



EPaRDA

From modest beginnings to community changing interventions



1999-2009

10th YEAR
ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL





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CONTENTS



10th YEAR ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

- 3 Messages
- 7 Overview of South Omo Zone
- 9 Introduction
- 11 Food Security
- 16 Education
- 18 Health



CONTENTS



10th YEAR ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

- 22 HIV/AIDS
- 24 Gender
- 28 Emergencies
- 31 Capacity Building
- 33 Peace Building
- 36 Research



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Message from the editors

It has been ten years since EPaRDA first set out to improve the lives of the pastoralist communities residing in South Omo Zone.

The intention was to tackle the unique challenges that exist within the zone by assisting the communities in improving their livelihoods. This has been done by making a diverse range of interventions in the area, including facilitating development projects, tackling outstanding health problems and assisting the pastoralists in conflict resolution and peace building.

This magazine has been produced in order to recognise the crucial work that has thus far been done by EPaRDA and its various partners during their decade of community service. It aims to provide an overview of the work done by highlighting successful initiatives across the whole spectrum of EPaRDA's interventions. Case studies from the various areas of focus have been included to exemplify the tangible positive effects that EPaRDA's work has had on individuals from the targeted communities.

The editors would like to extend their gratitude for the contributions made to the production of the magazine in the form of information, feedback, and hospitality offered by the EPaRDA staff.

Particular mention for their financing of the publication goes to OXFAM GB.

EPaRDA

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN



TSEGAYE MEKASHA

EPaRDA's ten year journey was full of unique challenges.

It is difficult to sum it up in a short note like this without doing a disservice to all concerned.

But praise be to the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State, the South Omo Zone Administration, donors, partners and the dedicated staff - EPaRDA has achieved a lot with the financial resources provided to it.

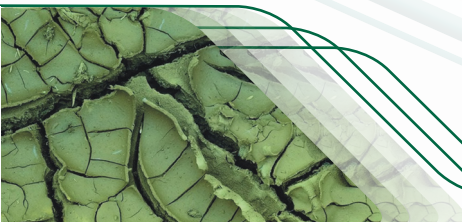
However, all that we have achieved has not been without shortcomings. For example, EPaRDA has so far operated only in the South Omo Zone and was not able to undertake projects in other pastoral regions. Besides, it has not concentrated on the research aspect of its objectives as much as it would have liked. In the future, the association will give more emphasis to these and other activities.

The recent Charities and Societies Proclamation No. 621/2009 has presented new terms and conditions for all civil

society organisations. EPaRDA has to adapt and abide by this legislation. It has to cope with the challenges and exploit the opportunities for the advancement of its objectives.

All in all, it was a decade of toil and success that it shares with all its stakeholders.

We look forward to another decade of achievement.





MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When we first established EPaRDA, I did not imagine then that I would be writing this message on our 10th anniversary.

It seems just yesterday that EPaRDA was established to champion the cause of pastoralists in Ethiopia, who for many years have been faced with the onslaughts of poverty, marginalisation and conflict. We paid particular attention to the communities of South Omo Zone who at the time could be considered as 'the marginalised of the marginalised'.

From its establishment in 1999, EPaRDA has maintained the vision of alleviating the plight of pastoralists in South Omo Zone by bringing about awareness of the problems faced by the people, and the need for policy amendments and approaches towards developing the region without alienating the local communities.

EPaRDA has successfully consolidated a series of interventions targeting a plethora of goals aimed at positively impacting the communities in the South Omo Zone. The projects range from improving income generation to health; from emergency relief work to education; and from capacity building to focusing on improving gender equity.

Besides these, EPaRDA has also delved into peace building in the zone and has become one of the few domestic organisations that has successfully implemented peace building initiatives not only in the zone, but also at a regional level, working with partners towards bringing lasting peace between communities in Ethiopia and Kenya. To date EPaRDA has conducted over 24 interventions.

For EPaRDA, the metamorphosis over the last decade reflects not only the remarkable creation of sustained peace and development, but also the lives that have been changed as a result of its and its partners' concerted efforts.



DR. ZERIHUN AMBAYE

EPaRDA



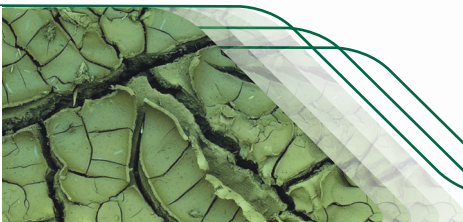
EPaRDA

What has evolved over the last 10 years, since the initial interventions of EPaRDA when a group of like-minded individuals representing different backgrounds and institutions came together, is that more and more children are going to school; HIV/AIDS awareness has grown; alternative income generation schemes are being practiced; and communities are dismantling the walls of discrimination and propagating peace and cooperation.

EPaRDA's ten year odyssey was in no way a walk in the park, but a combination of setbacks and successes. When faced with challenges and obstacles, EPaRDA would not surrender, but rather re-strategise and come back with an alternative.

The secret to our success lies in our approach, which is to give communities the opportunities to own the interventions, and decide which components they require and how they are implemented.

As we mark a decade of community service in the zone, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our partners that have worked with us: local and regional authorities, the communities in the South Omo Zone, and last, but by no means least, the dedicated staff of EPaRDA, whose continued diligence and hard work has resulted in many improved lives in the zone.



Overview of South Omo Zone



South Omo is one of the 15 zones in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPRS) occupying a total area of 23,535 square kilometres. Its capital city is Jinka, which is located 781 kilometres from Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa. It has eight woredas: Salamago, Debub Ari (South Ari), Semen Ari (North Ari), Hamer, Bena-Tsemai, Dassanech, Maale, and Nyangatom.

The altitude of the zone ranges from 360 to 3,300 metres above sea level. The total population of the zone is estimated at 557,673 people, and it has a population density of 24 inhabitants per square kilometre.

In most pastoral and agro-pastoral areas the annual rainfall is below 500 millimetres per year. In most areas the temperature ranges from 25 degrees celsius in normal times and ranges to 40-45 degrees celsius in hot seasons.

South Omo is one of the most diverse zones in Ethiopia, consisting of 16 different ethnic groups distributed among the eight woredas. The groups are Bena, Tsemai, Beraile, Dassanech, Ari, Arbore, Karo, Hamer, Nyangatom, Murile, Kuwegu, Maale,

Bacha, Bodi, Dime and Mursi. Despite the area being small geographically, the ethnic groups come from diverse backgrounds, with three different types of language being spoken: Cushitic, Nilo Saharan and Omotic.

The economy of the zone is based on the physical landscape of the area and can be classified into two types corresponding to the two distinct areas: sedentary farming areas found in the highland and middle altitude areas; and the lowland pastoral and agro-pastoral areas.

Economic opportunities in the lowland areas are, however, limited because of the environment and poor infrastructure. There are few opportunities for trade and, when there are opportunities, often the terms are poor. As the livelihoods of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists depend on key resources, such as land, water, forests, minerals, wildlife, livestock and pasture, the environment poses a particular challenge to their survival.

The crop production in South Omo Zone is divided into two seasons coinciding with the bi-annual rainfall pattern. Planting of sorghum and maize starts with the onset of the main rainy season from February through June. Staple crops planted in February are harvested in August or September. The other agricultural season commences with the onset of the short rainy season that starts in November and ends in December. Supplementary crops produced in the zone during this period, mainly in the higher altitudes, include sorghum, millet, wheat, barley, teff, and pulses.

