ACTION RESEARCH

How a group of young people did it in Napak and Moroto in Karamoja, Uganda

A method paper for the research
"Strength, Creativity and Livelihoods of Karimojong Youth"

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Introduction

Welcome to these pages. They describe an approach to action research used by a group of young people in Karamoja, Uganda. With guidance from experienced facilitators, 13 young people researched the situation of youth in their area over a period of 5 weeks in November/December 2011[1]. They published their findings in a book that should be read alongside this document on method. 'Strength, Creativity and Livelihoods of Karimojong Youth' can be downloaded from www.restlessdevelopment.org or from www.pastoralists.org.

These pages explain the basic principles we used. We are not holding up the work as a flawless example. We had to deal with many of the usual problems that beset genuine attempts to promote people's research into their own issues and on their own terms; including the questions of who commissions and who pays, how pressed everyone is for time and resources, and how ordinary people, who are not supposed to know how to do research, might suddenly take up the task with confidence and make use of facilitators without being dominated by them. The biggest issue of all is who takes action – who is it for?

The idea of action research is to recognise that these kinds of limitation always exist, and to produce truthful research that is useful to local communities and to outsiders despite the inevitable imperfections. This is done through being rigorous at every stage. Action research may appear relaxed but in truth it is not; it is done carefully and it sticks to its principles like glue. These pages aim to illustrate this cardinal point.

The first principle of action research is an equal level of respect for the researched and the researcher. It means that those who take part in it are the ones to design it. They must find ways to research that fit their constituency, questions and context. So, in these pages we do not give a method, tools or techniques, rather we explain effective principles put into practice in a given situation. If you are interested to apply action research principles to your own inquiries, in a way that answers your questions and fits with your situation, you may find some pointers from our experience.

What is action research?

"Action research catches people's own voices. It is useful. The researchers should come from the community¹ and they should ask their own questions and find their own answers."

Action research is a way for people to investigate matters that are important to them. It is practical and collaborative, tackling people's own questions, linking different players together and getting members of a community, group, organisation or network involved.

The logic is that when people who are part of a group define what needs to be known about their situation, they will generate uniquely useful knowledge. Once they and their community, organisation or network have learned about the subject they are investigating together, they can decide what to do about it. The results of this kind of research can also be very valuable to people who want to plan better programmes and policies, as it provides a perspective that is not usually accessible.

How does it work?

The group of researchers identify what their situation calls for. They ask questions, collect and analyse information, draw conclusions and debate what they are learning with people that they choose. Their inquiries draw in people who have an interest in the same questions, and the process leads to new questions. Unlike most other kinds of research (where questions and methods are fixed at the start), action research can encompass different methods and questions that fit with new understandings and changing contexts.

The question that impels a group of people to start an inquiry may not be the only question that needs to be asked, indeed it may even be the wrong question. Action research allows a group to change and expand its questions as it learns, as new people join, and as it undertakes new rounds of research once the conclusions of one round have been shared with others. The same applies to its methods. A method may work for one question, and not for another, for one group of people, and not for another, and so on. Action research involves a choice of method that is appropriate to the question being asked. In the process of iteration, action research can get more and more useful, involve more and more people, and generate more and more knowledge and ideas. Accounting for changes in the methods or the questions demands careful record keeping.

If an organisation decides to employ people to do action research for organisational purposes, then the researchers and their communities might think of the work as serving only the organisation, rather than as a process of discovery, self-realisation and co-learning with the organisation. There is a risk of breaking the first principle that the researchers and the researched must be equally respected in the design and purpose of the work. Nevertheless, such a process can be authentic action research – if the research team is able to take control and deliver useful knowledge to themselves and others. Such a transition from employee to action researcher demands extra rigorous attention to the principles that we lay out below.

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¹ A community can mean any group of people with a common interest. For example, people living in the same place, people working together.

Why do it?

Action research produces knowledge that is unique, fitting and timely. The researchers, who are ordinary people not outside experts, gain new insight, skills and direction from their involvement. Others who want to understand a situation, a group or a place, can also gain unique insight.

