

A Brief Report on the 4th Ethiopian Pastoralists Day Commemoration (Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia (PFE), February 2002)

Introduction

The Ethiopian Pastoralists Day has been celebrated every year since January 25, 1999 at local level. The idea of pastoralist day celebration was initiated by Somali and Borena elder pastoralists in 1996. The main objectives of the Ethiopian Pastoralist Day are to raise awareness of the public, NGOs, and government institutions that pastoralism is a viable way of life; influence decision makers to favor pastoralists interests; facilitate experience sharing among pastoral groups in different regions; and, encourage advocacy work on issues of development of pastoralist areas/livelihoods.

Pastoralists Concern Association Ethiopia (PCAE), a local NGO, has been coordinating the commemoration activities. This year, PCAE and Pastoralists Forum Ethiopia (PFE) in collaboration with Afar National Regional State organized the celebration. The main celebration took place in Dubti town, Afar Region, on Friday, January 25, 2002 under the motto '*More Attention for Pastoral Development and Poverty Reduction*'. In addition, the day was celebrated in Addis Ababa by conducting press conference at Ghion Hotel organized by Panos Ethiopia. Moreover, the event was celebrated in towns of Filtu (Somali Region) and Negelle (Oromiya Region).

The Setting

The preparations for the commemoration were undertaken both in Addis Ababa and in Dubti. The preparatory works in Addis Ababa were fund raising, production of T-shirt, leaflet, and poster as well as planning the overall activities of the celebration. A draft outline of works of the celebration was discussed and enriched by many members of the forum during series of meetings held.

Regarding the coordination of the activities, a committee with three members (PCAE-chairman, Panos, and EPRaDA) was assigned from Addis Ababa side, while Mr. Bulko Mohammed (Afar Elder) followed up activities in Afar side. In addition, trips were made twice to Dubti and Assaiyita (Afar) by staffs of PFE and PCAE.

Activities Accomplished during the Trips made to Afar

Experience sharing and material distribution

- a draft proposal on the 4th Ethiopian Pastoralists Day commemoration were presented and discussed;
- briefing the committee members in Afar with the progress made by the committee in Addis in the meeting that was chaired by His Excellency Mr. Hamedu Ali, Afar Regional Government Vice President;
- progress in Afar side was discussed and at the same time we tried to fill gaps we noticed in planning of finance and activities related to the Day as well as responsibility sharing among members of the committee;
- accordingly, we re-arranged the activities of the whole committees and produced brief plan of action to monitor progress of the activities. In addition, we commented to revise the previous allocated fund for the purpose as per the revised activities; and,
- T-shirts and leaflets were distributed among the committee members and concerned bodies; etc...

Organization and management of activities

- to ease coordination of activities, we established temporary Office at Tandaho State Farm premises at Dubti Town (this is the site selected for the commemoration);
- identifying appropriate coordinator from Afar side whom we can work together;
- identifying the exact places for the commemoration and preparation i.e., shed, stage, hall for panel discussion etc...
- informing arranging orchestra both from traditional singers and Police Band to get ready for the celebration;
- motivating the urban and peri-urban community to participate in the event;
- arranging and reserving accommodation facilities for guests coming from Addis Ababa and other places;
- arrangement of electric power supply, audio and video facilities;
- conducting brief meetings with committee members to update on the progress of the activities and to take due action on activities lagged;
- sequencing the whole activities of the event and timetable preparation; etc...

Events of the Day (Friday, January 25, 2002)

I. Dubti (Afar)

The celebrants came to Tandaho State Farm Stadium early in the morning to commemorate the day. The celebration ceremony was started after 9:00 am.

- various cultural songs and shows were performed;
- speeches and messages of the Day were made by:
 - Afar Region President, His excellency Mr. Ismael Ali Sero
 - PCAE Director, Abdi Abdullahi
 - PFE Program Officer, Tezera Getahun
 - Pastoral elders from Somali, Afar, SNNP, and Oromo Regions (Borena and Kereyu)
- exhibitions of valuable cultural equipment, traditional dishes and house, various photographs and printed documents were made by Afar Culture, Tourism and Information Bureau and NGOs (PCAE, ActionFaim, Mekele University etc) ;
- Material distribution by PFE: about 65 proceeding were distributed for the guests;
- panel discussion: The panel discussion was part of the event that was held from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm on the same day. The discussion points and the panelists were:
 - ☞ Pastoral Conflict: Abdi Abdullahi, PCAE
 - ☞ Pastoral settlement: Dr. Getachew Kassa, OSSREA/AAU
 - ☞ Pastoral Development Strategies: Dr. Taffese Mesfin, FARM Africa
 - ☞ What pastoralists need from the Government? Mr. Nura, Borena elder

Mr. Elias Hassen (Head, Afar Livestock, and Crop Production Bureau) chaired the panel discussion and it was attended by about 100 people including the president and vice president of the regional government.

