for subsistence, the community suffered prolonged famine leading to a total collapse of the society (Turnbull, 1972).

## Recent alternatives to the traditional conservation paradigm

For several decades now, there has been a growing body of opinion that argues for a more pluralistic way of thinking about the world and how to change it (eg Vickers, 1981; Pretty, 1994). Ecosystems are now more clearly regarded as dynamic and continuously changing, and the importance of people in their development is being acknowledged. This concern is based upon a new understanding of human populations as nurturers and conservers rather than simply destroyers of their own environments. In conservation circles there is a growing recognition that without local involvement there is little real chance of protecting wildlife, and the concept of 'conservation with a human face' (Bell, 1987) and the need for community participation (IIED, 1994) are now at least discussed. A few promising examples of African conservation efforts are now emerging where efforts are being made to integrate indigenous human populations into conservation and development projects (IIED, 1994).

Transposed to Arabia, Africa's new found conservation wisdom loses something in the translation. Using the internationally supported oryx reintroduction project in Oman<sup>1</sup> as a starting point, I aim to show that conservation schemes in Arabia continue to regard local



**Arabian oryx**

populations as obstacles to be overcome - either by monetary compensation or by special terms of local employment - instead of as partners in sustainable conservation and development.

### **Omani case study**

The earliest expression of interest in conservation in Arabia emerged in the middle of this century as the alarming rate at which gazelle, oryx and other 'sporting' animals were being caught or killed became clear. By 1972, the oryx was extinct in Oman and the rest of Arabia. In 1977 and 1978 a consultant with the World Wildlife Fund toured extensively through the interior of Oman trying to locate an 'ideal' place for a reintroduction project. He concluded that the ideal habitat for the oryx reintroduction would be in the Jiddat-il-Harasiis and that the whole of the Jiddat-il-Harasiis should be proclaimed a wildlife reserve or sanctuary. These recommendations were adopted, and in 1980 the first oryx from the World Herd were flown back into the country and released into the main oryx enclosure at Yalooni. Ten Harasiis tribesmen, out of an indigenous population of 3,000, were hired to serve as oryx rangers, tracking the animals and keeping daily records of their movements. For the first three

years there were no conflicts between the indigenous population, the growing expatriate conservation management team, and other Omanis.

Thereafter, difficulties gradually appeared in terms of competition over grazing, during prolonged drought, between the herds of domestic goat and camel and the reintroduced oryx (Stanley Price, 1989: 212-213), between the lineages of the Harasiis tribe over access to employment and special benefits, and between the Harasiis and rival tribes who had been completely ignored in this conservation effort. The appearance of poaching, first reported in 1986 and increasing yearly thereafter, by rival tribesmen and - some say - disaffected youth, point to the flaws in planning, design and implementation which top-down conservation projects all too often have. The animal reintroduction project was developed with near total disregard

for the indigenous human population. The idea of setting up an oryx sanctuary in Harasiis traditional territory was never discussed with the Harasiis, nor were they consulted on the most suitable area to place such a sanctuary<sup>2</sup>. The aims of the project, its goals, the implied restrictions on infrastructural development, and even the importance of their cooperation were never put forward to the tribal community.

As long as the Harasiis had no aspirations of their own, no desire to see an improvement in their access to water, no desire to have regular road grading, or infrastructural development in their traditional homeland, relations with the oryx reintroduction project remained untroubled. A confrontation over grazing competition in the mid 1980s as a result of which the oryx reintroduction manager requested that the Harasiis move away - and some refused - should have raised the alarm with conservationists. The Harasiis eventually came to realise that conservation placed constraints on the development of the

region. At the same time, the age old rivalry between the Harasiis tribe and their neighbours, the Jeneba, found new expression. Although the relationship cannot be proved, the fact that there has been a rapid rise in the rate of poaching (nearly 30 oryx were poached in 1996 alone - 10 per cent of the total herd)<sup>3</sup>, and that those caught have all been Jeneba tribesmen, suggests that inter-tribal rivalry is on the rise and that the project is not maintaining its popularity, or at least not with the youth of the tribe who grew up during the time when the oryx was extinct and therefore not really a part of their cultural tradition. To these disaffected, largely unemployed youths and rival tribesmen, the oryx sanctuary makes no sense. The opportunity to make some money by illegal poaching becomes a difficult temptation to resist when there is no sense of ownership or participation in the sanctuary.