What makes it useful?

"Our team has got this knowledge in doing this research. We know what we want to do now."

If its evidence can be easily checked by the people who want to use it, they will judge it as valid.

If it responds to people's own questions, uses their language and way of speaking, fits with their philosophy, and is set in a familiar context it is likely to add to their knowledge and understanding.

They may then convey this knowledge to others in whatever language is suitable and they and others can take informed action in line with what they have learnt.

What are its principles?

"We learnt the things that can make a good researcher. We had golden rules where we had respect, listening and keeping an open mind – not judging."

There are three basic principles that should be applied at every stage of action research to guarantee its authenticity and good effect. Based on a philosophy of trustworthiness, these principles prove endlessly useful in making decisions about facilitation, building and working as a team, engaging with other people, dealing with sponsors, managing and interpreting material, taking conclusions out to people, and taking action.

Openness – the researchers need to be open to the possibility that the person or people being spoken to, or the material they are collecting, can tell them something *different* from what they already know. It calls for engagement.

Respect – the researchers need to believe that what people say is likely to be *true,* is worth something and will teach them something. They must also respect their own knowledge. It calls for polite but unstinting curiosity and discussion.

Listening – the researchers need to make an effort to understand what the person or situation is saying. What is heard needs to make sense. It calls for attention and clarification.

How were these principles put into practice in Karamoja?

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1. Background to the Karamoja research

In November 2011 a team of 13 Karimojong researchers, young women and men aged between 20 and 29 of the Matheniko, Bokora and Tepeth groups set out to research the situation of youth in their area. They visited 16 settlements, conducted 378 interviews and took thousands of photographs in Napak and Moroto Districts of Karamoja. They analysed hundreds of stories and discussions and drew their conclusions, which they put into an illustrated book, published in January 2012. The book is to be taken back to the places where they did the research, as well as shared with development agencies and officials.

This work is an example that is useful for demonstrating the principles in action. Being a real life example, it is also limited in that it is in a place unlike any other, done by a group of people in very particular circumstances, limited by the usual constraints of resources, time, power and much else besides.

2. Role of the facilitators

If a team forms itself as a result of its members' own volition then it may not need or want a facilitator. But, in instances when a team is being *recruited*, and when its members may not yet have a common purpose, good facilitators make an important contribution. Their task is to transmit action research principles by guiding, not directing, and backstopping not leading. They mediate between the research team and those who commission the research. But when assigning roles to team members, deciding what the work is for, whom to meet, when to do something, how to do it and so on, it is the team that decides, not the facilitators.

The facilitators' primary task with a recruited team is to build its power, confidence and independence. This begins with building respect between all the members. A team that has solidarity can work rigorously, and deal effectively with authorities or people who question its activities. It can draw on the combined talents of its members and their varied experience. It can take responsibility for its method, sources, findings and conclusions. Its members can be clear about their task and can explain it to others. They can show that they are using sound principles of analysis to come to their conclusions.

To facilitate **openness**, good facilitators will support the team to ask more questions, never thinking that a matter is closed. They will encourage them to avoid hearsay and question the voice of authority. In this way the facilitators are promoting openness to new ideas, making it possible for the team to come to new conclusions.

To facilitate **respect**, facilitators will encourage the team to look for diverse people to talk to. They learn to strengthen the argument of those they are talking to, rather than criticise them, look down on them, or assume their ignorance. Given that what researchers are being told by someone who has a different perspective is possibly true, the researchers must be encouraged to work out how it could be so. Facilitators will help the team members to recognise their own knowledge and then add to it, building relationships and creating new understanding.

To facilitate **listening**, facilitators will encourage researchers to clarify what they are hearing, always inquiring if they have heard right, seeking explanations of words, statements and claims and fitting them to their own understandings.