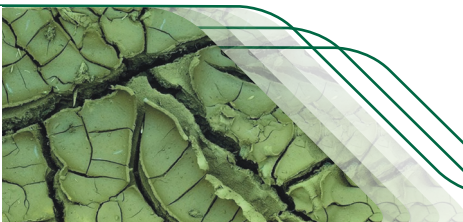
The lowland areas in South Omo Zone support agro-pastoral groups practicing a mixed agriculture that includes livestock production supplemented by crop cultivation. The main animals raised in these areas are cattle and supplementary flocks of sheep and goats.

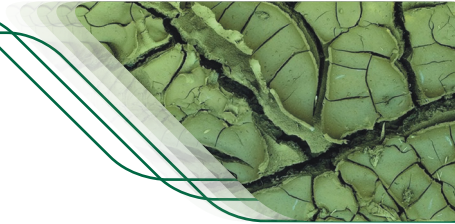
As compared to the wetter highlands, rainfall in these areas is both low and irregular, making the agro-pastoralists vulnerable to famine and drought.

Flood-retreat agriculture along the banks of the seasonally flooded rivers is certainly more reliable than rain-fed shifting cultivation. However, this system of production is limited in extent and contributes little to the overall subsistence needs of the local agro-pastoral groups.

The herding and opportunistic cultivation are supplemented by apiculture, the collection of leaves and berries, and hunting. These practices are carried out to make up for shortages in food during lean or troubled years, when the already vulnerable agro-pastoralist system fails to sustain or meet the basic needs of the local groups living in disaster-affected lowland areas of the zone.

The zone is home to a plethora of tourist attractions, including a diverse mix of natural, cultural and historical attractions, such as the Mago National Park, the Hamer's bull jumping festivities, and the Omo Anthropology and Archaeology Site, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.





EPaRDA

From Modest Beginnings to Community Changing Interventions

INTRODUCTION

In 1999, an Ethiopian non-governmental organisation (NGO) was established called the Ethiopian Pastoralist Research and Development Association (EPaRDA), which has now been renamed the Enhancing Pastoralist Research and Development Alternatives (EPaRDA).

It had the aim of making targeted interventions geared at supporting pastoralists through skill-building schemes, knowledge- and information-based programs and livelihood development interventions that would enable pastoralists to manage their own development processes.

EPaRDA decided to work primarily with pastoralists in the South Omo Zone of Ethiopia because its founding members recognised their plight: Not only do they occupy remote and harsh areas far from development opportunities, but they have over the years suffered from cycles of poverty, conflict and marginalisation. While other Ethiopian pastoralists suffer from similar problems, such as those in Afar, Somali and Borana, relatively greater efforts to assist those communities are already underway.

The founders of EPaRDA, as they made their first steps towards improving the lives of pastoralists, recognised the interventions would not bring lasting solutions unless they were guided by a research-based approach.

EPaRDA



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This led EPaRDA to come up with seven themes for its interventions:

-  *To conduct action-oriented research to facilitate development efforts*
-  *To advocate for Ethiopian pastoralist development problems and opportunities in a bid to influence national and regional policies*
-  *To support education and awareness creation programs to enable pastoralists to improve their livelihoods*
-  *To broaden the scope of the pastoralists' participation in project planning, monitoring and evaluation*
-  *To work closely with the communities at grassroots level and capitalise on their indigenous knowledge*
-  *To empower pastoralist women and enhance gender equity in pastoralist areas*
-  *To engage in pastoral area development works and peace building*

When EPaRDA started its programs in South Omo Zone there were only a handful of NGOs working in the area.

Over the last 10 years, the involvement of EPaRDA in the development efforts of the area has been progressively growing. These efforts are made through its development programs and projects and in the form of soft assistance, such as advocacy, partnership building and coordination activities.

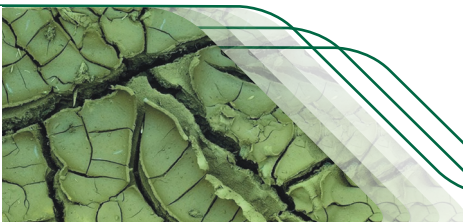
EPaRDA has been undertaking its activities from its headquarters in Addis Ababa, field offices in

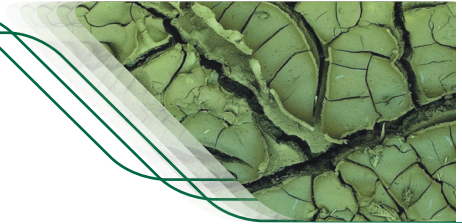
Wayto, Turmi and Jinka and also outreach camps in various places within the communities. So far, it has undertaken 24 projects worth more than 44 million birr.

It has operated small-scale schemes and pilot projects designed for the grassroots level, which proved to be effective. Even more important is the capacity of such schemes for mobilising a higher level of community participation, which is one of the tenets of EPaRDA's development approach. In all of the interventions, community capacity building is an underlying theme of EPaRDA's development planning.

During these years, EPaRDA has undertaken various programs, projects and activities in South Omo Zone. Additionally, the management and staff of EPaRDA have been involved in various events within and outside the project areas. Some of these included participation in different pastoralist-oriented conferences; participation in campaigns on polio vaccination; and participation in emergency responses, such as the outbreak of meningitis in Hamer Woreda and flooding in Dassanech and Nyangatom Woredas.

EPaRDA works in close collaboration with all tiers of Ethiopian government, as well as with other local and international organisations. Its major donors and partners have been Oxfam GB; the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID); the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); PACT Ethiopia; the Christian Relief Development Association (CRDA); FARM Africa; the Federal and Regional Pastoralist Community Development Program (PCDP); Cordaid; Health Unlimited; Sustainable Land Use Forum (SLUF); the Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD); MONACO Fund Aid; Weltfriedensdienst e.V. (WFD); Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia (PFE); and Veterinary Sans Frontieres, Germany.





FOOD SECURITY



Pastoralist areas in Ethiopia, such as the South Omo Zone, suffer from a variety of problems that are obstacles to creating food security for the inhabitants. Among the problems are drought, conflict, crop pests, livestock disease and poor agricultural practices.

To try and improve this situation over the last decade, EPaRDA, together with partners, particularly Cordaid, have focused on attempting to ensure that people do not starve in the event of



adverse circumstances. This has been achieved by improving agricultural production techniques and introducing alternative income generation activities.

For example, EPaRDA and Cordaid introduced food security enhancing irrigation cultivation in four pilot sites, namely Gola, Karo (both in Hamer Woreda), Lochuch (Dassanech Woreda) and Omo Kibish (Nyangatom Woreda).

In the small-scale irrigation schemes supported by EPaRDA, around 2,000 pastoralist and agro-pastoralist households benefited and harvested about 10,000 quintals of food grains - mainly maize and sorghum - from a total area close to 500 hectares. A result of this was that communities in these locations have become relatively food secure compared to others in the zone, as demonstrated by this statement made by the Gola communities in Hamer at the time: "We do not need food aid; rather we are in the position of donating food to our relatives".

Training sessions to improve farming techniques and the distribution of high yielding seeds, as well as farm tools, have also taken place. In particular, the improved maize and sorghum varieties that were distributed around Gisma and Shala areas showed good results.