### **Pastoralists and conservation in Syria**

Syria is now studying international conservation proposals to develop its own protected wildlife area in a part of the desert that provides crucial winter and spring grazing for the herds of a number of already marginalised Bedouin tribes. Establishment of the independent nation-state in the late 1940s and 1950s saw the culmination of several decades of sustained efforts to control and break down pastoral tribal organisation. Since then the Bedouin land holdings, once held in common, have been increasingly

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*The animal reintroduction project was developed with near total disregard for the indigenous human population*

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registered in the names of tribal leaders of important families and converted into farms. Some Bedouin families settled on the fringes of this agriculture. Many combined some farming with pastoralism, moving their herds out into the *Badia*<sup>4</sup> in late winter and early summer. Others moved away from these fringe areas, and began settling seasonally in small hamlets in the *Badia*, keeping their herds on the move for much of the year in search of natural grazing and post-harvest stubble.

The 1960s was a period of strenuous government land reform, including the complete seizure of all common tribal land and the confiscation of the large tracts of land owned by tribal leaders. Following a three-year-long drought in which over two million sheep died, the government instituted a programme to alleviate the problems caused by this ecological disaster. A UN project was set up to revitalise the pastoral sector of the Syrian economy with the primary goal of stabilising the livestock population. After a number of false starts, it launched a campaign to convince agencies concerned with rangeland of the

Bedouin a participatory voice in the running of cooperatives is an improvement over the uncontrolled grazing of the 1950s and the rigid government regulatory schemes of the 1960s.

### Conservation of wildlife in the *Badia*

In 1992 Syria attended meetings of the Commission for Natural Parks and Protected Areas of the World Conservation Union in Sicily, and negotiated funding for a project to rehabilitate rangeland and to establish a wildlife reserve in the Palmyra *Badia*. The pro-

jects to have obtained "higher forage production from the Al Badia Rangelands to enable domesticated animals and wildlife to live in harmony on the land" (FAO, 1995:7). In the third and final year of this project, physical boundaries will be established and "the reserve will only be devoted to wildlife grazing" (FAO, 1995:7). In other words, at the close of the project, the Bedouin and their herds will be excluded from an important area of rehabilitated rangeland.

Although the project will need the cooperation of the Bedouin communities that have used these grazing lands for the past few decades, no visible effort is made in the technical description of the project to incorporate them in its planning, development or implementation. What this project reveals is either the short memory of government or the difficulty of learning from past experience. The lessons that should have been learned in the 1960s after the Syrian government, with the assistance of a UN agency, attempted to revive nomadic sheep breeding without including people into its plans, have simply been forgotten. Pastoralists cannot be separated from their animals or from their common grazing land. Furthermore, the underlying assumption of this project seems to be the now stale assumption

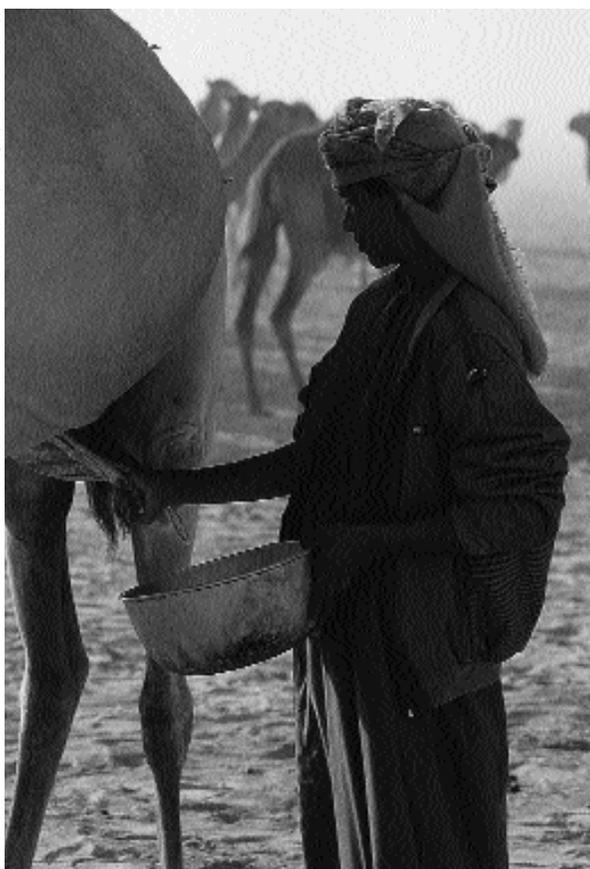
## *Pastoralists cannot be separated from their animals or from their common grazing land.*