What do facilitators need to be able to do this well? They need to have a good understanding of local politics and the makeup of society in order that they can constantly encourage the team to engage with and include diverse perspectives. Once the skills of openness, respect and listening become the norms of interaction within the team, they become easy to use in interactions with others in the research process.

3. Building the Research Team

"We are youth from different groups in rural and urban areas of Moroto, Napak and Nakapiripirit. Some of us have been to school and some have not. We have experience of mining, quarrying, digging murram, raiding, peace work, brewing, herding, growing sorghum, photography, making mandazis (doughnuts), granaries, soap and jewellery, hunting, business and NGO work."

Building a research team means convening people who are interested in finding out about and taking action on a common topic and who are, as far as possible, representative of a diversity of experience and background. Diversity is important because the researchers' own knowledge plays such an important role in action research in defining the purpose, setting the questions, framing the explanation of the research to those they meet and interpreting what people tell them and the data they collect. The team can be understood not only as a group of people with a task, but also as a discussion between different perspectives with a goal of understanding something.

Restless Development, wanting to enhance its work by responding to young Karimojong interests and concerns, put out an advertisement, calling for volunteers to take part in action research in Napak and Moroto Districts of Karamoja. They had resources to support a process for five weeks, including bringing in facilitators and producing an illustrated book. They were also able to find resources for a final week when the researchers would take their findings back to discuss them with the communities they had visited.

The facilitators stipulated that the team members should have experience of and interest in the topic, i.e., they should be young Karimojong themselves, and that they should be from a variety of backgrounds and a balance of schooled and unschooled. They suggested that the team should comprise about 12 people. Why 12? If a team is to generate questions that are fitting to the community, it needs to be diverse and to some extent 'representative' of the diversity it wants to consult within the wider community. At the same time, too much diversity will be self-defeating, as the team members must be able to get on with each other in achieving a demanding task. They need to have a common interest that they agree to research together. If they have widely differing interests, they might never agree on a purpose and a question to go out and ask. They also have to be not so many that they cannot fit into the available transport.

From more than 90 young people who volunteered to be part of the team, Restless Development created a shortlist of 20 people. The facilitators convened the 20 for the design stage. After a first day of story telling and discussion 13 people were selected for the team. The facilitators also recruited one elder, with experience of both research and Karimojong tradition, who would act as a supporter and advisor to their work.

The criteria for selecting the 13 young people were:

• Diversity and balance of gender, livelihood, schooling/non-schooling

• Openness to difference

• Respect for others

• Good questioners

• Good listeners

The diversity criterion means trying to draw in people who do not normally take part in formal research processes – people who are commonly thought of as not interested or 'desirable'. In Moroto, there was surprise that the facilitators insisted on people who had not been to school and people who were not living in an easily reachable settlement or town. The recruitment could not reach everybody – young people who were living far away, full time herders and full time farmers did not join. In the end the team came from rural and urban areas, some had been to school and some had not, each had experience of different ways of life, and they were of different ethnicities and genders. Their combined backgrounds and experience meant that when they went to meet people to conduct their research, they knew the language, the culture, the issues. They could introduce themselves through connections and they could understand what they were hearing. Their various skills could be deployed for different tasks to which they appointed each other. Those with writing could take a written record, those with oral skills could explain the purpose and ask clear questions. Young men who had been raiders or herders could gain the trust of other young men like themselves; young women who know how to brew beer and do business could chat about it with peers; those who had been to school could gain the confidence of others who had been to school.

"This thing has brought unity among us. It has created friendship. We have learned from each other."

4. Finding the topic and setting the questions

"We began our training in designing action research by telling stories about our lives, which let us understand each other's experiences and interests and make friends with each other. We identified our topic from our stories, 'strength, creativity and livelihoods of youth in Karamoja'."

Action research is different from other kinds of social research in that it recognises that the point of view of the researchers is as important in the findings as the points of view of others who contribute information. The researchers' own frame of reference is made explicit at all stages.

Stories are a good way to introduce people to one another and to lay the foundation for agreements about purpose and topic. They can encourage openness, listening and respect in building a team and its skills. They allow listeners to hear points of convergence and difference. Story telling can give a good basis for working together.