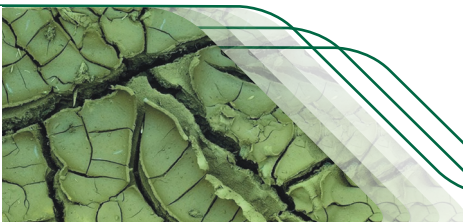
A project aimed at capacity building and food security for 15 pastoral associations in the Dassanech and Nyangatom woredas was conducted with EPaRDA's partner, the Federal and Regional Pastoralist Community Development Program (PCDP).

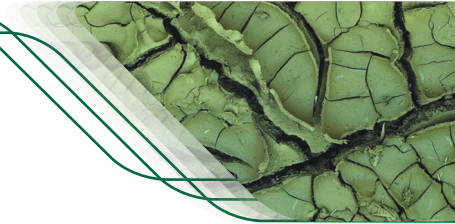
Another major focus was livestock, with particular emphasis on improving animal husbandry, establishing veterinary clinics, and introducing camels to the area.

Workshops and training sessions were held in an attempt to improve the care of animals, including awareness-raising of diseases. Moreover, the training of community animal health workers from within the communities under those initiatives have contributed a lot to creating improved access to livestock health services in the area. Repeatedly conducted livestock vaccinations also widely reduced the prevalence of livestock diseases.

In Dassanech Woreda, EPaRDA, in partnership with Veterinary Sans Frontieres, Germany, set up a clinic and provided training for practitioners, drugs and veterinary equipment for the new facility.

In partnership with FARM Africa, camels were introduced after an adaptability trial in 2003 found that camels, which can browse from shrubs and trees, were preferable to grazing livestock because of the scarcity of pasture in the zone. They are also drought tolerant and provide a better milk yield than cattle. This led EPaRDA to distribute camels in several woredas. The outcome was positive with, for example, the people in and around Biraile and Arbore recognising the advantages of camels over other livestock species and requesting them in exchange for bulls.





NEW CAMELS FEED ANKESO'S KIDS

Ankeso Menka was given one bull and one female camel by EPaRDA. With these camels, Ankeso was able to bring about a remarkable improvement in his family's situation by generating income through the production of milk and selling of camels.



Ankeso Menka

Ankeso has seven children and he said the milk production obtained from the camel is more than enough to feed his seven children. Other children in the area have also benefited from the milk.

In addition to the enhancement of food security during good and bad seasons for his family, he has also been able to generate income by selling camels. Ankeso Menka had seven camels; and he has sold four for a total amount of 12,500 Ethiopian Birr.

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Studies were conducted to assess the efficacy of the trial and it was found that the camels in Hamer Woreda grew remarkably in number and were reproducing very well. The beneficiaries are effectively utilising the camels as a source of meat, milk and for transport during the traditional bull jumping ceremony. The same is true in Luka Kebele of Bena-Tsemai Woreda.

Fishing improvement techniques were also introduced because the proximity of Lake Turkana and the various rivers in the zone meant it was an effective means of increasing food production. Equipment was purchased and technical support given to select fishing communities. The participants were able to generate extra income by selling the excess fish they produced.

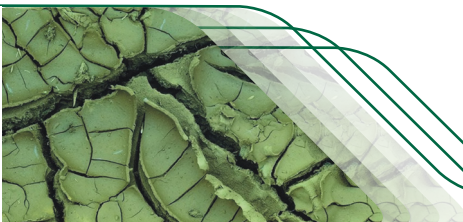
Modern bee keeping practices have also been introduced to the area to improve income generation from this existing traditional practice. After thorough discussions with Beraile, Tsemai and Bena communities, 10 people from Beraile community, and five each from Bena and Tsemai were registered to be the first beneficiaries. Model beehives were observed at a field site and one version from Jinka was selected as the suitable ones for distribution. These first interventions were a success, which has led EPaRDA to expand the scheme to other areas to meet the ongoing growing demand for apiculture assistance.

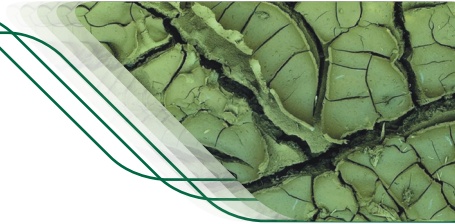
One of the best means to mitigate the frequent conflicts among the Hamer, Arbore and Borana communities was through the creation of a common market place that can bring people together so they can trust each other.

The threat from drought was reduced through the creation of information networks by studying and distributing weekly market information to the pastoralist and agro pastoralists, as well as merchants within the area. To accomplish this, four market places were selected to collect and disseminate weekly livestock market prices. These were Dimeka, Arbore, Biraile, and Key Afer markets. Ten pastoralist cooperative unions were also formed to improve business capacity and techniques.

Other interventions included improving water management, with a focus on improving infrastructure and communities' capacity to manage resources, partly via the formation of water committees. The committees included local leaders, elders and participants of the irrigation farming. They were responsible for allocating water among members fairly and equitably without discrimination; ensuring proper usage and management; mobilising the users to maintain irrigation canals; and to mediate and settle emerging conflicts.

In addition, in order to increase water resources for the communities, EPaRDA has so far constructed four ponds in Gisma, Bena-Tsemai Woreda, Arbore, Hamer Woreda, Omorate Zuria, Dassanech Woreda, and in Nyangatom Woreda.





WATER WORKS BEYOND WORDS FOR MAKOLO



Ermedie pond was established in February 2009 by MONACO Fund Aid. As it is in the middle of the two big grazing areas it is in a strategic place where more than ten pastoralist associations' livestock are watered. The associations that benefited are Ermedie, Torongole, Lobet, Kalowe, Altakatach, Hado, Lokoro, Gurenarama, Agolches, Delegnemoire and Diliriyele. The pond has a capacity of 7,600 cubic metres.



Makolo Lowi

Makolo Lowi, 35, who heads a household of six, was one of the beneficiaries and served as a water committee member. He explained the effect it has had on his life: "The only water source we had was the Omo River, which is 15 kilometres away from this pond and very far from Narama, the major pasture land. We used to spend a lot of time travelling to both, but now, thanks to EPaRDA, except during severe droughts, we water our cattle here. We also use the water for domestic purposes. I have 64 shoats and 22 cattle and since this pond was built our livestock are watered and reach the fields earlier. So, the benefit of this pond for us cannot be described in words. We want EPaRDA to construct an additional pond if possible because of the high number of livestock using it."

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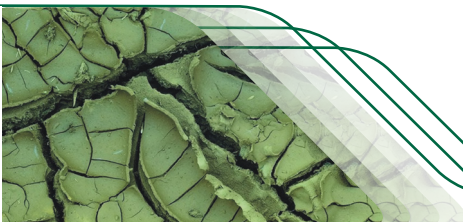


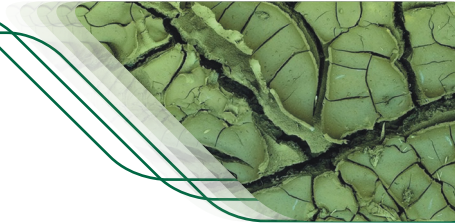
EDUCATION



Based on the conviction that education is the core and principal drive for development, and that education services for pastoral areas are characterised by low school attendance rates and achievement, EPaRDA, in collaboration with PACT Ethiopia, started a basic non-formal education project in May 2003.