Resolution of the Day

The resolutions made were;

- Ethiopian Pastoralists Day should be recognized by the government and commemorated every year on January 25;
- Pastoralists Elders Group (PEG) should be established at federal level;
- attention should be given for inclusion of Pastoralists Poverty Reduction Strategies in the full-fledged National PRSP;
- establishment of Pastoral Institution at federal level;
- attention should be given for pastoralists development and extension packages;
- there should be great attention to the livestock marketing opportunity both at local and abroad; and,
- possibility of using pastoral livestock resources as collateral for bank loan.

Documentation: video record and photos to document parts of the event

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Celebrants

The celebrant guests were estimated at 80 who came from different organizations. In addition, the residence of Dubti and peri-urban pastoral community attended the ceremony. The guests were:

- ✓ representatives from Afar Region Administrative and Bureaus as well as pastoral elders from 29 Woredas;
- ✓ pastoral elders from Somali, Borena and Kereyu, and SNNP
- ✓ representatives from regional government (Gambella, Benishangul Gumuz, SNNP, Dire Dawa Council, etc)
- ✓ Donors, UN-agencies, NGOs representatives (FAO, USAID, WHO, CRDA, Hararghe Catholic Church Secretariat, Panos, PCAE, CARE, AMCCO, FARM Africa, EPRaDA, GTF, ActionFaim, MSF French, APDA)
- ✓ Italian Embassy
- ✓ Addis Ababa University
- ✓ Mekelle University
- ✓ Pastoral Community Unit
- ✓ Media people (ETV, Ethiopian Radio, Radio Fana, Addis Zemen)
- ✓ etc

2. Addis Ababa

On the same day of the event, Panos organized a press conference at Ghion Hotel in Addis. Invitation was made for 85 people from governmental, non-governmental and international organizations that are concerned with pastoralism and pastoral development. Six people were discussants for the press conference. The discussants were representatives of the Pastoralist Network and the Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia. They discussed on the history, development of the pastoral network, the forum some issues relevant to pastoral development. The specific themes for the discussion were as follow:

Discussants	Topics/ themes
1. Ato Melakou Tegegn	Brief introductions about the Ethiopian Pastoralist Day
2. Ato Zerihun Ambaye	Experience gained from the last Ethiopian Pastoralist Day celebrations
3. Ato Sora Adi	Major problems affecting pastoralism
4.W/o Yeshimebet Gemed	Pastoralism and Gender issues
5. Dr.Tegegn Teka	the Ethiopian Pastoralist Network and its contribution to Pastoralism
6. Dr.Moahmmmed Mussa	Policy Issues required for a healthy pastoral Development

Half of the invited guests attended the press conference. The media representation was satisfying to our expectation. Both the private and government media people attended the conference (ETV, Zega publishing, the sun, etc.). The discussion went on until 7:00 p.m.

Conclusion

This year commemoration of the Ethiopian Pastoralist Day is the biggest one in terms of preparation and coverage of pastoral groups and it is for the first time to be celebrated at regional level. Several guests and celebrants were attended the event. The media coverage was interesting. We learnt how it is fantastic and appreciable to observe various cultural mixes of pastoral groups coming from different corners of the country. Furthermore, important resolutions came out of the event that might influence decision makers. In the press conference held in Addis Ababa, relevant issues were discussed. It was decided that next year the 5th Ethiopian Pastoralists Day will be celebrated in SNNP Region. It deserves to appreciate the hospitality and cooperation seen from the Afar Region Officials. Finally, the lesson learnt from the 4th Ethiopian Pastoralists Celebration are there is great cooperation and interests towards developing pastoralism so that it time to shape and use the present momentum. The other is it necessary to organize and arrange the commemoration before time.