In Moroto, the facilitators looked for a meeting place where each member of the team would feel at ease. They made sure that the food was right and that tea came at frequent intervals. Then they asked the newly assembled team to tell a short story from their life to show a little of who they are, what makes them strong, what they care about, and what brought them to join the team.

The facilitators encouraged the group members to ask questions after each story. They urged them to recognise which questions are open and increase understanding and which contain judgement and close down understanding.

"Stories mean listening to each other and trying to understand. When one person tells the story, the others were listening and were able to give back what they heard. There was openness – when someone was telling the story they weren't fearing the members so they could just say what they felt. They knew the members wouldn't say anything bad to them about their story."

After a number of stories had been told, and then again at the end, the facilitators asked the following questions to identify the research topic and research questions:

- What was the common thread in the stories?

- What *topics* aroused the most discussion and energy in the group?

- What were the *questions* that seemed to be calling out from the stories?

- Which topics and questions could form the basis of our research inquiry?

Topic

In each story the team members described their tireless efforts to earn a living and make a better life for themselves and their families. By the end of the discussion about common threads and important topics, the way of making a living came through strongly. The discussions had also focused on strengths – those that people have, and those that they need to do well. The team worked out that the topic of their research was how young people are making a living and what strengths they are using.

Questions

With clarity on the topic, we looked for questions that would help us to find out information that could help in seeing the situation of young people's livelihoods more clearly. The questions are about the topic – what did we want to know about it? The team wanted to know in what direction things were going, and what could be done to maximise strengths. They agreed they needed to find out not only the current situation, but also how things had come to be this way, and how things were looking for the future.

They selected four *open* questions that would invite those they met to say as much or as little as they wished. People could tell stories of their lives, or they could explain the different things that they were doing, how and why.

- "how are you/young people here making a living?"

- "what is influencing it?"

- "what makes it good?"

- "how has it come to be so?"

"Someone tells a story concerning his life. We heard people's strength and livelihood from this. Even from these stories we were able to create friendship. And we could find how they live in their place. The usefulness of this was that we got knowledge and skills."

5. Planning the research

People and Places

The plan focuses on people and places. The first stage is to agree on the limits. How wide an area? How many locations? How many people? How much time? When conducting the research, and when explaining and justifying it to others, it helps to be clear about from where and whom the findings came – we went to these areas, we talked to these people.

To agree the minimum number of people and places that are needed to say something true and useful, the team works out the diversity of people and places according to the parameters of the research questions, e.g. the range of livelihoods, and the range of different players in society affecting young people's choices. How many people and places will be enough to get a set of perspectives that is sufficiently broad and deep?

To agree the maximum number of people and places for the research plan, the team takes account of pragmatic considerations. How many people and places will be manageable within the time, people and resources that we have?

In Napak and Moroto Districts, the research team needed to make sure that they visited places that would show all the main livelihoods. They were familiar with the area and made a map on which they marked all the livelihoods they knew of in each location. They selected 6 sub-counties and 16 settlements across the sub-counties. In places where a research team is less familiar with the profile of the area, it might find that it needs to begin by collecting basic information from reliable sources. Then it might plan an initial set of places to visit, adding additional places as it learns.

In choosing how many people to speak to, the team knew that it needed to engage enough people doing each livelihood, and enough people of different ages, ethnicities and places to begin to see patterns and tendencies. The team decided to cover at least 6 different areas to account for the differences in livelihoods.

They worked out that there was time to spend one day in each place. The 12 people[1], working in pairs, would be able to manage about 4 interviews per pair or a total of 24 per place, giving an overall total of around 384 interviews.

"We made a map of the two districts and selected four sub-counties that show the livelihoods. Later we added two more sub-counties to include mining and quarrying, and traditional herding. We wrote the names of all the parishes and picked 16 at random from one of our hats. We planned our routes, and worked out security, logistics, timing and communication by cellphone. We prepared letters of introduction. We appointed guardians of the purpose, community respect, logistics, analysis, photography and security."