The project had six centres established at strategic locations that were convenient and accessible to the different ethnic groups of the project area. One facilitator/teacher for each centre and one supervisor for all centres were recruited and assigned to carry out the projects after having the necessary training. School management committees were also formed from communities to monitor the activities of the project.





Initially, the project targeted a sum of 300 students at the six sites from the six ethnic groups that reside in the project area. HIV/AIDS awareness was later incorporated into the curriculum.

Non-formal education was conducted in close cooperation with the local education bureaus and became a stepping-stone for the growth and development of education in the pastoral communities in the Hamer and Bena-Tsemai Woredas of South Omo Zone.

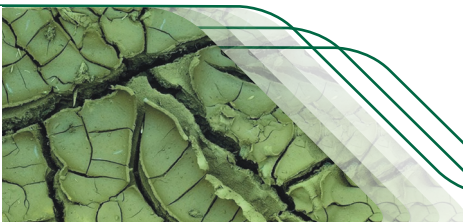


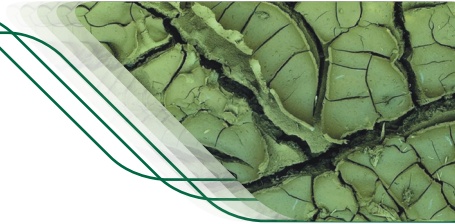


The major threat to pastoralists' health stems from the frequent droughts and flooding, malaria, and women's and children's medical problems resulting from childbirth.

There is a lack of modern health services in the area, and many people still rely on traditional healers and witchcraft, exacerbating the problem.

EPaRDA's main objective in this sector was to provide basic, integrated services, particularly focusing on the needs of women and children.





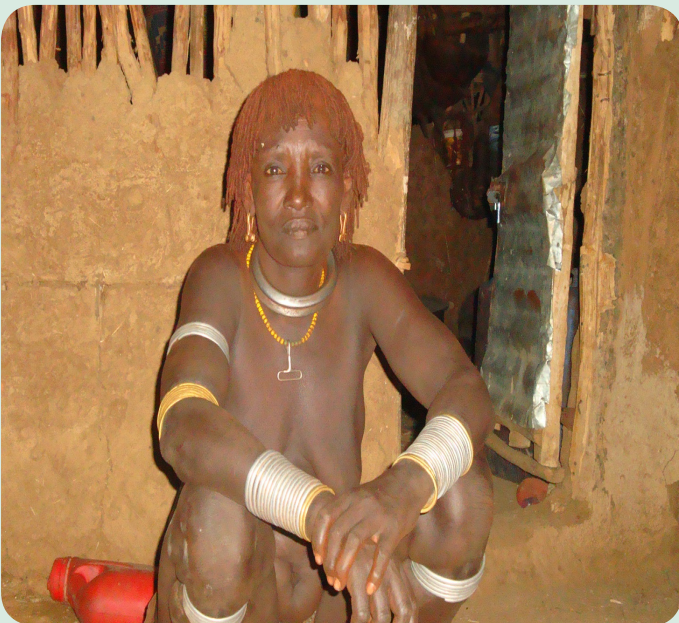
Some of its major achievements included: The establishment of mobile clinics accessible to 80,000 people; providing seven birthing huts with trained attendants, training of community health workers to carry out immunisations; the introduction of health insurance; and the offering of basic health education through youth clubs. Thirty six new pastoralist health committees were formed in 21 pastoral associations in Hamer Woreda and 15 in Bena-Tsemai Woreda.

Health education was given in daily sessions through mobile outreach camp facilities at two sites by health professionals and community mobilisers. The training was given to 6,242 pastoralist community members on HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, water-borne diseases transmission and control methods, general hygiene, malaria prevention and the importance of mosquito nets.

Health problems associated with child birth had been an outstanding problem in the area due to the lack of medical facilities and the harmful traditional practice of women in some communities giving birth alone and outside. This led EPaRDA to prioritise the construction of birthing huts and the training of traditional birth attendants.

The seven birthing huts were constructed at Arbore Clinic, Turmi Health Center, Alduba Health Center, Luka Clinic, Key Afer Health Centre, Dimeka Health Centre and Jinka Hospital. Materials were also purchased to equip the huts to complement this work, traditional birthing attendants were equipped and trained, and an awareness-raising session about birthing huts was offered to all health workers from 48 kebeles at the annual zonal performance review meeting.

MUDA GAINS RESPECT FOR DELIVERY SKILLS



Muda Kula

Muda Kula was selected by community elders to serve them as a birth attendant at Angude Kebele and she was trained for one month on child delivery.

She said: "I was working as a birth attendant before training, but I did not have enough skill and experience."

She also added that the training not only increased her child delivery skills, but taught her about the importance of family planning. Before EPaRDA's work, many mothers and children died during delivery and after delivery.

She concluded: "Now I have great respect from my kebele and community."

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A total of 41 youth clubs have been established, which were all provided with a five day training by woreda and zonal health experts. The aim of establishing these clubs was primarily to promote health education at the grassroots level. The clubs included health education and organising drama, dances and songs as techniques of health message dissemination.

After consultations with both Hamer and Bena-Tsemai Woreda health offices, a drug revolving fund was established. Alduba Health Centre in Bena-Tsemai and Dimeka Health Centre in Hamer were equipped with essential drugs and materials. The total amount invested for the purchases was 200,000 Ethiopian Birr; 100,000 for each woreda.

Other major interventions were a health insurance scheme and the provision of 10 motorbikes to enhance medical services in remote communities. A focus on malaria prevention and treatment, including the distribution of mosquito nets, was also a substantial part of EPaRDA's health-related activity.

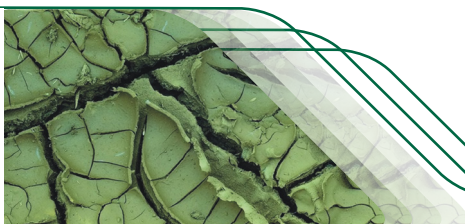
Because of the widespread poverty in the area, health insurance schemes were seen as a way to ensure that even those community members with very small incomes were able to receive medical treatment when they required it. Eleven community health insurance schemes have been established with 517 members. They selected their leaders and by-laws were established. The schemes, which are growing in popularity, work by members paying money into a fund and receiving a payout when they require it for medical treatment.

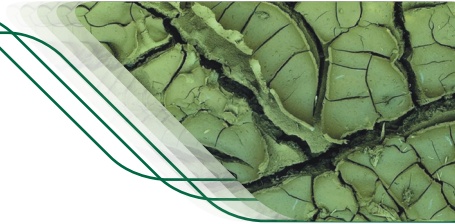
"GOLDEN CHANCE TO SAVE MY LIFE"

Thirty year old Sila Gumade, is one of the beneficiaries of the Arbore Kebele Health Insurance Scheme. When she was six months pregnant, severe abdominal cramp and vaginal bleeding started suddenly while she was resting in her house after a day's heavy work. She went to Arbore Health Center and, in order to save her life, a nurse referred her to Jinka Zonal Hospital suspecting a miscarriage. However, she had no money for the journey to Jinka, let alone for the emergency medical treatment. Realising how serious her predicament was, after talking to her husband she said: "I have a golden chance to save my life" and went to the chairman of the Arbore Health Insurance Scheme and borrowed 600 birr. When she finally arrived at the hospital, the dead foetus was removed in an operation and after two days close observation in a birthing hut in Jinka she returned to Arbore. As she had been advised at the hospital, Sila returned to Jinka when she experienced similar symptoms during a subsequent pregnancy. This time she borrowed 700 birr and a healthy baby was delivered by caesarian section after the doctor assessed that it was positioned dangerously in the womb.