importance of studying the human factor. It argued that the best means of repairing the damage overgrazing had caused in the desert, and improving the Bedouin economy, was by reviving the Bedouin tradition of *hema* (ie returning control over range conservation and management of grazing lands to the Bedouin).

These recommendations for a return to a system of communal ownership appealed to the Syrian government's socialist orientation and the proposal was accepted. After several years of trial and error, a programme of cooperatives was implemented whereby block applications by tribal units for control over their former traditional grazing lands were entertained by the government. Today, perhaps two thirds of Syria's Bedouin population are member of *hema* cooperatives and associated schemes. As membership has never been mandatory but rather the individual choice of a tribesman within a lineage group, the majority of Syria's Bedouin are joining because they perceive a benefit from doing so. The benefit is both as an individual herd owner and as a tribesman in terms of access to managed grazing, preferential prices for feed, and some credit facilities. Despite numerous ups and downs caused by changing legislation, and inadequate restraint on the spread of agriculture into the *Badia*, the current situation which allows

ject proposes to address three interrelated issues: diminishing grazing land, disappearing wildlife, and increasing requirements for supplemental feeding of domestic herds. It also proposes to incorporate some of the land holdings of three *hema* cooperatives into protected ranges, to set up restrictions on access by Bedouin and their domestic herds, and to run a programme to introduce new plant species. Within two years, it

photograph: Dawn Chatty



(see, for example, Behnke *et al*, 1993; Pimbert and Pretty, 1995:5) that it is pastoralists that are overgrazing, or overstocking, and that the solution is to reduce herd numbers and restrict their access to land in order to protect its carrying capacity. This assumption simply provides a scapegoat for a problem rather than looking for sustainable solutions. Such a search requires the inclusion of the affected population, not their exclusion and further displacement. The Bedouin need to be part of the project. Their perceptions of the problems, causes and possible solutions need to be taken into account. Their needs for their own herds - their access to graze, water and supplemental feed - need to be considered as well. For without accommodation of their needs, Bedouin will not support the conservation project.

### Conclusion

Sustainable conservation requires, above all else, the goodwill of

indigenous populations and not their forced exclusion or displacement. As McCabe and others (1992:353-366) have demonstrated, linking conservation with human development offers the most promising course of action for long-term sustainability of nature and human life. Nature reserves and other protected areas must be placed in a regional context. If the economy of the human population is in a serious state of decline, the establishment of a wildlife reserve in their midst does not augur well for long-term sustainability. The population is unlikely to see any benefit from such a scheme and cooperation is unlikely. If, on the other hand, the problems of the human population are addressed and the community envisages benefit from a combined conservation/development scheme, then cooperation and long-term sustainability are possible.

**Dawn Chatty is a social anthropologist who has worked with Bedouin and other nomadic communities in the Middle East for over 20 years. She is a Senior Research Fellow and the Deputy Director of the Refugee Studies Programme.**

1 Similar oryx reintroduction schemes exist in Saudi Arabia and Jordan

2 One Harasiis tribesman was consulted This was a contact of the British expatriate adviser from his days as a liaison officer for the national oil company. But he was not part of the political leadership of the tribe, who were not consulted, in fact, until the handover of Yalooni was a *fait accompli* (see Chatty, 1996:136).

3 The estimated number of oryx poached in 1996 is drawn from a number of informants both on the Jiddat itself and in the capital, Muscat The former manager of the oryx project station at Yalooni, Roddy Jones, pointed out to me that the pattern of poaching in the Jiddat was suggestive of traditional tribal raiding. The Jenaba obviously see the oryx as 'belonging' to the Harasiis. So the act of poaching is an expression of economic and political rivalry.

4 *Badia* is the Arabic word for the semi-arid land which covers 80-85% of Syria and Jordan The term Bedouin refers to the people who inhabit the *Badia*.

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