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[1]   The 13th team member, Joyce, was going to be away at her university graduation during the first week of visits to the communities, and would rejoin the team half way through.

To agree who they would like to meet, team members discussed all the different people that would be needed to give the different aspects of present livelihoods, and who would add to this understanding with details of the history and a direction for the future. Young women and men became the primary respondents because the team felt that the research was by, with and for them. In addition they also wanted to speak to others, mostly elders and mothers, to understand more about young people's position and situation in the broader context and to learn how the situation had come to be.

Logistics and Timetable

If the logistical support is ineffective, the entire research is put in jeopardy. Therefore much attention should be paid to getting it right. There will be inevitable challenges, but they should be kept to a minimum.

Restless Development provided logistical support to the team during the training, fieldwork and analysis phases. This involved arranging venues and food for the training and analysis, hiring vehicles, and making payments for traditional gifts, mobile phone time and living allowances to the team.

The team was responsible for managing these resources. They set out a timetable and organised their transport to take them out to settlements and kraals for two days and then every third day to share findings with each other in Moroto. They made decisions about security, transport, protocol with local leaders and communication with one another and with Restless Development; fitting their plans to the resources and the situation at the time. They used their own networks of information. Finally team members allocated a role to each of their number, so that every task had a responsible person and everyone had a role. In each group of six there were six roles: guardian of the purpose, of respect, of logistics, of security, of photography and of analysis. One English speaker was also responsible for liaison with Restless Development.

6. Researching in the settlements and Kraals

Method

The team found people, provoked discussions, asked questions, and recorded material using the three principles:

Respect: Discussing the topic with people, introducing who the researchers are, their purpose, their learning so far, being polite and answering as well as asking questions.

Openness: Allowing the people they interviewed to influence the direction of the discussion, its focus and its most important points. Taking an interest in how one person's points are different from those of others or those of the researcher, they avoided judging people, or rejecting their point of view or decisions as less valuable.

Listening: Paying attention to words, gestures and surroundings, sticking to the topic firmly, feeding back what has been heard (this is what I heard you say. Am I right?) and asking clarifying questions, (can you tell me more?).

"To listen well you should watch people's eyes and lips..."

Meeting people, seeing places and recording

The researchers agreed on face-to-face discussions with individuals, or twos or threes as they encountered them. They discussed how to find different kinds of people when they were in the settlements and kraals, before they went off herding, or when they came back from market. They spent some time working out how to approach people well and how to ask a few open questions to stimulate discussion. Each team had one digital camera and three voice recorders. They decided how they would take photographs and record conversations.

In each parish the team divided into two sub-teams of six people. Each sub-team went to a different place. They introduced themselves to the village leader or local administrator. The pairs went in search of young people and greeted them. They gave snuff as a traditional gift. They greeted mothers and older people with particular respect. They spent a little time chatting and helping those they met with whatever work they were doing. Then they asked their questions politely: 'how are you making a living?' 'What makes it good?' They asked people to tell stories from their lives.

Some people they met hoped for payment, while others were at first unwilling to engage. But the researchers made efforts to make friends and in most cases they were successful. They explained that they were also young Karimojong and not from outside. They used the principles they had agreed: respect, openness and listening. They were careful not to make promises they could not keep, promising only to return with the book of the research.

The team recorded 378 interviews and stories on voice recorders, to hear people's voices. Every third day elder, John Logwee, joined them for a day of analysis in Moroto town. Together they discussed and analysed what they had heard and seen, improving their approach and questions. They wrote the most arresting stories into record books and reviewed photographs.

7. Analysis

Analysis, separating the material into its constituent elements in order to understand it better, involves four stages:

- *collating or organising* the material in an arrangement that makes it easy to navigate or manage,

- *interpreting* it in ways that make sense,

- *synthesising* it to look for generalisations and patterns,

- *concluding* its essential messages.