Sila Gumade





In order to fit with the mobile lifestyles of the pastoral communities, EPaRDA introduced mobile outreach camps and provides its services by moving and camping with the communities.

A mobile outreach camp is a centre that is used to provide outreach services in various integrated EPaRDA projects for the pastoralists at the grassroots level. The services started in 2002 in the Hamer and Bena-Tsemai Woredas in agreement with the woreda administrations. The camp shifts from one kebele to another kebele of the woreda every three months. However, the camp may stay in one kebele more than three months if the need arises.

Services delivered at camps include provision of Information Education and Communication or Behavioural Change Communication (IEC/BCC) on HIV/AIDS, family planning and communicable diseases, a mobile clinical services, and a training centre; and it also serves as a training centre for project staff.

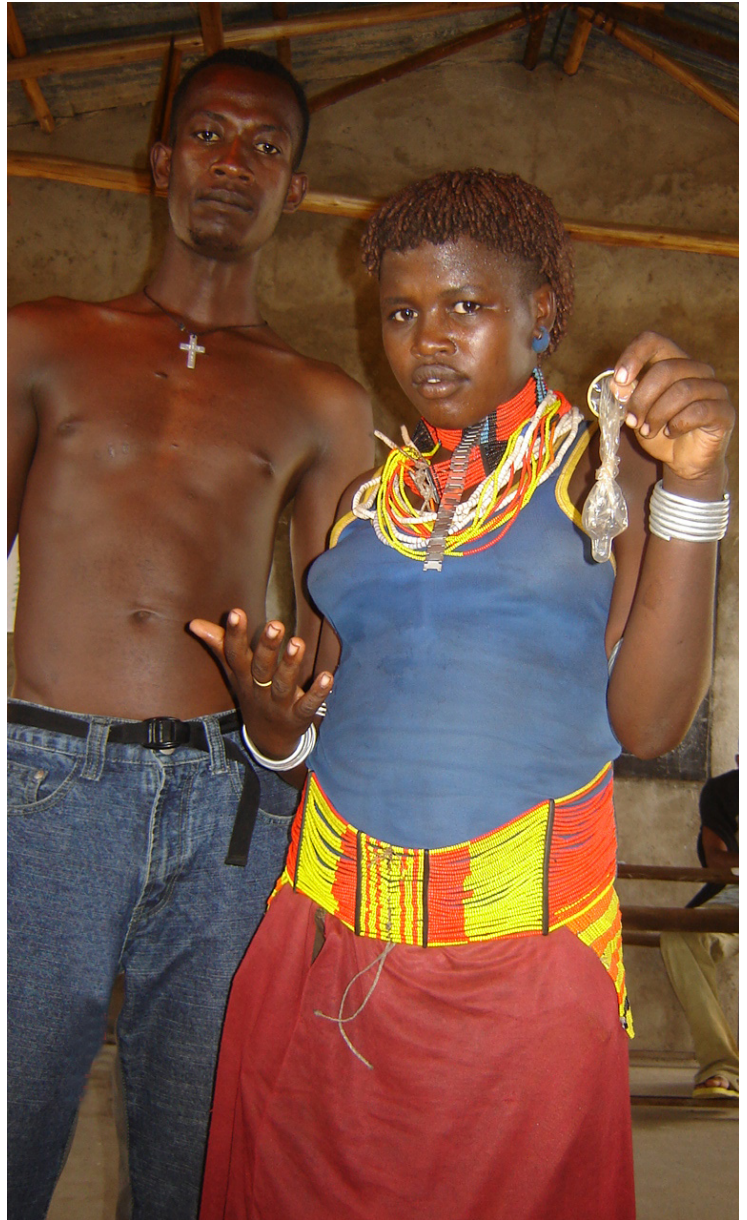


HIV/AIDS

Not only do those who are infected by HIV/AIDS suffer from the disease, but it also affects their families and the wider community.

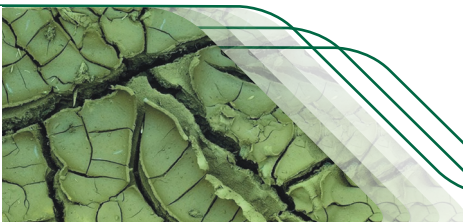
Approaching HIV/AIDS interventions among communities require a thorough understanding of the cultural nuances of the communities in question.

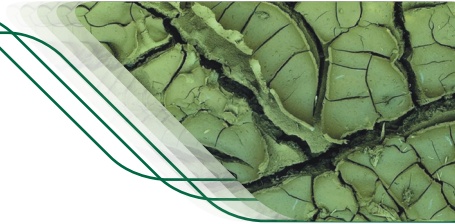
EPaRDA quickly recognised that as long as early interventions are not done in prevention and awareness creation, the HIV/AIDS pandemic could pose a serious challenge to development work in the pastoral areas of South Omo Zone. A survey conducted by EPaRDA in 2006 revealed that the level of awareness of the pastoral communities towards HIV/AIDS in South Omo Zone was at only 11.6 percent. In addition, only 10.6 percent of the respondents identified three or more ways of being infected with HIV/AIDS and means of prevention.



It is equally important that a more aggressive approach to improving the provision of antiretroviral therapy (ART) is taken.

The information gap on the HIV/AIDS epidemic is influenced by factors such as the area being one of the most marginalised areas of the country, the communities' transhumant lifestyle and traditional practices that encourage having multiple sexual partners.





What further compounds the situation in the zone is the prevailing extreme poverty has its own challenges, such as the scarcity of services for testing, education and treatment of the disease.

SEX EDUCATION FOR SHULI



SHULI AYEKE

"Formerly, we had the wrong perception that HIV/AIDS is a disease that only attacks highlanders. In due course, I saw people living with the virus in the town of Dimeka. Following the intervention, I sometimes participate in community conversations and attend the HIV/AIDS education.

"As a result there is a change in my behaviour and that of the society. Nowadays, I use condoms, which I did not use before. Also, previously, when I go to the town of Dimeka to drink alcohol, I spent the night with commercial sex workers. However, now I pass the evening with relatives."

In the face of these challenges, EPaRDA launched and implemented a project in 2002 and a subsequent project, which began in 2008, which focused upon bringing about the necessary behavioural changes by improving the awareness and capacity of the community towards the transmission and prevention of the disease.

The approaches taken by EPaRDA include: Awareness creation; Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) training; training of traditional healers in preventive HIV/AIDS counselling; training of volunteers and HIV positive people on HIV/AIDS education and advocacy; organising forums for discussions, such as workshops, youth and music clubs; the establishment of sexual and reproductive health clubs; launching of mobile outreach VCT services; the production and distribution of educational materials, as well as the establishment of associations of people living with HIV/AIDS.



GENDER

In the South Omo Zone, women play a critical role in the livelihoods of households and communities.

