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PASTORALIST FORUM ETHIOPIA

Voicing Pastoralism through Integrative Advocacy: Experiences and lessons learned from Ethiopia

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Key words: Pastoralists, Pastoralism, Ethiopia, Advocacy, Lobbying, Partnership, Networking



Introduction

In Ethiopia pastoralist population accounts more than 10 million (total population nearly 90 million) and inhabit more than half of the total landmass (FDRE HPR-PASC 2009). Almost all of pastoral inhabitants are considered rangelands. Pastoralists are endowed with huge livestock resources (42% of the total national TLU) and indigenous knowledge system that provides them with a rich resource for optimising production in often-challenging dryland environments. The contribution of pastoralism to national GDP is estimated 9% (Rodriguez, 2008 pp21). However despite the contribution and opportunities of pastoral livelihood systems, pastoralists have in the past years suffered from marginalization (economic, social and political) and exclusion from policy and decision-making processes.

This paper

The aims of this paper are to share experiences and lessons learned from advocating pastoralism and improving the voice of pastoralists in policy-making processes in Ethiopia through a specific activity and process – namely the Ethiopian Pastoralist Day. The paper has been developed through a self- and peer-reflective process by individuals and partners who have been involved in the development of EPD over the years. Questions considered include: What is the extent to which the EPD has helped mobilise pastoralists and created a common

platform for pastoralists to enable them to share experiences, both among themselves and with other stakeholders? What is the extent to which EPD has raised the profile and promoted the concern of pastoralists including through creating an enabling policy environment for pastoral development at local, regional and national levels? What have been the key successes and challenges of EPD? What are the lessons learned, including those relevant to other pastoral communities outside Ethiopia and those organisations that wish to support them?

The Birth and Development of Ethiopian Pastoralist Day

Cognizant of the age-old marginalization and exclusion, pastoral community elders and leaders from the Somali and the Oromo pastoral groups in Ethiopia and civil society organization (Pastoralist Concern Association Ethiopia, a local NGO) organized a conference in 1996 to discuss situation of pastoralists and they voiced for the first time uniqueness pastoral system and need for inclusive development. That was the birth of the Ethiopian Pastoralist Day (EPD) in 1999 and its subsequent development. EPD has now been celebrated for fifteen times since the first celebration on 25th Jan 1999. EPD is an *integrative* advocacy instrument. It is a unique process and an event that brings together almost all pastoral actors in Ethiopia for a common concern. The Day is marked in the presence of pastoralists, policy makers and dignitaries from

Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). EPD has been marked to influence policy makers, media and development actors to change policy, practices and behaviour. PCAE and pastoral representatives organized the first three EPDs (1999-2001) focusing on recognition of pastoralism as a way of life and viable production system. The pastoral groups in Ethiopia are diverse in terms of identity, geographical location and the scope of problems. As a result, PFE has taken the role of spearheading EPD at national level. Since 2008, EPD has been organized jointly by the Government, the House of Peoples' Representatives Pastoralist Affairs Standing Committee (PASC), and PFE. In our thinking, the innovative collaboration among these institutions makes EPD an *integrative* advocacy instrument.

Key Successes and Challenges of EPD

EPD mobilised pastoralists and helped create a common platform to enable them to share experiences: EPD has been celebrated in rotation at the national and regional (sub-national) levels so the pastoralists share living costumes and environment and level of development from each avenue. Thus, pastoralists coming from different localities have opportunity to discuss their respective and common issues and to present to the Government. The derogatory word (*Zelan*, local language, literally mean wonderers and lawless) has been slowly fading away and they are named *Arbetoader* (pastoralist). It was in 2008 (eight EPD) the Government of FDRE recognized EPD as a National Day. This is a milestone in the advocacy and lobby works of the PFE and partners.

EPD raised the profile and promoted concern of pastoralists and improving enabling policy environment: At each EPD, pastoralists have drawn up their own priority resolutions that have included amongst others the recognition of the uniqueness of pastoral livelihoods and requests for the establishment of pastoral oriented institutions. In terms of institutional development, the establishment of the PASC in the Federal Parliament was influenced by EPD. Most recently in 2015 a Ministry of Federal and Pastoral Development Affairs was established which is successor of MoFA; and, various regional pastoral government organs have been formed. And, subsequent national plans (e.g. poverty reduction or growth-transformation papers) have included pastoralism; and, aggregated pro-poor services (health, education, water) have been increased in triples. The challenges observed

so far are low level of institutionalization of EPD as it lacks clear monitoring and evaluation system and a slow move of the EPD into the regional and/or continental levels so that pastoralists living at adjacent countries would benefit more from opportunities created by EPD.

Lessons Learned for other Countries

Though a multi-pillar approach EPD has opened up different opportunities for influencing policy and decision-making approaches, through working with different sets of actors from national to local government, from elders to marginalised community members, and from international to local NGOs, EPD has brought together what were disparate sets of actors and developed agreement and a common voice supporting pastoralism.

Conclusions & Implications

The EPD has proved to a challenging but innovative approach to raising the voice of pastoralists and improving the profile and investment in pastoralism as a way of life, productive livelihood and land use system. EPD has brought about change in social development and inclusion of pastoral agenda in policy process. The Government of the FDRE has acknowledged EPD as a "national day" and high-level officials including the Prime Minister attend the celebration. However, some compromises and trade-offs have had to be made along the way in order to address some of the challenges faced. And though the situation for pastoralists has certainly improved there is still much to do in terms of fully recognising and supporting the full potential of pastoralists and their livelihood systems. We believe also the continental and the regional organs in Africa would consider lessons and contributions of EPD to promote regional economic integration and sustaining peace and stability in the region.

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- **Mr. Tezera G. Tiruneh**, Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia, tezera@pfe-ethiopia.org
- **Mr. Abdi A. Hussien**, Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia, abdidheere04@yahoo.com
- **Mr. Shanko D. Desta**, FDRE MoFPDA, shanko_d@yahoo.com
- **Ms. Fiona Flintan**, Rangelands Governance, ILRI/ILC, fionafintan@yahoo.co.uk