Unlike other forms of research, the analytical process in action research does not wait until all the material has been collected, but begins as early as the first meeting of the researchers. It continues throughout the discussion with each person who contributes knowledge to the research.

In every settlement and kraal and in the analysis sessions back in Moroto every third day, discussions about what people were saying were already leading the team towards ideas about how to organise their material. They were also getting a sense of direction for interpreting what they were finding, when they heard what people found important and why. After 18 days out, they returned to base for a final analysis, joined once again by John Logwee and the facilitators.

The team members were anxious to do the 'right thing'. They were concerned that the themes that they were hearing from people did not fit with the themes that they had talked about before they had set out. At the beginning of the analysis session, the facilitators began by asking them to speak about what had surprised or struck them in their visits and encounters. Team members responded with the issues that had the greatest resonance or were most often repeated. In this way, the team established themes for analysis based on their actual encounters rather than on categorisations that they had imagined before the interviews.

The first surprise they mentioned was that many people they met felt that NGOs were disconnected from the real life of the people. Was what the young researchers doing any different from all the others who had come before? People complained that they never saw any result from those visits by outsiders. The young people replied that this research was different; it was for Karimojong young people and they, the team members, were Karimojong youth too. They made promises to bring the results back.

Collating

The team members decided to collate the material in a way that would help in keeping that promise while also communicating to NGOs, government and the world outside their own. They needed to make their findings clear to and verifiable by Karimojong. They decided to organise and present their findings settlement by settlement, using numerous pictures, direct quotes and stories. Their approach would respect the Karimojong way of rooting analysis in the concrete reality of people and places. It would make the material easy to navigate and the findings trustworthy.

Interpreting

Collated information can be interpreted in many ways. The choice about what should be emphasised, whose opinions to give space to, and what questions to ask of the collected material, will strongly affect the conclusions. In action research it is important to interpret material in ways that are fitting to the local researchers' concerns and do justice to those they spoke to.

In talking about what struck them, the young researchers pinpointed particular issues that people emphasised strongly, or repeated often:

• the harshness of the work many young people were doing with such determination;

• the number of different things people were willing to put their hands to;

• the importance of friendship;

• the way people took care of things and valued knowledge;

• a widespread effort to return to the traditional culture of livestock-keeping.

The team turned these findings into categories: openmindedness, adaptability, respect, care and knowledge and tradition. All these phenomena were strengths, they said. Strength became their frame for interpreting the material, reflecting their own concerns and those of the people that they met.

All the pictures were loaded on to a computer and the data in voice recorders, record books and notebooks was organised by community. The team split into two groups, a picture group and a story group, each spending three days reviewing and choosing pictures and narratives that would be used to speak for the key points from each place. Each one was chosen to show the livelihoods they found in each place and to reflect the different aspects of strength and creativity that were coming through. The groups presented their choices to each other and discussed and recorded their interpretations.

Synthesising

This stage involves looking at the material and pulling out patterns and generalisations. It means looking for what most people are pointing out and looking for their explanations as to why they are saying this. It also means paying attention to what only a few people say, asking why it is so and what this outlier can add to our understanding of the main patterns.

The facilitators drew up a chart that listed the main livelihoods and the team scored each livelihood for how commonly they found it, how much people liked it, and whether it was a growing or declining way of making a living. The most frequent way of making a living turned out to be making charcoal, an unsustainable activity, but good for surviving and for earning extra money to buy livestock. The most desirable for everyone was to have cows, but only about half the people they met had any left after the years of violence. Least desirable, but relatively common, were the hard jobs of mining, quarrying, digging grit and breaking stones, all of which the young people believed would die away once people had managed to buy livestock again. They saw a future in which everyone would battle out of poverty based on their hard work, cooperation and ingenuity.

The second synthesis activity involved listing every instance of strength that they had come across. The list came to over 30 different strengths. They described them as they had found them among the people, identifying who

had which kind of strength and in what context was it important. They grouped them into five categories: respect, open-mindedness, flexibility, care and knowledge, and traditional law. They discussed how each of these linked to the other four, and explained how they all worked together in the context of making a good life for individuals and communities.