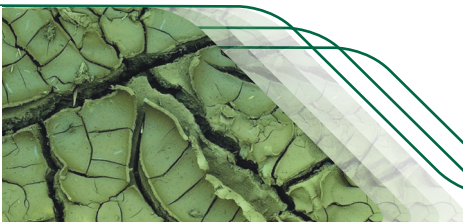
As in other pastoralist communities, women in the zone perform a large and diverse workload. Fetching water, collecting firewood, preparing food, taking care of children and livestock, constructing shelters, and working in the fields are a few of the tasks that they perform.

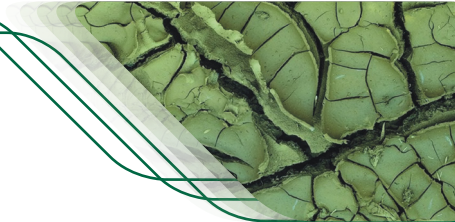
Such efforts significantly contribute to poverty reduction, but unfortunately this contribution often goes unrecognised and there is a significant imbalance between what women do and what women have. For example, women traditionally do not own livestock or land, and usually formal education for girls is not seen as necessary.

It is in this context that EPaRDA set about trying to improve gender equity and women's empowerment in the zone. This was done largely by awareness creation workshops, training, the provision of alternative livelihoods, and the introduction of labour-saving mechanisms, such as grinding mills.

For example, a workshop on gender awareness for subject matter specialists and the community was conducted in November 2001 in two woredas, Hamer and Bena-Tsemai. A total of 44 people (21 from Hamer and 23 from Bena-Tsemai) from different sector offices (council, agriculture, police, justice, health, education, cooperative promotion, women affairs, zonal council, Catholic Church Administration and EPaRDA) participated in the workshop.

There was also an effort to promote female involvement in conflict resolution, which recognised the prominent role of women in decision-making.





Women alongside youth and elder representatives from Borana, Arbore and Hamar ethnic groups actively participated in the peace conference and traditional peace ceremonies held at Elkuni-Teltele Woreda and at Arbore and Asile of Hamer Woreda, respectively. During the event, women had the opportunity to air their views on various issues concerning peace and security in their localities.

Other interventions included the establishment of women's petty trading groups, women's goat groups, and women's credit and savings groups. A 26 member women group, both goat beneficiaries and others, organised themselves into credit and saving groups. They contributed three Ethiopian Birr each, a total of 78 birr, as initial capital. They were advised to use the money for petty trading in order to generate income. Since their money was small for the purpose, the project allocated 1,000 birr in credit in order to strengthen the group. A 16-strong Biraile women group was also formed and organised into a credit and saving association. Their initial capital was 48 birr, which was supplemented with a 500 birr loan. At the moment the recipients are doing well, encouraging more people to join the scheme.



Women Petty Trading Groups

Women's income improved through petty trading at Lobet Kebele of Dassanech Woreda



Far left, Arra Merry

One women's petty trading group is found at Lobet Kebele in Dassanech Woreda and Lobet Lebele, which is closer to the town of Omorate. The group has 20 group members, one group chairman, one cashier, and one secretary, who are selected by the group members.

As with other groups, the Lobet group members have been given training about small business management, commodity marketing, simple accounting and bookkeeping concepts. After the training, the group was provided with a seed capital of 3,000 Ethiopian Birr.

Arra Merry is the chairman of the group and she has primary responsibility for day to day trading activity. The group has primarily engaged itself in the trading of sorghum, coffee shells and livestock.

The women have exerted great effort to bring a remarkable improvement to livelihood through trading the commodities.

Arra said: "The group has about 5,300 birr in cash, three bulls with an estimated price of 1,300

birr each, and four goats with an estimated price of 150 birr each.

"In addition to this, the entire group members have also used part of their profit (800 birr) for domestic purposes."

Women Grain Grinding Mill Groups

Arbore Women Grain Grinding Mill Group has one chairman, one cashier, one secretary and one management committee with four members who are selected by the group.

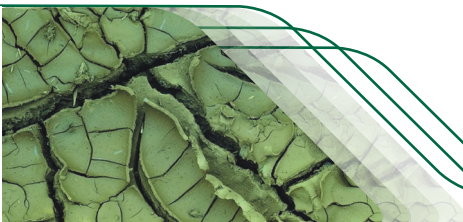
After the formation of the group, EPaRDA installed and constructed one modern grain grinding mill.

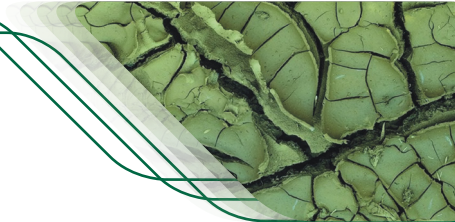
Ella is the chairman of the group and she is the primary responsible person to efficiently coordinate the whole group members during their day to day milling activity. Their efforts, together with the supportive supervision of EPaRDA staff, have brought remarkable progress.



Arbore Women Grain Grinding Mill Group at work

As Ella explained, they are able to efficiently manage and handle the required activities during milling times by themselves. She said: "Before





the construction of the grinding mill, women suffered from traveling long distances to get to the mill, and they also spent more energy and time grinding the crops by using a traditional stone mill.

“In addition to this, the community was exploited by private grain grinding mill owners who charged high prices.”

But now Ella said they are more equal to men; their heavy workload is reduced; they own property; they are able to protect their community from price inflation by competing with private mill owners; they have increased their income and food security; and they have saved a lot of time previously spent using traditional milling techniques.

While engine maintenance is carried out by EPaRDA, the replenishment of fuel, oil and other lubricants is carried out by the group. At the moment, the group has a total of about 6,000 birr and out of this one of the group members borrowed 1,200 birr to take her son to Jinka Hospital when he was ill.

In addition to this, the group has purchased about 12 quintals of sorghum that was distributed among themselves during a period of drought to alleviate food shortages.

Women Goat Group Members

Organising resource poor women into a group and providing them with three female goats each is one of the projects undertaken with the purpose of empowering poor pastoralist women. Those selected were provided with three female goats each at nine kebeles found in the three woredas of South Omo Zone. Each women goat group is comprised of 20 women.



From right to left, Oyita Olle and Goiti Ayike, the most successful goat group members at Luka Kebele in Bena-Tsemai Woreda

Oyita Olle is a member of Luka Kebele Women Goat Group in Bena-Tsemai Woreda. She is 35 years old. Her husband died five years ago, leaving her to look after four children. Before EPaRDA provided her with three female goats, she didn't have any livestock. Currently, she has seven goats.

She said: “I am in a better position than before. One and a half years ago, I had no livestock asset, but now I own livestock.”

Goiti Ayike and Burri Abebe were also very poor women among pastoralists. EPaRDA gave them three female goats each and currently they are the owner of six and five goats, respectively. Both women said that their livelihoods have improved with the livestock, and the attitude of the community towards them has also become more favourable.

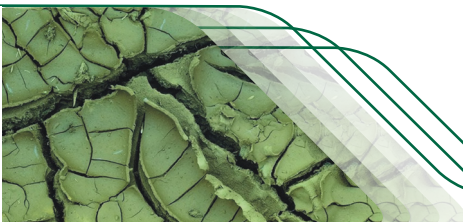


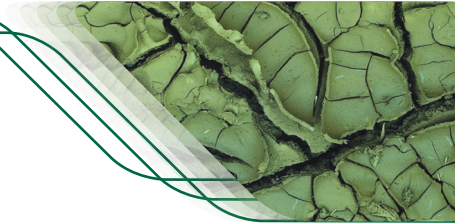
EMERGENCIES



In view of the widespread risks in South Omo Zone, EPaRDA has developed a project that can provide quick responses in the event of natural hazards occurring.

