

them, and they draw pictures. We want the children to have fun in school. They must not be afraid of school. They are all very keen to learn. They like to play and to have fun.

The adult people in the village like it too. They helped to build the school building with us. Next year in January we will start our class 1 in //Auru and in four other villages.

I think it is important to learn from an early age. We must be able to do things on our own. We must be able to understand what we are doing. Only then we can be independent of other people.

For me it is a very exciting experience to be here in Copenhagen. It is good that I can talk to you people far away from Bushmanland. We must talk to understand each other. I will tell my people what we discussed here. It is so important that we communicate. It is so good that we are being heard. I am looking forward to hearing about your experiences. I would like to thank you all for the invitation to this conference.

Thank you very much.

(Mr. #Oma G/aqo represented the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia, Baraka Training Centre, Eastern Bushmanland, at the conference)

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KXAO MOSES #OMA

CO-OP MANAGEMENT AND LAND RIGHTS

Work Experiences within the context of the Question of
Human Rights

I would like to thank you for the invitation to speak at this important conference today. You have given me the opportunity, apparently a human right, to speak on behalf of my Ju/'hoan colleagues.

I would like to point out that we, the Ju/'hoansi, did not have this right to spell out our concern before independence. I am not used to addressing such an international forum, but I will try my best and I am sure I will learn more from this experience.

I would like to speak on behalf of my brothers and sisters in Bushmanland, about Land Rights and our traditional *N! ore* system. I myself work as the manager of the *Nyae Nyae Farmers' Co-operative*, where I consider myself to be the „trouble-shooter“ for whatever problems may occur. It is a very demanding position, and due to the vast area of Bushmanland it is not always easy to communicate efficiently with all our 32 *n!oresi* (villages).

I consider it very difficult to live in Bushmanland. Since the South African army attracted a considerable number of Damaras to work for them, these people have made life difficult for us. The high salaries paid by the South African army introduced money into a moneyless society, which led to problems like alcohol abuse and the exploitation of the Ju/'hoansi by other peoples who were more used to a money-orientated economy.

I would like to point out, however, that despite all the problems I am not at all interested in leaving Bushmanland: I was born here, and I am prepared to do my share to make things work again.

Within the Co-op, we work together to enhance the quality of life for all the Ju/'hoansi. We want to be independent and to produce agricultural products on our own, including cattle farming and the maintenance of technical equipment. The structure of the Co-op is democratic, with every *n!ore* electing two representatives who then

elect the Co-op leadership, consisting of the President, the Chairperson, the Manager and the Assistant Manager.

Setting up a co-operative is a difficult process, but it is slowly working out. The cattle situation in the *n!oresi* is good, and every *n!ore* has good, clean water. The problem is, that sometimes people want too much too fast. We always and consistently address this problem in our meetings with the villagers. It is a matter that requires a great deal of time and dedication.

Daily life in Bushmanland revolves around *n!oresi*. Bushmanland or the Nyae Nyae area is our large *n!ore*. It is like a territory for all our families. The large *n!ore* consists of our small *n!oresi*, which are the territories of an extended family. *N!ore* means basically the place where you were born and where your parents and your grandparents were born. In Eastern Bushmanland we have 200 of such „family *n!oresi*“.

The *n!ore* is not just a piece of land. It is a piece of nature. It is our natural resource. We find our entire livelihood in such a *n!ore*, the vegetables, the wild food plants, the water, the game and material for our houses, tools, and so on. Each *n!ore* does not provide the same natural resources, therefore the Ju/'hoan families have learnt to share them. We have learnt to help each other in order to survive in such a harsh environment. In short, the *n!ore* is our backbone for survival, and therefore the foundation of our culture.

We wish to maintain and manage our *n!oresi* for our children and grandchildren, so that we have something valuable to offer them for their future. If you just look across the border fence to Botswana where our brothers and sisters have lost their *n!ore* rights, you might recognize that there the Ju/'hoansi are living in poverty and without any rights, oppressed by others who have taken over the Ju/hoansi land.

We, the Ju/'hoansi, consider the right to our *n!oresi*, the right to use and manage the natural resources, to be essential for our lives.

I brought this to your attention to inform you how we are depending on our *n!oresi*, and how our culture and well-being are linked to this land system. We Ju/'hoansi were born here, we grew up here, we married here. Still, Bushmanland belongs to the government - why don't we have the right to the land? We know the animals, we know the bush food, we were taught how to use these valuable natural resources for the best benefit of all our people. We are afraid of others moving in, and again taking away everything from us. For us, land rights are a human right. A human right the Farmer's Co-operative and all the Ju/'hoan people are committed to.

The independent government of Namibia has given us numerous opportunities to speak about our problems, concerns and future plans. We spoke at the National Land Conference in 1991, at the regional San conference in 1992, and recently at the UNIC/UNAM/ UNESCO Workshop on Education, Training and Information on Human Rights. We participate regularly in the Environmental Planning Committee of Bushmanland, and we are now taking part in this important conference in the year for Indigenous People.

Together with my brothers and sisters back home in Bushmanland, I consider this event a learning experience and a wonderful opportunity to meet other indigenous groups.

I believe it will be interesting to exchange our views, and to get new input from everybody participating here. We want to know if there is any other place with the same or similar problems, we want to find out if there has been any indigenous group that successfully secured their land rights and how it was achieved.

I must admit that sometimes I almost lose hope for our cause. Maybe we can get new and fresh encouragement from the people here? Maybe we can realize that we are not alone with our difficulties, and maybe we will find new strength in our struggle for our rights of which we have been deprived for so long? And, maybe even we, the Ju/'hoan people, can offer ideas to our friends in other countries.

I am looking forward to a dialogue and process of mutual encouragement. Encouragement is a powerful tool for everybody involved in our striving for justice and empowerment. If we are able to create this spirit of encouragement, the conference could be a starting-point for a better and more secure future for all indigenous peoples in the world.

Thank you for inviting us to be part of this re-construction of our reality.

Thank you very much

(Mr. Kxao Moses #Oma represented the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Co-operation, Baraka, Eastern Bushmanland, Namibia, at the conference)