Thus the team created generalisations about livelihoods and the strengths that people were relying on to struggle out of poverty. They explained how this situation had come to be, identifying patterns in people's choices of livelihood and in how they are using their strengths.

Concluding

In action research a conclusion is always provisional. It is a proposition to debate with others. It is accompanied by questions such as: how do you see it? And, what shall we do? Because of its nature as a contribution to a discussion, an action research conclusion respects what the audience will find useful, as well as what people said and what the researchers have concluded. It amplifies what the people being researched are saying and wanting to clarify about the topic. It brings in observations from different places and helps people to see the topic afresh.

The team made four points in their conclusion. First, they said that the situation they found had been caused by years of severe insecurity on the one hand, and by disrespect of their culture by outsiders on the other. Second, they pointed out that the Karimojong response was to draw on indigenous strength to rebuild livelihoods and culture. Third, they explained that Karimojong youth were drawing strength from tradition, friendships and courage. Fourth, they suggested that outsiders coming to the region should make a demonstrable effort to listen to the people. They asked that they support rather than undermine strengths, align with the direction of livelihoods and culture that Karimojong want, and operate in Karamoja according to the principles of respect, listening and open-mindedness.

Reporting

The conclusion, the analysis, the evidence and the method were all gathered together into a report. Reporting involves presenting the findings in a coherent narrative that makes sense, and is true and respectful of its audience. It should do justice to those who contributed.

The Karamoja team's report, 'Strength, Creativity and Livelihoods of Karimojong Youth' was built during the analysis process. The facilitation team included graphic design, writing and publications skills. As the days went by, the pictures, text and quotations were uploaded onto pages on a desktop publishing program. The final report began to form. The team generated its content and conclusions and agreed all its words and images. The facilitators then put all the synthesised material together into a book designed to be legible to people literate or not – the argument and evidence is apparent in the pictures as much as in the text. Once the draft was prepared, Restless Development took it to the team who reviewed it in detail. They made changes and endorsed the contents, layout and design. It then went to the printers.

For a copy of the book please visit www.restlessdevelopment.org or www.pastoralists.org.

8. What next?

To fulfill the principle of respect for those who have been the subject of the research, the findings of an action research process should be shared with as many of those who took part as possible. During January 2012, the team plan to take the books back to the communities they visited. They will discuss what they found and what should be done. They want to talk with young people about how they can build on the strengths they found. This is an example of the research becoming action.

The team is committed to action. However, they are not necessarily going to be able to do what they hope. Their livelihoods are precarious. They do not have resources to carry on without support. Several of them may get better sources of income and will have to focus on those. They may scatter in different directions, even though they built a remarkable team and developed a strong sense of purpose. If the process that they started does continue, they will be able to generate information on increasingly difficult issues (political, social, technical or otherwise). They will be able to inform programmes and projects, as well as their own community action. To keep it rigorous, support to the process will have to be as hands-off as this round has been. It has to allow the team to discuss what needs to be done with their peers and then do the kind of work that is truly useful to their community.

For the staff of Restless Development, who wanted to learn from the young people's perspective, the imperative is to hear the young people's challenge to NGOs and act on it. The organisation may want to do its own action research to understand its position more clearly and work out how to strengthen its programmes to better respond to the voices of young people.

The research team set out to make clear to their peers, elders, development agencies and others their strengths and the direction they want to take them. This they achieved. They made the point that the principles of open-mindedness, respect and listening are the foundations for the way they want to be treated, as well as the principles of action research. Now they want to see action. We can only wait and see what they, their communities and any of their supporters do as a result. We will keep you posted and we wish you good luck with your own journey with action research.

This paper, along with the book of the research "Strength, Creativity and Livelihoods of Karimojong Youth", is available from www.restlessdevelopment.org and www.pastoralists.org.

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