This pioneering effort was put in place in 2005 with funding from Cordaid. A contingency fund system was developed within this project and a start up budget of 250,000 Ethiopian Birr was allocated. This has helped in carrying out swift





emergency operations to save the lives of victims and was a remarkable step in overcoming the delays in emergency supplies that result from the usual lengthy process of fund appropriation at the time of emergencies.

Unfortunately, on August 13, 2006, the Omo River flooded around 14 villages in the Dassanech and Nyangatom Woredas of the zone. Consequently, 364 people were killed, 21,523 people were displaced, more than 3,200 livestock died and around 1,225 local grain storages containing 2,280 quintals of grain were destroyed.

EPaRDA was the first NGO to appear on the scene of the incident with emergency support a day after the flood. EPaRDA's operations were focused on relief, human health, livestock health, and emergency peace and security administration interventions. The interventions were through funds provided by Cordaid, Health Unlimited, Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia (PFE), Oxfam GB and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). The EPaRDA health team made up of a medical doctor and two nurses gave humanitarian assistance and the necessary support to the 22,544 flood victims. The majority were women, children and elders. There was no early preparedness for such a crisis on the government side, so EPaRDA mobilised emergency funds from its health project funded by Health Unlimited to cover the cost of medicines, daily subsistence allowances, and logistical support for government health staff. Furthermore, EPaRDA secured emergency funds from Oxfam GB, Cordaid and PFE for hygiene and environmental sanitation to purchase and distribute materials for displaced people during the first phase of the emergency operations.



NASURU'S FLOOD WORRIES RECEDE

Nasuru Muntie, 55, a female household head, whose cattle were swept away by the 2006 flood, was one of the first beneficiaries now thanking God for a small irrigation scheme project by EPaRDA and Cordaid to help rehabilitate victims of the 2006 floods. Despite her poverty and being a widow she is now able to produce crops for her family members.

Nasuru Muntie

She said: "The flood-retreat agriculture which we previously practiced was not sustainable as in drought years the river level will reduce too much and there will be no flooding. Irrigation schemes like EPaRDA's are the only alternative for the Dassanech. Thanks to the scheme, I can now sustain myself and my family."

EPaRDA



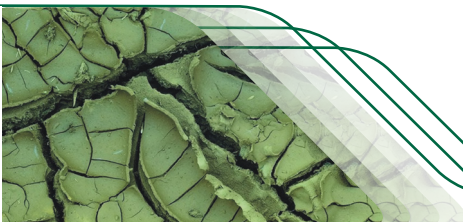


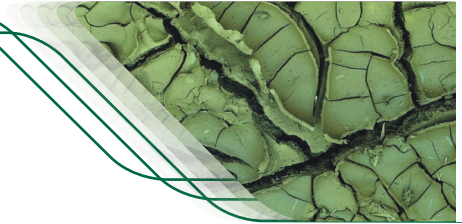
Diseases like pneumonia, dysentery, measles and others emerged as a result of this crisis. EPaRDA deployed a medical team led by a doctor to the site to provide emergency care to the displaced people. Also vaccination and treatment were given to 428,133 livestock against different diseases that would have caused an outbreak following the flooding.

Similarly, the flooding that occurred in 2007 in three woredas, Hamer, Dassanech and Nyangatom, was devastating both in its extent and geographical coverage compared to the 2006 flood. Early preparations made by EPaRDA in collaboration with donors and government - especially at woreda and zonal level - saved lives and properties.

Flooding of the Omo and Woito rivers is a regular phenomenon hitting the low-lying woredas of the zone: Dassanech, Nyangatom and Hamer. From past experiences, the flooding of the Omo starts from mid-August and continues until the first week of October.

In addition to conducting emergency relief efforts, EPaRDA is engaged in disaster preparedness and risk aversion operations. The risk aversion activities were put into practice in 2008 and helped to save the communities from the possible destruction of the flood. EPaRDA has at its disposal emergency contingency projects to support the communities for any unforeseen circumstances.





CAPACITY BUILDING



Pastoralist community capacity building initiatives of EPaRDA were launched with the overall goal of improving the food and livelihood security of pastoral and agro-pastoral communities of South Omo Zone.

These were conducted by enhancing the capacities and building the abilities of the communities to perform and manage their own development activities. The capacity strengthening efforts of

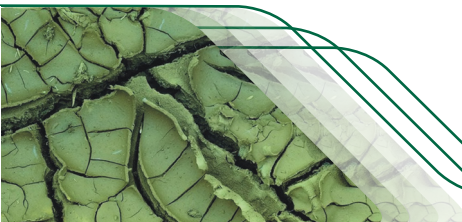




EPaRDA include three major components, namely, community-based capacity building programs; capacity building of various government experts through material support and various training sessions on a wide range of issues; and enhancing EPaRDA's field offices' capabilities for effective delivery of community services.

The strengthening of community capacity through infrastructure development, such as ponds/wells, grain mills, non-formal schools, market places, and others were conducted. EPaRDA also provided irrigation pumps; fishing gear; beehives and other apicultural equipment; farm implements; improved seeds; motorbikes for government offices, especially to health centres; and medicine for humans and livestock drugs, as well as medical equipment to woreda and zonal health centres.

EPaRDA provided training to community groups in different areas. They included hygiene and sanitation, water conservation and management, latrine construction and management, malaria prevention and control, HIV/AIDS prevention, fishery and fishing net production, beekeeping, beehive management and honey handling, lowland agricultural production and irrigation management, crop husbandry, livestock health, camel and goat husbandry practices and management, micro-enterprise establishment and management, bookkeeping and accounting, project designing and preparation, institutional management, monitoring and evaluation system, and conflict management.





PEACE BUILDING



Traditional peace making ceremony



In pastoralist areas, the major source of conflicts revolves around access to the use of natural resources, mainly water and pasture. However, there are also cases of conflict originating from the cultural practices of heroism, and asset building. In addition, the demographic upsurge and the proliferation of small arms has exacerbated the situation.



LOMOKORI FINDS PEACE AT LAST



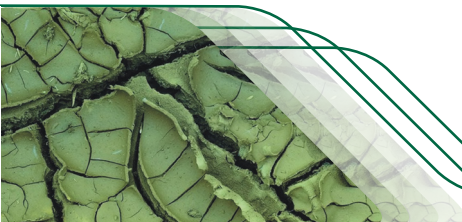
Lomokori Loituamay

Lomokori Loituamay, 45 and a father of eight children, is one of the peace committee members in Arsimoy Pastoral Association.

About the initiative, he said: "The peace committees in Dassanech with the help of EPaRDA and the woreda administration did well in creating peace in our region.

"The Kenyan peace committees have also been involved regarding thefts from both sides, and properties stolen were recovered and returned to their rightful owners.

"I was one the trouble makers in Dassanech, but now I am preaching about peace, advising youth and vigilantly keeping the peace for the sake of our future generations."





EPaRDA has been a pioneer in attempting to facilitate and organise in-country as well as cross-border (Ethiopia and Kenya) conflict mitigation and peace building initiatives for the pastoralist communities in South Omo. It has conducted a series of peacemaking processes, of which the first one was made among Arbore, Hamer, Konso and Borana. The second peacemaking was made among Mursi, Ari, and Bodi, and the third was made among Hamer, Dassanech, Nyangatom, Karo, Muguji, Mursi and Bodi. In addition, there were several other internal efforts and a cross-border peace-building endeavour at reducing tensions between the Turkana of Kenya and Dassanech and Nyangatom of Ethiopia.

The Dassanech are one of groups involved in long lasting conflicts with their neighbours, especially the Kenyan Turkana. Since the inception of the South Omo Turkana Conflict Mitigation Project in 2006, the two communities have peacefully co-existed for three years.

EPaRDA brought face-to-face various rival neighbouring pastoralist ethnic groups to discuss long standing rivalries. Using traditional peace settlement and conflict mitigation mechanisms this resulted in unprecedented peaceful coexistence among pastoralists that were historic enemies.

The methodologies used by EPaRDA to implement conflict mitigation and peace building included utilising traditional peace settlement mechanisms by organising local peace conferences with representatives from the government; conflicting groups and other actors; traditional elders' managed and all-inclusive inter-community dialogues; peace week celebrations; conflict mitigation and peace building training; and working with government at all levels to establish peace committees and enhance development that creates suitable conditions for a sustainable peace.

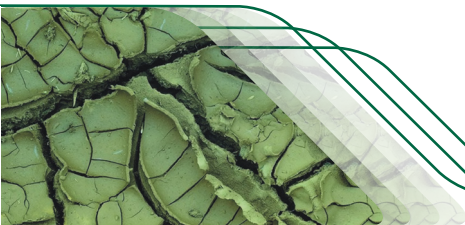


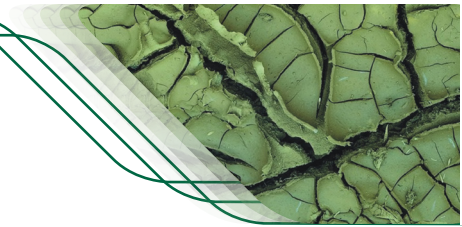
RESEARCH



EPaRDA believes that research-based development interventions will have a long lasting sustainable impact across generations and societies. As a result, EPaRDA has conducted several pieces of research on a diverse range of issues, including agronomy, socio-economy, gender, and peace building.

One of the main pieces of research conducted in the past decade was the Agronomy Study in Hamer, Bena-Tsemai, Nyangatom and Dassanech Woredas. This comprehensive 2005 piece of research examined all aspects of the area's agronomy, particularly its resources and the techniques used by the communities, as well as other crucial contextual factors, such as government policy, population and ethnic composition, and social issues. As a result, the paper made detailed recommendations regarding, for example, improving crop husbandry, establishing more effective livestock marketing systems, and introducing conflict resolution mechanisms.





Another study looked at Verification of Traditional Control Methods of Ticks and Mites in South Omo, Ethiopia. The research was designed to improve the quality of animal hides originating in the area to make them suitable for export and therefore boost the incomes of the local communities.

An April 2005 study looked at land use in Hamer and Kuruz (Kuruz has now been split into Nyangatom and Dassanech Woredas) Woredas. The study, which was called Land Cover and Land Use Rangeland Status in Kuruz and Hamer Woredas, used remote sensing and field investigation to classify, quantify and map

land use in the area. One finding of the study was that 36 percent of the land was heavily affected by biological and physical land degradation.

Dry meat research was one of the trials conducted with the aim of facilitating livestock marketing. For the purpose, modern slaughterhouse and meat drying houses were constructed. The trial was carried out for over three months. The preliminary results showed that it is profitable to sell livestock in the form of dry meat rather than live animals that incur costs from additional transportation and other related factors.

EPaRDA



Since the area is suffering from a shortage of rain, the rain that falls is not enough to grow crops till seed setting. The crops usually dry without setting seed. In order to solve this problem, EPaRDA conducted a sorghum transplantation trial. The outcome of the trial showed that the seedlings transplanted performed well and set seeds earlier than the crops planted. EPaRDA shared the outcomes with the communities and implemented them.

EPaRDA in a study it conducted in 2002 on the socio-economic state of pastoral communities in the Bena-Tsemai and Hamer Woredas aimed at identifying and enhancing pastoral development and research by collecting missing socio-economic information from the area. The specific objectives of the study were to have in-depth information on economic/livelihood diversification, drought, livestock and crop production and productivity, conflict, social services etc; and to develop a document that could serve as a springboard for future development and research interventions in the area, as well as in other pastoral areas.

The study's findings, which were based on consultations with the communities, revealed that among other issues were the growing need for enhancing grassroots participation and capacity building and interventions; linking relief with development and sharpening the food aid targeting mechanisms; enhancing and encouraging the existing livelihoods/asset diversification (apiculture, agro-pastoralism, fishery, herd diversification, etc); identifying traditional institutions' roles in reducing conflict so as to increase the movement of cattle and humans; developing efficient and appropriate market access; and introducing better farming practices.

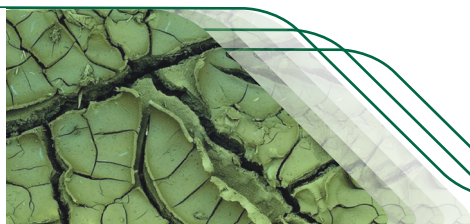
The study also assessed and described the livestock production system, diversification and

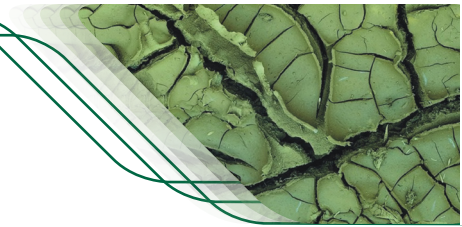
coping mechanisms, multi-faceted inter and intra community and household relations; how natural disasters, changes and interventions affect them and how they cope with these natural and social changes. It is believed that the study would act as an important tool for EPaRDA and other organisations for informed development intervention as well as introducing interested individuals to the basic socio-economic conditions of the areas.

On gender, EPaRDA commissioned research in Bena-Tsemai and Hamer Woredas on the six ethnic groups residing in them. The research was conducted with the aim of understanding the role and status of women and men in different ethnic groups; assessing and analysing specific gender disparity problems, as well as their causes; prioritising problems and possible solutions; gathering experience with participatory methods and techniques for the action-oriented research (Participatory Rural Appraisal); and identifying the role of women with regards to development projects.

The research identified that gender-desegregated statistical data are critical and prerequisites for any changes in policy, planning and research activities and for improving analytical and planning capacities for gender relevant programs. It also underscored the need to foster gender awareness among policy-makers, planners, village heads and male farmers on the benefits of women's access to productive resources and basic services.

EPaRDA in 2005 conducted an impact assessment of post conflict trauma among pastoralist communities of Nyangatom and Dassanech ethnic groups. The assessment identified the need to provide victims of conflicts who suffer from post conflict trauma with a psychosocial counsellor as well as social rehabilitation services.





EPaRDA staff and government representatives during EPaRDA's first intervention in the South Omo Zone

EPaRDA





EPaRDA's current headquarters staff



EPaRDA's current field office staff



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